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WAKA AMA, IT'S A KIND OF MAGIC

Hawaiki Ora

Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

at

The University of Waikato

by

Michael Nuku

(Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Mahu)



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2025

ABSTRACT

Waka ama is a heterotopic social space deeply embedded in Te Ao Māori and is navigating transformative currents as it balances cultural integrity and the pursuit of performance excellence. This study investigated the magic of waka ama, namely the magnetic phenomenon that captivated participants, the lifestyle changes resulting from engagement and participants' environmental perceptions. Magic is understood as the recognition of the enchanted amid modern pressures. A critical gap identified in the literature is the lack of recognition of the key elements that underpin positive participation in waka ama. By articulating and validating these key elements, this thesis lays a foundation for protecting and sustaining these cultural dimensions as waka ama grows in prominence and recognition as a high-performance sport. The study also raises concerns that increasing formalisation may risk eroding traditional values, underscoring the need for culturally responsive strategies to preserve the essence of waka ama for future generations.

This Kaupapa Māori Research is rooted in Te Ao Māori, with Kaupapa Māori Theory maintaining a Māori lens for interpretation and positionality. It utilised the Waka Ama Rangahau conceptual framework, creating stability and rigour for this journey of discovery. It employed an in-depth review of literature and semi-structured interviews with 15 established kaihoe (paddlers) from across Aotearoa to gather data. It also included perspectives of a group of kaihoe that experienced waka ama from an unexplored viewpoint to add depth and breadth to the findings. Thematic analysis and the Whakaaro method were employed to analyse the data. The findings were then presented using Thematic Synthesis. The knowledge and experiences shared by kaihoe contributed towards answering the three research questions and establishing the Waka AMA (Āhuru Mōwai Aroha) Model for supportive environments that characterised the concept of āhuru mōwai. This study conceptualised the āhuru mōwai, *Hawaiki Ora*, inspired by historical discourse and interpretations of Hawaiki Nui. The spatio-temporal environment of waka ama cultivated *Hawaiki Ora* in ways that align with Te Ao Māori time and space, and are reinforced by Foucault's concept of heterotopia and Lefebvre's theory of social space, offering a unique, transformative

space for identity, performance, connection, and care. Within this environment, kaihoe collectively negotiate and uphold their ideals, forging unity and compromise over time. These findings underscore the necessity of preserving waka ama's whānau-centric ethos to safeguard its cultural and spiritual essence against the encroachment of Eurocentric marginalisation commonly framed as modernity.

The Waka AMA Model provides an environmental social construction plan to ensure a supportive and genuinely caring environment is available throughout challenging times and spaces. Crucially, this support must be ongoing and never taken for granted. Waka AMA supports Hawaiki Ora from the experiences, aspirations and rangatiratanga of kaihoe.

TAKU MIHI

Ehara tēnei tohu kairangi i te tohu takitahi, engari he tohu kairangi takitini. Hai whakataki i āku mihi, he tohu kairangi ki runga, he pā harakeke ki te whenua. Anikā ngā tai o mihi e rere atu nei ki taku pā harakeke, nō tātau tēnei tohu e hika mā.

Kai te kaiurungi o tā māua whānau. Taku whakaāio nuku, taku whakaāio rangi. E kī ana te kōrero, he moana pukepuke ka ekengia e te waka. Heoi, anei taku āpitihanga, me ko koe kai te kei e urungi nei i te waka, karekau he ngaru, he moana rānei kua kore i taea e tāua!

Kai āku tamariki, mokopuna. Aku whetū tarake i te pō e ārahi nei i taku waka ki Hawaiki OraHou. Ko te manako i tōku ngākau kia whakairia ake tēnei tohu kairangi hei whakakipakipa i a koutou. Ko te anamata kai ō koutou nā ringaringa. Tū te hoe!

Me pēhea e kore ai a whakaaro e hoki ki te tokorua i tangata ai au. Nā kōrua te ia o taku hoe, nā kōrua i whakatauiria i te noho iti, i te tū nui. Ahakoa te heahea o te mahi, maringa nui ana ahau i ō kōrua akoranga, i ō kōrua uara kua heke mai ki a au.

Kai ōku pakeke, ngā kete mātauranga, ngā ataata o te ao tawhito, ko te oha o te ngākau ki a koutou kai aku rangatira. Otirā, me mihi ka tika ki ngā hautupua, ki te kaihoe rangatira a Amster Reedy, ki a Koro Matiu Eru, ki a Pāpā Piri Prentice, ki a Whaea Hiria Tumoana, ki a Matua Kotuku Tomoana, ki a Pāpā Val, ki a James Burns hoki.

Kai ngā metararahi e ārahi ana i tāku rangahau me āku mahi tuhi. Ahakoa ngā ngaru tūātea, ko kōrua tērā, aku toka tūmoana. E Haki, te taniwha hikuroa o te moananui, Anne te reo i kukume i ahau i te pōuri ki te ao mārama. Kei aku rangatira, tēnā kōrua.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: [IHU O TE WAKA](#)

The title of the thesis, "[Waka Ama](#), It's a Kinda Magic – Hawaiki Ora", has its own kōrero. I attended a waka ama workshop presented by a well-known sports psychologist, Edmond Otis. The following day, we by chance met again, and I asked what he thought of the workshop environment. He replied that he enjoyed it and went on to say, "I love doing waka ama workshops, they believe in magic" (E. Otis, November 23rd, 2021, personal communication). He clarified it was not meant in a derogatory way and expressed that waka ama participants believe in spiritual, physical, and different realms of existence. This is also referred to as a kura huna, or x-factor. Over the years, I have witnessed much discussion, speculation and hypotheses about what exactly positively influencing participants' wellbeing. Whatever is going on, the term magic seems all too fitting.

Māori of Aotearoa were without waka ama for a very long time due to the negative impact of colonisation. However, the courageous efforts of Matahi and Raipoia Brightwell, and their revival team, waka ama return to Aotearoa. The brilliant strategy employed to promote this Māori taonga tuku iho as both a physical activity and culturally embedded phenomenon, enabled waka ama to situate itself in the hearts of the many.

Waka ama is now at the precipice of significant change and challenge with the escalating participation and a quest for high-performance recognition. There is a need to understand the magical phenomenon of waka ama to maintain its unique character in the hearts and minds of the [kaihoe](#), the building blocks of the heterotopic social space, the [āhuru mōwai](#) referred to in this study as Hawaiki Ora.

Hawaiki is the enchanted ancestral homeland, the utopia of the Polynesian people, including Māori. It is a suitable term for this spatial-temporal concept at the centre of

this research. Ora is a concept encompassing life and holistic wellbeing. Achieving the ora state of being involves embracing cultural identity, supporting the community, and understanding the intersection of ancient wisdom and the natural environment. Combining Hawaiki and Ora completes the nomenclature for this concept.

Drawing on Lefebvre's Production of Space and Foucault's heterotopia theory, this study examines waka ama as a heterotopic social space. It achieves this by exploring the compelling forces that sustain participation in waka ama and the resulting lifestyle changes among enthusiasts, as well as their perceptions of the natural environment. The Waka Ama Rangahau conceptual framework was used for the study. The structural parts of the waka ama correspond to the components of this research. The conversion from a single hull to one with an ama was made to achieve greater stability and rigour for the thesis.

Data collection was conducted through a literature review, semi-structured interviews with 15 kaihoe, and comments obtained from a special group, with supporting data, to investigate the motivational, experiential, and environmental dimensions of waka ama. Like [Matariki](#) in the sky guiding [waka hourua](#) on great voyages, the research questions guided this research journey of discovery were as follows:

1. What is the magnetic phenomenon that captivates [kaihoe](#)?
2. How does waka ama influence lifestyle?"
3. What are kaihoe environmental perceptions?

The data was analysed using Thematic analysis (TA) and the Whakaaro method. The findings have been presented rendered into conceptual forms using a Thematic Synthesis Approach. This research concludes that waka ama serves as a heterotopic social space—an āhuru mōwai conceptualised as Hawaiki Ora. This understanding informed the development of the Indigenous, Māori-centric Waka [AMA](#) Model, which fosters nurturing and supportive environments.

Returning to Chapter One, it is presented as the [waka rangahau](#) embarking on a journey of discovery into the magic of waka ama. The introduction section will serve as the [ihu](#) of the waka rangahau that carves through the sea of uncertainty and acts as a reference point to aid navigation. Contained in this chapter is an initial explanation of magic in this research. The magic lies at the heart of this thesis, foundational in envisioning beyond the seen, like the heartwood of a mighty tōtara used for waka construction.

Stripping away the bark or outer layer will be a challenging but rewarding task. As was practised in ancient times, some bark would be removed years before the tree was felled to assist in the distant future's [tārai waka](#) process. Correspondingly, my waka ama experience over the last 25-plus years, perhaps only stripping away the surface content, hopefully also aided in the construction of this waka rangahau. My role as a waka ama participant and insider researcher will be disclosed to present any prejudice and assumptions to minimise potential negatives and maximise positives.

Māori and waka Māori are then discussed to set the contextual and historical background around this research. This leads to information about waka ama, divided into three epochs: prior to the waka ama revival, the revival itself, and the present, with a look into the future. Finally, there will be an overview of the structure of this thesis, including the main areas of consideration.

There is consideration for the use of Te Reo Māori, and those with limited to no understanding of Te Reo Māori. Māori terms and phrases will be used if they are the commonly used term in waka ama or are simply the best word for the particular situation. In such cases, the English equivalent will be linked to the Māori terms or phrases on the first use, requiring a simple cursor hover over the Māori word or phrase.

MAGIC

Realms of existence conjured up thoughts of [Hawaiki](#), [Hawaiki nui](#), [Hawaiki roa](#), [Hawaiki Pāmamao](#) and the associated pūrākau resplendent with magic. For too long, the disenchanting scientific world has suppressed such ideas. As Haig (2018) stated, “The purpose of science is to find out where the limits of possibility are. When we have achieved that – and we shall – there will be no more magic, no more superstition, there will just be what is” (p. 36). Providing a place for magic to exist, while allowing science the same right, is fundamental for this thesis, but somewhat counterintuitive. Difficulties arise when attempting to define magic using an imperial type matrix.

Magic is defined as “the power of apparently influencing events by using mysterious or supernatural forces” (Oxford, 2023) and “a special, exciting quality that makes something or someone different and better than others” (Cambridge, n.d). As stated by Clarke (2013), “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic” (p. 115). What we do not at first understand can leave us mystified. Magic for this study is the unknown experiences of waka ama kaihoe that are often so far from their present reality, they take on a mystical quality. There is magic in play as described by Huizinga (2014) that which stands alongside the associated rules, and Merleau-Ponty and Smith (1962) uses magic to express the unknown things and acts in the Phenomenology of Perception.

Magic has an energy in time and space according to McNamee (2009). He states that it possesses an “ideological and rhetorical signification of something ‘magic’” (p. 243). This energy is within individuals and also between them as a social-psychological atmosphere. This atmosphere or environment also relates to the social space of Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith (1991), as well as the heterotopia and utopia of Foucault (1984). Both will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Waka ama has environments that evoke an idealistic sense of magic, of Hawaiki Ora—a quasi-religious locus for those attending.

Debate continues over whether the omnipresence of Religion and Spirituality (R/S) is magic or reality. R/S is juxtaposed but referred to as two separate concepts that overlap and provide a powerful coping mechanism in times of struggle, offering an explanation that ameliorates potential chaos. This alone can have a positive impact on mental health (Garssen et al., 2021; Jirásek, 2015; Noh & Shahdan, 2020). Actions such as prayer, meditation, mindfulness and special rites manifest a physical action towards such positive possibilities.

Complicating matters, there is a lack of clear distinction between the concepts of R/S, and more so in the realm of sports. Again, we must work through the myriad of definitions to acquire what is suitable in our context. Unfortunately, the majority of these are from what Z. T. Smith (2019) is called a Christocentric viewpoint. This is slowly becoming more balanced as the conspirators of Ferguson (1980) work towards transformative definitions of sport and R/S.

For religion, there are religious studies focused on the many phenomena and realities pertaining to the association of both humans and the sacred. This gnosis allows the religious phenomena to be understood by incorporating relevant historical and cultural contexts. Religion is described by Garssen et al. (2021); (Noh & Shahdan, 2020) as striving for the ideal life by following, sometimes at an askesis intensity, pre-determined beliefs, values and practices of an organisation. In addition, there are four classical religious delimitations stated in Jirásek (2015); it is the recognition of a relationship with a deity, as a sense of mystical awe, an answer to the reality of life and existence, and processing a dichotomy of sacred and secular.

Experiences of a religious nature essentially transcend everydayness into the sphere of the deity, of the sacred, or of the unequivocal other. This transcendence into an ontologically alternative reality processes dichotomies like eternity versus being in time and gods versus humans. Many physical activities are regularly referred to as a religion, but experts argue that, due to their fallacious nature, they should be used only as a metaphor to illustrate particular pertinent characteristics. With sporting physical

activities lacking the connection to a deity, the transcendence and sacredness, it therefore lacks key components to claim religious substance. There are, however, regular religions infusing into the sports world (Jirásek, 2015). It is now common to see athletes pointing in acknowledgement to the sky or heavens, crossing their chest, falling to their knees and joining together in prayer to request, or acknowledge successful sporting endeavours.

The Olympics are often discussed as a religious event. With its sacred torch of fire, the venue becomes a sacred place, led by the Olympic Committee as its religious leaders and the Olympic oath as its guiding doctrine. The five Olympic rings are a mark of homage, whether on a medal or as a popular tattoo (Jirásek, 2015). The WANZ Sprint Nationals has a similarity with its [karakia](#) to open the event, reinforcing the sacredness of the locus, Lake Karāpiro. Those who perform the karakia and the other kaumātua are all recognised as wise leaders who interact with both realms. The values of waka ama and tikanga Māori serve as the guiding principles for the event and the behaviour at the event. Homage is through the waka ama National t-shirt or, for the lucky few, the medals on offer. The sacredness of the water is enhanced by the kōrero of Hawaiki, where Māori ancients were supposedly all great waterpeople.

The concept of religion is historically tied to colonial processes that sought to categorise, regulate, and often suppress Indigenous spiritual practices. Framing Indigenous sport through a religious paradigm risks reproducing colonial epistemologies by imposing externally derived categories onto Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Unlike religion, which is typically organised around doctrines, institutions, and formal worship, Indigenous spirituality is experiential, embodied, and deeply relational (Durie, 1998; Smith, 2012; Reid, 2025). In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer (2013) describes Indigenous spirituality as a lived practice of gratitude, reciprocity, ceremony, and kinship, that honours the whole living world as a community deserving the same care and respect that is expected of humans.

Spirituality in sport is another difficult concept to understand. Spirituality of sports people is characterised by the quest to experience transcendence of the natural world's everydayness. Aspiring for harmony and the search for meaning. This allows spirituality to be recognised as a stand-alone dimension, closely related to flow states and being in the zone.

Transcendence in terms of spirituality differs in that it remains within the actual world of everydayness, rather than the aforementioned unequivocal other (Noh & Shahdan, 2020). This orients one in the sphere of higher and deeper ideals, of ethical and aesthetic values, and the stronger realisation of one's self in the world to obtain enlightenment regarding the meaning of life (Jirásek, 2015). This is echoed by Garssen et al. (2021) who postulated that spirituality was a more subjective experience. This is the result of the desire to connect with the quintessence of life in order to progress on to experiencing the meaning of one's own life. Therefore, spirituality can not be simply labelled as religious, as it is a personal quest for the meaning and purpose of life.

In terms of human movement, spirituality is an individual's exemplification of movement and their ability to move without demarcation in their environment, not restricted within it. This is evident in Potter (2019) using the pilgrim metaphor for parkour practitioners. The pilgrim who has a "deeply embodied mode of spirituality" and "deep experience of place, invested with spiritual meaning on each step of the journey" (p. 5). He continues to explain the enchanted spaces created outside of the normal, cultural sacred spaces. They have transformed through the secularisation of play, from city sites to play sites.

For waka ama, aquatic sites are transformed into secular spaces for play and paddle. Returning to the example of Lake Karāpiro, a man-made lake given secular acknowledgement due to the pilgrim-like characteristics of [tīpuna](#) journeys on that river. Here is an evocative picture of the urban landscape and a contemporary waterscape as a magical site.

Indigenous physical activity plays a crucial role in fostering cultural resilience and promoting healing. In post-colonial settings where Indigenous bodies, movements, and spiritual traditions have been marginalised, culturally rooted physical practices help reclaim autonomy, dignity, and cultural identity. Through shared movement, Indigenous communities affirm their presence, strength, and continuity, framing physical activity as both a spiritually significant practice and an act of decolonization (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2011).

The [Taha Wairua](#) of the Whare Tapawhā health model is a vital component for a balanced wellbeing when viewed holistically (Durie, 1985). It is the phenomenon of spirituality as an influence on general health, both physical and psychic, and the influence that the other dimensions also have on the spiritual. Interestingly, Jirásek (2015) provides a useful list of characteristics of non-religious spirituality for use in physical education, sport training and sport performance. They are authentic modes of existence, enriching relationships with others, understanding the natural world, including ecosophy and aesthetics, inquiry into the purpose and meaning of life, and transition and transcendence to the magic of wholeness.

Māori Magic

All too often, the terms magic and Māori conjure up images of dark magic. Still, the highly recognised supernatural powers of the ancient tohunga are also magical acts. Ruawharo was a [tohunga karakia](#) on the Takitimu waka who was said to be the guardian of the gods of the earth and the ocean. He used his knowledge of incantations to perform positive magical feats like cutting through mountainous waves. Tunui of Heipipi [pā](#) also used such skills to turn the tide in a battle against the invading Taraia and his warriors. Conversely, these examples could be seen as dark magic depending on whether the outcome was in your favour or not.

A better example of magic that relates to this kaupapa could be the fishing up by Māui of [Te Ika a Māui](#). There are mystical connections with the fish hook fashioned from his

grandmother's jawbone and the smearing of blood to aid in the process. Each being highly [tapu](#) to Māori, increasing the [mana](#) and potential of such an epic task. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that from a [kaumoana](#) perspective, witnessing a new land mass appear on the horizon would resemble the sight when pulling a fish, or in this case, the land out of the ocean. This moment would possess a kind of magic parallel to what we are talking about in this study. Perhaps a sense of mystery, purpose, nostalgia and fulfilment all at the same time.

The goal is to use magic along these positive lines and avoid [mākutu](#) and the entertainment vocation of the tricksters or magicians that can be associated with magic. This study will treat magic as the unknown factor that influences situations and circumstances progressively, as experienced by many in their waka ama journey.

Flow and Aesthetics

If one turns to spirituality in sports, notable is the connection of human movement to the purpose of life. This implies that human movement culture may be utilised to produce far more meaningful lives (Jirásek, 2015). The flow state is another related concept connected to spirituality and a meaningful life.

Good lives are those categorised by the “complete absorption in what one does”, according to Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014, p. 89) and physical activity is an opportunity for this. Being in the zone or flow is associated with the spiritual state achieved during physical activity that balances skill and challenge, feeling control in the moment (Garssen et al., 2021; McNamee, 2009; Noh & Shahdan, 2020; Z. T. Smith, 2019). Cox and Tylka (2020) described being totally immersed in moving one's body as mimetic of both flow state and intrinsic motivation.

For flow to happen, there must be some meaningfulness in the participant's sport. Extrinsic values like health, socialising, relaxation and so on are thought of as accidental. Intrinsic, however, possesses more meaning and provides care and

authenticity for one's existence. This considers the horizons available, showing the temporality, often as participants are in a state of attunement, reflecting their involvement. Here, physical activities can be seen as an opportunity to clarify one's humanness and, in turn, elevate sport to new heights.

Flow research on the whole accentuates the dynamic system consisting of person and environment, and the phenomenology of person-environment interaction. Characteristic of flow is one's consciousness that regulates the adaptive behaviour and hauntological pre-existing programmed instructions within the person-environment interaction. Attention is focused on past and present conditions, and relevant past interests will be channelled to suitable encounters. The full investment of attention on the present moment results in the loss of the known 'me', and thus the basic parameters of experience, like time and distance, end up distorted in our perception (Cox & Tylka, 2020). However, this autopilot state can also allow for extra attention to be allocated to suitable adaptive behaviour for new challenges.

Activities can be adapted to enhance the flow potential. This is observable *vis-à-vis* the waka ama paddling on sheltered lakes versus paddling on the rough open ocean. There are, however, negative impacts that result from the flow state. Flow attained through adventurous activities can lead to impede risk awareness and anti-social behaviours (Schüler & Nakamura, 2013).

Another line of inquiry to do with flow is the autotelic personality, which is one inclined to enjoy life for the simple sake of enjoyment. They tend to be captivated by life, determined, inquiring and not egocentric. These people are more likely to return to the flow, experiencing activity, and therefore further develop their skill level. Autotelics' experience of stress and strain when in high-action-opportunities, high-skill situations are noted as less than that of non-autotelics (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Tse et al., 2025).

Milieu of support and challenge nurture these autotelic personalities, and the regulation of their attention influences experience, consciousness, self and culture (Thomson & Jaque, 2016). Unmonitored, the support and challenge have the potential to create a negative feedback loop, breaking the flow state and possibly the enjoyment factor (Fung & Jackson, 2024).

Flow is suggested to be one of two speculated intrinsically rewarding experiences, the other being relaxation. The former is concerned with utilising skills to maximise opportunities, and the latter involves the conservation of energy, a duality of motivation and behaviour (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Cox and Tylka (2020) further this path by stating the intrinsic rewards of flow include pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Perhaps these rewards could also be associated with relaxation.

An important point is that physical activities allow a myriad of pathways to experience and investigate embodiment's diversities and complexities, and ecosophical joy. Here, the term flow creates a sense of connection and unity with action and the environment.

The repetitive and less self-conscious nature of paddling a canoe can be attributed to experiences of flow (Peace, 2009). Another example is the nature-based experience associated with recognition of "cosmic or universal values" (Humberstone, 2011, p. 504). Such nature-based activities evoke meditation-like flow states, neutralising the resistance between the environment and the self (McNamee, 2009). Describing the game of face pull, Henning Eichberg (2009b) states despite the suffering, the resisting, the experience of pain, there is pleasure, there is flow and energy that concludes with laughter. A multitude of experiences in a single situation illuminating how flow refocuses the difficult, and affords "momentary experiences with value" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 102).

Humberstone (2011) presented a great argument on flow, masking the development and comprehension of bodily movement, hiding the embodiment phenomenon and the

sentience of such an experience. If flow is unpacked and embodied in an individual, in the case of nature-based practitioners, the perception of spiritual experience, oneness or connection with nature manifests—nature-based activities as spiritual experiences that serve a better social distinction than flow. Ergo, nature-based activities, as with parkour, involve an engagement with nature and the elements to enable the body to learn what it is to be in the world.

Spirituality, flow state, and even peak performance relationships seem to remain a Sisyphean task when attempting to determine any nexus. It is advised to resist the urge to apply dualistic patterns like flow, meaning good feelings, and stress, meaning bad feelings.

Aesthetics is relevant to this thesis due to its value associated with physical activity. Considering physical activity for its aesthetics has been widely explored and defended by Best (1976, 1980, 1985). A distinction is suggested to clarify aesthetics as a concept to perceive and not a constituent feature. Understanding aesthetics in a physical activity context will allow for an appreciation of sport and evoke emotional connections (Mumford, 2012; Yang, 2024).

While there are many attributes that situate waka ama as purposive and aesthetic, the end is nearly always to reach the finish line first. Downwind paddling and its surfing element may provide aesthetic value in the lines chosen that result in economy and efficiency, but these do not outweigh the paddler's race position on the result board. As Edgar (2013) explained, an artistic performance is ruined by mistakes like missed lines and incorrect movements. Whereas, in physical activity, the performance can still be seen as completed, but the worst case is an end defeat.

To end this look into the concept of magic for this thesis, the focus will turn to Reid (2025), who discussed both the modern lacrosse sport, and the traditional form of the Ojibwe people, baaga'adowewin. He notes there is "something special" (p. 20) about the traditional form, maybe magical, spiritual, aesthetic or even flow creating.

Furthermore, it is mentioned that indigenous practices and beliefs, like all human experiences and phenomenon are regionalised. While it is useful to look at other indigenous cultures, to group them together could be an injustice to their mana motuhake. Therefore, they should not be homogenised into one singular indigenous paradigm.

Personal Narrative: [Ōku Wheako Waka Ama](#)

Born and raised in [Te Matau a Māui](#), my upbringing was encapsulated by Ngāti Kahungunu [kōrero](#) that promoted a sense of identity for me and my whānau as Māori. With the second largest coast area, Ngāti Kahungunu [pūrākau](#) have strong connections to the land and ocean, the realms of [Tāne](#) and [Tangaroa](#). This includes the magical tales of our ancestors sailing from mystical Hawaiki to Aotearoa on their waka hourua. These were a startling contrast to the hostile stereotypical rhetoric concerning Māori at the time.

My whānau returned to Ōmāhu, where I attended a bilingual school which promoted atavism through identity-reinforcing pūrākau and, as a result, promoted being Māori. Takitimu waka was the great craft that transported my tīpuna. It was something to imagine, due to a finitude of insight into that world, that time and that form of transport. Although always with me, the waka pūrākau became more distant from my reality over time, and my Māori identity became more situated in the realm of Tāne than that of Tangaroa.

As an adult, I was lucky enough to be introduced to waka ama by a welcoming and embracing whānau in Wellington. I was hooked after the first paddle, along with my whole whānau. It was life-changing. No more basketball equipment, it was polypropylene and board shorts. Gone was the touch rugby season; summer was for lovely warm sun-soaked paddling. However, not until I began my journey into the world of waka ama did I form my own strong, enduring connection with the ocean and form my new Māori identity.

My journey has been extremely positive due to the people involved. My whānau all participate in waka ama, and now my whānau has extended to a waka ama [whānau whānui](#) full of remarkable, supporting and motivating people. This is an area where I must acknowledge a potential prejudice. Not everyone may have had the same experience or luck as I have had. My lens is particularly positive with regards to waka ama, despite the highs and lows that come naturally with any long-term involvement. It would be wrong to say everyone, or even most people, experiences what I have been lucky enough to experience. This is another reason why this research is important to me.

In more recent times, I have connected with my Ngāti Hinepare and Ngāti Māhu [whakapapa](#) and associated kōrero. Having been lucky enough to participate in the discussion pertaining to the [pou](#) being carved in our [whare tipuna](#), Manahau, my whānau history was polarised. The dark-skinned people who did not travel on waka to Aotearoa, who instead came from the ocean, have created a new and strengthening connection to Tangaroa. This polarisation of former ancient kōrero all adds to my identity and connection to the land and sea.

Unable to sing or perform at least an average [haka](#) and an introvert, waka ama was my entry point into [Te Ao Māori](#). Presenting itself as a leisurely pastime, suitable for someone like me wishing to escape the rat-race or urban jungle environment I found myself immersed in. This, I feel, gave me more confidence to be Māori and led to studying [te reo Māori](#) and then on to teaching at our local Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Ara Hou. Teaching and coaching [tamariki](#) and [pakeke](#) has been a great learning experience, which enabled me to represent Aotearoa in waka ama as a paddler, steerer and coach.

Highlights from coaching have been working with para-waka ama athlete Peter Cowan, who won a bronze medal in the 2024 Paralympics, and the NZ Elite Men's squad that won gold and bronze at the first Elite World Championships in 2016. There is always a place in my heart for coaching or supporting the Haeata Ocean Sports

adaptive waka ama teams. Two World Championship titles with the New Zealand Master Men's rafting team were an amazing contrast to waka ama racing. However, the highest points are anytime my wife and I get to paddle with our children and [mokopuna](#).

Waka ama led me into Te Ao Māori, within a few years, seeing my whānau and I head back to Heretaunga to learn te Reo Māori. Completing a BA Māori, I went on to teach Physical Education in our local kura, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Ara Hou. During which time I completed a Master's Degree on the new Elite level Waka Ama. Now my education journey has circled back to waka ama. Therefore, as a kaihoe myself and the researcher, I have extra consideration in terms of my bias and my responsibility to my waka ama whānau involved in this study (Smith, 2013).

Throughout my years in waka ama, I have had the privilege of meeting and conversing with many people impacted positively by waka ama. Such ebullient kōrero deserve to be shared, that they may enhance others' lives. Waka ama involves sharing experiences, sharing [mātauranga](#) and sharing the load amongst all paddlers. This research is an exciting part of my journey in [te ao waka ama](#) and upholding the sharing process, a chance for me to give back.

MĀORI

Māori cosmology started with [Te Kore](#), [Te Pō](#), [Te Ao](#) and on to the primal [atua](#) Ranginui and Papatūānuku. Their offspring became the atua of the myriad physical, spiritual and celestial elements of Te Ao Māori (Irwin, 2022; Whaanga, 2012). Noted for their mythopoetic genius, they draw from natural phenomena to construct a cosmology that portrays their reality (Holman, 2007). This topic will be covered in more detail in Chapter Five.

Māori, along with their Polynesian relatives, connect to the concept of Hawaiki. Known by other names, it has been referred to as the mystical homeland, a utopia of

Polynesian ideals, and a spatial definition. 'Hawaiki-nui, Hawaiki-roa, Hawaiki-pāmamao' is believed to be 'The expansive Hawaiki, the extensive Hawaiki, the distant Hawaiki.' Other names exist for this great land, such as "Nukuroa" (Smith, 1921, p. 55).

Hawaiki has also been referred to as a series of time periods (G. Nuku, personal communications, December 23, 1995). This is a temporal definition, stages that were perhaps vast, prolonged and ancient. This may be a spatial-temporal definition, which is also discussed more in chapter five.

Hawaiki is now mostly associated with the spiritual resting place of the Māori. Orators will farewell the [tūpāpaku](#) before their journey back to Hawaiki and back to unite with their ancestors, "haere ki Hawaiki-nui..." Interestingly, Smith (1921) states that once Aotearoa was settled by those who navigated the great ocean, Hawaiki was referred to as any land outside of Aotearoa that people travelled to and fro. Perhaps this demonstrates nostalgia for a point of departure or optimism for a point of arrival.

Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa. The name Māori was used after the arrival of colonial settlers. It is stated that prior to settlement by colonial people, the indigenous people of Aotearoa organised and identified themselves according to their clan affiliations (Ballara, 1998). Ngāti and Ngāi are commonly used prefixes for a tribal group, used as in Ngāti Māhu and Ngāi Te Upokoiri (Moorfield, 2005). Some groupings use "Te Tini o" and the ancestor's name, as in Te Tini o Orotu. Ka'ai-Mahuta (2010) mentions that the Polynesian tīpuna brought their past, their communication and their culture, which evolved and not until Aotearoa did they become Māori.

The term māori, with the lower case "m", refers to natural, native, indigenous, normal from the world view of the indigenous inhabitants of Aotearoa (Williams & Williams, 1917). [Wai](#) māori, [ngahere](#) māori, [reo](#) māori are all examples of māori in use. One may postulate the indigenous people describing themselves as the original, or māori, when questioned by the distant settlers. Māori with an upper case "M" is to be Māori.

Wiramina Ngahuka described the eponymous tipuna of her Ngāti Māhu people, Māhu Tapoanui, as a [tipua](#) or [taniwha](#) due to his connection to the ocean (Parsons, 1997, p. 6). This is one of many clans from around Aotearoa that are recognised as iwi taketake. Whether the iwi taketake referred to themselves as māori when introducing themselves to the whānau arriving from Hawaiki is unknown. However, what is known is that pre-[Pākehā](#) arrival inhabitants of Aotearoa are now the origin of the “Indigenous rights held by Māori and have a distinctive place in the history and development of contemporary New Zealand society” (Mullane, 2023, p. 20).

Māori of Aotearoa had their well-structured existence colonised in the 1800s by the British imperialists. The Treaty of Waitangi was an attempt to form a partnership of equality for both Māori and settlers (Erueti & Palmer, 2014). It was also an attempt to establish some control or order with regard to the settlers’ violent, drunken and disorderly behaviour. However, this partnership resulted in significant inequities among the partners.

Colonial settlers benefited from this situation (Fox et al., 2018; Waa et al., 2017). They obtained vast stretches of land for a fraction of its worth, their language became the hegemonic language of Aotearoa, and they were lucky enough to have a justice system established that favoured their needs and definition of right (Wikaire & Newman, 2014). While they progressed and their gains proliferated, many Māori were ingested by mechanisms of assimilation into the dominant culture while believing they were improving their lives (Stuart, 2003).

Through assimilation theory, individuals adapted and then adopted many of the colonial practices, beliefs, values and attitudes, leading to more mirroring of the dominant culture. There were also many acts of legislation that perpetuated the disparities, and like an ocean swell, gradually became an insurmountable challenge. Māori attempts to navigate this situation were faced with nothing more than a little breeze of support. Over time, Māori have attempted, sometimes successfully, to humanise those who oppressed them (Smith, 2015).

However, Māori are regaining their rangatiratanga or self-determination, their identity, and their knowledge systems, all on their terms. Waka Māori, such as waka ama, have long been symbols from the past that connect to the present, and are present to aid in the metaphoric journey, or physical journey into a better future.

Next, we will look at waka Māori to understand the context of their existence, the rise and demise in many cases. Their connections to the superterrestrial, the heroic maritime feats and the evolutionary praxis of tīpuna are also discussed. Following these highs are the lows of colonisation and modernity on waka Māori that lead to the need for revitalisation. It could be said that modernity has also provided the tools to assist in the revitalisation and the goal of rangatiratanga.

WAKA MĀORI

Understanding Waka Māori provides a contextual reality to comprehend waka ama. Waka Māori provide connections to the celestial, to atua Māori and ancestors. These are prerequisites to establishing the mental and social construction of Hawaiki, that is the foundation for our Hawaiki Ora. This demonstrates waka Māori as a metaphor for both the physical, metaphysical and social (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Waka symbolises something far greater than just a vehicle; they are [taonga](#) to Māori, significant culturally, spiritually and genealogically (Liu & Bruce, 2020; Mita, 2018; Wikaire & Newman, 2013). Consulting Māori on sample collections, Boswijk and Johns (2018) state:

Waka are taonga and considered by iwi as ancestors, therefore, their cultural and spiritual significance precludes the standard protocol of removing a slice or wedge from the canoe to obtain a section of wood for tree-ring analysis. During our consultations with iwi a representative inferred that to take a slice from the waka would be like cutting someone's leg off. (Boswijk & Johns, 2018, p. 444)

Waka Māori vary according to location and application. There are different shapes, sizes, plain or decorative, physical or spiritual, and located in realms of simultaneous existence. In terms of celestial waka Māori, one of great importance is [Te Waka o Taramainuku](#). It is associated with the journey of the deceased (Matamua, 2017b). This waka is situated in the night sky and is also known as the Te Waka o Rangi, Te Waka o Tainui, Ikaroa or the Milky Way.

Depending on the narratives followed, the biggest waka in Aotearoa is that of the demi-god, Māui Tikitiki-a-Taranga. [Te Waka a Māui](#) is the waka he used when fishing up the [Te Ika a Māui](#). Here, a connection through this waka narrative to all Polynesian cultures is established.

It should be safe to say that nearly every person who identifies as Māori can now link back to at least one of these great ocean-going waka and the traditional narratives associated. There was, in the past, a theory that suggested a great migration from Hawaiki that consisted of seven waka (Smith, 1921). This has since been dispelled, and the fact that travel between the islands and Aotearoa was a consistent occurrence (Simmons, 1969; Sorrenson, 2013).

The Māori of Aotearoa are widely known for their navigational skills, evident in the oral histories that describe the voyages from the ancient homelands of Hawaiki to Aotearoa. It was noted, “No other race of that culture stage has ever approached the Polynesian as deep-sea voyagers; truly have they written the wonder-story of the western world on the rolling sea roads of the great Pacific!” (Best, 1974, p. 36). That they skillfully navigated an ocean environment consisting of less than 1% land was impressive, but this is amplified when situated in time, 200 years prior to Columbus finding the courage to sail beyond sight of land. This degree of expertise persisted and was witnessed by early European arrivals to Aotearoa (Spiller et al., 2015; Walker, 1990).

Admiration for Māori prowess on the water continued. Numerous accounts in Māori newspapers demonstrate this token of appreciation towards a once mighty seafaring people. Pākehā mariners of the mid-1800s and the early 1900s often invited Māori to participate in their regatta, either sailing yachts, rowing whalers or paddling dug-out waka.

NAPIER REGATTA.

A regatta, under the auspices of the Napier Rowing Club, will take place on the Ngaruroro River on the 17th of March next. We hear that representative crews will come from Gisborne and Wairoa to compete with the Napier men. We wish particularly to draw the attention of our Maori readers to the fifth race on the programme, which is for Maori canoes...We hope to see our Maori friends come in large numbers on this occasion, as it is fine healthy exercise for them, and we would also impress upon them that in this race there is something to be won, and nothing to be lost (White, 1876).

Along the coastlines of Aotearoa, there are pūrākau pertaining to the myriad waka Māori of each whānau, [hapū](#) and [iwi](#). The great pūrākau of voyaging treacherous oceans and supernatural forces at play have lasted the test of time. The waka can therefore be considered a totemistic symbol of a magical existence on earth, connecting land and sea, human and nature and nature and culture. They possess a predictive possibility despite their natural assistance in dragging along the past in its eddy. The metaphysical realm has them carrying the past into the future, and in a physical realm, they carry items from one location or culture to another (Lévi-Strauss, 1971).

The Māori will read in the very word 'waka' all that is venerable in ancestry and sacred in tradition. Non-Māori readers may not realise the reverence the Māori people have for the history that is encapsulated within the pūrākau of waka. The *waka*, or canoe, is the only bond joining them to their ancestral home, Hawaiki (Mitchell, 1958).

The ancestors that arrived in Aotearoa soon demonstrated their evolutionary praxis by fashioning waka for the new environment and from the new resources available. McDonald (2022) carves the scene by stating,

Waka design and purpose evolved in response to the new inland water environments, access to new materials, and the cultural and political shifts of the time. Waka unique to Aotearoa emerged... A change in geography from the relatively small islands of the Pacific surrounded by ocean, to the two large and heavily forested land masses in Aotearoa caused a shift in culture which is evident in Māori cosmology (p. 48).

The ancient skills associated with ocean voyaging and other waka Māori suffered a maritime catastrophe as a result of the government's Native Schools Act 1967, Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 and missionaries introducing and inculcating Christianity. Unable to perpetuate the practices of waka building, navigating and knowledge transmission, these practices, along with many more Māori traditions, had to lie in wait for revival and hopefully return to their previous glory (McDonald, 2022; Wikaire & Newman, 2014).

With the scene set for the cultural renaissance, Māori reaffirmed their positive identity amongst themselves and to others looking in. As Te Rito (2007) stated, "Throughout the impacts and challenges arising from colonisation over the last two centuries, Māori have refused to lie down on the pillow of assimilation" (p. 4). This began movements focusing on land confiscation, language revitalisation, improved education and equal access to medication.

Loss of land had a dramatic effect on Māori "due to the intrinsic link between Māori identity and the land" (Lockhart et al., 2019, p. 2). The loss of the waka culture resulted in a loss of access to the water past the shoreline that was also a part of the Māori identity. Pākehā have been accused of suffering both permanent and selective amnesia when perceiving Aotearoa as egalitarian, and where Māori desired their poor

economic and health statistics (Awatere, 1984; Hippolite & Bruce, 2014; Pihama, 2019).

Over the last 40 years, significant progress has been made in revitalising waka Māori, notable is that of waka hourua (Tuaupiki, 2017). The waka hourua and waka ama often complement each other, providing participants a very solid foundation in inshore and open ocean water knowledge in a Te Ao Māori package. They also establish strong connections between the Māori of Aotearoa to the Maoli of Hawai'i, the Maohi of French Polynesia and of the Pacific.

One waka with a vast connection throughout Aotearoa is the Takitimu waka. It has the luxury of having much of its history maintained by the many landing places and people it encountered, along with much being recorded by Mitchell (1958) in the book, Takitimu. Landing in the north, it made landfall at several destinations along the eastern side of the North and South islands.

Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāi Tahu are the two largest tribe groups affiliated to the Takitimu waka. Tamatea Arikinui captained the waka. This waka was made tapu or sacred at Titirangi in Hawaiki (Mitchell, 1958). Composed by P. Sciascia, Waiatatia states, "He waka tipua, he waka atua, te waka Takitimu", considered as a supernatural and sacred vessel (heretaungawakaama).

The Takitimu, like all ancient waka hourua, are a temporal and psychological link to Hawaiki. They provide a physical tie to Polynesia, while also providing a spiritual, cultural and emotional space for Hawaiki in the consciousness of Māori. This gives me an ancestral connection and sense of belonging in Aotearoa and on the ocean.

The waka hourua, like the waka ama, have a direct connection to Hawaiki, therefore allowing a unique transcendence into Hawaiki Ora. The dual hull configuration also yields a relational commonality. Matangirua are waka with ama on each side and a sail. They provide a pathway between waka hourua and waka ama.

Next is the topic of waka ama and the epic journey travelled to reach its present point of development. This will provide a greater understanding of the world kaihoe enters into. There are phenomenological experiences that relate to the connections waka ama has with the past and present, with physical and spiritual and with indigeneity and modernity.

WAKA AMA

This section aims to explain the historical accounts of waka ama in Aotearoa, including the demise to the revival, and on to this present time. It will also discuss the dichotomy between physical and spiritual, and their inseparable existence in Te Ao Māori. This will all provide critical insight into the bigger picture behind the phenomenological experiences of kaihoe.

Pre-revival

Waka Ama is an activity that is known throughout the Pacific by various names that commonly branch out from waka to wa'a, vaka, and va'a. This is one of many examples of dialectical differences across the Pacific. Note that the use of the compound noun 'waka ama' is only used in Aotearoa, suggesting that waka from the Pacific were such that they required an ama attached for functional purposes. Therefore, no distinctive classification would be necessary, as it would go without saying. In Aotearoa, on the other hand, Māori largely used single-hull waka, ergo the need for classification of which waka is being referred to. An example is in most waka ama clubs, the members will simply say, "this waka is faster" or "our waka needs a clean" as there is only one form of waka in the clubs. Some lucky clubs have various waka Māori and therefore need to utilise the linguistic distinctions.

Hornell (1943) in his intensive study of both the double and single outrigger canoe, he believes the simplest configuration of a waka hull is basically a hollowed-out tree trunk. Unfortunately, this would have been unstable and treacherous in rough water

conditions such as the open ocean. This issue remains regardless of the technology used on modern hulls, such as those used in racing waka ama, where the narrow, sleek hull is hydrodynamic to maximise efficiency and speed. To overcome the instability issue, a “balancing-device” (p. 91) is attached to either one side or both, depending on the various situations and designs. In ancient times, the ama would have been a log of suitable buoyancy, whereas today they are moulded lightweight carbon fibre devices. Traditionally, [kīato](#) were selected for their appropriate natural shape with consideration for the hull and ama they attached to when providing equipment for the paddler. The kīato are lashed athwart the gunwales or rauawa of the hull at one end, and to the ama at the other.

The merit of the single outrigger is explained for both structural integrity and safety. In rough water conditions, the double ama can be disadvantaged due to the possibility of both ama floating opposite ends of a trough or sides of choppy seas, leaving the hull suspended between them. The strain can be catastrophic for the vessel and its crew.

Despite waka ama’s prolonged and patient desire for revival for many decades, its earlier insidious demise was initiated mainly by environmental changes. On arriving in Aotearoa, it can be assumed that the use of waka ama would have been a standard practice with experience and knowledge brought from across the Pacific. Their focus would have been on the new environment and associated challenges. As time went by and Māori became more accustomed with the resources of the new land, it would make sense that they experimented with these contemporary resources (Adds, 2012; Sadler, 2007), such as the tall and straight timbers of the native forests such as tōtara and kauri with sufficient girth and weight to provide suitable stability, reducing the need for waka with ama.

Waka ama have the ama or float attached to provide stability for the typically narrow hulls. The narrow hulls were a result of the natural materials available in their past islands of inhabitation. This issue becomes less important with the abundance of

sizable native Aotearoa logs. Large single-hull waka are able to carry superior payloads and, with greater manoeuvrability, would have soon become the preferred craft.

Further reason waka ama or even waka hourua became less utilised was the reduction in ocean voyages, due to Aotearoa being so abundant and spacious. These are supported by Finney et al. (2007) who also mentioned, “Single outrigger canoes were already rare and were at the point of disappearing at the time of European contact” (pp. 87-88).

Another factor, as mentioned by Waka Ama New Zealand (2020) was “Over the years the dependence on the use of waka in everyday life declined and, although waka continued to be used in ceremonial and official functions, interest in waka for leisure purposes dwindled” (p. 5).

It must also be stated that the colonial mechanisms employed to indoctrinate Māori did not want waka ama and any other such activities continuing, lest they remind the Māori of their great history or achievement. Tohunga were suppressed (Durie, 2005; Te Rito, 2007), ending the intergenerational transmission of knowledge in waka ama building and operating. With this went the skills in paddle making. This strategy ultimately ends with a lack of interest being afforded such taonga tuku iho, and promotes an interest in the new form of watercraft introduced by the Pākehā. Water people of great skill would surely have grasped the opportunity to demonstrate their ability on the water, regardless of the craft.

There are limited communiqués of waka ama by early ethnographers in Aotearoa. We are fortunate that a few pūrākau allow us to transcend modern times to a distant past where waka ama were a common and familiar vessel in Aotearoa. It is suggested that without such important and informative narratives, the past fades (Niles, 2010). Te Whatahoro provided one such encounter:

In the year 1853, a single outrigger canoe was brought from Waimarama down the coast to Te Unuunu, at Flat Point. There were sixteen of us on board, of whom seven were women. I was then about twelve years of age. Three of the elder men on board were Te Waka Tahu-ahi, Pahoro te Tio, and Te Meihana Takihi. I cannot say if that was the last time an outrigger canoe was used in our district or not. (as cited in Best, 1925, p. 37)

However, the pūrākau that last the test of time are the most compelling and exciting. It seems waka ama may have subsisted on the wave of canoe surfing as in the accounts of Skinner (1923) as he paints an impressive waka ama surfing oeuvre when discussing a community event, he fortuitously attended at Te Kauri during his time surveying the land between the Mokau and Awakino rivers. On a beautiful January day in 1884, he found the village almost deserted. Those still in the village informed him that everyone else was at the Mokau river mouth watching an “exhilarating sport, or pastime” (p. 35).

The fact that surf-riding in canoes was a new experience to Skinner likely motivated him to study it so intensely. Waka ama from 18’ to 25’ were being paddled by two people, one steerer at the stern and the other at the prow. The intergenerational transmission of knowledge of the positioning of paddlers, of sea, river and weather conditions, of geographic features and of wave formations that optimised the performance and experience is expressed in the comment, “doubtless for generations past, the old time Māori had indulged in this sport” (p. 36).

The skill level is evident in the passage:

Expert helmsman, as rigid as one cast in bronze, watching intently the gradual curling of the roller (the bowman inactive, with paddle drawn in), until at the moment he judges the time has come, with a swift twist or turn of his paddle (a movement so deft and graceful that it could scarce be detected by those watching close at hand) the canoe was turned sharply to the right, the wave

breaking as it passed beneath its keel, and riding gracefully down the outer slope of roller, turned seaward to repeat the manoeuvre (Skinner, 1923, p. 36)

The game aimed to ride the best wave for as long as possible, without being capsized or swamped by the breaking wave. Males and females participated, and successful rides were admired, but unsuccessful attempts were enjoyed more by the spectators. This perhaps shows the magic element, brought from Hawaiki, that brought the village together, which will be discussed later on in the thesis.

Skinner (1923) expressed his admiration of the chief Te Rangi Tuataka Takere, as “he sat statue like, steering-paddle firmly grasped, his fine muscular figure and clean cut tattooed features, reproducing, with the general surroundings, a grand picture of pure Maoridom as it had been for centuries prior to A.D 1884” (p. 37). Sadly, but prognosticated, he ends with the following sentiments, “Alas, that we were to witness such a scene never again” (p. 37)

Recalling Cook’s first voyage to Aotearoa and the journey of the North Island, Best (1923, 1925) states that Cook failed to detect any waka ama. However, they were witnessed by others, notably by Parkinson (1773) who said that during his travels around Te Mahia with Cook, “Several of the canoes had outriggers; and one of them had a very curious piece of ornamental carving at the head of it” (p. 91). This is likely the last documented sighting of waka ama in Aotearoa.

Te Māhia is the scene of a well-known pūrākau of Ngāti Kahungunu. The eponymous ancestor Kahungunu had arrived to pursue the chieftainess Rongomaiwahine. Firstly, he went about winning the approval of her people with bundles of [aruhe](#) wrapped in akaturihanga vines and baskets of [pāua](#), some placed on his body to give an aquaman look. Secondly, he created an argument amongst Rongomaiwahine and her husband Tamatakutai using the [hua](#) of the pāua. The next step, with Tamatakutai, was to participate in “whakaheke-ngaru (surfing in a canoe” (Whaanga, 2013, p. 88). This would most likely have been waka ama surfing, based on establishing that waka ama

were in use up until at least Cook's arrival. With a watchful eye and keen sense of the water, Kahungunu learned the necessary skills to be given the [kaiurungi](#). Sitting at the back, with a view of the sets approaching, Kahungunu selected a large wave to surf and allowed the waka ama to broach, resulting in it capsizing. Kahungunu returned ashore without Tamatakutai, and his drowning left no opposition to Kahungunu's quest (Whaanga, 2013).

Revival

Internationally, waka ama is run by the International Va'a Federation (IVF), representing 31 countries around the world (IVF, 2021). It has remained strong on [motu](#) such as Tahiti, Hawaii, Fiji and many more, but is experiencing massive growth across the globe. Across the world, Brazil has in excess of 10,000 waka ama paddlers.

The following discussion on the revival of waka ama is made extra special due to the [koha](#) of an open-hearted explanation given by Matahi and Raipoia during the [kōrerorero](#) process. They both shared kōrero about the return of waka ama to Aotearoa that should be left in their unique voice as much as possible, to show the [ihi](#), [wehi](#) and [aroha](#). This section was initially set out based on commonly known kōrero from literature and with kōrero from Matahi. However, as the whakataukī states, “E kore te kumara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka” (the kumara never boasts of its sweetness). Therefore, it is difficult at times to fully divulge one's intentions, despite good intentions, without being labelled a kumara.

Prior to Matahi's involvement in waka ama, he was carving whareniui and mastering the skill of adzing. While carving, he recalled an interesting kōrero began, “they started to talk about learning how to build canoes and they had two subjects. One was the waka rererangi that was renamed waka hourua, and waka taua” (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). A search began for trees to carve a waka hourua. In 1980, after completing the famous Taupō rock carvings, the trees were ready to be carved. Serendipity had Matahi on TV in Aotearoa at the same time

as an important Tahitian who was visiting a sick friend in Aotearoa. Discussions were had with the late Francis Cowan, and the iwi gave the waka hourua project to Matahi and Francis to build. He stated, “so, July 1980 I arrived in Tahiti. And I saw a photo of Raipoia on the wall of the House and asked who she was...and he said, you come to build a canoe not look at my daughter” (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Soon after this Matahi had his first encounter with waka ama, “I was swimming in the lagoon and I saw this canoe coming to me. I asked the guy if I could have a turn, and that’s when waka ama came into my life” (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

However, it was not until 1982, while attending the Heiva, a two-day cultural paddling event, looking at all the [va`a](#), that Matahi realised something significant. Sharing it with Raipoia, he said,

What I see here, I'm going to bring back to New Zealand...One of the greatest events I've ever seen. I could see it was a whānau sport. I could see it was a regional sport and they all came together in one place to race each other, and I thought that's what Māori need right now. (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Raipoia recollected that very moment and did not feel the same way. After all, it was something everyone did in Tahiti every day. Racing was traditional, representative of hapū pride. History-making races. She reinforced Matahi’s comments:

I still remember him saying at the Heiva races, ‘Next year. I'm going to bring that back to Aotearoa’. He always said ‘back’ because you had wWaka ama before, because that would be perfect to bring Māori [rangatahi](#) back to the water. At the time I thought ... what? What for? (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

Not foreseeing the situation, she would experience in Aotearoa, it was simply a 'whatever' moment. Unlike Tahiti, Māori had lost the strong connection to the sea, to Tangaroa that their Tahitian, Hawaiian and other Pacific cousins still possessed. She went on to say, "Whatever! And it's only when I came to Aotearoa that I realised, because I couldn't see the water side of the Māori culture. The water side was just about extinct...but it hit me then, when I came here" (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

There was an unanswered question of how Matahi would accomplish bringing waka ama back to Aotearoa, to the Māori people. He carved up a well-thought-out plan, which was to learn everything about waka ama from the best.

I realised what my task was in Tahiti. I had to find who the best paddlers were and train with them, which I did. Carlos Perez was my mentor, and he came from a famous club called Maerenui who dominated waka ama in Tahiti for 40 years and he was a protege of that [era]... I sought out the best one-man, six-man, three-man canoe builders... I found out who the greatest paddle makers were. I had to learn that technology to bring it back to New Zealand because you can talk about it but you have to teach every facet of waka ama which I learnt in Tahiti...in October 1985 when we left on Hawaiki Nui to sail back to New Zealand, I was so sure, I shipped two six-men, one one-man and my big Maui sculpture on a ship one month before. We left certain we'd arrive safely and my father made sure those two canoes were in Auckland, the two six-man, on our arrival in Auckland Harbour. I think because Hawaiki Nui was successful...that's why they adopted it, because of Hawaiki Nui's success. (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

While in Tahiti, Matahi had encountered two wonderful Tahiti treasures, va'a or waka ama, and Francis' daughter, Raipoia. He was fortunate enough to accompany both of them when he sailed Hawaiki Nui back to Aotearoa. He created a plan that stretched over 4000km, included three waka ama, paddling equipment, knowledge of waka ama

and paddle construction and use, and the revival of waka ama Māori. This was the perfect time as Māori were resisting the negative changes associated with colonisation and urbanisation, attempting to “regain, reconnect and re-centre what it means to be Māori” (Smith, 2015, p. 47).

After this initial stage of reviving waka ama in Aotearoa by Matahi (Wikaire & Newman, 2013) and Raipoia Whakataka-Brightwell while in Tahiti, the early pioneers like Greg ‘Ace’ Cuthers, Kris Kjeldsen, Pili Muaulu and Bo Herbert rode the preliminary wake set by Matahi and Raipoia to eventually consolidate and forge further into the hearts of Māori in Aotearoa. As a result, the first clubs were established: Mareikura in Gisborne, Ngā Hoe Horo o Pawarenga and Mitimitaga o le Pasefika Vaa’ Alo in Tutukaka.

The national organisation, Tatou Hoe, was established on May 23rd, 1987, in Pawarenga. There was a name change on December 20th, 1995, to Ngā Kaihoe o Aotearoa (NKOA). The subsequent wave for more to ride. This momentum and enthusiasm increased exponentially throughout the years.

Waka Ama New Zealand (WANZ) was the last name change for the national body, and it occurred in 2011. The organisation has developed and included the CEO, Lara Collins and other valuable [kaimahi](#). With a strong focus on development, the numbers have grown over the years.

The WANZ 2024 statistics show the growth in participant numbers, male and female participant numbers and the percentage of Māori participants.

Year	Total	Male – Female	%Māori
2025	5215	2295 - 2934	58.6%
2024	5608	2505 - 3107	55.9%
2023	4880	2192 – 2688	54.3%
2022	3402	1566 – 1836	46.8%
2021	6043	2774 – 3269	56.0%
2020	5431	2422 – 3009	57.8%
2019	5567	2578 – 2988	57.0%
2018	5171	2368 – 2803	56.9%
2017	5406	2509 – 2897	57.2%
2016	5096	2371 – 2725	56.4%
2015	4583	2123 – 2460	55.3%
2014	4276	2066 – 2210	53.9%

Table 1 WANZ 2024 participation statistics. Note. Reproduced from Waka Ama New Zealand 2024 Participation Statistics (Waka Ama NZ, 2024, <https://www.wakaama.co.nz/statistics/>)

In these positive statistics, it is notable that Māori are on unfamiliar ground as the majority, and [wāhine](#) Māori are the majority in the gender statistics. This highlights that waka ama is an activity that appeals to Māori. Also noteworthy is the fact that numbers decreased dramatically in 2022, during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Further to this, enthusiasm is a potential for benefits to participants' wellbeing. Māori who make up 55.9% of waka ama participants are unfortunately over-represented in negative health statistics in Aotearoa. The renaissance has been assisted by the competitive spirit amongst waka ama participants. However, during the somewhat distant COVID-19 lockdown, which subsequently cancelled the majority of the racing calendar, waka ama participants saw the value of paddling for their wellbeing. Perhaps it was more noticeable from the negative impacts associated with not being permitted to paddle at all.

Waka ama is now a renaissance vehicle for positive repositioning (Jackson et al., 2016; Wikaire & Newman, 2013), as achieved by kapa haka (Kaiwai & Zemke-White, 2004). As proudly stated, “We have a lot to celebrate in the history and renaissance of waka ama in Aotearoa” (Waka Ama New Zealand, 2020, p. 4). Modern waka ama has a strong connection to mātauranga Māori and practical knowledge.

It is not uncommon for new participants to be given an elementary introduction on equipment and what to do in the case of an emergency, before quickly being put into a waka ama with some more experienced paddlers to acquire through mimesis the new skills. This aligns with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the “‘I can’ being prior to the ‘I think’” and Confucius’ statement, “Tell it to me and I will forget it; show it to me, and I will remember it; let me do it, and I will know it” (Jespersen, 2009, p. 434). This education through sport is said to develop one’s personality and identity. As a movement culture, sport is concerned with the entire human being and their sociability (Jespersen, 2009).

[He rā kai tua.](#)

The 2009 strategic plan for the sport of waka ama had a vision that included tikanga being second nature to the participants by 2035 (Ngā Kaihoe o Aotearoa, 2009). This is not seen in the present strategic plan, which demonstrates the shift in focus. There are many whose ultimate goal for waka ama is to reach the Olympic level. That is where athletes and coaches get paid, get the best support and strive to be the best in the Olympic arena. The risk here is the cost to tradition, tikanga and values. As mentioned by an ex-Olympian kayaker and a waka ama world champion, “be careful what you wish for!” (A. Cairns, July 8, 2021, personal communications). This relates to the theory that the grass is greener over the fence or the waves are bigger in the next bay, but in this situation, it seems things could go from good to bad.

What seems to be the dream for many is that the magic never dies. There is also the future aspiration to develop an activity for all, that is embedded in Te Ao Māori and

benefits the health and wellbeing of the many. This idea aims to see the future of the sport, the activity and its customs survive beyond a sports trend.

[Kupu Whakamutunga](#)

This chapter has provided context for waka ama in Aotearoa to enable further relevant investigation for this research. There was information on the magic relative to this study, expanding to religion and spirituality. The insider/outsider role of the researcher is established to address any conflicts or bias. There have also been explanations concerning Māori, waka Māori, and finally the revival of the waka ama to inform and establish the context required.

Chapter One has served as a [Waka Rangahau](#) to start this journey of discovery, a waka in a rudimentary form, without sufficient freeboard of width for adverse conditions. In order to successfully complete a journey into new waters, one must be prepared for the worst. Therefore, this waka will be converted into a [Waka Ama Rangahau](#) to provide the necessary methodological stability.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two provides the methodological structure and explains the methods employed in this study to ensure safe and positive experiences for all while traversing [ngā takaoreoretanga o te Moananui-a-Mātauranga](#). As the research questions inquire into the personal experiences of kaihoe, this is phenomenological research requiring an interpretive process. Therefore, the first section will explain the various components employed for the methodological reconstruction of a Waka Ama Rangahau. Kaupapa Māori Theory, Kaupapa Māori Research, Kaupapa Māori Māramatanga and Māori values are all of which are fundamentals for this study (Pihama, 2019; Royal, 2012; Smith, 2018; Marsden & Royal, 2003; Pere & Nicholson, 1991).

The chapter will then focus on data collection and data analysis. Here, semi-structured kōrerorero will be explained and justified. This research employed thematic analysis

following the widely used framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). This thesis utilised thematic synthesis, as articulated by Thomas and Harden (2008), to integrate participant narratives and pūrākau into higher-order conceptual themes. The research draws upon the [Whakaaro](#) Method (Mika & Southey, 2018), an Indigenous analytic approach grounded in Māori modes of reflection, relationality, and the interweaving of thought, place, and experience. The analysis is informed by Heidegger's view of interpretation as rooted in the concept of being-in-the-world. This will be followed up by information on the kaihoe and an explanation on how to read this thesis.

Chapter Three: Tū te Hoe is the call to prepare one's paddle, metaphoric of these kaihoe preparing to paddle a waka ama for the first time. The inquiry navigated the moment between determination and dedication, the moment kaihoe first stepped into a waka ama and the unfolding experiences that captivate them.

Chapter Four: Manini te Waka is the experience of the waka ama gliding through the water, somewhat effortlessly, a change in state due to the act of paddling. The first section, Kia Mau, explored the transformation that occurred once people became kaihoe, changes to lifestyle and identity. Secondly, this chapter explored the claim that waka ama is more than just a sport to determine its validity and where waka ama may fit best based on semantic comparison.

Chapter Five: Mana ki Tangaroa is the practice of gratitude for the environment in which kaihoe participate. Therefore, acknowledgement of Tangaroa is the sensible starting point for most. The chapter elucidates the kaihoe environmental perceptions of kaihoe through their spatial temporal experience. It explores how time in Te Ao Māori is deeply cyclical, relational, and embedded in environmental rhythms. The chapter also examines space as a socially and spiritually constructed reality, a fusion of whenua, whakapapa, wai and wairua.

These titles were taken from the haka of Tūnui-a-te-Ika Waka Ama club in Wellington, composed by the late tohunga Amster Reedy:

Tū te hoe, Manini te waka, Mana ki Tangaroa.

Chapter Six: Hawaiki Ora summarises the findings on the magical waka ama experiences and discusses the limitations and adaptations encountered throughout this thesis. It will also introduce the Waka AMA Model for nurturing and supportive environments that can arise from the future applications of the new knowledge gained in this thesis. These areas are important because knowing “the reasons for an athlete to participate in sports should be fully clarified in order to maintain the continuity in sports” (Erdoğan et al., 2014, p. 164). This can be transferred to non-sporting physical activities also. There is potential to implement such motivations in other situations, recreating this positive environment experienced in waka ama. This would hopefully influence more people towards positive lifestyle changes or allow more positive life experiences.

This chapter has explained magic to show that tricks and illusions were not the focus, but instead, were the enchanted and metaphysical concepts that are inherent in life. Then, a look into the world of the researcher is provided to establish an understanding of their lens. Background on Māori, waka Māori, and waka ama were presented to contextualise the situation, including their demise and rise in Aotearoa. All these areas will become relevant in the coming chapters, as the magic of waka ama is explored.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY: KO TE TAKE O TE KOREWA HEI TIAKI I TE WAKA KOI TAHURI

In this chapter, “ko te take o te korewa hei tiaki i te waka” (Best, 1923, p. 204) is used as a metaphor for a methodology’s potential to protect a thesis from succumbing to an untimely fate.

The chapter aims to lay out the process of ensuring this waka rangahau, or research process, travels well on this journey of discovery. By transforming the original waka into a waka ‘ama’ rangahau, it will ensure that the raison d’être will withstand the forces of the [ngaru-nui](#) of the [Moananui-a-Mātauranga](#) and will be ensconced in the bay of [Pūrangiaho](#). The conclusion of this study will provide a transformative process to stabilise other waka ama of change; waka reo, waka hauora and so on.

Research has long carried a negative connotation for Indigenous people around the world (Smith, 2013). Up until recent times, it had been used to identify deficits in Indigenous cultures, and deceive rhetoric reinforcing the outsiders’ narrative of dominance, their doctrine of discovery. No effort was afforded to promote the positive aspects of Indigenous life or to address the impacts of colonisation (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2010; Smith et al., 2016; Wilson et al., 2022). It is no longer acceptable for Indigenous cultures like that of the Māori to be subjects of other cultures’ research projects, subjected to positivist and post-positivist research paradigms.

Kaupapa Māori Research and decolonising research methodologies have become the [tūāpapa](#) for meaningful research concerning Māori. They proudly embody the phrase “by Māori, for Māori, with Māori” (Smith, 2015, p. 47) and acknowledge Māori knowledge systems. These have aided in establishing a Māori research paradigm not requiring validation from Western Knowledge systems. It is capable of utilising both Indigenous and Western theories, and details the reality, values and knowledge

system relevant to Māori. Māori experiences must be shared via the Māori reo (voice), and must be heard by [taringa](#) Māori, to be interpreted by Māori [hinengaro](#), to be felt through the Māori [ngākau](#), and embodied by the Māori [tinana](#). As stated by Wilson et al. (2022), “embedded within any research with Indigenous peoples must be their worldviews, knowledge, culture, and protocols” (p. 382).

The promotion of transformative research has been gaining momentum in Indigenous research (Dudgeon et al., 2020; Elke, 2022; Smith, 2013). Here we have an end goal of a positive transformation for the participant group. In this case, positive transformation for Māori and their Polynesian cousins is paramount. However, there is also a hope that the transformational conclusions can be of good for all, in line with the saying, “[Tātau, tātau](#)”.

There will be three main sections of this chapter of transformation. The first, [Whakawhānuitia kai tītahataha](#), concerning the elements that will transform the Waka Rangahau to form an appropriate Waka Ama Rangahau. It will also demonstrate the methodology employed to carefully design this Waka Ama Rangahau.

The second and third sections concern the methods employed. [Kohinga Kōrero](#) will provide details on the methods used to obtain data, while [Tātari Kōrero](#) informs on the methods to analyse data. Both determine the best set-up of the Waka Ama Rangahau on its journey. This rigging will provide rigour, and like a hermeneutic circle, can continuously be re-evaluated and adjusted.

The remaining sections discuss the Kaihoe, Limitations and Adaptations, and the [Māhere Pānui](#) involved in this thesis. The details concerning the kaihoe recruitment are provided to demonstrate how Kaupapa Māori theory was utilised to ensure [whakawhanaungatanga](#), trustworthiness and transparency. There follows an explanation of the limitations and adaptations that occurred during this thesis for consideration. The last section is a Māhere Pānui to aid in navigating this thesis, as a

reader. It will aid in following the slight layout changes that occur in different chapters that are necessary to obtain the full richness of the kōrero available.

Whakawhānuitia Kai Titahataha

To correctly convert this Waka Rangahau into a Waka Ama Rangahau, knowledge from the past and present needs to be drawn on to help prepare for the future. The knowledge of past weather and water conditions, along with the predicted future conditions, is used to determine the correct setup for the waka ama.

The following elements will be employed in the transformation to a waka ama rangahau, and the formation of a stable vessel for which to load with the many possibilities ahead. Added to the takere will be rauawa, taumanu, ama/korewa, kīato, and aukaha.

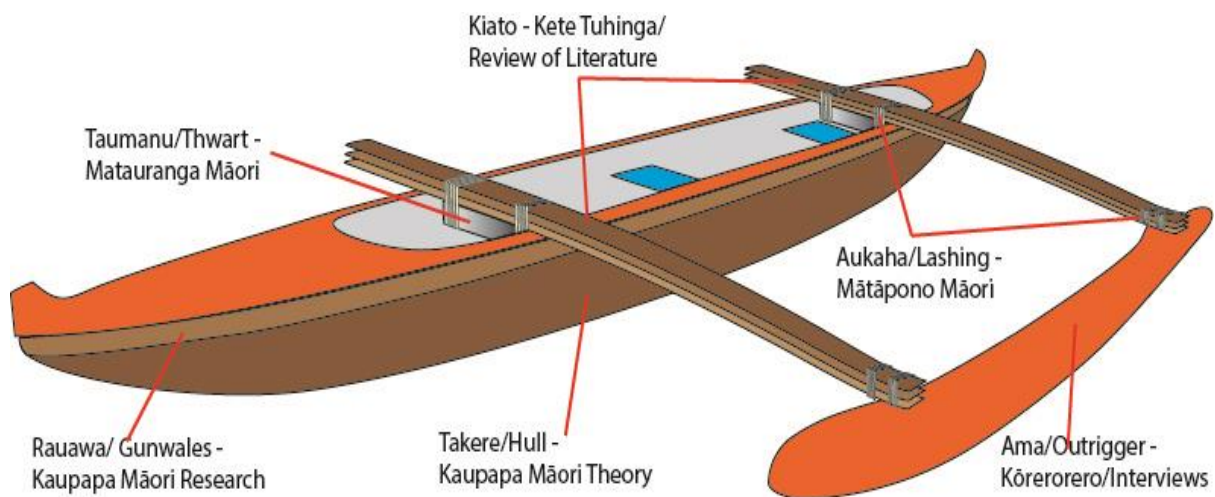


Figure 1. Waka Ama Rangahau Conceptual Framework. Note. Author created.

Kaupapa Māori Theory – Takere

The takere of this Waka Ama Rangahau represents kaupapa Māori theory. Kaupapa Māori theory is the framework that allows for Māori values and worldview to be

recognised and acknowledged for the advancement of Māori in all avenues of life. It is an unapologetic way of slicing through and dispelling the waves of colonisers' dominant discourse towards the clear waters of meaningful dialogue relevant to the unique Māori aspirations. In this sense, Kaupapa Māori Theory aligns with critical theory in its attempt to elucidate the hegemonic influence that shapes the Māori conjecture of reality (Brewer et al., 2014).

This is the section of the Waka Ama Rangahau that carries the weight of this [kaupapa](#), and for this study connects Tāne and Tangaroa. Tāne is the deity associated with the rākau or trees that the takere are fashioned from. Tangaroa is the deity of the ocean, who will carry the takere on its journey. Tangaroa also connects the people of the Māori, Māoli, Māohi and other Polynesian people of the Pacific Ocean. Attached to the takere are the [rauawa](#) which are discussed next.

Kaupapa Māori Research – Rauawa

The rauawa will provide additional freeboard to keep unwanted things out, and ultimately increase the waka ama rangahau's ability to provide space for big Māori ideas and ideals. Kaupapa Māori research, built on the framework of Kaupapa Māori Theory, will be Māori-designed and conceptualised, reflecting Māori goals, beliefs, principles and outlooks (Pihama, 2019; Royal, 2012). This study endeavours to uphold these characteristics by making space for a Māori epistemology and worldviews (Cooper, 2012; Curtis, 2016).

Kaupapa Māori research privileges the Māori worldview to manage whatever approach it encounters, making it Māori per se (Curtis, 2016; Hiha, 2015). Worldviews are defined as “cognitive, perceptual, and affective maps that people continuously use to make sense of the social landscape” (Hart, 2010, p. 2) and refined as being established by “comprehensive networks of relationships” (Ngawhare, 2020, p. 27).

Bishop credits Kaupapa Māori research for its policy statement and its acknowledgement of the “ongoing effects of racism and colonialism in the wider society” (2016, p. 5). Here we can situate Kaupapa Māori research in the trenches working vigilantly for Māori aspirations for recognition of mātauranga Māori and [tino rangatiratanga](#).

However, Mika (2020) warns that if used too strictly, it risks creating monochrome, unidimensional delivery and findings. It is very important to maintain the nomenclature of Kaupapa Māori research and its definitions in order to maintain control and theories pertaining to meanings (Smith, 2018; Warbrick et al., 2020). This is an important element in upholding the self-determination and transformative power of Kaupapa Māori research required for this rangahau.

The rauawa connect firmly with the [taumanu](#), supporting their role and mitigating any superfluous distortion that might undermine the integrity of the Waka Ama Rangahau’s hull.

Kaupapa Māori Māramatanga – Taumanu

Taumanu are established within the takere and between the rauawa. These structural components were vital in maintaining the rigidity of the waka ama rangahau and in successfully fastening the [kīato](#) and [ama](#). Therefore, Kaupapa Māori Theory and Kaupapa Māori Research needed to be supported by Kaupapa Māori Māramatanga for them to be fit for this study. The data from both kaihoe and literature depended upon Kaupapa Māori Māramatanga, providing a base to anchor relevant data for this study. In some waka ama designs, the taumanu can also double as seating, ergo supporting the researcher and their comprehension.

Mātauranga Māori

For this study of a phenomenon situated in Te Ao Māori, [mātauranga Māori](#) of [ngā kete o te wānanga](#) was privileged over that of the dominant Western worldview and its

ideologies. Ngā kete o te wānanga, the three baskets of knowledge include: Te Kete Tuatea, knowledge pertaining to evil, makutu and whaiwhaiā; Te Kete Tuauri, knowledge pertaining to the natural world and the tohunga realm; and Te Kete Aronui, knowledge pertaining to peace, the arts, and the humanities (Marsden & Royal, 2003). All three baskets are expressed by today's mātauranga Māori and were vital for both informing the rigging process for this research journey, and to afford a worthy exegesis, or seaworthy conclusion for such a study. Royal warns that mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori Theory should not be confused. Mātauranga Māori "will have much to contribute to the transformative goals set for kaupapa Māori" (2012, p. 36).

Mātauranga Māori has been noted as having its origins in ancient Polynesia, which is evident in the similarities that exist with other Polynesian people of the Pacific. As supported by the statement, "[Tīpuna](#) Māori arrived in Aotearoa/New Zealand from Hawaiki carrying with them all of the knowledge of their own tīpuna" (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2010, p. 11). It continues to be developed, refined and enhanced (Phillips Ph D, 2020; Sadler, 2007). This continuum would therefore include the mātauranga of the original Indigenous inhabitants who claim they came out of the sea, with whakapapa to justify their identity as tāngata moana (Parsons, 1997), and others who came from this land. It is also plausible that the similarities in mātauranga throughout the Polynesian people of the Pacific are a result of the ongoing waka journeys between the islands.

The mātauranga would be of oceanic origins and over time evolved to accommodate the new Māori environment. This is supported by Mullane (2023) who believes that Indigenous knowledge, such as mātauranga Māori, are characteristically an "adaptable, dynamic system based on skills, abilities, and problem-solving techniques that change over time depending on environmental conditions" (p. 19). Therefore, it is clear that mātauranga Māori is far from a new concept, but its recognition as a valid epistemology is new and challenging to the Western epistemological norms (Jackson & Jackson, 2017).

Māori have always had and still maintain a systematic approach to knowledge involving research, trial and experimentation to ascertain the various characteristics, qualities and habits of the natural world to sustain life (Hikuroa, 2017; Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019; Sadler, 2007). Māori have attempted to justify mātauranga Māori against the Western dominant standards. However, Stewart (2020) argues that mātauranga Māori is more a form of philosophy of science than a pure science. Although Hikuroa (2017) compared mātauranga Māori with scientific methods, he also stipulates that mātauranga Māori is “valid in its own right” (p. 9).

Mātauranga Māori contains knowledge from the physical, metaphysical and spiritual realms that has triumphed the test of time to help shape the present and the future. It also allows the imagination to create amazing and intelligible kaupapa Māori fantasies (Corballis, 2014). As Raureti stated, “Knowledge is our greatest currency and forms a strong connection back to our tupuna” (2017, p. 13). Reinforcing this, Pere and Nicholson (1991) states that if children are expected to determine their futures, they will need to be equipped with knowledge about their cultural past. She also explains that mātauranga includes intuitive intellect that is linked to atua. Understanding mātauranga Māori will allow a greater appreciation of the data collected throughout this research on this Māori treasure, waka ama.

Māori Philosophy

Māori philosophy works with mātauranga Māori to bind this methodological process together, creating a solid structure for the journey. There are occasions when non-Māori philosophies were also employed to add an extra layer of support against the elements. When handling these opposing philosophical approaches, it will be important to “refuse the foolish wisdom of resignation and be disobedient, yet thoughtful”, as stated by Kirloskar-Steinbach and Mika (2020, p. 547). They note the turn Western philosophy had undertaken to gain credibility in the Enlightenment era, and the subsequent loss of its ability to deal with the non-conceptual. There is a move

towards world philosophies such as Māori philosophy to reinvigorate the 'humus from which philosophical activity grows' (p. 535).

Despite being sources of wisdom and knowledge for their cultures and people, these world philosophies risk being mislabelled as mythology or dogmatic. Maintaining a symbiotic connection with science and its ethos is an easy option for Western philosophy, but maybe not for philosophies such as that of Māori. The difficulty for Western philosophy is discovering methods to express and explain those areas outside of science, and for world philosophies, it would justify why they need to accommodate Western philosophy's relationship with science.

Māori philosophy has always existed, be it hapū or regionally based. There are foundational elements that set non-Māori philosophy apart from Māori philosophy. In this section, the fundamentals of Māori philosophy will be explored and established for this study's context.

Te Ao Māori, or the Māori world, is the product of whakapapa or genealogical progressions from the beginning of the Māori concept of time (Seed-Pihama, 2017). Each stage and event have a significance in the construction of the Māori way, and they survive in the range of [pūrākau](#). These pūrākau aid in forming tikanga and kawa, behaviours and protocols, and reinforce the Māori philosophy of old, and maintain their relevance in the present. Oral traditions are a cultural praxis to transmit a collective cultural history and guide the future (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2010; Zerubavel, 2003).

Expanding briefly on what was mentioned in Chapter One, Māori cosmology starts with Te Kore, often referred to as the void or nothingness from a non-Māori perspective. For Māori, this always existing state was without restrictions, without labels, often likened to chaos. The pandemonium of chaos also encompassed the hypothetical potential. Eventually, like mitosis, Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama evolved (Barlow, 1991). Here, Māori adopted the device of opposites to justify their existence within their world, which included physical and spiritual representation.

Te Pō was the world of becoming, while Te Ao Mārama is the world of being (Irwin, 2022), showing a notion of transition from dark to light, from possibility to potential and ignorance to enlightenment (Barlow, 1991). Generally, Te Pō was first, then from which came Te Ao, but it could also be perceived that Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama were simultaneously created by the division. Whether they created the next stage together or not is an interesting question. Here, the one becomes two, as in mitosis, or the two can become one, as in fusion. It is also believed that Te Pō is the location of the spiritual realm, and Te Ao Mārama is the physical realm.

It seems apparent that from the chaos came dark and then light. Hence came the possibility for growth, development and expansion. As Ferguson (1980) suggested, after the age of darkness comes the time of light and a time for the true liberation of the mind.

Next on the stage after Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama, or below Te Ao Mārama depending on your applied lens, is Papatūānuku and Ranginui. Te Pō is accredited with the female lineage to Papatūānuku, and Te Ao Mārama with the male celestial firmament of the universe and Ranginui. These are the primal parents of Te Ao Māori (Barlow, 1991).

Papatūānuku and Ranginui's descendants include the gods or deities of the many realms. Tangaroa for sea and ocean, Tāwhirimātea for wind and elements of weather, Tūmatauenga for war and mankind, and Tāne for the forest, to name but a few. This myriad of deities went about creating in a binary fashion to allow all living things to procreate. Common belief is that binary opposites were established, such as male and female, confidence and fear, good and bad, and for there to be life, there must also be death (Barlow, 1991). However, such dichotomous thinking can be challenged through philosophy, allowing concepts to be more than two-sided, or either one way or the other. There are a multitude of points within the continuum that can each be identified with their own characteristic, forms of simultaneity and multiplicity.

Māori philosophy pertaining to health and wellbeing is encapsulated in hauora. The Whare Tapawhā is used for the holistic approaches to wellbeing in Te Ao Māori, with four sides of a whare constituting the four main areas: taha wairua, [taha hinengaro](#), [taha tinana](#) and [taha whānau](#). The concept of wellbeing here can also be expanded to the eleven components as defined by (Pere & Nicholson, 1991) in her Te Wheke Health Model. She has the head of the [wheke](#) being the whānau, with its eyes as [waiora](#), and the eight tentacles each representing different elements of wellbeing; [wairuatanga](#), hinengaro, taha tinana, whanaungatanga, [mauri](#), mana ake, [hā a koro mā, a kui mā](#) and [whatumanawa](#).

From the distinctions and similarities of hauora, another form of chaos is coordinated into Te Ao Māori, mātauranga Māori and [tikanga](#) Māori. These are the associated Māori concepts that are closely shadowed by Western philosophical ontology, epistemology and axiology. Although similar, they never fully translate without the former losing position in Te Ao Māori. The non-Māori philosophies can impose themselves on Māori philosophy via their vernacular, eventually stating a hegemonic stance (Jackson, 1992; Mika & Stewart, 2017). This illustrates the importance of establishing the worldview or lens through which this study will be conducted.

Māori philosophy and Māori knowledge are umbrellaed by mātauranga Māori according to Mead (2016). He believes that tikanga Māori could be seen as “Māori philosophy in practice and as the practical face of Māori knowledge” (p. 7). Therefore, an understanding of Māori philosophy is a prerequisite for acting in accordance with tikanga. There is a risk here of creating a hierarchy within these concepts, like the question of who came first, the moa or the egg. The total of Māori existence is the foundation on which these concepts are structured, and without the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, one would struggle to comprehend the complexities involved.

Mātāpono Māori – Aukaha

The aukaha held all the parts of this Waka Ama Rangahau together in unity. Despite stress occurring, well lashed waka ama holdfast. Like lashings, the values all need to be present and recognised to attain the maximum strength and mana they possess when united.

Within Te Ao Māori one experiences tikanga, whakapapa, whanaungatanga, aroha, [manaakitanga](#), [kaitiakitanga](#), wairuatanga, rangatiratanga and mana. Depending on the iwi, hapū or individual, there are others. However, these are key ethical values to the researcher and very pertinent to this study. With this in mind, one can determine what Māori consider as reality and use that to inform mātauranga Māori (Henry & Pene, 2001). The following will be a brief explanation of these values relative to this thesis.

Tikanga concerns correct cultural behaviours and performances in distinctively Māori ways that are enlightened by both whakapapa and mātauranga, and through kaupapa Māori are articulated and made perceptible (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019; Phillips Ph D, 2020; Royal, 2012; Smith, 2015). However, as stated, “The conceptualisation and performance of tikanga is an intimate experience but also a collective one. Tikanga must also be fluid and dynamic if it is to account for the diversity of whānau experiences” (Pihama, 2019, p. 31). Tikanga must adapt and evolve with the ever-changing realities of Māori life to maintain its relevance for the people. These new situations and ideas can be dealt with in a Māori manner through kōrero, or the “bricolage of utterances” as described by Mika and Stewart (2017, p. 136). This will be returned to in chapter three.

Whakapapa unifies [Te Ao Tūroa](#) and [Te Wāhi Ngāro](#), realms of living and non-living, to display the Māori metaphysics (Kirloskar-Steinbach & Mika, 2020). They co-exist, never antagonistic and not merely parallel realities. The dead can return to Te Ao Tūroa by the mention of them and their actions, [mā te arero ka hahū ake](#). Also, one

can talk directly to those in Te Wāhi Ngaro, crossing from one realm to the other. Te Ao Māori does not delineate exact boundary points between these realms. Whakapapa can legitimise claims of hierarchy, possession and plays an important part in connecting with one's heritage. The bloodlinks create an unbreakable "cousinhood" (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 77).

Whanaungatanga is a connection one has with one's kin within Te Ao Māori. Here, Aroha gets challenged. This kinship relates to one's "feeling of belonging, value and security" (Pere & Nicholson, 1991, p. 26). They continue to explain that whānau that participate in collective activities enable their whānau members to feel valuable and important, which in turn begets "pride, unity, and a real sense of belonging" (p. 26). This will be returned to in chapter four.

Aroha is an important term and concept for the survival and strength of whanaungatanga. It is more meaningful as a praxis--not as just a theory. This is evident in the verbs used in an attempt to describe aroha, such as caring, sharing, mourning and more. Aroha has no boundaries, according to Pere and Nicholson (1991), as it is "truly a divine love" (p. 6).

Aroha, like aloha, in my opinion, appears to have been used to subdue Indigenous people's urge to resist and debate. Messages promoting the ancient way of living being a constant state of aroha create an idea that resistance is against the ancient teachings. However, disagreements, hate, and even war were common occurrences in ancient times. The range of emotions sits together in harmony along a continuum.

Manaakitanga is the concept of kindness, respect and hospitality towards others (Pere & Nicholson, 1991). Empathy for others and actions to promote others' wellbeing is the goal. It is a two-way process where givers become receivers, while receivers become givers. If one is served a small portion of food, it can be considered as lacking manaakitanga. However, lacking manaakitanga could also be complaining and impacting negatively on the hosting people's mana.

Kaitiakitanga is the concept of environmental protection, stewardship and guardianship. Māori and other Indigenous people believe the environment and themselves are connected intrinsically through whakapapa and physical interaction (Wheaton et al., 2020). Māori believe the environment should be maintained or improved for those who will interact with it in the following generations.

Wairuatanga acknowledges the spiritual element of Te Ao Māori. Pere and Nicholson (1991) states “wairua is an apt description of the spirit – it denotes two waters...both positive and negative” (p. 16). Wairua is a part of all things, and the idea of water as giver and taker of life is very relevant and supports the notion that balance is paramount.

Rangatiratanga is commonly translated as self-governance or sovereignty. Pihama (2019) states, “rangatiratanga involves reinstating the collectivism of whānau and contains a political imperative that the policy environment of Aotearoa New Zealand must recognise and provide for it in meaningful ways” (p. 45). It is applicable to both a collective and an individual, empowering all. Therefore, rangatiratanga is also demonstrated in all the macro, domestic and intimate processes everyone does on a daily basis. It not only emanates outwards, but inwards also within one’s “mind, body and spirit” (p. 46).

Rangatiratanga is a Māori leadership system, connecting generations with mana to time and place. Within the Declaration of Independence of 1835, it refers to chieftainship. In modern times, it is used to define the Māori political struggle to maintain self-determination (Smith et al., 2021).

According to Pere and Nicholson (1991) mana is multi-formed as it “includes psychic influence, control, prestige, power, vested and acquired authority and influence, being influential or binding over others, and the quality of the person that others know she or he has!” (p. 14). They elaborate by pointing out that Māori women with mana perform monotonous duties at home and are still confident in who they are and their

role. They do not fear losing their mana due to simply being themselves. This is also experienced in a waka ama crew, where each kaihoe has mana connected to their role in the heterotopic social space, Hawaiki Ora.

While emphasising the need for young Māori men to respect their kaumatua, Rua et al. (2017) says that these young Māori men's "mana (power/authority) or identity as Māori men is related to the health of kaumātua who represent their tribal identity" (p. 60). If respect for mana is not afforded, Pere and Nicholson (1991) believe the mauri will suffer and Smith et al. (2021) mention that rangatiratanga is impacted negatively.

Furthermore, and related to research, sensitive issues that affect the mana of either the living or the dead, require a "culturally responsive and sensitive Kaupapa Māori methodology" (Stevenson, 2018, p. 55) to guide research.

Kohinga Kōrero

The data collection for this thesis was selected to maximise stability. This was critical for the waka ama rangahau to run true, and when it is tested by the swells of academic rigour and the winds of philosophical scrutiny. Acknowledging the mana of individuals' and collective's kōrero, the kete tuhinga and the pūrākau in which these were all located increases the potential for success. This section explains kōrerorero in the context of the thesis, and then pūrākau are validated for their use in this kaupapa Māori study. Following that, the kōrerorero and kete tuhinga collection process is clarified.

Kōrerorero – Ama/Outrigger

The ama represented the voices of the kaihoe participating in this research, the phenomenological personal experiences from the waka ama world. This was a suitable data collection for phenomenological research (Mayan, 2023). These uplifting stories within the ama were positive buoyancy, supporting and providing balance where and when necessary for the waka ama rangahau. Without this structure

component, the Waka Ama Rangahau would struggle to reach the shores of [Pūrangiaho](#).

The use of kōrerorero over the term interview has been intentional. Interview has connotations of power imbalance amongst participants, and this needed to be eliminated as the waka ama whānau were so supportive of this study. As stated by (Mansell, 2013) “it is a term that does not sit comfortably with me in the context of this project and working with whānau so openly and willingly agreed to participate” (p. 22). More was gained from free-flowing kōrerorero than would have come from an interview mentality.

The use of kōrerorero aligned with Kaupapa Māori research by allowing participants to freely express their narrative of their lived experiences (Glenis & Boulton, 2017). There was an opportunity for kōrerorero in te reo Māori and/or English. As a fundamental element of Kaupapa Māori research, whakawhanaungatanga was critical prior to questioning to minimise the social distancing between researcher and research participants. Participants were afforded mana whakahaere or control during the kōrerorero, allowed to express their narrative without “fear of distortions and/or prosecutions” (Tuffour, 2017).

Kaihoe were selected based on their individual experience in waka ama. Some were elite kaihoe, representatives of WANZ, some were long-time kaihoe who brought with them experiences from the early days of waka ama to the present, and some were relatively new to waka ama, able to share the modern induction to addiction. Another group were waka ama babies, kaihoe who have always had waka ama in their lives. There were kaihoe who have transitioned into volunteer or kaitūao roles, providing a voice for those passionate about supporting waka ama. As best as possible, a range of wāhine and [tāne](#), rangatahi and pakeke, and kaihoe from all waka ama regions was sought after.

There are a range of factors that determine sample size, and as Sim et al. (2018) explained, it often depends on methodological concerns, epistemological attitude and available resources and time. They go further by concluding that sample size is an “ongoing interpretation by the researcher” (p. 630). A logical approach regarding sample sizes is supported by many researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2016; 2013; Fugard & Potts, 2015; 2016). While it is simple to state a sample size based on similar studies, the risk of oversimplifying can have a negative impact on the kaupapa.

Rather than subscribe to a set sample size number as is often the case in qualitative research, a range from 6-18 participants was initially prescribed. Firstly, this range was selected to cater for diversity, and also keep the sample size manageable for this kaupapa, yet productive enough to supply sufficient data. It is a stand against the seductive pull of lower saturation sample sizes suggested by some scholars.

Braun and Clarke (2021) state that saturation is not the only or the best reason for validating sample sizes in research. They also go on to say that data saturation is “the rabbit pulled out of the hat, the magic trick that reveals and maybe also conceals” (p. 211) and therefore not the “gold standard” (p. 206). Furthermore, with the reflexive thematic analysis being a continually revolving and evolving, defining and refining process, the idea of saturation and no new codes or themes also implies a closed circle of interpretation. The proverb, [ahakoa he iti, he pounamu](#), is fitting in this situation. Therefore, the sample size range is not designed to reach data saturation or information redundancy; the reflexive process is.

There was a need to have a set of structured questions, or any form of saturation would be near impossible. However, to allow for individual kaihoe flow within kōrerorero, the semi-structured process was employed.

The kaihoe were explained the kaupapa and their role and responsibilities from the outset. Consent was sought, and kaihoe were informed that they were able to withdraw from this kaupapa at any time. Also explained was the koha for their tautoko of this

kaupapa. Each kaihoe would be offered a coaching session for themselves as a kaihoe, or to help them as coaches working with a team. This was based on the relationship with each kaihoe and the goal of providing a koha that has a long-term benefit for them and their whānau. Chocolate biscuits and cakes were not sufficient koha for this thesis, and antithetical to hauora.

Weather permitting, participants were offered a moving kōrerorero to evoke spatial data (Evans & Jones, 2011). Walking with kaihoe allowed them to situate themselves along with the kairangahau in the spatial point of discussion. The first kaihoe were able to participate in this form of kōrerorero, but the others were not due to COVID-19 restrictions. The two participants were able to show their unique experience of the WANZ sprint nationals location at Lake Karāpiro. Even allowing them to guide the kairangahau around the event was an empowering factor. Culturally safe settings, such as the regatta space for the kaihoe, are “effective for shifting power” (Mullane, 2023) to the kaihoe.

Kōrerorero were recorded on an audio device and on a video device as backup for those kanohi ki te kanohi kōrerorero, and the zoom kōrerorero were recorded to Waikato University’s Panopto drive. These recordings were utilised for the transcriptions.

Mayan (2023) explains that sometimes the interviewer has to simply smile, despite the possibility of repugnant comments made by participants during the interview. To allow the flow of the kōrerorero to continue and truly get the experience of the participants, the researcher must sometimes bite their tongue and maintain a neutral position. The kaihoe in this study were very positive throughout the kōrerorero. There were challenges set for WANZ, but that is expected of all National Sport organisations.

Included was an unexpected kōrero obtained from the Pro-Choice Waka Ama group, which related to this study. Zoom meeting recordings and Messenger group chats were the source of data. The group allowed the use of their discussions to highlight

praxis and theory, which attracted and retained them in Te Ao Waka Ama. Relevant comments were gathered and presented to the group for approval. Anything that might identify participants was removed to ensure all comments remained anonymous. This method was an addition due to the potential it had to provide an alternative viewpoint on this study. Although painful discussions, they were conducted sanguinely to ameliorate the situation they found themselves in at that time.

Pūrākau

Niles (2010) presents that narratives are part of human evolution. Māori hold pūrākau with high esteem due to the mātauranga Māori within (Lee, 2009). As Corballis (2014) explained, it is the sustenance of our imaginations that permits transition to and from the past, to construct possible futures and muse on endless fantasies.

Smith and Sparkes (2012) discussed narratives as the product of a group, never of the individual. This aligns with the collection focus of kaupapa Māori research. Narratives borrow from other narratives and are able to perform significant tasks for us. The life story is an example of this. By inviting participants to tell their life story in a semi-structured kōrerorero format, starting with a structured question and then allowing the story to unfold naturally. The focus is not on detailed descriptions, but on the actual story. It is advised to do less talking and focus on listening.

Narrative habitus is what Smith and Sparkes (2012) refer to as “an acquired embodied disposition formed in the context of people’s social locations to hear some stories as those that one should listen to, should tell, should be guided by or should pass over” (p. 83). People will or will not connect with a story depending on the embodied reaction experienced. They also investigate ways to determine what a story is and what it is not. Stories should be able to keep a child’s attention, as in story time before bed. There should be suspense and characters with strengths and weaknesses. Despite this, they warn that the many ways of defining stories are never resolute.

It is suggested that data collection and data analysis are concurrent activities, and therefore, the writing is not left until the end of the research project. Researchers are encouraged to write “continuously and creatively throughout the research” (Smith & Sparkes, 2012, p. 87). They also believe that as analysis occurs during the writing, writing is therefore a type of analysis. The process of analysis often aims to discover the what and how of a story (Sparkes & Partington, 2003). This was also noted as difficult and less productive than focusing efforts purely on the what of the story.

The pūrākau is the mastery of weaving past, present and future concepts to stimulate further embellishments. Here presents the dichotomy of Western positivism’s truth and the Kaupapa Māori view of pūrākau for stimulus towards new ideas and treasures hidden within. It prevents the cultural stagnation of a fixed Eurocentric systemisation of knowledge (Kaiwai & Zemke-White, 2004).

Therefore, pūrākau is a key methodology to create new imagery of the past, present and future. It will allow participants to express freely their narratives about themselves, their whānau, waka ama experiences and perceptions. Here, the semi-structured kōrerorero provided an ideal environment and situation for such narratives. This is explained in more detail in the following section.

Semi-structured one-to-one kōrerorero

Mann (2016) described these kōrerorero as non-reliant on a script, and following a guide that allows for a degree of deviation, like that given to a good steerer that permits the waka ama to deviate from time to time, as long as it covers the necessary waypoints along the journey. Allen-Collinson (2012) notes that semi-structured kōrerorero are primary methods for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Thematic Analysis, both explained in more detail later.

Semi-structured kōrerorero were conducted with those with relevant knowledge and experience of this topic and who were willing to participate in this research. Ideally, it

was to include a diverse group of individuals with waka ama as a commonality. Once potential participants were ascertained, they were briefly explained the kaupapa in a kanohi ki te kanohi kōrero, via email, via social media chat or a zoom meeting. Those who were interested in the kaupapa and potential study participants were sent preliminary information on the study, which included;

1. Ethical considerations pertaining to this study
2. The researcher's roles and responsibilities as the researcher
3. The researcher's roles and responsibilities as a member of the waka ama whānau
4. The kaihoe rights, roles and responsibilities
5. An invitation to participate.

On acceptance, they were sent a consent form and a more detailed information sheet explaining those mentioned above.

All efforts were made to arrange mobile or go-along kōrerorero, or in this case, walking or paddling kōrerorero with kaihoe in a pokohiwi ki te pokohiwi fashion. Such kōrerorero in the environment of the thesis aided in the participant's ability to recollect kōrero, activities, incidents and so on pertaining to those environments. These also "help with trust and rapport" (Mann, 2016, p. 105). However, with people living busy lives and the COVID-19 restrictions impacting most areas of life during the kōrerorero process, zoom kōrerorero were used for several of this study's kōrerorero. Although not as extreme as a phone call kōrerorero, the zoom kōrerorero was an added challenge in creating a rapport with kaihoe (Mann, 2016). Online interviews have their challenges, along with their advantages. Technological developments are rapid and exciting (Mayan, 2023).

With a good understanding of the phenomenon, the researcher was able to generate the questions to expose the experiences of the kaihoe. However, there was no way

for the researcher to foresee the answers that would be collected. The meaning unfolds with each disclosure (Mayan, 2023).

Video recordings were captured of each participant's kōrerorero to guarantee the precision of transcriptions. Transcriptions were sent to the relevant participants to check for accuracy. After any alterations, and with the participant's approval, their kōrero was added to the data set.

To ensure kōrerorero are conducted ethically, an ethics application was submitted to the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of kōrerorero. This was accepted and endorsed by the committee.

Whanaungatanga was important from the beginning. Each kaihoe was given time and space to introduce themselves, their connections and their [wheako](#). As a researcher, the same was done to allow for further connections to be forged (McDonald, 2022; Smith, 2013).

There were set questions established, like [hoe urupounamu matua](#) to steer the kōrerorero in the desired direction at the beginning, before allowing more free-flowing discussions to evolve. There were also [hoe urupounamu akiaki](#) to mindfully encourage indepth kōrero on a particular point, or to [mirimiri](#) the discussion back on track for this kaupapa.

Hoe Urupounamu Matua Tuatahi

1. Nō whea koe? - Where were you situated (prior to starting waka ama)?

Hoe Urupounamu Akiaki

- How was your general wellbeing?
- How did you fit into Te Ao Māori?

- What social activities did you participate in?
- What physical activities did you participate in?

Hoe Urupounamu Matua Tuarua

2. Kai whea koe? - Where are you situated (since starting waka ama)?

Hoe Urupounamu Akiaki

- Has waka ama changed your life or lifestyle in any way?
- Has waka ama changed others' lives or lifestyles in any way?
- What do you think of waka ama as a social activity?
- What do you think of the waka ama environment?

Kete Tuhinga – Kīato/Outrigger Beams

The kīato are made of layers of laminated materials, representing the layers of information involved in this study. This includes that which was sourced from the vast literature search that was utilised to inform the kōrerorero process, and the main themes that surfaced from the kōrerorero process that are, in turn, utilised in attempting to resolve the research questions.

Here, the stabilising force of the kīato transfers as an eidetic or abstract form between the waka hull and ama. This maintains the direction, connection and demarcation required to properly assist this transformation and voyage of discovery.

The kīato forms a four-sided circuit with waka and the ama, likened to the hermeneutic circle that will be discussed further in this chapter. Simply, the kōrero goes from one section to the next, in a continuous circuit, providing opportunity for more input. This allows for the development of new knowledge and understanding to be co-constructed with input from many sources.

Waka ama and waka Māori were the initial field for reviewing literature to ascertain what was available and also what was lacking for this kaupapa, like an inventory list prior to a journey. Te Ao Māori was the next point of inquiry to establish a Māori lens for this research. This included relevant mātauranga, tikanga, [kōri tinana](#), hauora and whakapapa literature.

Next, with as much of a Māori lens as possible, an in-depth look at the intense topics of embodiment, identity, space, and time was the focus. Here, the social space and bluespace were important areas of inquiry. Further literature searches occurred after the kōrerorero were completed to investigate any rogue waves that arose and surprised the initial direction of this study. This also aided in ascertaining appropriate connections between kōrerorero and the initial review of literature. The last review of literature occurred after conclusions were formulated to test their validity.

A strategy to obtain digital copies of all literature was employed. This was two-fold; firstly, it aided the dyslexic researcher in reading the document, and secondly, it enabled the easy utilisation of EndNote for referencing and NVivo for coding.

While filling the kete tuhinga, with a Kaupapa Māori Theory to guide, data was not criticised or belittled for the sake of improving my position on an issue. Such data was left off, mitigating any potential [takahi](#) of the mana of others. If ideas contradict one another, but are valid, they were both given their due respect.

Although the goal was to create a thesis readable to the masses, some topic areas possess a vernacular that was beyond the researcher's ability to simplify. The kete tuhinga kōrero is dispersed in areas of relevance, again scaffolding the reader along the way. Sometimes the kīato is before the ama, and other times the ama comes before the kīato, that is to say, literature lead or kaihoe lead.

Matariki - Urupounamu Rangahau/Research Question

The research questions acted like guiding stars for this journey of discovery. This journey began at the start of the Māori lunar year, at the time of Matariki, making Matariki relevant to this stage.

1. What is the magnetic phenomenon that captivates kaihoe?
2. How does waka ama influence lifestyle?
3. What are participants' perceptions of the waka ama environments?

Kaiurungi/Steerer - Researcher

Within the takere, sits the [kaiurungi](#), maintaining their positionality, not bracketed as their experience is critical in the success of this study. The experiences of the researcher have been mentioned in chapter one, "Ōku Wheako Waka Ama". Brewer et al. (2014) state, "The researcher's personal qualities, identity, and family connections are essential. Similarly, relationships between researchers and people involved in the research are fundamentally important, both during design and throughout the study"(p. 89).

From the kaiurungi's location, they are able to interpret the experiences of the participants in relation to both their viewpoint and the viewpoint of the kaihoe in front of them, as a synergy of an insider-outsider researcher. Within a study, the kaiurungi can switch their position between insider and outsider. For example, a kaiurungi may be a kaihoe, making them an insider in terms of waka ama paddling. That is, situated inside the social group being researched. However, they may be an outsider in terms of kaihoe wahine, kaihoe rangatahi and so on. Insiders must be mindful of the risk they put their relationships in by using their position in their research. As an insider, there is an accountability to that group, and negative impacts may result in transformation to a full-time outsider (Smith, 2013).

As an insider, there are advantages regarding access to the appropriate participants and understanding of communication signals, that is, being able to understand the typical vernacular of the phenomenon. If one hears '[kia rite](#)', they would know it means get ready to paddle, not to do a haka. However, the outsider is less likely to take commonly known assumptions for granted and inquiry into behaviours, which also has its benefits (Mayan, 2023). More of the threat would be an outsider researcher from outside of the waka ama community or the Indigenous community of this kaupapa (Smith, 2013).

The kaiurungi is ultimately responsible for the direction the Waka Ama Rangahau is heading based on their interpretation of available data. Smith (2015) clearly explains that Kaupapa Māori research should be carried out by Māori, and this waka ama research was also conducted by a Māori researcher who is also a kaihoe and has experienced the phenomenon at the heart of this study. There was always expert advice available from the two tohunga supporting the kaiurungi, the supervisors for this study, Dr Haki Tuaupiki and Dr Anne Hiha.

Power relationships are a critical consideration in interviews. Another kaiurungi may be female, Māori, and an elite coach, had a lengthy duration in waka ama and therefore deserves their due respect and power. The difficulty remains in trying to establish equity and, therefore, trust (Mayan, 2023). However, kaupapa Māori research will allow equity through recognition of rangatiratanga for all participating.

The discussion chapters three, four, five and six are like the view of the kaiurungi. From the [kei](#) of the waka ama, in the rear seat, they are able to observe the trim of the waka ama rangahau. They assess whether the metaphoric rigging process was adequate or not. The kei and the [ihu](#) of both the waka and ama are all used to assess the rigging for stability, efficiency and suitability for this journey of discovery.

The researcher, likewise, continually defined and refined the data collected from literature, kaihoe and personal experience. It is a balancing act where experience

leads to the research question, which supported the literature review, which supported the kōrerorero. Combined, they lead to the findings, which in turn lead to more inquiry. This cyclic process reoccurred until finally a conclusion was found.

The data received had formed new knowledge about the many different rigging configurations. Here, the researcher gathered the research data and categorised them appropriately, noting wind conditions, water conditions and so on, comparing them with those experienced prior. This allowed for a meaningful reading of the data experienced in this journey to establish a mental, physical and spiritual form of empathy for each kaihoe. More on this in the following section.

When discussing the guideline "[kia mahaki](#)", Brewer et al. (2014) discloses that demonstrating respect towards others, attention to their kōrero and actions, and care not to belittle others' mana, the researcher will be displaying kia mahaki. Coinciding with this, Mullane (2023) comments that as many kaihoe in this kaupapa will identify or state a connection to Māori and Pacific ethnicities, suitable research frameworks will need to be considered or created.

Tātari Kōrero

The analysis of data for this study was conducted using Thematic Analysis (TA). Conversely, the Whakaaro method was employed to provide an accompanying method to provoke "simultaneously independent but world-related response to what another has said" (Mika & Southey, 2018, p. 796).

Transcriptions of all [kōrerorero](#) were conducted by first running the audio file through Microsoft Word's transcription tool, and then these draft transcriptions were checked for accuracy by Roni Nuku and Teress Nuku. This task was outsourced due to the researcher's dyslexia, time restraints, and because my whānau were my support ama. Each support person was given a koha aroha.

Thematic Analysis (TA)

TA is an accessible and theoretically malleable approach for analysing qualitative data. This method of analysis can be applied to either reflect or reveal realities. Clarke & Braun discuss that TA can work with a range of research questions, “from those about people’s experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts” (2013, p. 2).

For this study, the TA focused on pragmatic elements of the research data and constructing the meaning of such data (Spiers & Riley, 2019). TA involved identifying, analysing and then interpreting themes that occur within the data (Terry et al., 2017). According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), TA is designed for shared and collective meanings, which makes it suitable for Kaupapa Māori framework. The interpretation employed both Western hermeneutics and Māori Indigenous Whakaaro to complement the diversity amongst the kaihoe involved.

Firstly, codes are allocated to relevant information from all collected data, and then emergent themes are found. TA is not merely stating figures associated with kōrerorero. It involves transforming the data into codes associated with ideas and concepts relevant to the research kaupapa. Some codes will be numerous, others not so. Related codes are assembled into broader themes that represent new patterns within the dataset. The themes are defined and refined until they are ready for appropriate naming to describe the content.

Kiger and Varpio (2020) simplify this with a six-step process; “Familiarizing Yourself with the Data”, “Generating Initial Codes”, “Searching for Themes”, “Reviewing Themes”, “Defining and Naming Themes”, and finally “Producing the Report/Manuscript” (pp. 849-850). Familiarising is a process [of hoki atu, hoki atu](#), listening to kōrerorero prior to transcription, during the transcription, reading the kōrerorero transcriptions a number of times to enable it to sit like [tangata whenua](#) in one’s mind.

Epstein (2013) discusses chunking, which is like a kaiurungi noting the bumps on the water, then coding them into types of waves: large, steep, building, dumping, spilling and so on. With more experience, the downwind kaihoe will recognise patterns in the coded bumps and identify themes; easy to catch, difficult to ride, able to link left and so on. With more time, defining and refining these themes into well-classified themes that inform the downwind kaihoe with which they are confronted. Now there is no need to concentrate on each of the smaller codes.

Codes are parts of the data related to the phenomenon. Themes should have independent value while maintaining position within the bigger picture of the thesis. It may take time to see which codes fit best in which particular theme, but worthwhile when they all fit neatly together. During the review, “Themes can be added, combined, divided, or even discarded” (Kiger & Varpio, 2020, p. 851).

Next, the themes are scrutinised for importance and relevance. There may be situations where themes are not directly relevant to the research question, but are seen as important all the same. These are data-driven themes and can provide richness to the overall study.

Lastly, the production of a report that goes beyond basic data regurgitation or surface semantics. It is an interpretation of data and links each theme of kōrerorero and literature to create a wholeness. This is a reflexive process. Mayan (2023) explains reflexivity as the ability of a system to objectify itself in order to refer back upon itself. It is an ongoing conversation about experience and developments, while being in the moment. One must stay clear of confessional ethnography that evolves into an apologetic mechanism to liberate researchers of any transgression. She sums up the act of analysis nicely by saying, “we can construct sensible, complex, fascinating, and indefinite accounts of reality that simultaneously evoke wonderment and unease about what it means to be part of our social world” (Mayan, 2023, p. 139).

With TA being a flexible method, Kiger and Varpio (2020) warn that it runs the risk of being seen as less rigorous, lacking transparency and leaving readers confused. To avoid this, as much information as possible needs to be provided to demonstrate the rigours. However, Mayan (2023) disagrees and believes that it is quantitative research thinking. Instead, suggested trustworthiness over rigour, and the criteria for this evolve over time.

Following the TA, the presentation of data and findings will utilise thematic synthesis. The kete kōrero and kaihoe perceptions intertwined, supporting each other like the kīato and ama. The kete kōrero is the combination of the research and literature in a discussion. Where possible, the kete kōrero will be the first section of a theme, and kaihoe perceptions the second. There may be situations where kete kōrero appears in kaihoe perceptions, and vice versa, to lend a little help on the theme at hand.

Researchers need to carefully work through the data and literature, and resist advancing too fast without a solid footing on the situation. However, despite also needing the ability to forgo any poorly supported ideas, the use of the Whakaaro method allows time, space and energy for non-empirical observations.

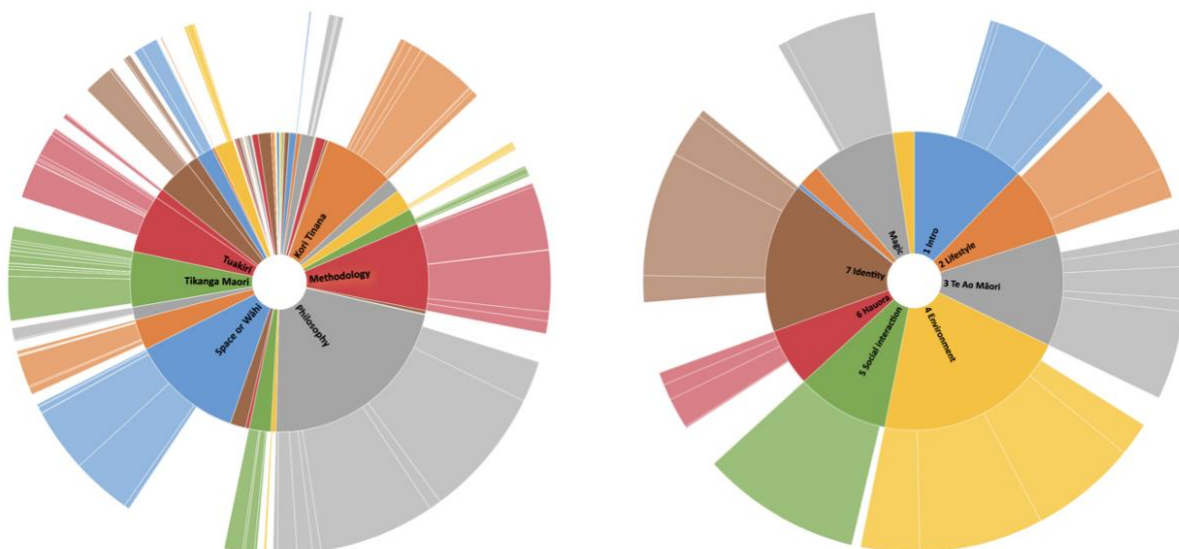


Figure 2 Codes and themes created in the NVivo software.

Whakaaro Method

This method weaves verifiable data with creative thinking, encouraging researchers away from taking kōrero at face value (Mika & Southey, 2018). Whakaaro is a suitable method for Māori research, its metaphysics, enchantment and magic. Somewhat nebulous, it is compatible with the nebulosity of our world. Often genuflecting to Kaupapa Māori and Mātauranga Māori, it can play a significant role in consolidating what remains outside of the empirical world to create a final vision in its entirety.

The Western view of frivolity towards Indigenous views should not subvert the positionality in Te Ao Māori (Mika & Southey, 2018). They also state, “wellbeing that is not empirical cannot be resolved through an empirical means” (p. 799). Therefore, the magic of waka ama required the utilisation of Whakaaro to create entirety.

Throughout the TA process, time was allocated to the act of [whakaaro](#). Once [whakaaro](#) had been recognised as compatible with this thesis, the implementation of [Āta](#) Whakaaro occurred to establish deeper concepts relevant to the research questions. Here we have a situation similar to a kaihoe trusting in the feel of the waka ama and its crew. There may not be empirical data to justify this sentiment, but a kaihoe attuned with their environment will be able to utilise Whakaaro to address their non-empirical stance. It is not uncommon for seat one, the stroke, to be positioned in an important role due to their feel for the crew behind them and the feel of the water. More often than not, without the utilisation of technological devices.

Sutherland (2019) states, “Machines don’t allow for magic...Psychology does...In our addiction to naïve logic, we have created a magic-free world” (p. 11). Whakaaro will ensure the magic survives. There were, however, situations where empirical data was supplied, and therefore Western hermeneutics was of value.

Thematic Synthesis

Thematic synthesis is a method for synthesising findings from multiple qualitative sources by applying a new level of thematic coding, developing descriptive themes, and then establishing high level analytic themes to produce new explanations or hypotheses (Lucas et al., 2007; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Flemming et al., 2019). This is ideal for drawing together kaihoe and researcher perceptions together with the literature of this study.



Figure 3 Research journey to Hawaiki Ora. Coding, theming and synthesis. Author created using AI.

Flemming and Noyes (2021) also state that thematic synthesis is inclusive to a wide range of data sources. This allows for a greater understanding of the phenomenon at

hand, such as human attitudes, beliefs and experiences. While discussing the use of software engineering to extend the potential of thematic synthesis, Cruzes and Dyba (2011) mentioned that thematic synthesis is particularly useful in creating new insights into rare events. NVivo was the software engineering used for this study, however, it was not utilised to its fullest to aid with the interpretation and synthesis of findings.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is described by George (2020) as both the study and philosophy of interpretation. It is a philosophical approach established on the notion that humans are interpretative, that is, continually generating interpretations of their existence and reality (Devine & Lopez Frias, 2020; Welters, 2016), which is “first and foremost an inner reality, a coherence experienced from within” (Dilthey, 1990, p. 231). Hermeneutics does not aim to provide explanations, but to acquire understanding (Jirásek et al., 2018; Martínková & Parry, 2016).

Being and Time (Heidegger, 2010) stimulated the use of hermeneutics from this broader text interpretation, to the concept of being and thus seeing ourselves as hermeneutic (Donohoe, 2017). Lopez Frias and Gimeno Monfort (2016) comment that Heidegger introduces the concept of *dasein*, being-in-the-world, which to him is “not in the world as a spatial object but absorbed in the world.” (p. 381). Within the waka ama, one is absorbed by the waka ama world and its many characteristics.

Heidegger, along with Gadamer and Ricoeur were amongst thinkers of the twentieth century who fostered the idea that we are always prejudiced (Grondin, 2016). Pre-existing understanding allows interpretation to be constructed with more depth and breadth (Martínková & Parry, 2016). Prejudices become an issue in terms of hermeneutics when individuals are ignorant of their existence and impact on interpretation. This self-interpretation is not singular, as individuals exist in the world with others, consistently comparing themselves to others (Allen-Collinson, 2012). This relates to Chapter One and the comments on insider-outsider. Here, hermeneutics

demonstrates similarities with the Māori philosophical view of the collective world, where the individual interprets the world as part of the collective interpretation, including the others' view within their own interpretation. Opposing this is Descartes' "I think, therefore I am", while supportive of it are the Ubuntu phrases, "I am because we are" and "I am human because I belong" (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013, p. 84). A Māori worldview equivalent is "I belong, therefore I am" (Irwin, 2022, p. 7).

Heidegger's phenomenology, by turning the attention to the being and human existence, supported an ontological structure called facticity, an opposing moment to transcendence (Crowell, 2004). That is, not something found in consciousness, but found in our being-in-the-world (Dilthey, 1990).

Whakapapa is at the core of being-in-the-world for Māori. Here everything is connected, acting and reacting in a continuous routine, making sense of one's place, stance and general relationship between the layers of understanding and between the pillars of existence. When one's being is established in the world, one can interpret experiences of their world and connect to the experiences of others.

Individuals are important elements of the collective *gestalt*, encapsulated by Māori identifying as tangata whenua. Whaanga (2012) refers to this as belonging to the land, however, rephrasing to "being from the land" could also suffice when one considers the whakapapa connection established through Māori cosmology. He goes on to discuss Māori use of whakapapa to connect with the broader environment or "spread themselves over the land" (p. 43), and whanaungatanga as locating oneself between their kinship. There should be no hierarchy, but as with Māori values of whanaungatanga, respect should be afforded to all.

An individual's experience of themselves, others and the world is impacted by their passion (George, 2020). This suggests that one's passion for this kinship or their whānau will impact their own experience in the world. An extreme of this could be *das man*, no longer being in the world, but consumed by the world and all its hype. This

can occur from temptations capable of absorbing them, and making them objects in the world, as opposed to being themselves as constituents of the world. Another avenue is the tendency to follow the influence of the social world of others (Donohoe, 2017; Martínková & Parry, 2016).

For waka ama, the passion established may aid in the connection of the self to others and the world, that being the waka ama world. This is possibly a positive *das man*, or the falling from one's world that is unaccommodating to that individual into a world worthy of their passion. Perhaps, for example, a non-Māori world into Te Ao Māori promotes a kinship of all, not objectifying anything. Kaihoe may end up falling, but landing safely and establishing *dasein* in the waka ama world, Te Ao Māori or a modern day Hawaiki Ora.

In contemporary times, philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer is known for connecting interpretative experience with education. Experience of truth was critical for understanding, according to his approach, and this truth cannot be attained through modern scientific methods. This truth is a result of continuous prediction and exchange until an adequate interpretation is formed. These are based on our own hermeneutic experiences, traditions, and languages. They create horizons we can use to guide us, and in turn, new horizons are added to assist in this process. Broadening these horizons enables a more in-depth understanding of our world. This can be achieved by the fusion with other historical horizons, unifying the outcome (George, 2020). As Dilthey (1990) stated,

“historical consciousness constructed on this basis has enabled modern man to hold the entire past of humanity present within himself: across the limits of his own time he peers into vanished cultures, appropriating their energies and taking pleasure in their charm, with a consequent increase in his own happiness” (p. 231).

Here Dilthey extends hermeneutics to include social situations, “effectively turning society into a text”, (Donohoe, 2017, p. 26) and situations are temporally vast.

Gadamer follows Heidegger’s famous phrase regarding the correct entry point into the hermeneutic circle, meaning that the prejudiced nature of an individual’s understanding needs to be acknowledged as making understanding possible. He also encourages the use of the correct prejudices to increase conductivity to what is being interpreted (Grondin, 2016).

Dilthey (1990) implies that the hermeneutic process strives to understand the author of a text better than the author understood itself. He concludes by saying the primary purpose of hermeneutics is to protect the validity and theoretical justification of interpretation that historical knowledge is based on. Therefore, it is important from the beginning of this study to understand interpretation as it applies to many concepts of waka ama that may arise from the kōrerorero process. This will also maintain the mana of all participants and their mana over their kōrero, their taonga.

Worthy of investigation is the triad of play, games, and sports, and the broader term leisure. Waka ama could encompass one or more of these definitions. While seeking a definition for these activities, it is clear to see that they cannot individually be defined in isolation from the others. For the externalist who disregards the theory of athletic performance, they view games and sport as a means to an alternative end. The narrow internalist, however, believes rules are the defining aspect of games. Then the broad internalist looks beyond the rule-defining approach to an intrinsic ethos within the activities (Welters, 2016). The realist embraces the world of gestalts as being the real perceived world, and in such, the concrete contents like objects, humans, animals, plants or practices such as physical activities cannot be comprehended in isolation. Waka ama could well be seen as a gestalt, or a sum of many perceived “relational wholes” (Loland, 1996, p. 73). More on this topic in chapter five.

Kaihoe

This section introduces the kaihoe who participated in this kaupapa. Explanations on why they were selected and the manner of enrolment have been discussed already. Each kaihoe who was asked to participate agreed straight away, without reservation, with the understanding that their kōrero, this kaupapa and waka ama as a whole would be respected. The kaihoe are presented in order, from [Te Waipounamu](#) through to [Te Hiku o te Ika a Māui](#). There is so much more to know about these amazing people, but that will be left for individuals to seek out and enter into kōrerorero with them in due time.

Craig Pauling

The farthest south kaihoe, Craig has whakapapa connecting him to Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mamoe, Waitaha, and Ngāti Mutunga. His great-grandmother was from the Chatham Islands, providing a link to Te Wharekauri, and he always acknowledges his English, Scottish, and Welsh whakapapa too. He did not grow up knowing his Māori lineage, however, and it was playing rugby in England as a young man that grew a desire to know more about who he was growing up. Returning home to study, he soon realised that he had a whakapapa that connected him to a whole new world. Up for a challenge, he embarked on a journey of self-discovery, including te reo and whakapapa, which set him up to be a particularly useful person for his iwi. Along his journey, he was introduced to waka ama and the wider traditions associated with waka in Aotearoa. Craig's kōrero is a true taonga and shows a unique perspective within this kaupapa.

Karmen Wallace

Mother of two, kuia to three mokopuna and Auntie Karmen to the waka ama fraternity, Karmen has been a long-term kaihoe and [kaitūao](#). For a very long time, she has volunteered at the WANZ Sprint National Champs. She was for so long the voice of the loading bay, and a voice for many volunteers in this kaupapa. Her paddling started

in Wellington, at Kōkiri Taipatu Waka Ama, who are based at Kōkiri Marae, Seaview, Lower Hutt. It was a whānau activity that drew her in.

Turi Hodges

With many years of experience in water sports, Turi is a true waterman. At home sailing, paddling, downwind surfing and kaimoana diving, there is not much he cannot do around water. An extremely competitive paddler, he manages to maintain a social focus at the club level to support waka ama as a whole. Turi is a basket of knowledge in terms of waka ama, and everyone benefits from the wealth of in-depth analysis he has shared for this study.

Te Wai-a-Tauranga Nuku

The youngest of three paddling sisters, Te Wai-a-Tauranga had something to prove on the water. After winning a World Whitewater Rafting gold medal in the Junior 18 Women's downriver, she joined the well-known distance team Manus and Jemimas for their first serious sprint campaign. After an outstanding performance by winning the open women's 1500m race from long-term title holders, Te Wai-a-Tauranga was able to focus her energy towards university. Now, she notes, is the time to return to paddling, as she knows it is never too late to paddle, as her koroua was paddling at 75. Having Te Wai-a-Tauranga's thoughts around the research questions will add a view that is becoming more common, that of the lifetime kaihoe. This study is all the better for having her weird and wacky ideas.

Moana-Lee Raihania

A founding member of Haeata Ocean Sports and driving force behind the establishment of Waka Ama Kahungunu, a RSO under Sport Hawke's Bay, Moana-Lee has left a trail of well-organised entities. Her passion to support her girls' paddling resulted in her taking to the water as an example to other mums and wāhine Māori. Not happy with these achievements, she has taken on many governance roles such

as Sport Hawke's Bay, Sport New Zealand, on the WANZ board and now at Te Huinga Tākaro Aotearoa. Moana-Lee's thoughts are a taonga that enhances the ihi, wehi and wana of this study.

Matahi Whakataka-Brightwell

The godfather of waka ama in Aotearoa, Matahi, single-handedly established the pivotal epoch-making revival. Matahi was living with his kuia Te Huatahi Susie Gilbert in Otaki. She sent him to Ohau, to Tarawhai Master Carvers Hona Gardiner and Hone Heke. Francis Cowan, Raipoia's father, was given the Hawaiki nui project by Matahi's Kaumatua in Porirua. Francis met Matahi and invited him to come to Tahiti to build Hawaiki nui Waka Hourua. The waka was completed in Tahiti by Matahi and Tahitian helpers Nga Toi Nga Taonga Tuku Iho. He was then part of the crew that sailed it to Aotearoa from Tahiti, along with his plan to revive waka ama in Aotearoa.

Matahi and his wife Raipoia, along with their children and mokopuna, are skilled kaihoe and the backbone of Mareikura Waka Ama Club in Gisborne. They have four generations of kaihoe. Matahi has always been an elite-level kaihoe and coach. He paddled with Tahitian crews and coached many world champions. It would not be a waka ama kaupapa without the voice of Matahi to ground it in the past, present and potential future realities. [E kore e mutu ngā mihi.](#)

Raipoia Brightwell

If her husband is the godfather, Raipoia must be the godmother of waka ama in Aotearoa. Moving to Aotearoa from Tahiti with Matahi, she soon became the example of excellence for kaihoe wāhine all over Aotearoa and any other location she graced the water. She has excelled in W1 paddling and is classified as a master steerswoman, representing her new home of Aotearoa on several occasions. Raipoia was part of the original Tātau Hoe, the original secretary in 1988. Her greatest achievement would

surely be her amazing children and grandchildren. To have such an experienced and humble vahine participate in this kaupapa is a true privilege.

Liz Savage

Liz was a high-performance athlete in netball and touch rugby before starting waka ama. It did not take long for her to rise to the same level of performance in waka ama, as both a steerer and paddler.

She has represented Aotearoa multiple times over multiple years on the waka ama world stage. Always a professional, and always keeping it whānau. Her club is Hei Matau from Rotorua, within the Puku-o-te-Ika Region. It is a special voice gained for this kaupapa, having Liz involved.

Martin Helleur

Martin is a talented kaihoe, was in a team with a world title in the Open Men's 500m sprint, from Tahiti in 2002. Following that success, he spent time learning more in-depth aspects of waka ama racing. He has since been continually sharing his knowledge with youth and adults for health, cultural and individual performance improvements. Based in Rotorua, he enjoys both competitive and social paddling, the balance of both providing holistic wellbeing. He is working with Te Arawa Lakes in Rotorua, protecting the waterways with biosecurity and educating water-users, following the values of his tīpuna and fellow kaihoe. It is a pleasure and honour that he found time to support this kaupapa.

Heeni Hope

A kaiako and a kaihoe, Heeni has both a pragmatic and analytical approach for waka ama, grounded on her deep understanding of te ao Māori, waka ama, and science. She enjoys the competitive challenge of waka ama as a sport, but also the opportunities waka ama provides to travel to new locations, local or international.

Originally for Tūrangawaewae Water Sports in the Waikato area, she now paddles the waters of Rotorua. It was a true honour to have Heeni share her thoughts on the many topics discussed in this kaupapa.

Jason Porter

Renowned carver and tā-moko artist Jason, is equally well known for his paddling skills and wisdom. While involved in a carving project, he came across waka ama, and it became a part of his life. He has represented Aotearoa in waka ama at overseas events for many years. Jason could be classed as from the waka ama older school, where the sport side has never overpowered his love for the wider kaupapa of waka ama. He has branched out to waka hourua, surfski, surfing and stand-up paddle boarding, but always with waka ama as his special marine place. This is also likely the reason why he found time in his busy life to share some of his whakaaro on waka ama. This study benefits enormously from capturing his insightful views.

Tūranga Barclay-Kerr

From the Waikato club, Te Toki Voyaging Trust, Turanga is an experienced waka ama kaihoe and coach. He dedicates countless hours to improving rangatahi's lives through waka ama. A member of the elite squad in 2016, Turanga has reached the highest level of waka ama, while remaining staunch to the values of his tīpuna. Turanga is a leader in waka circles, the captain of the waka taua, Taheretikitiki II, and he also represents his fellow kaihoe on the WANZ board in a governance role. All these factors make it a true honour to have his thoughts shared

Conan Herbert

Raised in Pawarenga, Conan is one of Aotearoa's premier watermen. Regarded by many as the foremost Men's steersman, he can also upset the best OC1 paddlers on any given day. Brought up by parents who were both elite athletes, Conan and his two younger brothers were destined for waka ama greatness from a young age. The

whānau team, Herberts on Tour, is known internationally due to their pedigree and their numerous world titles. Conan and his fantastic wife Lana, also a great kaihoe, have two lovely children, Metua and Hana, who are both continuing the waka ama legacy. Conan and his whānau run Tai paddles, producing beautiful, high-performance hoe, and waka ama for kaihoe around the world. Despite their busy waka ama lifestyle, Conan made time to support this kaupapa. [Kāhore e ārikarika ngā mihi.](#)

Lara Collins

Lara played many sports until trying waka ama. She has always had leadership skills, which suit anyone wanting to tackle the challenge of steering a waka ama. Lara went on to steer several successful teams. She steered Aotearoa in many international events, accumulating several world titles along the way. Lara also steered WANZ with her leadership as WANZ President/Chair, before becoming the first and present WANZ CEO. Recognised for her leadership expertise, she was voted in as the President chairperson of the International Va'a Federation in 2016. Somehow, she managed to find time to support this kaupapa and provide her rich insight on waka ama. E kore e mutu ngā mihi.

Richard Pehi

Richard went from social paddler to world champ in a very short time. He has won two Master Men's W1 500m sprint world titles, and also won an Elite Open Men's W6 500m sprint title. When he is not paddling, he works in health promotions, involved in mental health waka ama events and housing kaupapa also. Richard is a well-known elite athlete, volunteer and uncle at WANZ events. With waka ama in many facets of his life, it is a privilege to have his whakaaro on this kaupapa.

PCWA

The COVID-19 restrictions of 2021 and 2022 had a negative impact on many. Waka ama did not escape the complications of the time. Kaihoe were locked down in their

homes, ultimately locked out of paddling their waka ama. Many kaihoe discovered that the time off the water highlighted their passion for paddling. On returning to the water after the initial restrictions were lifted, many were not so focused on racing due to perhaps a new look on life or due to the lack of certainty around events.

An email went out to clubs on the 30th November, 2021, stating that Aotearoa would move to the COVID-19 Protection Framework of the government at 11.59pm on the 2nd December that year. On the 17th of December, WANZ emailed the clubs for feedback on their draft of the WANZ COVID-19 Event Policy (event policy).

Initially, one waka ama whānau reached out to another whānau to discuss the event policy via zoom in an attempt to provide helpful feedback on the issue. The zoom attendees list evolved like a wave rising from the ocean, building size and momentum continuously. The Pro-Choice Waka Ama (PCWA) group was established.

The goal of the zoom hui was to discuss the event policy, not debate the pros & cons of vaccination and mandates, or create hubris amongst one demographic over another. Mihimihi unveiled the breadth and depth of the event policy's impact. Mixtures of disappointment, anger and sorrow were shared and supported.

PCWA submitted their feedback with the hope of providing space for those impacted negatively by the proposed event policy to be heard. Their closing comment states,

There is a lack of respect for a segment of the waka ama whānau, the waka ama kaupapa and its caring environment. We cannot see how WANZ can possibly stand proud knowing your integrity is being compromised and our passion is being suffocated. (Pro-Choice Waka Ama, 2021)

The event policy became official, without any changes, on the 28th January, 2022.

The PCWA provided a kaihoe perception from an alternative location on many of the concepts discussed in this study. These participants from around Aotearoa faced the

cold reality that they would be isolated from their activity of choice, their portal into te ao Māori, their connection to their tīpuna and so on. It was not until they lost it that they truly understood what they had and what they loved about waka ama. Therefore, it was an opportunity to capture the emotional discourse of this minority group in their heterotopic space. The participants kindly allowed the use of their kōrero for this study.

Māhere Pānui

The reading plan below will guide you through the following chapters. Chapter Three, 'Tū te Hoe', contains three sections: Kia Rite, Hoes and Kia Mau. The chapter incorporates kōrero from both the kōrerorero and kete tuhinga to explain the reasons kaihoe started and remained in waka ama, and investigates how lifestyle and identity evolve as a consequence.

Chapter Four, 'Manini te Waka', is a kete tuhinga that tackles the statement that 'waka ama is more than a sport.' This contains kete kōrero and opinions on the classification of physical activities such as waka ama. There is little kaihoe perception as this statement was discovered as a commonality and important after the kōrerorero process was completed.

Chapter Five 'Mana ki Tangaroa' delves into the spatial temporal environment of waka ama. It includes a unique voice of the silent sufferers of isolation from their identity and social sphere.

The last chapter summarises the key findings of each chapter to support the new knowledge. This knowledge is discussed further in terms of its future application. The Waka AMA Model is presented as the final destination of this map.

All images are the property of the researcher. They were created using Adobe Illustrator.

Kupu Whakamutunga

This chapter has launched the methodological framework that stabilises and propels the Waka Ama Rangahau on its journey of discovery. By aligning with Kaupapa Māori Theory (*takere*), this research offers an unflinching and unapologetic stance on prioritising Māori desires, values, and worldview. It affirms the validity and agency of Māori ways of knowing essential for rangatiratanga. The *takere*, formed through the whakapapa of Tāne and carried forward by Tangaroa, form an ontological pronouncement of being Māori, being in Te Ao Māori and researching from within.

Building upon this foundation, Kaupapa Māori Research (*rauawa*) expand the Waka Ama Rangahau's capacity to safely carry a multiplicity of Māori ideas. These *rauawa* maintain integrity against external forces, against epistemological dilution. Constructed from Kaupapa Māori Māramatanga, the *taumanu* stabilises the research space internally, ensuring coherence, relational validity, and a place for whakaaro. Mātauranga Māori and Māori Philosophy, ancient, adaptive, and relational- guide not only the questions asked but also their interpretation. The inclusion of Te Kore, Te Pō, and Te Ao Mārama situates this research within a cosmological continuum, one that transcends fixed linearity in favour of rhythm, dualities, and transformation.

The values and principles (*aukaha*); *manaakitanga*, *aroha*, *whakapapa*, and *rangatiratanga* tightly bind all components of the waka. These ensure that each stage of the research honours the data and the mana of those who share it. This methodological framework was enriched further by *kōrerorero* and *pūrākau* to gather data in a culturally appropriate manner. The voices of *kaihoe* were invited, guided, and situated as positive buoyancy into the ama of the research through Kaupapa Māori praxis.

Lastly, the dual analytic approach using Thematic Analysis and Whakaaro provided cultural resonance and analytical rigour. Thematic analysis allowed for the

identification of patterns across narratives, and Whakaaro introduced space for magic, feeling, and the intangible qualities of the waka ama experience.

Together, these methods and metaphors constructed a methodologically stable, spiritually grounded, and culturally embodied Waka Ama Rangahau. The kaiurungi, as researcher and kaihoe, continued to steer with sensitivity, responsibility and dedication to the kaupapa, ensuring each stroke forward honoured those kaihoe paddling alongside, those who paddled before, and those [kaihoe o āpōpō](#).

The next chapter aims to establish the motivations that influenced kaihoe to start waka ama, and for remaining as kaihoe holding fast to their [hoe](#). Comprehension of these motivations can ensure they are maintained for future prospective kaihoe and enable the replication in other arenas. It also aids in establishing the reasons for the disciplined lifestyle changes that are investigated later in the thesis.

The following chapter will also discuss the embrace of identities, evolving with every experience. The changes that kaihoe experiences, both desired and undesired. The identity topic is relevant due to its connection to hauora, which is also discussed in a later chapter.

CHAPTER 3

TŪ TE HOE!

Tū te Hoe is the ancestral call to prepare one's paddle. Not only a physical act, but a symbolic transition from the shoreline of the unknown to joining the collective rhythm of waka ama. The call is a metaphor for exploring the first urupounamu rangahau: *What is the magnetic phenomenon that captivates kaihoe?* This inquiry navigates the liminal space between decision and devotion, the moment kaihoe first grasp the paddle and the unfolding experiences that captivate them to waka ama. This chapter paddles alongside the experiences of kaihoe to establish the motivations for people grasping a paddle and starting their waka ama journey.

The framework utilised is a figurative paddling stroke, consisting of two fundamental stages: *Kia Rite* is the preparation stage, and *Hoea* is the paddle action stage. This is the epoch of excitement, risk, surprise and maybe surrender. There are five themes examined in Kia Rite section: Whānau and Friends, Wero/Challenge, Te Ao Māori and Wellbeing. These themes offer an opportunity to understand why kaihoe participated in waka ama. Within Hoea were two themes: Hauora and Te Ao Māori.

Within this chapter are heartfelt comments from the PCWA related to a time many would like to forget, and that many cannot forget. It was a time when the waka ama values and inclusivity were put to the test. What came out of that time was a deeper understanding of the most essential parts of waka ama.

This chapter investigates not only *why* kaihoe begin paddling, but *what keeps them paddling*, even through challenge, change, and adversity. Ultimately, it argues that the magic of waka ama lies in its ability to hold people in a space that is at once physical, cultural, and spiritual, a living expression of Hawaiki Ora.

Thematic synthesis will be utilised in this chapter, with the researcher, the literature and kaihoe perceptions literature and kaihoe perceptions supporting each other like

the kīato and ama. The structure is kete kōrero followed by kaihoe perceptions, but there may be cases where kete kōrero surfaced between kaihoe perceptions to clarify the topic.

Kia Rite (Awareness and Curiosity).

Kia Rite focuses on the preliminary phase for prospective kaihoe and their introduction to waka ama. It investigates their reasons for leaving terra firma to pursue the aquatic and culturally rich world of waka ama.

Zarrett et al. (2020) found that improved access and inclusivity were vital for advancing the poor youth participation statistics. 40% of girls and 33.3% of boys never participate in physical activity, and more than 33.3% of those who do participate drop out. Mokari-Yamchi et al. (2024) found that of youth participants, 36.3% adhered to physical activity recommendations, and 20.9% met screen time guidelines—appalling statistics for future generations.

Motivations for commencing physical activities or sports have been well investigated by scholars such as Erdogdu et al, Zarrett et al, Dorsche et al, Afsanepurak et al, Kerr and Mackenzie, and Warbrick. Each study approaches the question of motivation from its own particular field and aims, selected for their relevance to this thesis on waka ama.

There is a consensus that there are two central motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic. While intrinsically motivated participants aim for improving their skills, experiencing team spirit, being confident and exhibiting sportsmanship, extrinsically motivated, on the other hand, demonstrate more social attitudes, and contribute to elevating one's social status (Afsanepurak et al., 2012; Erdoğan et al., 2014; Warbrick et al., 2020).

Leino et al. (2023) states that comprehension of motives assists in explaining particular behaviours and selections in terms of physical activity. There are three motives, the first is task motivation, which is intrinsic and relates to starting a physical

activity on the premise of “pleasure and personal reward” being attained (Erdoğdu et al., 2014, p. 159). The other two are both extrinsic, with ego motivation associated with comparing one’s performance with that of others. Social motivation is connected to friendship and socialisation, and links to belonging, respect and appreciation. Common amongst studies were the motivations of socialising, achievement, fitness and fun (Afsanepurak et al., 2012; Erdoğdu et al., 2014)

Coaches foster the love for sport and willingness to stay in sport through their likability and the participant’s perception of the coach’s competency. Parental support was found to have a profound impact on the retention or dropping out of girls in sport. Dorsch et al. (2015) found sports provides parents and children with new opportunities to interact and communicate. Parents or caregivers play an essential role in children starting physical activities. They are responsible for creating environments for their children to grow and develop. Consequently, parents became part of the sporting culture, embracing their new roles and utilising the sports setting to teach life lessons to their children.

Erdoğdu et al. (2014) found that young females preferred membership in team sports and the associated team spirit. This is opposed to the young males’ goal of developing their skill level further. They also suggest that the boy’s skill development desire is to improve their chances of selection in good teams, somewhat intrinsic in nature. Initially, both genders generally strive for fun and competition, whereas adults are typically motivated by health gains and have a preference for less physical and less complex activities.

Leisure time physical activities were the focus of Leino et al. (2023), who categorised escapism, the temporary escape from the pressures of the world, into three concepts. Solitary Escapism (me alone), Co-Escapism (us alone) and Integrative Escapism (us together or apart) all fit the waka ama experience. From an individual to a whole whānau, they can all escape the day-to-day drudgery and monotony while paddling and escaping to Hawaiki Ora.

Leino et al. (2023) discusses a neglected area of study, that of family constellations, or whānau in a kāinga, and how physical activity can improve wellbeing. They found that family constellations influenced the physical activity motivations. Also of interest is that the leisure time physical activity impact on wellbeing is bidirectional. This means a whānau's wellbeing state can impact the physical activity pursued, which is evident in the kaihoe comments to follow.

Nearly all kaihoe were encouraged by their whānau and friends. Moana-Lee was persuaded by whānau and friends to take her daughter to waka ama, igniting a long-burning flame. "She just rung me one day and said, 'Do you want to bring Kim down to have a go at waka ama?' And I'm like, 'Yeah. What happens?' She goes 'Just come down'. So, we did..." (M. Raihania, personal communication, January 27, 2021).

Moana-Lee took her child, who soon became an accomplished paddler, and over time reciprocated by influencing her mother to paddle also. There were a few other cases where the parents of tamariki were influenced to join in the waka ama paddling. One case was not a young child, but myself as an adult, influencing my father, who was in his late 50s at the time. He attended one national sprint regatta as our whānau van driver, and on the return trip from Whangārei to Wellington, he informed us all that he would like to start paddling too. He paddled well into his 70s.

Richard explained how his wife first tried waka ama with her friends, and then suggested he try it also, "Ngairi comes back and she goes, 'Oh my gosh, it was so cool, you need to come down' (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021). Richard and I both have our wives to thank for introducing us to waka ama, which is not uncommon due to waka ama having a higher female participation rate in Aotearoa.

Craig remembered his friend encouraging him to try waka ama,

...come and do Waka Ama' and I said, 'What's that?' I don't even know what it was, had no idea. 'Just come and do it bro'... So I just met down there, got into

it, got chucked in probably seat five or something and that was me. (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021)

While overseas, Martin had the opportunity to paddle a traditional Madagascan waka ama, known as a lakanā-piarā to the local people (Hornell, 1920). He comments on taking a chance to reconnect to that craft with waka ama in Aotearoa:

“Then I was having a crack at it and tipping out, and I was like, ‘hey, what’s that?’ I was over there skippering a boat over there...so that was my first experience and that was the late 80s, early 90s and then in 2000...I was working in Auckland and this team from Tāmaki Outriggers “Oh can you sponsor our team? We do waka ama.” “What’s that?” “Oh, come down and have a look at it.” (M. Helleur, personal communication, September 22, 2021)

From that early invitation, Martin met the waka ama whānau of that club, and the rest is history.

Summing this section up nicely, Turi stated while discussing the feeling inside a waka ama club, “your club members are like your family” (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). This is what awaits new kaihoe in most, if not all, waka ama clubs around Aotearoa, and perhaps the world.

Wero

Sport is explained by Martínková and Parry (2016) to possess the ability to present participants with their historical situation and promote human existence to a more visible and recognisable position. Risk in the form of the incessant challenges one faces has an impact on the individual. Accepting the risk and continuing allows growth and precludes the “life of stasis” (Hochstetler & Hopsicker, 2012, p. 124).

One’s decision can lead to either a narrative of the reasonable person who strives for betterment, or of the bad person unable to recognise that their risk evasion is harming

their potential. Unfortunately, regardless of the duration spent striving as a good person, one act of prevarication can be all it takes to risk becoming the opposite.

Through sports, participants can engage in the “precipitousness and risk within a growing culture of docility” (Hochstetler & Hopsicker, 2012, p. 130). Society has become docile because of the phylogenetics of risk mitigation to avoid liability. While risk management protects, it can also eliminate the chance for growth through risk-taking.

Risk is seen as an essential distinction between play and sport. Sport is an opportunity to encounter challenges and take risks. Every time one participates, they engage in the risk of defeat, of injury, of failure, which is not always associated with losing, of criticism, of offending friends and family and so on. Therefore, participants in life must be prepared for these risks, attempt to mitigate or minimise their likelihood. Training, coaching, visualisation, wānanga and other such strategies are helpful for this methodology.

Some sports present risks that are extreme, where failure can result in serious injury or be life-threatening. Conill Sancho (2016) goes as far as to say the “sportsperson does not flee from risk but even looks for this and thus displays another way of valuing life and death” (p. 420). These risks are not like building an unsafe house to dwell in. They are relevant risks that are “predicted, controlled, mastered and dealt with” (Gorichanaz, 2016, p. 371), and intrinsic to humans.

Many academics condemn high-impact sports due to the human harm and social cost to health systems. The self-affirmation associated with harmful sports needs to be weighed up against the harm to individuals, families and society (Devine & Lopez Frias, 2020). High-risk sports, due to their jeopardising nature, stress the finitude of human life. When one understands their potential for death, they gain insight into “authenticity” (Martínková & Parry, 2016, p. 370). Adrenaline junkie events provide a “short-term pleasure, illusions of intoxication from dangerous situations, and escapes

from boredom and emptiness” (Jirásek et al., 2018, p. 9) but are not necessarily processing life’s meaning.

Wall’s (2021) study of cable wakeboarders showed that the relationship within adventure or extreme sports had an impact on the perceived risk. These sports are referred to as a social construct, and if built on trust, their community can normalise the risk associated with these sports. Therefore, in a whānau-focused community such as that of waka ama, where trust is valued, participants may become complacent with regard to safety and risk.

Experiencing this firsthand, my wife and I were filling in for a group of new kaihoe on a [W12](#) when one hull became swamped 50m from shore. We took control, calmly getting some in the water, all the while fearful for the wellbeing of both the kaihoe wellbeing and the waka. Later, the crew members mentioned how safe they felt with my wife and me helping in that situation. This is despite the very high risk of harm to both the kaihoe and waka ama, and also the two of us silently stressing out and contemplating the possible worst-case scenario.

Endurance sports provide another opportunity for risk, especially when participants choose alternative race environments in nature and are exposed to inherent risks beyond the typical urban or formalised venues. Whereas, the isolation that is associated with some forms of nature sports or remote sports, participants can reflect upon life at a higher level and reprioritise what life really is to them (Howe, 2008).

Distance from the shore provides separation from the everyday rigours of life, and opens a world of adventure. One can easily situate oneself in a Hawaiki Ora state, a realm free of the day-to-day struggles and akin to the inspiring historical accounts of the time of their tīpuna. However, Heeni states the sprint environment is a good, safe environment, closer to shore with plenty of supporting safety crafts to minimise the overall risk.

Ultimately, acknowledging threats, whether fearsomeness or sheer vastness, and the ability to cast them aside and continue will produce an elevated state that is called sublime (Ginsborg, 2019; Gorichanaz, 2016; Shapshay, 2018). The participant's perception of the threat will factor here. Someone new to distance paddling could see 10 km as a threat due to their realisation of the latest pain and level of exhaustion they may experience.

Partaking in the paddle could well provide the same sublime moments as those of an experienced participant in a 100km paddle. Each will be embodying any onsets of pain, the unknown levels or amounts of pain to come, or withstand the constant repetitive, rhythmic stroke and sound of water dripping off the paddle blade after every stroke. Being on the water, rivers, lakes, or the ocean will heighten the sense, and therefore, waka ama is an opportunity to experience the sublime.

The ultra-distance movement has established itself in the sporting world and presents even more risk and perhaps more reward. Gorichanaz (2016) discusses the sublime feeling experienced by ultrarunners who are intrinsically motivated, as opposed to the extrinsically motivated experience of beauty. The sublime relates to life's meaning through tackling threats and is heightened in nature environments. Even in urban environments, the sublime can be obtained as in the Sri Chinmoy Ultra set in a single block of Jamaica, Queens, in New York. Competitors aim to cover 3100 miles in 52 days and are guaranteed to be changed at the end.

This aligns with Jason's comments of the great paddlers that inspired him by paddling from Tahiti to Rarotonga, "The difference between racing and what they did, it's a higher level. It's definitely a higher level. It's not a racing level, to me racing here, but to do that type of thing it takes" (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021).

The Māori saying goes, Tūwhitia te hopo, face the fear and do it anyway, and perhaps explains the sublime very well. Along these lines, the Hawaiian saying goes, "no such

thing no can, just can”, (Kenoi, 2014) also demonstrates the power of words in these situations. These words can, however, increase the risk of careless adventures.

In waka ama, we take calculated risks. However, not all hazards can be mitigated. James Moore was a capable paddler of many crafts and a calculated risk taker. Representing Aotearoa in White Water Rafting and Waka Ama, he was a well-respected kaihoe. He unfortunately fell victim to one of the unforeseeables of the ocean during a downwind paddle with friends. This incident was a wake-up call to the waka ama whānau and is memorialised in the annual Bhutty’s Race held every Waitangi weekend in Tauranga, Aotearoa. Risk is ever present in water sports, especially with the horrific drowning statistics in Aotearoa. However, critical thinking for mitigation or minimisation of risks provides learning for individuals and groups to carry into the world.

Waka ama is an adventure activity, challenging many to leave the security of terra firma. Kerr and Mackenzie (2012) investigated the multiple motivations for participation in activities. They demonstrated that risk and its associated adrenaline-fueled experience were not the only reason, or even the main reason, people participated in adventure activities. Positive experiences with nature and the world were everyday, and motivations changed over time, and depending on ethnicity, gender, religion and so on. Therefore, people tend to begin and participate in adventure activities for many reasons, and this varies depending on a multitude of factors.

Looking at the motives for participation in more high-risk extreme sports, Zarrett et al. (2020) inform that for those not competitively inclined, there needs to be non-competition options available that are promoted equally with competitive sports, given the same mana, so to speak. This will assist those motivated to play. However, the motives vary from one extreme sport to another.

Added to the traditional list of motives for participating in physical activity, Zarrett et al. (2020) included two more important motives relevant to extreme sports: vertigo

(danger, extreme experience, excitement and risk), and catharsis (spirit and refreshment). Vertigo can relate to the kōrero of Hawaiki and the kaihoe and kaumoana who travelled the ocean. Commonly conceived as fearless, it is more likely that they were mentally and physically prepared for such adventures. Catharsis, in turn, relates to the renewed sense of existence obtained in the environment, that which resembles Hawaiki or attained in our Hawaiki Ora.

Karmen disclosed how her sister persuaded her and her whānau into paddling in the late 90s:

... 'come down and try out waka ama'...husband got on the waka and had a go and he loved it... took out my Cereace who was about four and a half, five and she loved it. So, I thought oh well I better be brave and courageous and have a go myself. (K. Wallace, personal communications, January 28, 2021)

She demonstrated the apparent risks that needed to be overcome, as stated earlier by Zarrett et al. (2020). Whānau support helped her get through the challenge.

As a young waterman, word got around about Turi, and he was soon scouted out by a waka ama club in its early days. His chance to watch became an opportunity to participate in what most would not try until years of training. Receiving a call from a stranger, the late waterman Perry Hakaraia, this skilled and well-trained adrenaline junky was up for a new challenge. He recalls the life-changing moment,

...he got my number from somewhere and said, "Oh, bro you keen for a paddle?" I said I was keen for a paddle. Rocked up the next day and one of their paddlers pulled out and he said "um, we just going up to Otaki. It's about 55 k's, upwind!" (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021)

Whereas many, like myself, would call that extreme, Turi thought of it as a challenge to be conquered. As noted above, motivations would have included vertigo and catharsis, as it was risky and new.

As a mother of two, although very apprehensive, Karmen embraced the challenge and followed her whānau in trying waka ama. That first experience is so important, as it can make or break someone's initial experience. Karmen mentioned:

...I'm always very, very thankful that the steerer at the time...he only did circles around, not too far, so we didn't go too far from shore and I just felt the exhilaration of being out on the water and seeing the landscape like literally the landscape from a new perspective. (K. Wallace, personal communications, January 28, 2021)

The highly competitive Liz was hesitant at first, but “then finding waka ama had the same adrenaline as I found with ball sports” (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021). Likewise, once Turi made the initial step to check waka ama out, he was faced with quite a challenge. The type of challenge that may have ended many people's interests in waka ama, but the person who invited him knew it would spark a fire in someone like Turi:

He said, “Um, we're just going up to Otaki. It's about 55 k's, upwind!” ...and of course, with my white-water experience on the C1...I had a really cool stroke on one side, but the other side was like really gammy...It turned out to be a bit of a form of entertainment towards the end of the race...but yeah, that was my baptism by fire. I loved it. I love the whole thing. (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021)

Both Liz and Turi gained the adrenaline fix they were familiar with from their earlier physical activities. Whether that was enough to maintain them was yet to be known.

Matahi connected the dots and found a way to combine his [tārai waka](#) and increase his knowledge of waka ama. A random but essential Tahitian luckily took the time to pass on his skills to Matahi:

I was going around in circles. Yeah, and the Tahitian guy actually showed me how to paddle it. Anyway, that's how my Waka Ama life started, and then I met ... (*interrupted by Raipoia*) ... I said to myself, "Man, yeah, I could do both here. I could build the sailing canoe and learn all about this Waka Ama or va'a, then Va'a Ama. (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

Matahi found a connection to his life at that time, went with it and soon discovered more connections. Jason was lucky enough to start paddling with Matahi's support in the early days. Along with other kaihoe, he disclosed that he enjoyed the physicality involved. It was not just pure physical effort, but a somewhat delicate balance of power and finesse. He mentioned an initial paddle with a Tahitian,

...he's just like cruising along, hitting it, and I'm just giving it the frigging mutton. Look, I'm bigger than him, I'm stronger than him, what's wrong with this? Why is this thing not doing? Why am I not going fast or straight? And that's the beauty of waka. When you're good at something, what you don't see is how long it's taken you to perfect it. (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021)

Jason's comment here brings to mind Bruce Lee's famous quote about becoming water, "water can flow or it can crash, be water my friend" (Lee, 2021). For a big, strong person, water can be a very humbling substance to attempt to overcome. Efficiency and mindful movements will result in far greater increases in performance and speed than would increasing one's power output (Laughlin, 2004).

Lara started with the introduction phase in the pool and then ventured out into the harbour. A very safe process for new kaihoe, and very forward-thinking for its time:

We paddled in the dive pool for 2 months before we ever went on the Tamaki Estuary and I never, I think, I never really played softball again after that ... once I started doing it (*waka ama*), it was like it was something I should have

always been doing. I felt really comfortable in that sport and meeting all new people. (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

Te Ao Māori

Te Ao Māori, like all worldviews, emerges from the cosmology, in this case, that of the Māori (Irwin, 2022). There is debate, as mentioned earlier, that worldviews can be constructed by misconceptions presented in text, under the auspices of imperial research. Unfortunately, often the research falls short of authentic recollections of history, on which people could establish their worldview.

Irwin (2022) believes that Te Ao Māori is not a simple or primitive cyclic process. He shows that Te Ao Māori is structured in three tiers, “the Realm of Ultimate Reality, the Realm of the Human, and the realm of the Dead” (p. 5). Māori exist within these three tiers, together to create the wholeness of the Māori experience. Being in the world, but a world with enchantment.

Enchantment is established through myths, legends and names. They all have a role in maintaining the existence of the past in the present and the spiritual in the physical. Myths give religious beliefs to the cosmos and importance to people, while legends allow people to reconcile the natural world. Names hold stories and knowledge. These aspects are all vital in the waka ama experience.

Matahi was carving waka, and then on his first attempt at waka ama, realised that he could do both at the same time, creating and operating. Waka ama had allowed him to connect with his art, embodying both the artist’s expression and the function’s purpose. Taking a break for a swim in a lagoon in Tahiti, he noticed a waka ama approaching.

I asked the guy if I could have a turn and that’s when Waka Ama came into my life...It was strange because I was there to build a sailing canoe to sail 5000 km from Tahiti to New Zealand, I actually hadn’t been in a canoe. So, I hopped

on the little single canoe and hopped on it like a Māori hero. (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

It must be mentioned that this was a significant event in the revitalisation of waka ama in Aotearoa. Matahi, in time, introduced Jason to waka ama, who was carving with Matahi back in Aotearoa. How many Matahi has introduced to waka ama since he returned to Aotearoa would be an incredible sum.

Heeni was always swimming in the [awa](#), and from time to time tried waka kōpapa and waka ama as a youngster.

A [tuakana](#) of ours had been introduced to it and so she was then introducing some of us to it. It was just a one off - there was no continuity. I think we might have had a couple of paddles. [Ka mutu i reira](#). (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021)

She picked waka ama back up as a kaiako at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ruamatā around 2005. The focus then was not on racing but “about te reo, te whānau, ngā [hītori](#), te mana motuhake, te whānau, te [ora](#) o te whānau. Those are my early memories of paddling with the club. It was very much paddling with a lot of our older paddlers” (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021). Waka ama was a vehicle and an environment to be Māori outside of the Māori immersion environment of her [kura](#). It was another place to be comfortable, a Hawaiki Ora, due to its homeliness and whānau focus.

Whakamātūtūnga: Rehabilitation

The ability to rehabilitate a low limb injury while keeping active is often a drawcard for some participants. Data from an early study showed that the most common injuries from sports in Aotearoa were associated with the ankles and knees, and striking, being struck and overexertion (Hume & Marshall, 1994). These are highly unlikely in waka

ama, which is upper body orientated. Waka ama allows for continued exercise and can be executed without the use of the lower limbs.

The following two kaihoe were suggested for waka ama to maintain fitness, but they never knew the change that was ahead of them. Here lies the question of why some stay with waka ama after their recovery.

For Liz, explaining the life-changing moment when she realised that she may not play land-based sports competitively again. She was fortunate enough to have a physio, at the time a kaihoe, who suggested waka ama. Liz also had whānau involved in waka ama, which made the process easier. Her leg injury created an opportunity to try waka ama.

...it was like my world came down. ... I was like I can't play sports! What am I going to do? And I'm not one to sit for too long. I had the op and then the very next day went paddling, because I thought I'd try it. Just to sit in the canoe. Just to try it... (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021)

Likewise, Lara chanced upon waka ama after considering her options post-injury. Another story of humble beginnings:

I was playing basketball, dislocated my knee and couldn't play softball in that year coming up. A friend said 'Oh you should come paddling with us'. I said 'What's paddling?' and I went for a paddle in the then dive pool at Swimarama, waka tied up... (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

Since starting our club, I have been presented with numerous individuals with injuries wanting to stay fit while their lower limb rehabilitation occurs. A full-time iron woman, requiring ankle surgery, was one such kaihoe. She abhorred the thought of losing her hard-earned fitness while awaiting her operation. Imported from Britain, waka ama was a significant change to her, but she soon became part of the whānau.

There has been increased engagement with people with permanent injuries that stop them from participating in other sports that require some level of low limb utilisation. Para-waka ama is another avenue for the para-kaihoe to participate in physical activity, in a culturally, physically, spiritually and mentally safe environment.

It is evident from the kaihoe, whether it was to try something new, try something others were doing or try something that complemented their injury recovery, it was whānau and friends who got kaihoe to take the stroke towards Te Ao Waka Ama. The findings of studies regarding motivations for participation in other sports reinforce this. With the increasingly popular school competitions such as the WANZ Secondary School Sprint Nationals, there is likely to be a growing number of teachers and sport coordinators encouraging their students to participate in waka ama and strategies to keep them paddling need to be considered.

Lifetime Kaihoe

Te Wai-a-Tauranga, Turanga, and Raipoia had all known waka ama their entire lives. As a group, they will be referred to as lifetime kaihoe. It was mentioned that waka ama was never seen as something special, like water to a fish, perhaps.

Raipoia expressed this in her comment about her waka ama world in Tahiti,

I never thought waka was that special because they were all around us. I mean, everyone is a paddler, in my time, everyone knew how to paddle, everyone had paddled...Waka racing was more around traditional racing...you represented your hapū like your district...when something is just part of you, you don't think about it as new and beautiful. (R. Brightwell, September 5, 2021)

Both Te Wai-a-Tauranga and Turanga, despite not using waka as a form of transport or for fishing, saw it as more than a sporting activity. With one major event held each year for their age groups, the national waka ama sprint championships, these youngsters would have experienced training and social paddles far more than they

would have experienced racing. Therefore, the majority of the experiences would have been playing in or playing around waka ama, including the odd informal race between mates. Despite this, they both seemed keen at a young age to experience racing like others in the whānau.

Turanga recalls being five or six years of age when he started in the grade, then called 'midgets'. He went on to say, "if you talk to my mum and dad...my mum was pregnant with me and she was still racing, still steering...as a joke, they say that's why I've done quite a bit in the waka scene" (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). Similarly, Te Wai-a-Tauranga recalled, "We were at the water a lot...Puti and Puhi training...just me and the boys hanging out at the pond...trying to entertain each other...I told my mom I wanted a team" (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021). Te Wai-a-Tauranga had the honour of being born at a regatta while her whānau were away from home. This demonstrates how ingrained waka ama has been in her life. These two lifetime kaihoe were both paddling from an early age, but interestingly, consider being in a team as the point where they started waka ama.

The main reason for these three lifetime kaihoe participating in waka ama was because it was a whānau activity and was a part of who they were as a whānau unit. Other kaihoe also disclosed that it was associated with friends and whānau. My wife was the first in our whānau to paddle, and by chance, I finished work early on a waka ama training day. The first experience was absolutely awesome. As they say, "you can't beat Wellington on a good day!" I was offered a chance to paddle with some amazing people, and the rest is history.

Kia Rite has shown that the primary motivator in joining waka ama is whānau. The stories that whānau share pave an inviting path to something new, yet old, something exciting, yet calming. Friends, challenge, Te Ao Māori and wellbeing also feature, but the whānau is the common factor. One would be safe to say that if attempting anything new, having whānau with you to support is the ideal.

Hoea (Captivation)

The title of this section denotes the command to paddle, here representing the first impressions of the kaihoe when they finally got to paddle. The first step, or more relevant, the first stroke towards a new life. Here we start to see the “hook” that creates a desire to develop beyond the ‘having a go’ stage to being a kaihoe.

For this session, the Whare Tapa Whā health model’s four elements will be used to structure the literature and kaihoe perceptions. Firstly, an introduction to the hauora or wellbeing of Māori will be presented for context.

Understanding the hauora benefits and lifestyle changes will demonstrate the power waka ama possess to return kaihoe to shore in an enhanced state from their experience of Hawaiki Ora.

Wellbeing is the state where one is healthy and content (Islam & Khosravi, 2021). It is an important concept to understand for this thesis, as it will help determine if waka ama is beneficial or detrimental to the wellbeing of kaihoe. In order to accomplish this, an explanation will be provided, along with relevant kōrero from kaihoe and literature. Firstly, some background will be provided to understand the Māori wellbeing situation and demonstrate how balancing one’s hauora will lead towards the magic waka ama far better than if not balanced.

Hauora

The Māori population dropped from 150,000 in the 1800s to 42,000 in 1896. This sudden decline left many believing Māori were destined to die out completely. They were being superseded by a superior race according to some observers, however others argue that it was all part of a genocidal system called colonisation.

The diminution in hauora accompanied the decrease in population. Warbrick et al. (2020) state that,

Although classifications of 'Indigenous' and 'minority' are different constructs – one representing original peoples of a given land, while the other represents those groups who are not classified within dominant culture respectively – Indigenous people often fall within the definition of 'minority' as well. What's more, public health statistics suggest that Indigenous minorities and non-Indigenous minorities share similar health disparities, particularly regarding 'lifestyle' illnesses. (p. 797)

Despite the challenges of the past, Māori numbers are higher than ever, and continuing to grow (Kingi, 2020). Māori hauora is developing, but how robust it is unknown.

Hauora is holistic, with a myriad of components that constitute being Māori, "including their spirituality and cultural identity, alongside physical and mental wellbeing" (Reweti, 2023, p. 2). Te Whare Tapa Whā is a holistic health model that consists of four dimensions: Te Taha Whānau, Te Taha Wairua, Te Taha Hinengaro and Te Taha Tinana that which represent the walls of the house. Although Te Whare Tapa Whā is well known and practical in application, there are aspects such as waiora or environmental protection from Te Pae Māhutonga that could be included (Raureti, 2017; Te Morenga et al., 2018) and are of relevance to this kaupapa. However, one can link the environmental concerns if considering Papatūānuku as having a whakapapa connection according to cosmology, thus including the environment in Te Taha Whānau.

Hauora inequities are persistently experienced by Māori (Haar et al., 2019; Mullane, 2023; Rahiri et al., 2018; Ratima, 2019). With concern towards the Māori and Pacific population's negative health numbers starting to exceed those of Pākehā, a study participant of Gordon et al. (2013) stated, "if that happens, we'll bankrupt the health system, cause our health is poor" (p. 58).

Jansen (2016) showed health inequities between Māori and Pākehā students were unexplained by socioeconomic status. This would suggest that bias within the delivery of Aotearoa's health and social services still exists. There are, however, substantial links between health disparities in avoidable diseases and broader socio-cultural/political determinants of health (Reweti & Severinsen, 2022).

There have been loud and proud demands for equity by the Māori research community. They are unsympathetic and unapologetic in stating that research on Māori hauora must produce positive outcomes for Māori, and not blame Māori for the gaps presented. The Māori voice must be heard, despite being a minority in the Aotearoa population, and a minority percentage in random sampling.

The voices of Māori, Pasifika and Pākehā are heard in this kaupapa, each given their due respect and mana. Equity through meaningful and mindful research is not a chimera, but an inevitable reality (Reid et al., 2017).

Fed up with the growing disparities in health, Māori have denied being the problem and reclaimed being the solution. The ideology of interventions being designed for Māori by Māori has been a positive step toward hauora equity (Eggleton et al., 2018). Positive steps, such as Hauteruruku ki Puketeraki, found that waka reconnect whānau and therefore strengthen their identity. These are also beneficial to their hauora (Mita, 2016).

Waka ama facilitates these interventions being firmly situated in te ao Māori with an appreciation of te reo Māori and whanaungatanga, which all contribute to cultural embeddedness. Furthermore, waka ama can aid in the development of embeddedness in the Māori culture or the unique waka ama cultures created in each region, club and team.

The study by Reweti and Severinsen (2022) found waka ama to be the exemplar of indigenous health promotion. It highlighted the need for a broad approach to wellbeing,

including whānau and involving whānau. Waka ama provides a foundation for community-led health promotions that respect Māori values. The data from their research of 16 kaihoe presented valuable insights into the benefits of waka ama, in particular, to the well-being of the body and environment. They concluded by stating, “Positioned within a Māori worldview, waka ama enhances physical fitness while at the same time promoting cultural identity, social connectedness, intergenerational participation and community cohesion” (p. 252).

WANZ have included hauora as one of their values, stating, “This value focuses on the holistic wellbeing of participants, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Waka Ama provides a platform for promoting health, fitness, and wellbeing through the sport itself” (Waka Ama New Zealand, 2020).

Next, the kaihoe shares some general effects on hauora experienced since starting waka ama. The changes impressed upon by the kaihoe often demonstrate the influence of one being positioned in an activity that sits within a Māori worldview. Influences have varied and range from conscious to unconscious, physical to spiritual. Attending events and watching the way people ate, paddled, what paddle they used and what they wore for particular weather conditions was so interesting to Liz, and although the changes were not immediate, as she said, “I did change”.

Martin mentioned that he gave up smoking in 2000. He worked in hotel management and was around alcohol and so forth daily. He had given up drinking because he needed a change in direction. That change led him to waka ama, and it enabled him to maintain a healthy mind and a healthy body.

Aiming to improve his paddling, Martin stated, “you get your head down and your bum up and you want to really get into it, your health becomes a lot better. You know it’s part and parcel to it. It stopped me from smoking again” (M. Helleur, personal communication, September 22, 2021). The dynamics within your paddling group

influence you, Martin believes. He stated that no one gets a lifestyle lesson; it is the people that you paddle with that impact you.

Hauora, fitness and cultural connections back to your roots are all benefits identified by Raipoia. She also thought that waka ama kept her going through the ups and downs of life. She acknowledged often the many positive situations waka ama provided, “Oh, thanks for waka” (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). A positive factor for Raipoia is the connection waka ama gives her whānau, all being kaihoe. She continued by saying they may not have noticed at the time, but the paddling in their younger years had set them up nicely for the realities of life out in the world.

After six months of waka ama, Richard attended the WANZ Nationals and expressed it as an eye-opener for him. He had never seen so many Māori, let alone so many not drinking. Continuing with his health transformation, he explained:

I smoked cigarettes, I was quite a heavy smoker. I'd been smoking since I was 13 and I was 40 when I got into waka. It's a long time of smoking. For years I've been trying to give up, but for some reason smoking become not important. I felt like I can do this, so I just slowly gave up and within a year I'd given up smoking. (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021).

Nobody pressured or judged him. He also mentioned that part of the reason for his change was that he no longer had time to waste on smoking and alcohol, “I don't really need it, I'm too busy paddling” (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021). This is similar to why Jason stopped frequenting nightclubs. He wanted to maximise his enjoyment of waka ama the following day.

The following section will explore Te Taha Whānau, an element of hauora commonly mentioned by kaihoe. Understanding this will empower one to feel the connectivity provided by waka ama.

Whānau

Whānau is translated to mean “be born” or “be in childbed”, “offspring, family group” and “a familiar term of address to a number of people” (Williams & Williams, 1917, p. 487). This multifaceted term has importance to Māori and to waka ama. It is a support network, likened to the supportive ama of a waka ama.

There are many motivations behind people maintaining their participation in physical activity, and a key motivation, according to Pomohaci and Sopa (2018) is socialisation, or whanaungatanga for this thesis. Their study of a group of sports found that whanaungatanga was often the reason for adult participation. However, the same research captured that one professional sport ranked socialisation last out of the options provided and prioritised movement.

Thorpe et al. (2014) support the importance of socialisation with their study on indigenous athletes who disclosed the pride and responsibility to their culture, motivating them as a team. The team environment also provides a support network and camaraderie.

The taha whānau refers to the relationships that make te ao Māori function. Whānau is pivotal in comprehending who one is, where one is from and one’s identity as Māori (Raureti, 2017). It has evolved beyond purely being a concept of bloodlines to include a wider community.

Taha whānau is used in many organisations to create a sense of meaning and belonging (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). These extensions of whānau provide an alternative whānau in times of need. If an individual did not have whānau in this broader sense to turn to and therefore was isolated socially, the prevalence of mortality and serious morbidity increases (Glover, 2017).

Warbrick et al. (2020) note the need for more culturally and socially relevant studies on the expectations of the role Indigenous men, also applicable to women, play in their

communities, and the impact on their hauora. Waka ama has a wider whānau that links across Aotearoa and throughout Te Moananui-a-Kiwa through whakapapa, even stretching around the globe through the commonalities of a love for the water and paddling alike.

Whanaungatanga is an extension of whānau to an extended network of relationships as mentioned above. It is another value of WANZ, and they explain it as, “This value promotes a strong sense of belonging, identification, and collective strength within the Waka Ama community. It fosters a feeling of being connected to others, not just through kinship but also through shared experiences and a mutual love for the sport” (Waka Ama New Zealand, 2020). Unfortunately, the use of the vernacular ‘sport’ limits the proper application of this value.

Whanaungatanga involves a myriad of relationships conceptualised from a Māori cultural world view (Bishop, 1999). Waka ama’s power, according to Pope, “seems to lie within the affective and social experiences of participants” (2013, p. 223). This social aspect has a positive impact on hauora.

There remains debate on which is the greater determinant for physical activity, peers or family, but the whānau concept is able to encompass the nexus of both. Although these are focused on youth, some longevity can be experienced into adulthood. McMillan et al. (2016) mention that youth who are lucky enough to participate in sports will be more plausibly physically active adults. In turn, they will procure the associated health benefits.

Conan mused about this topic over the years, having been a social paddler through to an elite paddler, a steersman and a coach himself. He summed his experience up by saying, “Waka Ama wouldn't be here if it wasn't for people” (C. Herbert, personal communication, March 24, 2021). He discussed that although rivals on the water, and the goal for each individual or team is to win, after racing, everyone is friends again.

This treatment of others is reflexive in the way they, in turn, treat you, according to Conan.

People were a common theme throughout the kōrerorero. For example, Jason shared that he now filters who he would paddle with, preferring mates or open minded friendly people over a bunch of [jedi](#) paddlers who are, in his words, “dickheads.” If someone wins with their paddling friends, it is like a double dose of enjoyment in his opinion.

A waterman of many water sports codes, Turi immediately noticed a difference in waka ama. Although always treated with respect in kayaking and canoeing, he still felt like an outsider. Suppose you are the only person of a particular characteristic, like the only tall person. In that case, the only anything, there is always a chance you could feel like an ‘other’ in those situations. “From day one, you know, coming into waka ama, you just feel like this, you know this is home” (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). Home is what you make it, and he did precisely that, 30+ years of involvement and making the podium his home for most of that time.

Richard mentioned the shared experience, regardless of who was in the waka ama with him—the sense of individual responsibility and communal effort present in the waka ama crew scenario.

...you could do it with other people. You weren't too sure if they had the same kind of mindset but whatever they were getting out of it, it was a positive thing. It didn't really matter; it was more just a journey. (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021)

Lara explained that despite participating in several sports, waka ama trumped the others. Lara expressed a mysterious magic, “waka ama was like, once I started doing it, it was like it was something I should have always been doing. It felt really comfortable in that sport and meeting all the new people”. She added further, “getting to know people. People are important for me” (L. Collins, personal communication,

March 24, 2021). She also commented on her preference to be on the water in a waka ama on hot summer days over being on a sports field wearing an impractical hot uniform.

The majority of the kaihoe mentioned that they encountered good people, which is a positive in any situation. With the leadership in place being viewed positively, the organisation as a whole will be looked upon favourably also. Indigenous leadership as experienced in waka is a product of “sacred kinship” (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 15). The presence of good people in waka ama was identified by two kaihoe as influential to their experience. One of these kaihoe went on to say that the first racing experience hooked them in because of the leadership style present.

Although very sporty, Jason was perplexed by waka ama’s history and possible future. The wānanga sessions with Matahi being seen as of equal value to the paddling sessions were expressed in the following comment:

...talking with Matahi and just trying to see where it kind of came from and where it originated from... I was quite intrigued by it.... I have to pursue this, this new thing, and that’s where I thought I’ll just keep paddling and trying to understand more about it. (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021)

Aligning with Jason’s experience, the more one understands, the more relevant something becomes. This creates a connection that is more likely to endure. This is evident in Jason’s long and successful life in waka ama.

For Martin, the excellent demonstration of respect and aroha from Ace and Louise personified good leadership. Retelling kōrero from his early days at Tāmaki Outrigger:

Initially it's all about finding that connection with the people that you paddle with and what Ace and Louise used to tell me, especially Ace used to talk about what he used to do. You know it used to make me think that it would be so cool.

Yeah, it was always my ambition to go and paddle in Tahiti. Listening to him talk about paddling, it was always my ambition to go there and have a paddle. I thought that would be the coolest thing. Not necessarily even competitively. It was just to go and do what he's done. (M. Helleur, personal communication, September 22, 2021)

The leadership and role modelling experienced by Martin set him up to be a successful paddler, and now he has become that paragon for others. The same has happened for Lara.

Lara is the current CEO of WANZ and the IVF chairperson. These are likely due to the remarkable leaders she had witnessed and experienced. She remembered the following, “I mean we just started a new club at Pakuranga. Louise and Ace took us under their wing, you know, which they did with everybody in Auckland. You got to meet heaps of people straight away” (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

Liz and Karmen disclosed their admiration for the logic and clarity Lara brought to the organisational side of waka ama. Liz stated, “great kōrero and privilege” (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021).

Richard also divulged that, “Some people call it friendly, but it doesn't quite explain the experience. It's a bit more than being friendly. People are genuinely really interested in how you are” (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021).

The sporting side of waka ama had a considerable part to play in some participants' choice to stay involved in waka ama. The WANZ National Sprints was the main drawcard mentioned. Being addicted to waka ama after such an event is not uncommon, but perhaps there is more to this than exceptional competition. To some kaihoe, hearing of the national sprint regatta from others left them wanting to attend. The social environment was also mentioned by many when asked about why the

regatta is so appealing. There is a complex web of interactions involved in the regatta space, between competitors, whānau, public, volunteers, and officials. There is also the interaction with the water and waka.

Illustrating Richard's reaction to the WANZ national sprint event, he said, "hadn't been paddling very long, and that was an eye opener, that was amazing. I've never been to a place where I'd see so many Māori, and so many Māori not drinking! This is pretty cool" (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021).

Looking back at her big moment, Liz expresses her situation by stating, "from '96 I sort of built my way up and jumped in with teams that would have me to fill a seat. I was addicted then". She went on to say that, "getting to see people, meeting new people, and catching up with old friends, that's a real bonus for me with waka...but the social side of meeting up with friends and whānau, that's a big thing for me too." (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021).

Other waka ama events also featured, mainly due to the potential to travel to new locations in Aotearoa, and for some, the travel took them overseas. Hawaii and Tahiti are two meccas of waka ama, and coincidentally are breathtaking places to holiday. Those participants who had competed in these places noted the whanaungatanga that also existed amongst those local paddling communities. There is, of course, the Polynesian connection that enhances such moments. Richard considers the journey of his ancestors as something that allows Tahitian and Hawaiian paddlers, for instance, to instantly connect.

I have been privileged to experience the whanaungatanga of the people of Te Moananui-a-Kiwa, of the USA and of Canada in my time paddling waka ama. There may be different vernacular at each location, but the hospitality is a constant. Knowing that one day the act of hospitality will be reciprocated makes it more acceptable to accept such generous acts. However, the chances of someone living in what I believe

to be paradise wanting to visit the cold and, more often than not, sadly polluted waters of Aotearoa seem slim.

Raipoa is solid in her stance,

we become close to the Waka whānau whether it's local, national or international. It's like big families. You see clubs, you know the Tahitian Clubs, the Hawaiian Clubs as a big family and it's just visiting or connecting with them. Definitely it's like a 'whānau for life' type of thing, we even connecting with you guys and your club although we're not in your club, you are not in our club, but you know we can meet anywhere and paddle together or build a project together because we whānau on that dimension. (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

Karmen, a volunteer of waka ama and ex-paddler, explained the waka ama whanaungatanga that hooked her in. Enjoying the normal competitive nature of Māori participation in physical activities like touch rugby and netball, to name but a few, the total switch to a caring environment and whanaungatanga off and on the water in waka ama really appealed. However, the leading hook she experienced was something new at waka ama. After paddling and resting on the shore, a young mother approached with her baby, and Karmen recalled the following,

I remember this beautiful mummy coming up to me and she'd been feeding her pēpi but was about to hop on the water and she came and asked me if I could hold onto her pēpi while she got on the water...I went, Wow, that's so awesome! (K. Wallace, personal communications, January 28, 2021)

The waka ama whānau told the mother to give her baby to an aunty (Karmen) to mind while she had a quick paddle. This act of community, trust and sharing was what caused Karmen to focus on waka ama as the activity for her whānau.

It so happens that the young mother was my wife, and the baby was our second daughter, our first lifetime kaihoe Pareputiputi. That scenario also had the same effect on my wife and me. It is a special space if you are asked to watch someone's tamaiti, or ask if someone would watch your tamaiti, and feel safe doing it.

New relationships were formed that remain to this day. The waka ama whānau was far more than an overused term for a group of friends. Waka ama seems to create a social space where whanaungatanga thrives, and vice versa.

There has been a shift in some clubs and groups towards a sports focus, and even a high-performance sport goal. Heeni discussed how teams demonstrated their drive, but at the cost of the club's core values. She asked, "How do we go back to a club or whānau, a community sort of focus rather than teams just going down and having their squad training, their team training" (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021). However, she could see that some get the taste for training hard and setting performance goals, and the social club scene becomes less appealing.

It becomes a way of life connecting to whatever...You know we talked about going to Taranaki and paddling not even for races. Just because there's a way of connecting with friends and connecting with that place and finding out the stories of that place. (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021)

Inclusivity

Another area of interest that relates to this section is the inclusivity of all the age groups in waka ama. With divisions ranging from taitamariki (5- 10 yrs) to kaumātua (80 yrs +), it is truly age inclusive. The magic of this is having multiple generations participating in the same event.

Credit for this encompassing situation can go back to the pioneers who saw the value of this type of setting. Matahi disclosed the period of careful decision-making when he

was the founding president of the Confederation in Aotearoa, and they all had to consider the long-term survival of waka ama.

The introduction of taitamariki and all the grades that followed was a critical strategy in the history of waka ama. Those grades increased as the age of kaihoe increased. Matahi continued by philosophically saying, “If I didn't make it a whānau sport, it would probably have fizzled out and there'd be no Māori participation” (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

The range of divisions accommodated the whole whānau, and is witnessed by many kaihoe:

Now I'm coaching a great-granddaughter or a great-grandson. I'm onto the third generation and that's an indicator that Māori will not let the sport go. They will embrace it for another 100 or 1000 years. I really hope it's true. (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

Matahi shared another example of the intergenerational experience in waka ama:

I enjoy seeing the grandmother coming back looking for the granddaughter or grandson because they've used their paddle in one of the races and she needs it straight away and so we're all walking around the tent looking for her paddle. Those instances are phenomenal that's where it's at. (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

Continuing with this kaupapa, Raipoia mentioned the exceptional circumstance where there are four generations competing at the same event, “It's never been seen in any other sport...four generations there, competing” (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). She also expressed her inclination towards paddling with anyone, regardless of age. Everyone is considered equally important in the success of the waka ama experience. She explained from her point of view:

When I'm on the waka I just paddle it, I don't think in terms of age. Whether with intermediates, with Golden Master, with Master, with Open, to me, we are one and I'm pretty sure Roni probably thinks the same, talking about the women. (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

There is no set entry point to enjoy waka ama, or experience success in it either. When one joins, it is the right time. Also, on this train of thought was Turanga who stated that there are not many situations where you have “a moko and a koro...at the same competition competing...not many sports where you'll get that and get multi-generational athletes competing at the same event or being able to do the same thing” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021).

Turanga has seen some master men ‘Daddy Daycare’ type guys dropping their kids to training, and then they are invited to try paddling as they are part of the waka ama whānau. Six guys know each other briefly from waiting around for their kids on shore. Before long, they become mates on the water and the lifestyle changes slowly, becoming their new reality, resulting in the parents and children able to paddle together.

Richard shared how he liked seeing all the age groups together also:

At any time in somebody's life, they want to pick up paddling and they get into it, it's OK. Everyone becomes the best they want to be when they go in. So, you can go in at 20, you go in at 50, you go in at 60 if you want to, but you're not judged by your age. (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021)

He continued by disclosing how good it is being able to talk to a kaumātua and a 15 year old in the same way, about the same paddling encounters, “doesn't matter how old you are they will connect. That was the cool thing to see” (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021).

Turi expressed his surprise when he noticed the number of elderly kaihoe involved in waka ama, and the fact that they looked incredibly healthy. Turi himself is a classic example of health. He proposed his point of difference concerning waka ama:

When do you see like 70-year-olds on the rugby field? Or you know you can have a whole family in one crew? That you have three generations in one crew and that doesn't happen on a rugby field, and that's the point of difference. (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021)

A considerable effort goes into the kaumātua events at WANZ events. The kaumātua nomenclature demonstrates the respect afforded to these kaihoe. The normal 10-year age range in divisions is reduced after the master's 70 division. The accumulated knowledge gained over time makes older athletes more suited to endurance events where skill and patience are required (Hochstetler & Hopsicker, 2012). The kaumatua are catered for in the multitude of distance events within the waka ama calendar, throughout the year, and often seen in teams with all their guns blazing, rocketing away from the start line only to be overtaken later on in the race, like the turtle and the hare.

Even as these kaihoe get slower, they motivate and encourage their fellow kaihoe of younger divisions that there is paddling careers never end. Therefore, every kaihoe has the potential to produce phenomenal returns for the culture and activity. Waka ama can be with them for life, returning many like myself to initially to te Ao Māori and ultimately aiding them in their journey to the heterotopia Hawaiki Ora.

Social teams and even social clubs are more relaxed in this setting, according to Turi. From his perspective, these groupings are not focused on winning and therefore experience less stressed-out moments. However, it has been observed that if one member changes their focus towards a more performance-based outcome, things can become unstable.

Clubs play a crucial role in creating the environment for positive relationships. Including people as part of the whānau and respecting them for what they do on the water and off the water, "it's a package" (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021).

The social side of meeting up with friends and whānau was an important component for Liz, and a sentiment also repeated by Heeni. Heeni also communicated that sometimes she and her partner just go paddling to connect with friends and to learn about different locations. This may be likened to a jogger, a cyclist or a swimmer out with friends.

The experiences in waka ama are not limited to Aotearoa. Richard comments, "We have some spectacular paddles when you're with your friends, experiencing different environments, different countries like Hawaii, even in Australia or anywhere" (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021). Likewise, as Matahi explained, the inclusivity of waka ama, when the Samoan delegation entered the WANZ scene at the commencement of the World Sprints in Hawaii in 1988, they were welcomed by Aotearoa. He recalls this moment and adds further, "We don't own the sport, it belongs to the whole Pacific" (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Richard believes that even if you do not know the other kaihoe you end up paddling with, getting out on the water is a positive for both the individual and the collective in the waka ama. This progresses over time, and a respect for each other forms. Finding the connection is important, and waka ama facilitates this, according to Martin. If you find that person or people who will get up and train when you can, it motivates you to keep at it and to never let the others down.

Raipoiā expressed her support by adding that we can connect through the water, and the waka is the medium to facilitate the process. Waka ama whānau builds strong relationships, locally, nationally and internationally. A whānau grouping, such as clubs,

Tahitian clubs, Hawaiian clubs and so on, is a big whānau to visit and reconnect with. It is like a “whānau for life” situation.

Kaihoe connect with others from outside their club, meet up, paddle together or work on projects together because they are whānau. “The whānau relationships established for waka ama purposes stay for life” (R. Brightwell, 2021). Kaihoe come into the clubs, become whānau and sometimes leave the waka ama scene for university, for work or other reasons. However, when they are seen later on in life, they are still whānau, and through the waka ama connection, both parties are able to reconnect.

Poaching is a problem some face, as it pulls teams and clubs apart. Kaihoe are pulled into other clubs to create high-performance teams from time to time, but this can create an environment for new friendships. Having suffered from this in the past, following on from Raipoia’s comments, Matahi finds comfort knowing, “Māori are champions and I’m happy Māori are world champions, no matter what club. Yes, we suffer for it, but the sport has to grow” (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Matahi mentioned that he did not want waka ama becoming a sport for the wealthy, where whānau cannot afford to participate, but he has faith in the WANZ’s junior events like the secondary school and club sprint nationals, which will save waka ama from this contemporary demise.

How to get back to the community focus within clubs, training as a squad as opposed to teams sticking together, spoiling their experiences, was a question posed by Heeni. She wondered if perhaps once some people get a taste of the competitive side, they may prefer that.

As a chronic asthmatic, Karmen feared overexerting herself. However, the caring environment without judgment changed that. From the get-go, whakawhanaungatanga, whether it was on or off the water, was identified in every aspect. She loved the mixed racing at the regatta, due to the whanaungatanga aspect.

WANZ Sprint Nationals were also a holiday for Karmen and her whānau. Being able to volunteer helped make it affordable for them. It was a yearly holiday and reunion with waka ama whānau. Te Wai-a-Tauranga continues by saying the WANZ Nationals is a highlight in her year because she gets “to see this bigger family” she belongs to (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021).

When he started, Martin was lucky to be influenced by extraordinary role models. They helped his group of teammates focus as a collective. Now, when he is working with kids, his experience allows them to build these types of relationships together. Similar to when Martin started, this group of his gravitated towards good people, and he attributed it to “no one being bigger than anyone else” (M. Helleur, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

Following on with this theme, Conan disclosed that he really enjoyed that you can have individual superstar kaihoe in a team, but they, along with everyone else, become equally important to the team’s success. A whānau striving for a common goal. This is where individuals accept being insignificant for the success of the team.

Having personally struggled with team environments on land, Turi conveyed that being on the water in a waka ama with friends and whānau was what he really loved about waka ama. It is not uncommon to hear whānau referred to as a *waka whānau*, meaning the majority participate in waka ama in one form or another. A waka whānau will travel together to events, some competing, some may assist the paddlers, some may prepare kai, whereas some may even take on the critical role of whānau photographer, and some may quite often volunteer to help with the event organisation.

This taha whānau, which is thriving in waka ama, is a far cry from the social capital concerns discussed by Putnam (2015) in *Bowling Alone*. Waka ama events not only increase in kaihoe participation annually, but also in supporters. Every event has the potential to increase one’s relationship base in several directions, like the roots of the [kahikatea](#) to provide stability as a united one. This one being a whānau.

When asking the participating kaihoe about their first waka ama experience, there was a large majority of positive experiences, but of course, there is also the odd negative experience to keep the world balanced. Conan disclosed that as a youngster, it was very cold and took until the following year for him to fully participate. “I remember the first time I started. I only lasted two trainings and I was too small and too cold so ... so I didn't finish that year. And then I came back the next year with my own teammates” (C. Herbert, personal communication, March 24, 2021). With the right social environment, Conan started his epic journey into waka ama.

Clearly upset with the event policy mentioned in Chapter Two, PCWA whānau members shared the following views on the definition of inclusivity of that time, “...if you're not vaxed you're not included” (PCWA, 2021). Seeing signs posted on clubs instructing, “only accept vaccinated kaihoe” (PCWA, 2021) and “no vax, no paddle” (PCWA, 2021) were overwhelming experiences. To help minimise the effect on youth in his area, one PCWA kaihoe informed, “I've had a few families bring their kids over to us as I don't have those stupid rules, everyone is the same to me” (PCWA, 2021).

One point of contention was that the WANZ's vision states, “Waka ama – mā te katoa, mō ake tonu. Waka ama – for all, for life” (Waka Ama New Zealand, 2024). What the policy promoted was, “not waka ama for life” (PCWA, 2021), and, “for all the years of promoting inclusion for everyone regardless of age, colour, race, nationality, religious status, sexual status, disabilities etc...we are suddenly and openly discriminated against” (PCWA, 2021). Both these comments echoed the sentiments of PCWA whānau whānui.

After reading the draft feedback letter, one kaihoe stated “read the document, I feel sad...you have described the sadness and the anger I feel towards those that are on a one-way drive to eradicate us and our children from society through the disguise of the greater good of us all” (PCWA, 2021). More support came in the form of, “if they can read this without tears, they have no heart and have no right to represent us again” (PCWA, 2021).

Another posted that they were, “really finding hard to want to participate in and contribute to Waka Ama as I have done in the past” and then a positive statement shared, “the people in charge of decisions are not ‘waka ama’ and that in the timeframe of our sport it’s just a blink” (PCWA, 2021). The blink in time was supported by others, showing the optimistic outlook of the group for waka ama and their participation moving forward. From that point forward, the blink in time reinforced the desire to achieve a positive outcome with WANZ.

At no point did PCWA express concern about not racing. Their entire focus and effort were on the pain and sorrow experienced due to the isolation and segregation of the policy. As stated by Rose Pere, “A person as a social being has to interact with others in a variety of ways – she or he has to live within a society” (Pere & Nicholson, 1991, p. 36).

After COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, Turanga mentioned that the first training was good because “it was just like a big reunion” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). He also reinforced the idea that good relationships within the waka ama create a suitable environment for all involved and for the success of the paddling session.

Moana-Lee believed it is vital to find a balance, as not everyone is the same. We can strive to find like-minded people for waka ama, but sometimes it is too complicated. Therefore, compromise and respect towards others’ worldviews are necessary. This is quintessential inclusivity.

Hinengaro

Te Taha Hinengaro relates to mental health. Hinengaro is the “Seat of the thoughts and emotions, heart”, and “Desire” (Williams & Williams, 1917, p. 51). It is also the “mind”, “consciousness”, and “awareness”, according to (Moorfield, 2005).

Kirk (2004) summarised that quality learning experiences at the early stage of engagement are vital in sustaining participation in physical activities for children. This was also noted as necessary for adult participation (Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018) and perhaps an intrinsic human desire.

Postcolonial factors, namely disease, land confiscation and so on, have fostered an imbalance, causing a substantial negative impact on Māori mental health (Herbert, 1935; John et al., 2016; Pihama, 2019). Without balance and connectiveness, people find themselves isolated and scattered, leading to “identity loss and ill-health” (Rua et al., 2017, p. 60). However, the connection of mātauranga Māori, whakapapa and tikanga Māori are foundational aspects for resilience and recovery, crucial in mental health (Pihama, 2019).

Mental illness was recognised as somewhat of a contemporary Māori issue. Arguably, due to the transition from effective traditional whānau care to the introduced western forms of treatment (Gassin, 2019; Kopua et al., 2020; Pihama, 2019). Durie et al. (2002) provides some historical context by stating that non-Māori made up more than twice as many admissions to mental health centres in 1951, compared with Māori. However, fast forward to the 1980s and Māori statistics had changed. For example, Māori male suicide rates had increased by 162 per cent. Attempts to recover the reason for such negative trending focused on issues concerning behaviours, environment factors that included colonisation and socio-economic concerns.

It was found that there may have been misinterpretations of cultural behaviours and distinctions, resulting in misdiagnosis. Urbanisation was also a factor identified, namely due to the isolation of whānau and traditional ways of care, disturbing one’s “social and cultural cohesion” (Durie et al., 2002, p. 16).

The Western treatment for problems that resulted from isolation was, unfortunately, isolation in most cases. Partly due to the fear of contamination and an “out of sight, out of mind” attitude. A far cry from the Māori holistic method of healing.

The Treaty of Waitangi principles were recommended for all social policy design, and Māori wanted to be part of the design and implementation team. Change was apparent in the 1990s, with new guidelines, Te Whāriki Manaaki and then Te Whare Manaaki, which provided a focus on not only interventions, but the suitable application of those interventions. Now began the deinstitutionalisation and the re-indigenisation. Asylums that focused on disorders were unnecessary, with the focus on normalising patients' lives within their collective, and therefore reformed.

Māori leadership must remain a catalyst for change and success into the future. There will be many future challenges for Māori, such as “Global corporate colonisation...Global climate change... Global over-population...Global diaspora” (Durie et al., 2002, p. 81), and they will need to be dealt with wisely.

Whakawhanaungatanga is an astute traditional practice that can be utilised to avoid negative impacts from these challenges. This practice is open for people to share who they are, where they are from, and any other information they believe is suitable to illustrate their story and their identity. Elder (2018) states, “within whānau there are whakapapa resources” (p. 147), which will aid in the process of establishing or maintaining oranga.

Waka ama has an inclusive environment and culture that will allow people to be proud of themselves, as themselves, Māori or non-Māori alike. This is reinforced by the passage concerning Māori and Pacifica youth identity, “Waka Ama offers a connection to their cultural identities, its place, its practices, its people, and its history. It provides comfort” (Pope, 2013, p. 223).

The Tairāwhiti waka hourua is noted by Mita (2023) for enhancing the Taha Hinengaro by providing a fulfilling, healing experience that promotes feeling well. This was echoed by Lara and Turi, who both mentioned how waka ama felt comfortable and like home, and this has been discussed as a positive factor in establishing roots within a society.

Māori suicide statistics impact many of the waka ama clubs due to the high percentages of Māori rangatahi participation and their sad statistics. Turanga was optimistic that by not only focusing on fitness and strength, but also providing support and making rangatahi aware of the issues they encounter, they would be better prepared.

Having witnessed the pain felt by some rangatahi kaihoe who had lost friends, Turanga is always mindful of changes in attitude and behaviour amongst his waka ama whānau. Taking the time to ask how kaihoe are, promoting a sharing environment and advising them of places to get help are all part of the whānau caring for one another. This cannot be a scheduled mechanical inquiry, but must be meaningful, with aroha.

Jason expressed his concern for the ego that can exist and its negative impact on the mental health of some individuals. Having witnessed the friendly banter between mates turn to a negative experience, where it drew them into a training frenzy to meet the sporting expectations or ideals of others. Here, the sport and its competitive nature show their unpleasant face.

Encountering a kaihoe on the water struggling in his waka ama, Jason offered him support and said, “bro, let’s go home. Let’s just get home” as they slowly but surely approached shore (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021). Here is an example of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga maintained by the old-school kaihoe.

Heeni and Karmen both mention fear being a factor in waka ama. For some, it is the fear of failure, for others, the fear of capsizing or more precise, of water. Sprint events can reduce the fear of capsizing, suggests Heeni, as they are closer to shore and have very clear and visible water safety support.

Dealing with fear can impact individuals in many different ways, but hopefully, a supportive environment in waka ama will ensure it is an opportunity for individuals to grow and develop themselves. Further on this topic, Lara recalled thinking her first

10km paddle was an epic challenge and prompting the comment at the time “oh my god! I’m gonna paddle 10k’s, I’ve never ever run 10k’s!” (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021). However, with support and mind over matter, it was not long before she was completing the 70km Hauraki Hoe. In a society obsessed with risk evasion, waka ama is a chance to challenge new frontiers.

Being focused on the moment is something Te Wai-a-Tauranga experienced on the water. She comments, “What happens, happens...I just focus on the race, I don’t really think about other stuff when I’m out there” (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021). Similarly, Turi mentioned he still has “that dog mindedness” from his other water sports, but revealed “that has never left me, but my periphery has expanded” (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). How far expanded was not disclosed, but he remains in waka ama at a top level well into his 50s.

Tinana

The word tinana refers to the real, actual and central part of anything. It also contrasts with the spiritual (Williams & Williams, 1917). Moorfield (2005) includes the torso as a definition. What is apparent is that tinana is a complex concept.

Eime et al. (2013) state regarding physical activity that “Regular participation in moderate to vigorous physical activity is imperative for good health” (p. 7). Māori are noted for being disproportionately represented in lifestyle disorders that are related to inactivity. A study of Māori men found that they, despite knowing the importance of physical activity, had difficulty finding time to participate due to “cultural obligations to community and whānau” (Warbrick et al., 2016, p. 1). Waka ama and other Māori or indigenous physical activities may be the answer to allowing for both physical activity and cultural obligations.

More studies are needed, like that of Apos et al. (2019) which suggested that waka ama has an extra health benefit due to the increased resistance work that develops

muscular strength, minimising the chance of osteoporosis, all while being a great aerobic activity in a friendly social environment. Studies on the risk of injury concomitant with waka ama have reported on common sites of injury being the shoulders, spine, elbows and wrist. However, it is also noted that the risk of injury is negated by the potential health gains associated with waka ama (Bell et al., 2013; Liu, 2018).

Waka ama is considered by Conan as a relatively low-impact activity, allowing for longevity as long as kaihoe look after themselves. Matahi alludes to the point that many rangatahi may see the healthy bodies in waka ama and aspire towards that end. Although some see it as ego and vanity, obtained via waka ama, the process involves useful traits for their future, such as discipline, commitment and being healthy.

The physicality, although low impact, of waka ama appeals to some, such as Richard. He enjoyed using his body to propel his waka ama and himself from A to B. Noting the ability to see it happen, the effort transferred to movement.

Te Wai-a-Tauranga was fortunate to be a part of a high-performance academy, although for white water rafting. She was able to transfer the rafting skills to waka ama and vice versa. Using her whole body more efficiently has helped her succeed in waka ama. This is a goal for most competitive paddlers: to be more efficient and more balanced. These can reduce the risk of injury and undue stress, physically and mentally.

Wairua

This important metaphysical aspect is not visible and therefore often neglected (Pihama, 2019). As the proverb says, “ko te kokona whare, ka kitea, ko te kokona ngākau, tē kitea”, which refers to the corners of a house that are visible, and the corners of the heart that never will be so (M. Haenga, personal communications, 2005). Therefore, it could be said that it is out of sight and out of mind.

Wairua is a product of Māori cosmology and connects to the identity, the history, the whakapapa and te reo of Māori (Raureti, 2017). Each contributes to wairua and vice versa. Raureti also states that the “two waters” represent the physical and spiritual realms and constitute the “wholeness of life” (2017, p. 387).

Akin to the two waters, as mentioned by Pere and Nicholson (1991) all, emotions have a time and place, and they should be expressed and never repressed. Men and women cry for sadness and joy, te hekenga roimata, and tears that result are believed to flow from the sacred healing pools within.

Connecting with the environment, whānau, and friends has positive outcomes for the wairua and can be accomplished through waka ama experiences (Thorpe et al., 2011). Recollecting his days as a white-water slalom paddler, Turi said that he “wasn’t sort of spiritually and emotionally invested” and that waka ama possessed “that X-Factor which was missing”. Having thrown himself into waka ama, this newfound pastime became his "spiritual food" and his pursuit of choice (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021) and his pastime of choice.

Heeni and Conan aired their enjoyment of the empowerment aspect of waka ama. Being able to compete or even just transport yourself from one place to another is satisfying. Heeni continued by stating, “sometimes it can be sort of te taha wairua... that satisfaction and knowing and doing” (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

After experiencing a period of grieving, Karmen recalls her refusal “to let go of waka” as it was a connection to the positive times in her life. Turanga noted that the adolescents of today can often struggle with the pressure and stress of their existence, having a profound negative impact on the taha hinengaro. Conan views Waka ama as a good outlet for pent-up emotions and stresses that build up during the day. Kaihoe can leave it all out there on the water.

Karakia

Shailer (2019) expressed the importance of karakia to Māori in their many cultural contexts. He was privileged to work with the late Amster Reedy, who was a tohunga karakia and a highly regarded waka ama kaihoe of Tūnui-a-te-Ika with his close friend, my father. Amster shared with the athletes of the New Zealand 2016 Olympic team the stimulating power of karakia on the wairua and connectivity with historical and lived time.

Some of the routinely practised tikanga of waka ama, including karakia to reinforce Te Ao Māori, ensure they are never lost. There was a universal acceptance of karakia being a stable praxis in terms of tikanga waka ama to connect to the past, and even those who have passed. It can be an entry point for some to Te Ao Māori, and that waka ama normalised this process. Karakia before, during, and at the commencement are commonplace, to unify kaihoe as mentioned prior. While discussing her friend, Heeni mentioned that they went from never doing karakia to “super karakia guy” (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

Some participants' clubs really embrace karakia as a way they connect with the atua Māori like Tangaroa and Tāwhirimātea. Observations by Tahitian Raipoia revealed that waka ama is a way for Māori to reconnect to Tangaroa. For so long, Māori had been disconnected due to the giant forests of Tāne and colonisation. Karakia focused on Tangaroa, strengthening this connection that Tāne had so long dominated.

Karakia allow a connection and acknowledgement of other creatures within the paddling environment, like plants, birds and fish. It was also mentioned that including tīpuna in karakia was not uncommon, as a sign of respect and strength. Some clubs are also lucky to have members with a vast knowledge of karakia for water settings.

Turanga explained that his club Te Toki had multiple karakia to teach their waka ama whānau, for both waka ama and non-waka ama purposes. Here, karakia practices of

waka ama expand out into waka ama whānau's everyday lives. However, one or many, the impact seems to be the same positive experience.

With regards to Te Ao Māori, Richard mentioned his father did not encourage learning about Te Ao Māori, and reluctantly took him to whānau [tangi](#) at the [marae](#). This is common in Richard's father's generation who were traumatised with beatings for speaking te reo Māori and also made to believe that the only way forward in life was to disregard their Māori ways. Therefore, when Richard's first paddling session started with a karakia, he sensed a new beginning for himself. He began his journey into Te Ao Māori. He went on to explain that he learnt about Te Ao Māori through waka ama, but was never deliberately taught about it. This embodied experience was common amongst kaihoe, living in Te Ao Māori or being in Te Ao Māori for the duration of their paddling session.

Explaining how he connected to the environment through karakia, Craig mentioned how they karakia to Tangaroa and Marukura:

We connect to that environment, that realm as much as you can in these modern days with people not fully understanding those things. And of course, for me what is big is the manu and the ika, that we're in their realm. (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021)

Liz knew of her Rarotongan Māori side all her life, but was unaware of her Aotearoa Māori whakapapa until waka ama provided opportunities to create connections. The belief in karakia and the participation in waka ama here ties her two cultures together seamlessly. She has her tikanga she follows for waka ama that is unique to her and her waka ama/vaka world,

I will always bless my waka and when I'm in the waka, I reach to the back of the waka and throw water on it three times to acknowledge my tīpuna are on

my shoulders and on my back to help me move forward. (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021)

Personal waka ama tikanga are not an alternative to water safety practices, they are collaborative. Liz acknowledges her ancestors to remind her of their remarkable feats and excellent skills, which motivates her to continue with an open-mindset on her learning journey. This is a fantastic example of tikanga evolving and being developed for the new situations we face. This tikanga allows her to traverse time and space, to unite with her ancestors from Rarotonga and Aotearoa.

Unity from karakia was also expressed by Martin, who had at one time taught nine different school groups of youth the same karakia. He recalls, "They all said the same karakia. At the beginning of the event. Wow, that's powerful. That is mean! So, it's individual, but collectively that's so powerful" (M. Helleur, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

Heeni noticed the change in some people due to being involved in karakia. It becomes a routine procedure for them that it must happen. Heeni shares the view that there would be times when karakia were not necessary or practical. For example, while attempting to escape from a pursuing war party, one may not take time out to karakia in fear of capture or death. However, there is the possibility that they recited karakia on the move in that situation.

Other kaihoe with only limited knowledge or understanding of Te Ao Māori believed waka ama was a significant factor in their establishment within Te Ao Māori. They became more confident, and this was echoed by other kaihoe outside of this kaupapa. Even non-Māori felt at ease knowing more about Te Ao Māori, despite it initially taking them out of their comfort zone. This allowed for a better appreciation of the diversity of world views within waka ama.

Those with a connection to Te Ao Māori included Te Kōhanga Reo graduates, Kura Kaupapa graduates, kaiwhakairo, and some lucky enough to have been immersed in Te Ao Māori through their grandparents. Common from participants was the new desire to learn more about Te Ao Māori as a result of being involved in waka ama. For Jason, as a kaiwhakairo, it connected him to his carving work, and Te Ao Māori all started to make sense. Another kaihoe mentioned travelling the course of their nannies and tīpuna opened up a new world of experience. Both of these situations demonstrate the embodied experience of the past and present by participants.

Craig explained that the connection with Te Ao Māori created a sense of home within the waka ama world. Waka ama transported him into Te Ao Māori with confidence and pride. “Not being a kapa haka person, or an orator, I enjoyed letting my paddling introduce me and perhaps define me. I was a kaihoe!” (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021). This statement leads on to the next section, identity or tuakiri. Identities can be forged and challenged by the transition to a new activity, new community, new location and even new ideology.

Based on the kōrero from kaihoe and literature, the magic that attracts kaihoe is a combination of whānau and friends. Although there are multiple avenues to access waka ama, an invitation from someone close to you is the primary factor. What is said in most situations has been presented in this chapter to demonstrate the minimal social distance between kaihoe and those inviting them into their waka ama world. A common sentiment is a relative or close friend who is laying out the welcome mat. This will not be uncommon in other physical activities, however the conversion rate from newbie to waka ama evangelist of the waka ama faith looks pretty high.

Once the kaihoe started waka ama, they experienced many positive aspects, but those that stood out included entry into Te Ao Māori through tikanga and an embodied historical connection. This places kaihoe in a spatial temporal existence contrary to what they usually experience. These factors led to several holistic health benefits discussed.

These experiences present kaihoe with many of the aspects we learn about as characteristic of Hawaiki. They portray a time and space where Māori ways and beliefs were the norm, where there was no Māori world view, just a world view of the Māori world.

Te Ao Māori

Kaihoe, discovering an entrance point into Te Ao Māori, is likened to the paddle entering the water from an environment it believes is its realm of existence. However, once submerged, the paddle finds the true realm it is meant for, its Hawaiki Ora. This section strives to demonstrate the sense of belonging in Te Ao Māori or the Hawaiki Ora felt by many kaihoe introduced to waka ama.

With regards to the first impressions, something that was commonly mentioned by kaihoe was the Te Ao Māori foundation noticeable in waka ama. There has already been discussion on Māori and their Mātauranga Māori, Māori philosophy and Māori values. All of these factors are encompassed within Te Ao Māori, the Māori world as viewed through Māori eyes.

Raipoa remembered back to her surprise regarding claims that waka ama would be suitable for rangatahi Māori. Once she was ensconced in her new home and amongst the Māori people of Te Tairāwhiti, she soon noticed that when waka ama was introduced to the rangatahi, the impact was noticeably positive for them and their whānau. It was a Te Ao Māori way of doing things that encompasses Māori values and resonates with Māori.

Tikanga

Tikanga was explained in Chapter Two as a culturally correct behaviour that adapts to the demands of the time while maintaining cultural integrity. It was also mentioned in Chapter One that in 2009, there was a vision of tikanga being second nature by 2035, but this is no longer in the strategic plan. Hopefully, this is due to the progress

experienced to date and not a change in focus. Supportive of the notion that tikanga is becoming second nature, all participants expressed the importance of tikanga and disclosed the various ways they execute this.

In terms of sports, tikanga principles should be afforded the right to guide both the administration and delivery of sports (Hippolite & Bruce, 2010), as it is in waka ama. Tikanga can relate to different actions, environments and situations, prescribing “how Māori interact and engage with water” (Phillips Ph D, 2020, p. 12).

As stated, “Waka Ama is steeped in the rich history and traditions of waka. Waka Ama is seen as more than a sport. This is reflected in our values and tikanga that underpin all that we do” (Waka Ama New Zealand, 2020, p. 10). This is echoed throughout Aotearoa, from waka ama clubs to school waka ama programmes. Although the tikanga are not prescribed on information sheets and websites, they let possible participants know that tikanga is a part of the organisation’s big picture concerning waka ama.

Tikanga sets waka ama apart from other sports (Pihama, 2019). These tikanga allow a foot in the door or a peek into Te Ao Māori, and as mentioned, “Māori sporting and leisure practices can be seen as an extension of Māori culture, empowering Māori values” (Borell, 2017, p. 140). The following are some examples of tikanga in action taken from the kōrerorero that demonstrate the behaviours that are consistent with healthy relationships with one another and the environment.

In terms of tikanga and kaihoe perceptions, manaakitanga towards out-of-town paddlers, despite them being the opposition on the water, is an example. Jason recalled an event where their team stopped to rescue a solo paddler in distress, resulting in them losing their position in the race. The team returned the paddler to shore, while one of their teammates returned the distressed paddler’s waka ama too. At the prize-giving later that day, the team received the loudest applause due to their demonstration of manaakitanga. Jason referred to that moment as “the gold medal

bro. Saving someone's life. Knowing that she gets to go home, back to her family” (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021). This also demonstrates the widely accepted tikanga of manaakitanga amongst kaihoe and waka ama whānau.

On returning home, to the river she had for so long taken for granted, Karmen said she greeted the awa due to the connection with water she had discovered through waka ama. Karmen’s emotional and relational connection was echoed by Heeni, who mentioned that waka ama is not just about the sporting aspect. She recognised that the moana and its kōrero must be recognised and remembered too.

Taking this one step further, Moana-Lee expressed her concern regarding the integrity and whakapapa of waka ama. She believes that both need protection so they are available to benefit future generations. According to Moana-Lee, kaihoe reciprocated aroha and respect for Tangaroa into the future, in the same way their tīpuna did in the past.

Reciprocity has the potential to reinstate kaihoe as indigenous to the waterways they paddle on, increasing connectivity like their Polynesian cousins. Although related to land, Kimmerer (2013) stated, “For all of us, becoming indigenous to a place means living as if your children’s future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it” (p. 9).

Waka ama is a positive means to transfer the teachings of tikanga to others through embodied practices like karakia, manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga, to name a few. These all help to establish a connection with kaihoe, ancestors, waka ama, land and ocean. Although there was a general understanding of tikanga Māori, there seemed to be the presence of tikanga waka ama that complemented thinking. This assemblage of values is actualised in different ways.

Craig gave an explanation of tikanga as doing things like naming and caring for your waka ama and your paddle as if they were animate. He explains the intimate

relationship he has with his paddle and waka, "...the [hoe](#) goes in the car and the waka goes on the roof" and jokingly says "Oh this is my Tahitian girlfriend" (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021). Referring to the desire for reciprocation with these items was perhaps deemed as somewhat weird to many, but also illustrated the internal resistance facing enchantment today.

The use of te reo Māori varies amongst participants, however, it was common that they viewed the uninhibited use of te reo Māori around waka ama as a positive. The language flows free of the ambivalence of the dominant society that is external to waka ama. It is an ideal point to start one's journey toward language acquisition.

Te reo Māori was easier to learn for some in the relevant context of waka ama. Studies show that the relevance of knowledge has a tremendous influence on the uptake (Nosirova, 2023). Karmen said since leaving kapa haka, waka ama has provided her and her whānau with a suitable te reo Māori space. Acquisition may be assisted due to the serious safety element and the consequences of misunderstanding. It may also be due to the repetitive nature of the vernacular used.

There was, however, concern that waka ama was not being utilised to support the Māori Language Commission's goal of one million speakers. Governance was seen as lacking the breadth of vision to incorporate the whole of Te Ao Māori. The primary focus seemed to remain on growing the sport and the hauora aspect. Te reo Māori is concomitant with waka ama, through the input of the capable participants and often the willingness of the many to learn. Lately, WANZ has begun implementing strong te reo Māori initiatives.

The national organisation, **WANZ**, maintains that despite the money involved, tikanga must be upheld. They try "to do what's best as that is the right thing to do" (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021), and this is not an easy task. Interpretations of tikanga and values can create conflict, as is the nature of interpretation.

Raipoa explained her whakaaro that waka ama has a Māori and Polynesian way of doing things that must remain. "The whānau kind of atmosphere, the whānau way of doing things, whānau relationship" (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). To lose these elements would eliminate the chance of reaching Hawaiki Ora.

There are moments in history when we look back and wonder if things could have been done better. Tikanga and interpretations of tikanga are not immune to this situation. Returning to the event policy and eminent isolation in 2021, PCWA members voiced their opinion with regards to the WANZ values of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, hauora and tū tangata. If no changes were made to the policy, they believed "those values then become worthless and mean nothing but words written on a piece of paper" (PCWA, 2021). Also articulating the importance of maintaining the values, one PCWA member stated that they were "exactly the very values we saw and felt when we first joined the Waka Ama Whānau" (PCWA, 2021). This statement reinforced the comments of kaihoe in this study. In essence, these values are the structural building blocks that give Hawaiki Ora its strength and integrity. At that moment, WANZ and PCWA had antithetical perceptions of the values on which waka ama in Aotearoa had been founded.

Rangatiratanga

This concept was explained in Chapter Two, being self-governance and leading with mana. There is a bonus associated with waka ama paddling, that of actually seeing an embodied reaction to the embodied activity. The movement of the waka ama from the propulsion generated by the kaihoe and the hoe gives meaning to the action.

Richard expressed his wonder at this phenomenon;

I was quite physical before I became a social worker and I really enjoyed that physicality. Really enjoyed using my body...when I went paddling it was like, I

can actually use my body to go from point A to point B and could actually see it. (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021)

Supporting Richard's comments, Heeni discussed her view on the potential of waka ama as a means of transportation in everyday life, freeing one from the land-based systems that dominate Aotearoa—more in line with the modes of transport of one's ancestors in Hawaiki.

...it's quicker to paddle across the lake to kura than it is to drive all the way around, but obviously you know the weather doesn't always oblige. I like that idea...it's your body as the engine. Your mind is sort of like, '[he kai kei aku ringa](#)'...you don't have to be elites, you can just be reasonably able bodied and if you have got a hoe, you can basically get yourself from A to B... I like that aspect of it and there's a sense of empowerment. (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021)

The PCWA also discussed this concept of rangatiratanga. For them, it was something that could not be taken away from them. PCWA kaihoe shared, "I celebrate when I hear or see you choose to uphold your absolute right to your own tino rangatiratanga! And I don't feel alone" (PCWA, 2021) and, "Here's to standing by you all in being the stewards of our time in this heavy space for the future of waka ama for all our people" (PCWA, 2021).

One PCWA kaihoe expressed their pride in being part of an inclusive group of individuals who protected their whakapapa, maintained their sovereignty and their love for waka ama. The tough times had severe impacts on many, but the supportive nature of the group allowed them to cope and see that the good elements of waka ama remained, regardless of the segregated situation faced.

Demonstrating their rangatiratanga, one PCWA kaihoe stated that their whānau had decided to remain waka ama club members but would not affiliate with WANZ. This

effectively stops them from participating in WANZ events, but also demonstrates the belief in waka ama as more than a sport. They continued optimistically with the thought of future paddling with whānau and like-minded friends. Here is an opportunity for a new heterotopia for the new minority.

Hoea has demonstrated that once kaihoe get started, the whānau environment again stood out as the key motivator in them staying and establishing themselves as kaihoe. Socialisation is a factor in wellbeing that is catered for in waka ama, as are the other three elements that were discussed. Another concept discussed is that of Te Ao Māori, in which waka ama exists and therefore provides entry for those new to it or struggling to establish their place within it.

Kupu Whakamutunga

This chapter has navigated the first research urupounamu, “What is the magnetic phenomenon that captivates kaihoe?” by lashing together the voices of paddlers, academic literature, and Kaupapa Māori theory, in a transitioning stroke sequence of *Kia Rite* and *Hoea*. These two metaphorical paddling phases chart the journey from initial curiosity and enticement to full immersion in the world of waka ama. *Kia Rite* revealed the forces that first pulled kaihoe toward the hoe: whānau and friends, the lure of challenge, the inclusion in Te Ao Māori, and the pursuit of wellbeing. These intrinsic and extrinsic motivations both align with scholarly literature but are firmly positioned in uniquely Māori expressions of cultural revival, identity and belonging. The kōrerorero of Lifetime Kaihoe illustrated that this journey was void of the pulling force experienced by others, as it was an inheritance, a lifestyle integrated into their whakapapa.

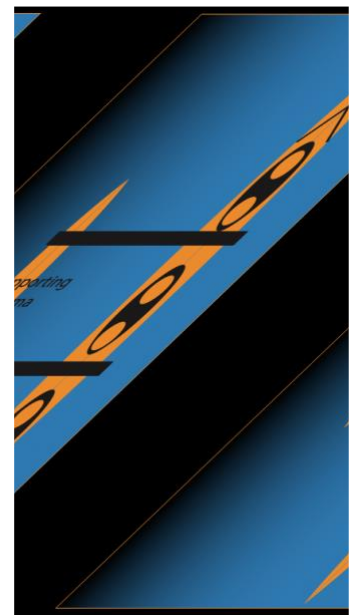


Figure 4. Whānau support, crucial in attracting and retaining kaihoe. Note. Author created.

Hoea, the command to paddle, illuminated what happens after that first stroke, how kaihoe are retained, transformed, and inspired through their participation in waka ama. The effects on hauora, framed through *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, demonstrated that this practice is not just sport, but a physical activity with a mauri: a space of healing, identity building, and social cohesion. The tikanga of waka ama is inclusive of all people, creating a dynamic, living and lived space where whanaungatanga prospers across whakapapa, whenua and moana.

Therefore, the captivation of kaihoe is not a single magnetic phenomenon, it is a confluence of merging drivers. It is the pōwhiri of whānau, whenua and moana, the challenge of the unknown, the comfort and security of Te Ao Māori, and the chance to follow the rhythm of the water and of others in your waka ama. Waka ama is more than movement; it is meaning in motion, an embodied understanding. The transition from *Kia Rite* to *Hoea* is not a mere path to a physical activity, but to Hawaiiki Ora, a heterotopic space of connection, transformation, and homecoming.

The next chapter explored the second research question, “How does waka ama influence lifestyle?” The key themes of lifestyle and identity change. The second half of the chapter demonstrates why waka ama is more than a sport.

CHAPTER 4

MANINI TE WAKA!

Manini te Waka is the experience of the waka ama gliding through the water, a moment of effortlessness, of accomplishment and the harmony found during the act of paddling. This physical exertion produces more than physical displacement of the waka ama; it creates a holistic movement of the kaihoe through realms and realities.

The second research question, “How does waka ama influence lifestyle?” is at the heart of this chapter. The first section, Kia Mau, aimed to explore the changes that occurred once the kaihoe were on the waka ama paddling, changes to lifestyle and identity. Secondly, this chapter explored the claim that waka ama is more than just a sport to determine its validity and where waka ama may fit best based on semantic comparison.

The first section of this chapter is Kia Mau, an instruction given at the commencement of paddling to hold on to one’s paddle and glide. This is emblematic of the kaihoe holding on to elements of the waka ama world they have experienced, and which are now factors in their new world. This section aims to illuminate the evolutionary praxis of change that occurs through time by exploring two prominent themes: lifestyle and identity. Lifestyle changes from one’s norm are evolutionary, but one hopes they are positive changes. Identity also changes due to the myriad of transformative factors in one’s life.

The second section of this current chapter focuses on one theme that kaihoe presented, and that is their belief that waka ama is more than a sport. It should be acknowledged, that the success waka ama has experienced to date is due largely to its appeal as a sport. However, as a whole, it produces a heterotopian social space for far more than pure sporting activities. The concepts discussed that relate to the theme are: leisure, play, games, sports and movement.

Leisure has a sense of freedom associated with one's will, while play is a freedom from the everyday, rule-driven world. Games add an obstacle to the mundane, creating an activity that is more challenging and enjoyable. Sport is a physical challenge against place, people or equipment. Rules provide a fair competition for those involved. Movement can be physical, emotional and social, and each has a place in this study.

This chapter will also utilise thematic synthesis, with the researcher, the literature and kaihoe perceptions supporting each other like the kīato and ama. The standard layout will be kete kōrero first to provide a contextual background to the topic at hand, followed by kaihoe perceptions to bring extra relevance from waka ama.

Kia Mau (Transformation)

Kia mau is an instruction given to relax, and it is a chance to experience the moment. Feeling the glide allows one to appreciate the change that has occurred, from stationary to mobile, and even from the hegemonic to the heterotopic. This is also a time to recognise personal change.

This section aims to illuminate two themes, lifestyle and identity. Both lifestyle and identity change over time, like the pulling of the paddle changes the waka ama's state of inertia. The action causes a reaction, and for many kaihoe, the act of joining waka ama results in these changes.

Lifestyle

After establishing a strong connection to waka ama, some participants experienced changes to their lifestyle. They were asked to explain their lifestyle prior to and after becoming waka ama participants to help illustrate the change that many took for granted. There was also an allowance for them to express the lifestyle changes for any of their waka ama whānau or friends.

Lifestyle is defined as “the way in which a person lives” (Oxford, 2023) and “the usual way of life of a person, group, or society” (Webster, 1996). Astin et al. (2014) discussed lifestyle changes that resulted from a sudden change in health status, and the resulting reassessment of one’s past, present and future. The loss of the familiar self meant the introduction of the unfamiliar self and the associated distress. There is also a shift in their self-identity, which involves re-evaluating one’s new limits and self-worth.

Pershing et al. (2024) explored the motivations and barriers of lifestyle changing programmes designed to prevent health issues—tailoring programmes to individual needs, such as community support throughout the programmes, assisted in motivation. Barriers need to be addressed to establish inviting environments. Stoner et al. (2012) noted the negative effect on indigenous health as a consequence of colonisation. They believed culturally sensitive strategies need to be employed to improve indigenous people’s health to drive lifestyle change.

Some people experienced a negative unfamiliar self due to lifestyle changes in the study by Astin et al. (2014). Kaihoe too experienced lifestyle change; however, the environment was inviting, including the presence of whānau and friends. It was not a case of having to change, but an evolutionary change that resulted in proactive benefits to hauora and identity. The familiar self remains, selecting potential changes from the new environment, from the heterotopic social space of Hawaiki Ora. The environment of waka ama provides a culturally sensitive approach that promotes lifestyle changes in many of the kaihoe.

Waka ama as a movement has been noted for promoting healthy lifestyles. It encourages smoke-free, alcohol-free, fizzy drink-free and fatty food-free events (Reweti, 2023). Healthy kaihoe of all ages, sizes and shapes, and ethnicities also motivate change. The result is that now these have become waka ama specific tikanga. The consumption of healthy food has become synonymous with waka ama, promoting a well-rounded approach to physical activity and healthy lifestyle changes.

Several participants disclosed their involvement in the common heavy drinking culture of New Zealand. Coming from employment or sporting codes that held alcohol consumption as a regular part of life, they noticed that over time their perception of drinking changed. Giving up drinking for some time was common, and they all cut their drinking back to socialising on rare occasions if they started drinking again.

Making healthy lifestyle changes is not always easy. Martin gave up smoking in the year 2000, however in his place of employment, alcohol was a daily constant being in the hospitality industry. It was his involvement with waka ama that enabled him to make a change in direction and has empowered him to maintain his health status. Aiming to improve his paddling, he stated, “you get your head down and your bum up and you want to really get into it, your health becomes a lot better. You know it’s part and parcel to it. It stopped me from smoking again” (M. Helleur, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

Anything that was going to negatively impact one’s waka ama experiences seemed to be eliminated. The dynamics within your paddling group influence you, Martin believed. He stated that no one gets a lifestyle lesson; it is the people that you paddle with that impact you.

After six months of waka ama, Richard attended the WANZ Nationals, and it was an eye-opener for him. He had never seen so many Māori, let alone so many positive role models. He soon made changes to his lifestyle, avoiding smoking and alcohol because he prioritised paddling over those habits.

This is similar to Jason’s move away from nightclubbing. He went from leaving early and sleeping in cars outside the club to not attending at all. As mentioned prior, if anything got in the way of one’s enjoyable paddling experience, it was phased out, and if anything could increase the enjoyment, it was introduced with open arms.

The discarding of these two prior unhealthy habits could be due to the tikanga set by WANZ in the early days. Waka ama events were and still are all smoke-free, and the event merchandise had smoke-free logos on it. All venues became smoke-free and alcohol free, lifting the mana of the activity above that of a mere sport. This also established a sense of tapu or rāhui around waka ama and the waka ama environment. Those restrictions or guidelines entrenched waka ama firmly in Te Ao Māori. Many lessons are taught and learnt through these measures.

With an environment that placed emphasis on the wellbeing of its membership a priority, efforts by competitive and social paddlers to make improvements in other areas appeared. Nutritional knowledge increased, hydration became essential and how to train smarter developed over time. High-performance paddlers saw a significant lifestyle change, as do most athletes pursuing the elite level.

Some kaihoe mentioned the mimesis of others achieving high standards in waka ama. What they ate, drank, wore, their paddle choice, their waka ama choice and even their gym workouts all became of interest. Along with this is the idea to associate with any high-performance paddlers. As a whakataukī states, “Haere i mua i te tira parāoa”, which demonstrates this strategy was also employed in ancient Māori times and yet another connection to the past.

The health benefits gained through lifestyle changes were not only perceived in a better waka ama performance. Through her diligence and perseverance in training, Karmen no longer needed her ritually used asthma pump. Anxiety of asthma was a lifelong issue for Karmen. Often, she was fearful of overexerting herself and being able to participate at her own pace without judgment allowed her to experience hauora gains like everyone else. While training for an overseas race with her whānau, Karmen explains, “I got rid of my ventolin inhaler”. This was an anxious moment for her, but she noticed that she needed it less and less, and then did not need to take it once her team stopped paddling as in the past. Pleased, she said, “I slowly built up the confidence to let my buddy go”. A new experience was training until she got tired, not

until she began wheezing and struggled to breathe. “Wow, a lifetime discovery” (K. Wallace, personal communications, January 28, 2021). Later, being able for the first time to push to physical limits, rather than the limit dictated by Karmen’s asthma condition. This life-changing moment was the result of the gradual lifestyle changes she made, and it was the waka ama environment and whanaungatanga that made that shift possible.

Raipoa stated, “training builds strength in tinana and character” (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021), and this was shared by many of the kaihoe wanting to be healthy and happy people. Hauora, fitness and cultural connection back to your roots are all benefits identified by Raipoia. As mentioned earlier, she knows waka ama keeps her going through the ups and downs of life.

In the youngest grade, taitamariki, things are pretty cruisy according to Turanga. He adds that as one progresses through the grades, they experience healthy ways and a healthier lifestyle. Starting with being active, as they are already achieving that. Furthermore, overall hauora is introduced later, and the mental health side becomes more of a focus point in adolescents. Turanga disclosed that “especially now with rangatahi, you see all the different challenges that they face” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021).

Turanga also recalled the pleasure in watching the hauora changes in friends who start waka ama such as “minimising bad habits” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). This can also be enticing to other non-paddling friends. This is similar to Turi’s experience seeing the healthy older generation participating in waka ama. He also added that the elimination of unhealthy food and drinks from the WANZ Nationals shows a move in the right direction in terms of healthy options for whānau paddling and spectating.

Critical of the way waka ama may be heading, Heeni recollected when their club’s emphasis was on the whole whānau being involved. Now, there may be a narrower

range of people getting involved. She stated that they would have all shapes and sizes paddling. Her club would have wānanga-type situations that created a “strong sort of ethic of wellbeing for the average person”. Continuing on this point, she explained that “it’s still about the hauora o te tangata, but it seems like a lot of the people who are involved already have an active disposition and maybe see it as more of a competitive sport rather than a lifestyle” (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

The connection with the environment and nature was standard amongst participants. Many enjoyed sharing their experiences with new kaihoe. Another lifestyle change seemed to be an acknowledgement of the natural environment, on and off the water, that people gained. Perhaps being surrounded by new natural experiences on the water, one can start to recognise and identify more natural experiences on land also; fish, birds, plants and even the quality of green and blue spaces.

The water is viewed as “a tool for your hauora” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). Learning about the source of your water, what it does to your body, how to protect it and also how to enjoy it are not necessarily part of waka ama, but are inseparable. These elements all add balance to life and people’s overall hauora according to Turanga. He added that his people believe that the health of their river reflects the health of their people, “if our waterways aren’t healthy then somewhere along the line, we aren’t healthy” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021).

Waka ama gave Heeni an anchor to the area they participated in. Learning the names of water areas and other relevant places is all part of exploring the watery world of waka ama. Some of these special places can be enjoyed on both land and water. They also carry a history that empowers individuals if they carry it with them into new situations.

The spiritual and emotional aspects of waka ama were lifestyle changes for Turi. These x-factors, as he termed them, were not seen in their past paddling community.

He also mentioned the summer holidays were lost in the name of waka ama due to the national sprint championships being held in January each year. That leads to being pōhara or financially challenged due to the travel paddlers undertake in the space of a year. Financially poor in the pursuit of wealth in health.

The lifestyle changes were referred to as 'wholeness' that consumed many participants' entire whānau, not just in reference to racing and paddling. Many mothers were able to join waka ama from the safety of the lifestyle they are already in, due to other whānau members paddling. This reawakens them from a life dedicated to their children's adventures for so long, to one of self-discovery and challenge.

There was the telling of a tale involving two waka ama participants who expressed the positive way their new waka ama lifestyle had on their relationship. One partner thanked Matahi for his part in re-establishing waka ama in Aotearoa, which was a significant factor in saving their marriage, house and job. This was mainly due to the other partner stopping their heavy alcohol consumption after commencing waka ama.

Richard mentioned how he and his lovely wife experienced a positive change in their lifestyle, one being more time to discuss each other's day, paddling day that is, after starting waka ama. My wife and I experience the same positive impact on our lifestyle, sharing more positive times and positive moments since commencing waka ama.

Moving from lifestyle to identity, Craig mentioned the similarity of the two in his statement about waka ama,

I see it as a lifestyle, like being involved in Waka. It's an identity, it's a lifestyle and I don't really see it. It's just normal...but it might not be normal to other people, but it's just part of who I am and that's what I like about it. (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021)

Identity

Participants noted an identity change, as discussed in chapter three. Waka ama on the roof of participants' vehicles became the norm and a unique statement. Discussions tend to be waka ama focused, regardless of the audience. Paddler and kaihoe nomenclature became sources of pride and unity.

This is supported by kōrerorero on the identity of kaihoe. Identity changes over time, like the pulling of the paddle change the waka ama's state of inertia. The action causing a reaction and for many kaihoe, the act of joining waka ama results in either a changed or an improved sense of identity.

Smith (2015) states that the "identity question is complex" (p. 48). Identity is a very loaded vernacular and noted as having too many meanings, resulting in complete ambiguity according to Brubaker and Cooper (2000). They also mention that people are asked to identify themselves, to characterise themselves, to locate themselves and to position themselves within a narrative or category in countless situations and contexts. Their conceptualisation of their self-identification as opposed to their conceptualised identity by others had a vast polarising potential. Just as social life waxes and wanes, so too do these conceptualised identities of self and others, and others of self. Dallmayr (1987) delves deeper by stating "social identities are neither objectively given nor totally dissolved, but rather emerge through constant renegotiation (or a process of challenge and response)" (p. 288). Identity changes with changes in our situation that distance us from our past and its associated identification. Moving abroad, new relationships, health issues and even the recent disposable culture are examples of such events (Zerubavel, 2003).

Parents or caregivers of young children contribute the most to the young person's identity (Rocha & Webber, 2017). Some use identity to create productive environments, promoting self-identification both emotionally and cognitively, a psychodynamic process that reinforces solidarity (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Games,

dance and festivities are opportunities where the brotherhood and sisterhood can flourish. Solidarity and communities of diverse networks form a comforting, warm society to willingly identify with (Henning Eichberg, 2009).

Self is closely aligned with identity. Houkamau (2006) considers oneself to be constructed through social interaction, and attempts to find one's place or space in society by living up to the expectations of their group or society. This is a conceptual self. The self comes from one's understanding of their existence as both an actor and an object in society. Imitation of others, particularly caregivers, aids in this interactive process. The whānau are essential to the development of the "me" which fits in the whānau environment. There may be conflict when agency or [mana motuhake](#) is exercised as one becomes more independent.

There is a self that is exposed to the world through bodily actions. Another is a private self that is only accessible to that person. Despite efforts to share, one's private self cannot be fully comprehended by others. The self is therefore the sum of many experiences and interactions in the world, with a goal to fit in or stand out.

Identity however is a comparable notion between others in society. Here again, we see the goal of finding in society a space or place to fit or stand out. To do this, one must classify oneself within socially accepted categorical markers like race, gender, occupation and so on.

Someone's personality should not be confused with their identity. It is a characteristic of their self or nature. Erikson (1994) saw personal identity as a nexus of one's observations of their sameness through a spatial-temporal lens and the observation of others of that sameness.

Some groups have initiatives that provide a right of entry into the particular group's identity, like those of Foucault's heterotopia. It may be seen as a means of acceptance or as a gauge of one's desire and resoluteness to be part of the group's identity. For

Māori not established in Te Ao Māori, mastery in waka ama builds self-esteem in a Māori social reality of Hawaiki Ora. Therefore, Te Ao Māori becomes more accessible.

Houkamau (2006) defines identity as “that aspect of the self-concept that relates to ‘who’ a person is and what that means relative to others” (p. 13). One's identity is a combination of imitation of archetypes by their close associates, whichever time aids in establishing their role identity in society. This role is comparable to others where those roles are understood through a set of expectations and values connected to appearance and actions. Substandard adherence to these can result in disapproval, dissociation and even distress.

Social Identity Theory shows that one can have multiple identities for the myriad of social settings they engage in (Khadka, 2024). The individual ultimately determines the selection of the appropriate identity for a given situation. The individual can also hide or redirect negative attention away from their identifier categories. Related to such actions is Situational Identity, which is interpersonal, where the superego protects one from shame in social situations, and even online environments, as reported by Qin et al. (2023) when explaining situational selves.

Zerubavel (2003) explains that from a young age, people hear stories from others, set out chronologically, that help show the storyteller's identity among peers. Over time, this is continued by the younger listeners. However, there can be a tendency for some to focus too much on the negative aspects of their past for the foundation on which to build their identity. Time, and in particular Māori time, will be discussed more in Chapter Five.

Ethnic groups are usually minority groups, often with visible distinctions and frequently subject to lower socioeconomic statistics. All these elements add a special flavour to the identity make-up of ethnic minorities. While setting them apart, it also provides solidarity. However, ethnic discrimination's psychological impact is less when people evaluate their ethnicity positively, and they also manage to reflect negativity better.

With this in mind, it has been a priority for many to promote the learning of one's cultural practices and language to establish self-worth and pride, and to ultimately withstand discrimination. Learning about the history and practices of the culture improves self-esteem, and connecting with others of that culture also has the benefit of increasing self-worth and value even higher (Houkamau, 2006).

Māori Identity

Māori is the ethnic and racial demonym used to label the indigenous people of Aotearoa by the foreign arrivals (Fox et al., 2018; Smith, 2018). However, suddenly it referred to their pan tribal identity that was new and thus added to the complexities of identity. This creation of a pan tribal identity meant the reduction of strength in the iwi, hapū and whānau identity. Here began the Māori identity created by colonial mechanisms that undermined the true indigenous identity of a people. These types of demographical shifts result in societies being confronted with cultural change (Quezada et al., 2012). These were intentional methods designed to “allow for a greater degree of state control” (Smith, 2015, p. 48).

Māori identity has been impacted by colonisation's religious and academic mechanisms, constructing and solidifying a Māori identity. Early ethnographers told the story of old Māori times, based on kōrero from Māori who were themselves not without prejudices from the new colonial world. Separating one worldview while discussing another is a noble but Sisyphean task.

Early Māori who wrote on Māori traditions wrote through a somewhat clouded lens. As stated by Morris, many Māori ancestors went away from their tribal lands and returned followers of the Christian faith, “rere kurī noa, hoki Karaitiana mai” (Morris, 2024). Holman (2007) mentions,

In attempting to find a superior level of esoteric spirituality amongst Māori, Best was led to believe the contentious idea that there remained an informant

amongst Māori by the 1890s, whose religious thinking had not been influenced by the missionary culture, and the power of biblical literacy to reshape Māori thought and society (p. 33).

He demonstrates this further by stating with regards to three prominent ethnographers that presented historical accounts which influence indigenous people's worldview, "As with Marsden, Barlow has a Christian background and roots in Mormonism: the echoes of Best may seem faint in this explanation, but are present, nevertheless" (p. 373).

Māori as an identity is constantly in a state of renegotiation due to the ever-changing world of non-Māori concepts they face. A form of the hermeneutic circle of the continually redefined Māori starting point for the conceptualisation of the new (Fox et al., 2018). This new hybrid identity is situated between cultures and is often criticised. However, some will say it was inevitable (Kaiwai & Zemke-White, 2004; Rocha & Webber, 2017). At this stage Māori was just a label, however over time other Eurocentric devices started undermining the true indigenous identity of the people. As stated, "Māori identity is embedded within a Pākehā ecology" and this "Pākehā ecology has played a major role in weakening Māori identity" (Moeke-Pickering, 1996, p. 3).

The major external identification agents that impact self-identification and that also happen to be the powerful institutions of authority reinforce the struggle for identity (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Here, the colonial settler governments perpetuated this new identity of Māori, but on their Western hegemonic terms.

Now, Māori identity and Māori culture are becoming a positive aspect for Māori. With increased understanding of the plight of Māori historically, Māori positioning in society is seen not as an inadequacy, but as related to injustice. Erikson (1994) explained a coloured boy who finds pleasure in playing along as the Lone Ranger, albeit a Lone Ranger of colour. He finds solace in fitting in the hegemonic culture, as expressed in

the statement, “white men like him” (p. 37). Similarly, as supported by the kōrerorero of this study, those who identify as kaihoe have high-esteem amongst Māori communities. Kaihoe embody the acts of ancient times, of their tīpuna, and like the Lone Ranger coloured boy, share the prestige associated with the role or actions.

The creation story of the Māori sets the foundation for who Māori believe they are. As quoted, “creation stories everywhere, cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world. They tell us who we are” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 7). This links back to whakapapa and through whakapapa to a myriad of Māori values and concepts that participate in the development of the tuakiri Māori. Tuakiri is formed through the bond with whenua, whānau, marae, values and te reo (Smith, 2015).

Tuakiri denotes traditional Māori identity, where even the nomenclature is more than it seems from first glance. With tua meaning the farther side and kiri meaning skin, it denotes more than the physical appearance, reaching different realms of existence—a far deeper sense of identity. The farther side offers a spiritual nostalgia in time. It could also include land, mountains, rivers, lakes and oceans that “ground an individual’s personality to a place” (Mead, 2016, p. 273).

Tūrangawaewae are places to ground and connect with one’s ancestors. Knowledge of this place allows one to explore the world with the assurance that their identity is strong and they can stand firm. Here, waka ama provides the same grounding, especially with the knowledge of the origin of this ancient physical activity being connected to their heritage, to their whakapapa, to the distant Hawaiki, and to this heterotopic social space called Hawaiki Ora.

Loss of land through often dubious sale or confiscation has resulted in a loss of mana, encumbering one’s ability to establish a positive sense of tuakiri (Ngawhare, 2020). The loss of access to the moana has also had a negative impact. These axiologies were originally situated firmly within Te Ao Māori but have, over time, expanded to accommodate the multicultural and multiple worldviews evolving within Te Ao Māori.

Identification can be linked to relational webs such as kinship or friendships, or to membership groups with common categorical characteristics (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). The relational web of the Māori reaches different realms of existence and provokes the integration of the metaphysical. This metaphysical reality of Māori has too long faced the rigours of positivism, viewed through safety glasses that filter the unknown and promote the unenchanted (Mika, 2020; Stuart, 2003).

Māori cultural embeddedness is foundational to Māori identity. It involves an appreciation of te reo Māori, strong ties with other Māori (whānau, hapū, iwi or [hoa](#)) and a solid understanding of what it is to be Māori as contrasted to others. Therefore, it could be of benefit to those seeking to establish their Māori identity to participate in waka ama, the culture of waka ama and the heterotopic social space it has established. Reinforcing this assertion, Wikaire & Newman state, “Waka contributes to the construction of a Māori person’s identity, forming symbols of tribal identity and pride on both a physical and spiritual level whilst also holding an important utilitarian function” (2014, p. 63).

Allender et al. (2006) reviewed literature on why particular groups participated in sports and the barriers they faced. They conclude with a point regarding people having to “reorient individual identities” (2006, p. 834) as a barrier for many participants in sports. Although there is a requirement for reorienting one’s identity, many times it seems to be a positive, self-discovery and a sense of return for some participants in this study. Returning to an identity denied them, as mentioned earlier, for many reasons, including colonisation and urbanisation.

Identity and tuakiri, for Māori, are defined in terms of the collective (Fox et al., 2018). Commonality is sharing some common attributes, and connectedness establishes a sense of “belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 20). The whānau fosters this sense of solidarity, an onus on roles and responsibilities, and the significance of unity.

For Māori, whānau also presents a space to nurture meaning and belonging to both culture and iwi (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). Belonging is known for its positive connection to wellbeing (Apos et al., 2019; Glover, 2017). Both knowing one's identity and having a sense of identity are indispensable to Māori (Te Rito, 2007).

Stuart (2003) mentions that nations can be seen as ethnic and cultural identities. States however are more political authorities or jurisdictions over an area of society and possess an internal power to defend it by implementing the police, army, and bureaucracies. Concepts such as politics, culture, gender, ethnicity and so on, are presumed to be social structures within a state (Paringatai, 2018; Shields, 1999).

Māori were originally nation states with control over their territory and defended it against any attacks. "It is important to understand that Māori are not a homogenous group, and that different Māori iwi (tribes) and hapū (sub-tribes) have different beliefs and practices" (Liu & Bruce, 2020, p. 730). These iwi each had a distinct identity connected to their unique whakapapa and variances in language and tikanga. The common 'us' and 'others' binary opposites were conceptualised as a comprehensive 'us' being their iwi or hapū, and 'others' being any of the other iwi or hapū.

Post the New Zealand land wars, the settler Government stepped up its assimilation policies to eradicate the iwi nations and force Māori on their way towards complete, but undesired, metamorphosis (Stuart, 2003; Wheaton et al., 2021; Wikaire & Newman, 2014). Moeke-Pickering states that "threats to the Māori identity have been numerous" (1996, p. 5).

When colonial mechanisms meet resistance, as seen in the Māori renaissance movements, it was possible to see the struggle to maintain an identity as becoming more about producing new identities (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Pritchard states that:

The affirmation of identity and culture as positive, as self-defining or self-differentiating, risks uncritically accepting the terms in which identity or culture

are given through a conflation of re-presentation and representation, while the characterization of colonization in terms of a kind of trafficking or exchange between cultures means that matters of ownership, authenticity and authority become difficult to determine (2001, p. 37).

Māori and Pacific people have embraced waka ama in Aotearoa, combining to create a unique cultural identity for the sport, a microculture (Pope, 2013). Noted is that non-Māori share the struggle for a bicultural identity with Māori Te Tiriti partners. These struggles can be an empowering process for all (Fox et al., 2018). This is likely to incorporate several cultures in today's global connectivity. Acculturation through recreational activities has been argued as providing positive opportunities to adapt to new settings (Lee & Funk, 2011) and illustrates that waka ama can aid positively in the acculturation of non-Māori into the Māori culture.

Mullholland (2013) discusses the symbolism of nationhood, as seen with flags and anthems. Māori acceptance of the Tino Rangatiratanga flag and Hinewehi Mohi singing the te reo Māori version of the national anthem in 1999 are such symbols that reinforce Māori solidarity. This is intensified in times of war, or more recently, in times of global crisis. They give a reason for fighting, or more particularly, a reason to unite. The COVID-19 pandemic was such a crisis that united the majority of the planet, through different mechanisms. A more contemporary Aotearoa example is the Tiriti Amendment Bill and the resulting unification of Māori and non-Māori along the [hīkoi](#).

Whakapapa

Whakapapa is like the lashing that binds Māori concepts and realities together, including waka ama. It primarily elucidates and vindicates the Māori reality of the world (Mahuika, 2019; Pihama, 2019). Whakapapa dates back to Polynesia and connects Māori to Māori, Māori to Māoli and so on throughout the Pacific (Ellis, 2014; Te Rito, 2007).

Although traditional intergenerational transfer of whakapapa was an oral tradition, “te rākau ā te Pākehā” (Te Rito, 2007, p. 4), written versions have thankfully kept alive considerable treasured traditional narratives that would have otherwise perished under colonial suppression. There are artistic representations of whakapapa within whakairo, tukutuku and kōwhaiwhai, but they would be mere artworks if not for the ability to interpret the symbols by a suitable tohunga. This traditional concept is translated as genealogy, but it has far more depth than the translation suggests.

Whakapapa has an ability to connect the ancient to the present, the present to the future (Pihama, 2019), the dead to the living, the physical to the spiritual and everything in Te Ao Māori to one another. It rejects the dichotomy of human and non-human others (Te Aramoana Waiti & Shaun, 2019) and promotes the wholeness or oneness of the world (Latour, 2017).

Zerubavel (2003) describes genealogy in a way that suits whakapapa, as a bloodline link for the past and present, an image of actual lines descending to the present. These all explain the world lived by Māori and Māori peoples' place within it (Mahuika, 2019; Te Rito, 2007). It could be argued that without this nostalgic connection, Māori would slip out of the grasp of collective strength, of collective identity, and of the culture that positions them in Te Ao Māori (Ngawhare, 2020).

Common descent lines provide a hierarchy structure for whānau identity and history. As a “system of organising legitimacy” (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 62), whakapapa can prove superior lineage to benefit the lucky bluebloods, to segregate the unfortunate. Worship of the ancestors in names serves to maintain the continuity and the connection.

If one goes back far enough, they discover connections with all things, a “cousinhood” (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 77). The anthropocentric belief that humans are superior beings is at odds with whakapapa. However, biocentrism and ecocentrism are quintessential of whakapapa (Rameka, 2016). Here is the power that reinforces Māori identity (Mahuika, 2019), which values the understanding that everything, including people,

living beings and the environment, all have an equally important place in the world. This is nicely coined in the statement, “Let us pledge reciprocity with the living world” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 116).

Comprehension of where everything fits together in the puzzle of Māori reality aids in comprehending how each should be treated and respected (Rameka, 2016; Stevenson, 2018). This interlinking privileges the Māori with a sense of belonging, and the associated wellbeing benefits. It also means they should never feel isolated or a mere individual (Seed-Pihama, 2017). Whakapapa stabilises Māori identity with links to history, time, place and whānau. Being one with the world, or being one in Hawaiki Ora.

There is a common emphasis on the astounding feats through whakapapa, but it is also important to disclose the dichotomies of existence, such as the zigzag narratives of “creative, courageous and sometimes outrageous people” who were not without fault (Pihama, 2019, p. 22). Whakapapa consists of parallel lineages of characters running side by side, era by era, and incident by incident (Te Rito, 2007), perpetuating a cause and effect relationship (Sadler, 2007), and “is central to Māori identity” (Rameka, 2016, p. 388).

Kaihoe Identity

Athletes use socially constructed norms, values, beliefs, tikanga and narratives that are associated with their sport to theorise and interpret meaning from their numerous social exchanges. This achieved identity can consume the athlete’s ascribed identity, isolating them from their typical day-to-day life. The athlete’s identity is highly sought after. However, it is also believed that balancing both identities fosters excellence unobtainable when focusing on one identity in isolation (Erueti & Palmer, 2014; Ryan, 2018).

An authentic Māori physical activity, such as waka ama, can help with balancing the athlete and non-athlete identity dichotomy. It embraces the athletic, while remaining firmly situated in te Ao Māori. A pyrrhic victory would be winning at the expense of the waka ama positionality in te Ao Māori. Therefore, waka ama is in a good situation where athlete identity and cultural identity are thriving.

Some members of the 2016 elite waka ama team noticed the tension between their athlete identity and their own Māori identity. Due to the elite level training commitments, they experienced extremely limited time to enjoy whānau, friends, and the teams they would typically coach. Their athlete identity started to dominate and impact their own cultural identity. In contrast, in the 2017 elite team, there were some with strong athlete identities on a journey to discover their cultural identity, establishing the foundation for their own waka ama identity (Nuku, 2018).

Waka ama serves as a flux for the two ends of the athlete identity-Māori identity continuum. As reinforced in the statement, “waka ama provides a unique physical cultural space through which tino-rangatiratanga (self-determination), Māori identity and Māori culture can be shared and promoted” (Wikaire & Newman, 2013, p. 60).

In competition mode, Liz expressed that she is always striving to be in the top three. However, if this does not come to fruition, she shakes it off as “it’s no biggie” to her. Also, as an accomplished steerer, she never considers herself the skipper or one to give out directions to others. “I’m just another paddler” (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021) or part of one big engine, she believes.

As Raipoia has mentioned prior, she views Māori as the children of Tāne, deity of the Forest, and the Polynesian cousins like Tahiti and Hawaii are the children of Tangaroa, the deity of the Ocean. This is reinforced by tohunga rongoā Rob McGowan, who explained his perception of Māori as the people of Aotearoa. When the waka arrived here from the islands, the new people were not Māori, but became Māori over time (R. McGowan, personal communication, May 2, 2021). To be Māori may require

relinquishing the strong tie to Tangaroa in place of one with Tāne. Raipoia believes that when Māori connect their strength and large stature with the fluidness of their island characteristics of old, they will be waka ama world beaters. This suggests the potential evolution of paddler identity as they reconnect or establish a connection to the ocean. She eloquently uses the analogy of a cord connecting people to the water, and the cord is still with Māori, but shorter than that of those living on the islands, surrounded by water, [ao te pō, pō te ao](#).

There is so much learning to be gained from participating in the waka ama experience with an open mindset, as Karmen did. She spoke of all the weather and water conditions, the corresponding time for specific patterns to form and change and so on. These make the kaihoe different from your non-paddling person. Jason supported this by describing the way kaihoe can help others on the water who are not yet accustomed to the environment and the risks associated. Helping other water users is part of being a kaihoe, but he also expands further to say that this is common across water activities and their accompanying water people.

Explaining his admiration for his long-distance paddling idols in Tahiti, Jason said they looked amazing, healthy, strong, perfect specimens of Polynesian pride. They were not kaihoe because of racing; they were at a higher level, according to Jason. Their identity was different from that of racing kaihoe, suggesting again an element that separates one kaihoe from another, a possible multiplicity of kaihoe. This implies that the racing class is not the original class, and non-competitive do not complete the binary of possibilities.

Craig strongly supports the view Jason puts forward regarding these higher-level Tahitian kaihoe. He mentioned that whakapapa and understanding waka ama were “a part of our identity and heritage” as a Māori, as a kaihoe. Experiencing this identity phenomenon, he realised that it keeps him in waka ama, not the racing. He repeated, “It’s our identity and that’s our heritage” (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021). Also, over time, he saw himself more grounded due to waka ama.

Content with who he had become as a result of the ups and downs of promoting and enjoying waka ama as a lifestyle.

Embedded into Craig's lifestyle is his ever-present waka ama on the roof of his vehicle, irrespective of the kaupapa or destination. Throughout the years, Craig's journeys have developed his connections to various areas he paddles in. This evolved into him feeling confident within himself at these locations of significance to him.

Turanga also discusses the internal competition within clubs and crews. He stated, "We always want to one up the bros, especially if it's your bros" (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). The end goal is not as evident as his statement. He clarifies that it is a constant battle for a collective goal of improving everyone. Although a performance goal in nature, it always has an intrinsic benefit for the individuals who are simultaneously committed to motivating and enhancing others.

Identities linked to regions, clubs and teams which are emphasised on the water, but Conan conveyed his joy that on the land, "You're all part of the same. You are all waka paddlers and you all get along" (C. Herbert, personal communication, March 24, 2021). He also saluted those pioneers who pushed the boundaries. They saw the Moloka'i channel and said, "Oh, let's try and paddle across to there" (C. Herbert, personal communication, March 24, 2021), much like Māori dared to venture across the vast Pacific Ocean. This added to Conan's ideals for the kaihoe identity, and is a characteristic of kaihoe in his Hawaiki Ora.

Turi's club accommodates both competitive and social paddling. They have a social grade that caters for social kaihoe, free from pressure to make performance gains and full of personal gains. Strong paddlers to Turi are those who are also strong leaders. Elite athletes are expected to perform at a certain level when they go about their paddling, but may not automatically fall into the category of strong, as Turi alluded to earlier. Although fitting the criteria to be elite, he mentioned that he was no fan of the term 'elite'. It seems that the elite program has created changes in the waka ama

environment. As mentioned prior, many in the first squad were from social to competitive waka ama environments and did not comprehend the level of commitment and degree of excellence required to be elite.

If kaihoe have sustained a lengthy performance focus and are at the top level amongst the club or region, Turanga supports kaihoe striving for the elite program. He adds that “elitism isn’t for everybody”. When asked about the potential for reconnection between kaihoe and their waka ama whānau, like a club or club team, he considered it more likely amongst what he terms the newer generation that join the sport later and what Turanga called the “top of the tree”. Commenting on his experience in the first elite squad, he said that squad was safe because “most of them are bros” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021), meaning they have a solid foundation in waka ama that allowed them to remain very stable and grounded at that high level of the elite program. Those newer generations face the risk of qualifying for the high placement, but their foundation is so limited that they risk being toppled by things situated at the roots or the structural level of the tree, so to speak.

Another kaihoe part of the first elite squad, Turi supported the above comments and added that some kaihoe seemed to have a sense of entitlement when they started the elite journey. “There’s a certain performance level that’s expected” (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021), that some simply could not reach. At higher levels of performance, intense prescribed exercise is demanded to support the increased pressure for results. People are progressively becoming more accepting of the fact that there is a standard, and if one cannot reach that standard, as Turi says, “don’t take it personally” (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). This is a positive development in waka ama and the mindset of kaihoe, he believes.

Stressing the importance of the elite kaihoe program, Richard communicated that people participate in waka ama for many reasons. The elite kaihoe program provides another level of experience for kaihoe—an experience “where it pushes everything to the limit” physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. The elite kaihoe had high entry

baselines. Elite kaihoe reached new levels of excellence, where Richard says they take in the experience for a moment, then start elevating themselves again to even higher levels, they push themselves to uncharted territory where “we don’t know what that looks like, don’t know what that feels like”. Despite the ever-apparent risk of stress-related consequences when operating so close to breaking point, he conveyed that the elite kaihoe program is a “pretty cool experience”. As a result of all the commitment, effort and intense training, Richard said the racing became a fun part to him, and he would think “bring it on!” (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021).

With relation to Turanga’s tree structure, Turi also agrees that the foundation is important. He points more to WANZ’s investment in developing the structure and infrastructure at the club level to provide stability. There are very few that reach the elite level, and a larger percentage that either do not want to battle for a seat in the elite waka ama, or will not achieve the standard required to obtain an elite spot. Turi noted that successful elements exist in netball and rugby, the national sports of Aotearoa. Extracting these elements would be important to waka ama, according to Turi. Aotearoa waka ama must remain Aotearoa waka ama and not become marketised as Wikaire and Newman (2014) implied in their study. Worried about school involvement, Turi has seen schools pushing their agendas to manipulate the way waka ama is promoted today. Trying to link this cultural activity to school academic credits is smart, but it cannot be at the expense of the culture that is being taught.

Explaining that she felt her less competitive days as a kaihoe in secondary school were fun, Te-Wai-a-Tauranga continued by saying that that type of fun ended when she became competitive and focused on winning. However, she followed on by stating this new level was “more fun because I’m more into it or more committed, more driven, more dedicated”, and these have meant she has experienced better results and more rewards. Insisting it was not her ego enjoying the success, she noted that her attention was on racing and nothing else at that time. “Whatever happens, happens” (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021) is how she approaches the stressful race

situation, to remain calm. Having paddled for her whole life, she may be able to eliminate a great deal of stressful elements that others face, leaving her more energy to focus on racing well and executing her race plan.

Development and structure were points raised by Raipoia concerning the elite kaihoe program. Suggesting that WANZ could eventually establish a development structure from junior grade through to seniors for clubs, she notes there is a lack of cohesion amongst clubs. To create a competitive team, kaihoe are often brought in to make the numbers in these dial-a-crew or text-a-crew situations. This more often than not has a negative impact on the clubs and on the teams they have left behind. Kaihoe can be left jumping from one team to the next, one club to another. The costs associated with travel are higher than staying local, putting a strain on whānau financially.

Some dial-a-crew organisers, like myself, promote that kaihoe remain engaged with their original club or team, and utilise them only for pre-determined events that are identified early in the formation of the team. This can have a positive impact on original clubs and teams as these kaihoe take back any new knowledge and experiences to share with the original club or team. However, it can mean clubs training their kaihoe to see them race in big events for another club and creating unwanted tension. The ultimate goal is, however, to see kaihoe paddling and enjoying it.

Staying connected to the WANZ values is stressed by former WANZ board member Moana-Lee when discussing the elite kaihoe campaign. If gaps form between the elite kaihoe program space and whānau, for example, it would be terrible. She stated that “it’s our whānau that got us there” (M. Raihania, personal communication, January 27, 2021). Worth consideration, she suggested letting our values guide us in the manner in which we develop rules, coaching programs and transition kaihoe into the elite kaihoe campaign.

Tikanga guidance was also an issue for Moana-Lee based on her role as a manager of the first elite kaihoe program. Tikanga should be at the forefront of how waka ama

is conducted and she felt the first elite kaihoe campaign was thrown in the deep end. In contrast, the technical high-performance areas were given greater effort. Furthermore, she posed a thought-provoking question for WANZ and waka ama in general, “What is the pinnacle for us as a Māori people?” She continues by asking whether it is the Olympics, or is it about being Indigenous? Moana-Lee maintains that waka is a Māori activity and has whakapapa. Will making it into the Olympics result in any enhancement for Māori? She mentioned that there may actually be a cost that High Performance Sport New Zealand cannot settle with money. That is the “cost to our wairua, there’s a cost to our hinengaro”. One’s whānau and culture had to be left behind in pursuit of a selfish goal that totally goes against what “we’ve built waka ama on” (M. Raihania, personal communication, January 27, 2021). The Māori tikanga of waka ama has held it on an amazing path to date, so the question arises as to why we might abandon it now in pursuit of sporting excellence.

Recalling the wise words spoken to him by an illustrious canoe builder, Matahi was warned of the negative influence that “economy and elitism” could have on a culture’s traditions connected to waka ama, wa’a, va’a and so on. He was told to “be very careful that it stays with you, Māori.” The expensive nature of sport today concerns him, and he hopes waka ama does not have to fall prey to that type of culture-robbing predators. In Australia, waka ama or outrigger canoeing has, in Matahi’s opinion, become a “rich boys’ sport...I don’t want that to happen here” (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). For Matahi, the WANZ secondary school nationals, the junior divisions, are saving waka ama.

Kaitautoko Identity

When inquiring about outside help for the paddling development and coaching in their region, Craig received the reply, “There is nobody else bro... we’re it mate” (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021). Realising that this was the reality at the time, he and his fellow kaihoe did the best they could. This has been the case in many locations, and Lara disclosed that WANZ aims to create kaihoe pathways and coach

pathways of development in the future. Having coached many people for many years, Turanga conveyed his belief that if the coach can assist in their kaihoe's growth to higher levels of waka ama, the coaches have done a good job. If kaihoe can make a mark for themselves and their club, it is also seen as a positive for Turanga.

Aotearoa's first coach and renowned for his high standards, Matahi began venting about the poaching in Aotearoa, where their waka ama whānau are taken from the club and the coach who got them to that high level. A catch 22 situation perhaps, where the more you help them, the more likely you are to lose them. However, as mentioned previously, despite the unavoidable suffering experienced by the club whānau, he was proud of the kaihoe who chose to move on and happy to see Māori achieving on the world stage. He said that WANZ really needs to address this situation for the good of waka ama in the long run. A suggestion put forward by Matahi was bi-club training camps where one club is represented one year, the other the following year, to maintain a high-quality and highly respectful program.

Matahi described the lack of funding waka ama coaches receive in his pūrākau.

I get pulled up four times a month by the cops because I'm doing 40, 20, 30 in a 50K area. And they pull me up. "Come on, Matahi, you're not supposed to be doing 20 and 30. Why are you doing that?" I said, "Well, I'll come down here twice a day, 6 times a week. It costs me nearly \$80.00 if I do 50. If I do 20 or 30, it's only \$60.00 a week. You got an answer for that?" They go, "just go, go."
(M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

Matahi debated why waka ama coaches and managers remain on a voluntary basis, while rowing, kayaking and surf lifesaving provide salaries for theirs. He also liked the idea of waka ama coaches sharing their knowledge, stating "always willing to learn something new" and also emphasising that the "kids and parents are sick of my voice" (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). These are common in waka ama and volunteer coaching situations. Perhaps these two realities form a

dichotomy with Te Ao Māori that waka ama is based on promoting a community approach to growth, he toa takitini, so to speak. If money became available to support, there could be a risk that it would then become the currency of respect and knowledge, or mana and mātauranga. This would set the scene for the predatory system of greed to take over the forward movement of this cultural practice.

Karmen, a well-known volunteer at the WANZ sprint nationals loading bay, explained that she started as one of the volunteers that clubs had to provide each year. However, she soon became interested in learning more about the process of running such a well-established event. Therefore, she decided to volunteer and gain new experiences. Explaining her passion and dedication for her role, despite the hard times associated with life and with the volunteer job, it is the paddlers' happy experiences and expressions of thanks that give her the greatest pleasure. She conveys that, "I get my fill of thank you and gratitude in January, that last me all the way through to the next January" (K. Wallace, personal communications, January 28, 2021).

Unfortunately, regardless of a PCWA kaitūao's years of service, they were exposed to a situation that was unhealthy for them and their whānau. "And no vax volunteers either, no matter how much tautoko and awhi given freely in pre vax dictatorship... second class citizen in their eyes now" (PCWA, 2021). This is one of the cold realities of narrow-focused solutions, like Western medicine in general. The side effects can often be worse than the original problem. For an activity that depends so much on volunteers, exile and exclusion seem counterproductive, as mentioned earlier in the Taha Hinengaro section. Fortunately for waka ama, this kaituao returned to her role as soon as the restrictions were lifted. E kore e mutu te tangi aroha mōna.

Embodiment

Embodiment stems from Descartes' dualistic theories and was further developed by Husserl and Heidegger. It is the notion of humans being thrown into the world. Humans' actions are situated on the foundation of embodied nature and the material

world the body is attached. Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'flesh' where both the individual and the world create a chiasmic relationship interlinking both reality and perception, therefore situating the body as part of both simultaneously (Allen-Collinson, 2011). The body actively engages in finding and supplying meaning, as opposed to Descartes' dualism, which promotes the mind over the body. In philosophy, the body both perceives and is perceived (Henning Eichberg, 2009a; Lopez Frias & Gimeno Monfort, 2016).

For phenomenology, the teleological view is the body presenting itself in its unique way when working, communicating and perceiving physically. Its existence appears in the physical world and therefore demonstrates the "body is a fundamental form of our existence" (Gojkovic et al., 2018, p. 6).

Sport has an educational function that cultivates moral character (Reid, 2009). This moral character is embodied in athletes, through both the emancipation of internal and external confinements of being and achieving harmony for personality and characteristics of a human.

Jespersen (2009) enquires into experiences that expose performances endowed with a special sense. There are three options: religious, pleasure and delight, and finally resignation to the possibility of finding the meaning of life. Religions are based on beliefs, and therefore, it is questionable if there is a degree of prejudice towards religious ways of being sensitive to prescribed ways. The second option is also questionable if one cannot rely on hedonistic characteristics to provide one with wellness, and one would merely be a consumer without purpose. The latter is in opposition to the former two, considering them as futile (Jirásek et al., 2018). These three options are suitable for a range of concepts, such as locations, durations and formations. If a location imparts a special sense like that of Hawaiki, it could be attributed to the aforementioned triad.

Just as the phenomenological epoch re-established the enchantment of the world of our perception from the effects of dualism instituted by philosophic history, waka ama provides us relief from the disenchantment of play by the same dualistic attitude. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy endorsed a primitive world view with familiarity with the natural attitude of the Māori world view. This is seen in the recent interest in indigenous cultural practices by professional sports teams like the English rugby team, which uses Māori culture to create a positive team culture (Shailer, 2019).

In 2023, the New Zealand Women's K4 team desired their own karakia, to encompass their journey, past to future, and their whanaungatanga. This karakia would be a taonga tuku iho, to remain with the K4 Women's Teams of tomorrow. The team shaped the karakia with their collective ideas to include tikanga, whānau, supporters, determination, strength, and history. The karakia, Tuapuku Tiwha, was completed and adopted by the team, used prior to training and racing to unify them in thought and action. They went on to win the 2023 World Championship in Duisburg, Germany and the 2024 Olympic Gold Medal in Paris, France. [Ko wai ka hua, ko wai ka tohu?](#)

Although Te Whare Tapawhā health model separates the four dimensions of Māori health, which includes the physical, mental, spiritual and relational, the key concept involves reconnecting and ultimately eliminating the boundaries between each. As Edgar (2016) alluded to with regard to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, there is "no longer any hard divide between thought and things. Consciousness is restored as a characteristic of the lived world, and perception gives access to things that disclose themselves as both unpredictable and familiar, stable yet in motion, as subject-objects" (p. 21).

We can talk to the ocean, personifying and subjectifying it, and yet not expect a reply, but it should never be excluded from the "realm of possibility" (Edgar, 2016, p. 21). However, we feel the ocean and there could be a possibility that the ocean in turn feels us. The unknown state of the ocean's sentient abilities should not deny the potential of another foreign world or realm of perception existing. This may sound like non-

sense faith, but scientific investigation starts with a perceptual faith. This perceptual faith locates the “living body at the centre of the philosophy” (Edgar, 2016, p. 24). The perceived world is not like the imaginary world because the perceived world asserts that we are as much the perceived world and the perceived world is us.

Merleau-Ponty believed in a duality that was not a “dualism of substance”, but a “mode of thinking that refuses to reduce the understanding of things to a single plane of thought” (Edgar, 2016, p. 35). Embodiment is attuned to the yin and yang concept of difference, that is, not polar opposites, but demonstrates that the spiritual and corporeal exist fundamentally in everything to a certain degree on a continuum (Humberstone, 2019b).

The nexus of body and nature is liberated in nature-based physical activities, especially water-based activities, as the body and its equipment must attempt to respond to the chaotic nature of the environment. Never to be mastered, but at best to be matched, to be like water.

Conan stated his thoughts on the diverse array of conditions one may experience in waka ama:

To me, there's no good conditions or bad conditions. They are all good conditions and you just got to find out how to make the most of it. They all have different challenges whether it's rough or calm. You just try to always think of it as a rhythm. You're trying to find the rhythm and work with your environment. (C. Herbert, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

The idea of cosmic or universal values establishing themselves in nature-based sports is not as inconceivable as was once thought. This alternative or weird image to Western objectivist and positivist alike is not seen that way by other philosophies of the Eastern or Indigenous cultures. The notion that the elements of nature are impacted by the Sun, the moon and other celestial bodies is grounds for consideration

of this concept. For Māori, there is a powerful connection to the [Kauae Runga](#) and the [Kauae Raro](#). Māori mythology links all things, animate or inanimate, to one another through whakapapa as mentioned earlier. Here is another example of kinetic empathy as one moves with others, human or otherwise, in a relational intentionality akin to spiritual or religious experiences.

The waka ama pioneers discussed earlier by Conan were a sense of inspiration, but also a chance to embody their actions in the actions taken today by waka ama whānau. Conan is an internationally renowned paddle and canoe maker who feels that connection to his tīpuna and the wider waka ama whānau that, like him, strive towards new frontiers.

Experiencing the Tahitian lifestyle and how waka ama is embedded in their lives has inspired Craig. He and his whānau embodied the waka ama lifestyle of Aotearoa, the waka ama on the roof of the vehicle, the waka ama stories, the waka ama jokes and the paddling. His desire is for the paddle action to be second nature to his children, an embodied movement. Te Wai-a-Tauranga mentioned with regards to always being a kaihoe and how it is embodied in her, “body hates it when I don’t paddle, my body hates me when I don’t” (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021).

Through that embodied movement and the knowledge of historical locations of importance, there is a chance to embody the historical moments of old. Further to this, Richard mentioned,

I always knew my waka, Aotea, but I'd never been in a waka to actually experience what my tīpuna experienced. It was like a real connection with my tīpuna which is something special. There was a whole lot of, like déjà vu, as I was paddling. This is what my tīpuna did, wow! This is what they must have felt when they were paddling, going on a journey from point A to point B. (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021)

Historical connections were also expressed by Lara, “Sometimes, if you are paddling here, like how amazing it is to think that people would have been paddling a different kind of craft or whatever. I don't know hundred, 200 years ago what that might have been like.” After a relatively short period, Lara had competed in a large number of races and attended copious training to the point where she felt “completely absorbed in it.” She goes on to explicate feelings of comfort and ease in the waka ama in so that “it feels natural to me” (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

Referred to as a natural steerer, Raipoia explains that she operates at a level where she does not have to think about what she is doing. “I never had to think that I steer to the left or steer to the right, to go straight, I just naturally do”, she discloses humbly (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). She continues with mentioning the awareness she has of the environment, the wind, the water and the waka ama, that again is not a routinely executed procedure. Embodied knowledge allows her to respond to stimuli without drawing on her cognitive focus. Allowing deeper focus on the constantly fluctuating tactical variables employed by opponents or on assisting kaihoe within her waka ama. A sixth sense is offered as a possible reason for her ability to feel that the paddling time is not suitable, despite the visible signs saying the contrary. Here, the body may be responding to stimuli that the cognitive senses have not yet identified or associated with risk.

Although Lara does not have a tīpuna or whakapapa connection to waka ama like many in Aotearoa, she still feels a connection. Jokingly, she suggests it may be from her Irish ancestors who came over on ships. She does, however, have a connection to her paddle and the waka ama. The waka ama is thought of in a different way from most objects.

Naming equipment, like waka ama and paddles, is characteristic of relationship formation. A connection is formed with the kaihoe and their equipment. Conan explained how kaihoe form a bond with their paddles, believing that if one looks after their paddle, their paddle will look after them. This suggests the existence of a

resemblance characteristic for these two particulars, the kaihoe and the paddle. As opposed to looking after your paddle so it lasts longer, which although semantically correct, is absent of the sense of bond mentioned by Conan. Adding to this, he expresses gratitude towards his paddles for what they allow him to do. Conan also mentioned that his paddles, especially the old ones, possess a range of memories that just seeing them reignites. These could include embodied memories due to the physicality and repetition of paddling while grasping the hoe.

Although Lara does not talk to her paddle, there is a relationship of trust where she will never mistreat it. It becomes a part of her as a paddler, an anthropomorphic paddle of an intrinsic nature. Craig discussed his special connection, “I’d say to people ‘Oh this is my Tahitian girlfriend’. Just a little joke like that. I said ‘Cause I’m just as intimate with my V1 as I am with my wife” (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021). Here, the animate nature of paddles and waka ama is demonstrated amongst kaihoe.

Referring to the whakataukī, “[he kai kei aku ringa](#)”, Heeni expressed that it is the body which is the engine, regardless of the waka. This is something unthought of during the action, while the kaihoe considers the myriad of decisions to be made related to cadence, intensity, direction and so on. There needs to be consideration for the adaptive kaihoe, or parawaka kaihoe, who, despite their differing abilities, still manage to propel the waka ama forward.

Due to Lara being a highly regarded steerswoman in Aotearoa, she disclosed that some steerers can feel the waka ama pulling to one side, leaning to one side and the slightest unusual reaction from stimulus, either inside or outside the waka ama. She believes this is the result of time on the water. This is made easier to achieve because she has always been happy to steer anyone, from children to adults, from novice to elite, because “you love it and so you do hundreds and hundreds of hours” (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021). These hours include experiencing through the body, not just the more commonly identified senses. Those experiences then

become embodied, an embodied knowledge that is not reliant on cognitive processes. Steerers often find it difficult to describe how they know how to react, especially in terms of intuition.

Establishing a connection with the waka ama and the water is a special characteristic of waka ama. Martin recollects his ambition to be like one of his waterman exemplars, and in time, noticing others following in his wake. For some, it is relatively easy, and for others, extremely difficult. However, Martin believes that they can all achieve it if they persevere with their own journey of discovery.

It could be that the longer one takes, the wealth of hours invested also may have embodiment benefits in the long term. The new kaihoe spotted as a natural, unlike those with years of experience, may miss a lot of trial and error, and its associated gains. Being coached and instructed on all areas of waka ama may also limit the growth potential for those who select a competitive pathway. The associated gains, such as the enchantment offered by the realm of waka ama, are overshadowed by the kaihoe wanting to get from A to B as fast as possible (Nuku, 2018).

This idea is supported by Matahi, who explained that at times he will paddle the six-person waka ama and advise the others to watch and feel the glide, the weightlessness. Here he is providing an opportunity for kaihoe to experience and embody a side of waka ama seldom privileged due to the focus on the paddling action. This coaching technique is an opportunity to “understand the connection” (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). Here, the kaihoe undergoes a switch from agent of propulsion to subject of the propulsive action. He sees the waka ama as being carried by the water, and this changes perceptions from the normal water acting upon the water to a more Māori worldview of the water consisting of a life and life-giving essence. Therefore, the water is a participant involved in the embodied interaction.

Kia mau has provided explanations and examples of lifestyle and identity changes experienced by kaihoe since embedding themselves in the waka ama world. Healthy choices in terms of food, drink, time management and goals all play a part in the lifestyle changes, and evolve into identity changes. This continuous cycle is evident in the kaihoe perceptions. The newer kaihoe has often gone through significant changes due to their first exposure not being too long ago. However, the long-term kaihoe, while still evolving, are experiencing fewer and fewer dramatic changes. Personally, the whānau side attracted me, then the competitive side, and now back to the whānau. Who knows, maybe there will be a competitive phase in the future.

More than a sport

Social interactions with others that occur during waka ama are commonly echoed sentiments concerning the magical component of interest to this study. Therefore, a focus towards this is maintained while investigating the claim that waka ama is more than a sport. This exploration was restricted to the realm of physical activity definitions: leisure, play, games and sport.

Pre-colonisation Māori physical activity, sports, martial arts and leisure activities had a purpose for the participants and the wider community. However, their activities and abilities were unrecognised and deemed as insignificant by Europeans. In a short time, through the gaze of the coloniser, Māori went from unworthy of sportsperson status, to being seen as extremes of “either sports-stars or criminals” (Hokowhitu, 2008, p. 81). Attempting to comply and constant physical stereotyping impacted on Māori (Ryan, 2007). Waka ama as a kaupapa Māori PA allows Māori to step out of the socially constructed resistance of the past and stand proud on their own terms.

Māori prize PA with traditional narrative. They are familiar and meaningful (Warbrick et al., 2016). Therefore, Māori sports and leisure shine as a “point of difference that is distinctly Māori” (Borell, 2017, p. 140). Tino rangatiratanga, Māori identity, culture and

world view are all shared and promoted through a distinctive waka ama space (Wikaire & Newman, 2013).

In terms of waka ama being just a sport, the following comments summarise the views of the kaihoe involved. Craig states, “it’s not just a sport...it’s our identity and that’s our heritage” (C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021). That is also what persuaded Heeni to get on the water, but it was witnessing the positive health impacts on waka ama whānau that kept her interested. However, now she really likes the sense of empowerment she experiences when she can paddle from a location like their home to their kura. Additionally, Heeni likes how their holidays are now waka ama paddling trips with a purpose to see and learn about a new location. Far more than a sport to them.

Turi agreed that waka ama is far more than a sport, saying that waka ama quickly became his pastime and his hobby. Raipoia uses racing as motivation to keep training and stay healthy, but racing is “definitely not the main purpose” (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021). When asked if waka ama is more than a sport, Richard replied, “paddling is only part of it. It’s the whole, ...the off-water experience, the on-water experience, they’re just part and parcel of it all” (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021). As mentioned earlier, Conan also named off-water culture as the biggest attraction for him.

Turanga said that there is an attempt at the governance level to “put a little bit of focus on those that want to do it just for the love of doing it.” These people were easily identified during the COVID-19 lockdowns. They were just itching to paddle, regardless of whether there were races or not. He stated, “COVID kind of pushed everyone back to their roots.” Recalling the small group of friends that were paddling on their W1 together once lockdown was lifted, they eventually got enough to fill a W6. It was like a reunion, he explains. Then the word spread and more turned up, “they felt the magic” and Turanga added that one would “probably find the ones that know about

that magic are the ones that are doing it for life” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021).

Jason sums this section up nicely by stating, “It’s not about winning, or not winning a race anyway” (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021). Next, the thesis will demonstrate the many physical activity concepts that also apply to waka ama and the reason for this claim.

Leisure

Leisure is a commonly employed appellation for a broad range of physical activities. Freedom is a frequently used concept associated with leisure. Trunfio (1991) explains her etymological definition of leisure,

The root word for leisure is the Latin word "licere," which means to be free. The freedom of leisure can be expressed in several ways: freedom to choose, freedom from work, freedom of the usage of time, and freedom from inward constraints and outward obligations (Trunfio, 1991, p. 157).

Leisure is therefore a freedom to pursue one’s preferred activity and perpetuates within our world (Cooper, 1991; Dare, 1991; Gong, 2024). Rancourt (1991) supports this by stating leisure allows opportunity for free will and freedom, and also acknowledges that to participate in leisure, one must be embarking on a discovery, a disclosure and a development of one’s spirit, of oneself at that moment in time. With these comes responsibility and accountability, and the capacity for personal growth. The value of leisure is therefore not in terms of capitalistic productivity, but the possibility of self-potential or rangatiratanga and mana motuhake.

Fain (1991) challenges the non-capitalistic claim. He believed leisure had changed as a consequence of industrialisation, only realised in the absence of employment, and a mere supplement to industry. Emancipation from obligatory occupation is a far cry

from its early virtuous ideal of being of the highest morals and resulting in the utmost happiness.

There are recognised benefits to wellbeing associated with leisure. However, access to leisure was also impacted by the wellbeing and socioeconomic status of the participants (Auger, 2020; Mansfield et al., 2020; Mataloni, 2023). Nevertheless, participants of all ages benefit from the social aspect of leisure activities (Mock & Smale, 2023; Tripathi & Samanta, 2023).

Māori access to leisure has been impacted by colonisation. Leisure is not a luxury, but a necessity for building culture, identity and a sense of belonging. This highlights the importance of revitalising traditional Māori leisure, such as waka ama (Borell, 2017; Martin et al., 2025).

The waka ama pūrākau that remain illustrate the leisure side of waka ama. Surfing was sighted in both Te Māhia on the East Coast (Parkinson, 1773) and Awakino on the West Coast (Skinner, 1923), creating an image of enjoyment, discovery and freedom. This image of waka ama surfing demonstrates waka ama belonging in this situation within [ngā mahi a rēhia](#), and reflects the past times of tīpuna Māori.

It is not uncommon for waka ama clubs to have members who prefer what would be referred to as the leisure side of waka ama. Haeata Ocean Sports has a group of men who have a weekly hauora paddle. Only the worst of storms prevented them from taking to the water at 5:15am, even braving the cold and dark of winter. Anyone attempting to incite a race is reminded of the kaupapa matua of the group. Strong connections with people and the environment are created in these sessions.

Play

With *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga (2014) became well known for his courageous attempt to describe play (Nørgaard, 2009). He was a founder of modern cultural history, and rightfully so, was captivated by play and its relationship to culture. He was not focused

on the idea of play as an extraction of culture, but that of play “existing before culture” (Huizinga, 2014, p. 4). This is worthy of consideration when attempting to build, revitalise or even understand cultures, such as that of waka ama. From play, many cultures are able to engrain meaning that helps promote cultural codes of behaviour (Nørgaard, 2009; O’Connor, 2016; Whitaker, 2023). Therefore, to define play, one must investigate and understand the cultural context of the play.

Through play, youth can be emancipated from the “stuffy and bossy adult world they encounter” (Sutton-Smith, 2008, p. 94). This sense of freedom transcends the boring reality of existence, providing a better world for those at that time and perhaps beyond. A sense of freedom creates a deep exhilaration and relaxed concentration, like a flow state (Lewis, 2010; Lopez Frias & Edgar, 2016). These are often seen as counter to conventional correctness, requiring restrictions on freedoms of imagination for the good of society. Imagination is beneficial to human thinking, but detrimental if used with heedless abandonment.

Shimomura (2023) views play as an intrinsic motivated action, as opposed to survival. This has a positive effect on wellbeing and enjoyment. Vilić (2021) adds that play is existential, transcending biological functions to enhance life. It has historically nurtured the spiritual and social aspects of wellbeing, but modernity is impacting these qualities.

Whether there is allowance for play within waka ama is worth consideration. It is still evident on the stage where kapa haka has maintained its affiliation with play during [whakangahau](#) performances. Waka ama may be a more difficult case to support, apart from startline and training banter. There are serious safety risks around water sports, and the cost of equipment may minimise play opportunities. One hopes it is not due to a coach’s dogmatic focus on winning races. Waka ama as a form of play has regained positionality amongst ngā mahi a te rēhia, with many employing play-based training, creating new drills, warm-ups and so on.

Our club, Haeata Ocean Sports, attempts to incorporate play into training. The last 20-30 minutes of a session are allocated to play. An example of a play activity is attempting to fly the ama and return it to the water, right way up. There is no extrinsic reward, other than staying dry. The younger kaihoe often want to swim, so stopping in the middle of the pond provides the perfect jumping platform for bombs or manus.

Meier (1988) defines play as “an activity voluntarily pursued for predominantly intrinsic reasons” (p. 25). Therefore, if a sport or game is followed voluntarily for intrinsic reasons, it can be classified as a play form. This demonstrates that play is not contradictory to sport or games, but it can enhance both experiences.

Games

At the core of games, according to Suits (1988) are rules that act as “artificial barriers...to be overcome by rule-governed skills” (p. 5). These rules are enforced by referees or participants’ honesty. Performances have rules, but the core here is the ideal of the performance to be attained. Therefore, rules are the catalyst for skills in games, and ideals are the stimulus for skills in performances. The rules during a performance are highlighted by Meier (1988) as being regulatory rules, which distinguish suitable and endorsed actions. However, there seems to be a difference between game rules and sporting rules.

The terms autotelic activities and instrumental activities better demonstrate the dichotomy of game and sport, with autotelic activities simply valuing the activities themselves. Instrumental activities, on the other hand, value the payoff of participation. When attending a regatta in the Pacific islands, a teammate asked a local about the paddling techniques employed by the island’s paddlers. The local replied that there were two techniques, the taro and the steroid. The taro technique was paddling for the love of paddling, while the steroid technique was paddling to win. The taro is autotelic, and the steroid is instrumental.

Laughter is intertwined with play and games. Eichberg (2008) discusses the demise of laughter. Perceptions vary, where laughter can be seen as a dysfunctional, unnecessary trait of the low-performing, low-achieving, and lower-level participants. It should also be said that laughter is not without its darker side, causing shame and hurt if interpreted or used in specific ways.

The constituents of joy, agility, empathy and whanaungatanga unify to form a kinetic entity, an embodied community. All involved, regardless of their level of proficiency, are able to experience contentment and importance through a good game (Loland, 2009).

Waka ama sprint racing and the so-called progression to individually marked lanes prioritise “objective, quantified results” (Loland, 1996, p. 4) over fun and laughter. No longer can you interfere with opponents or get up close and personal, attempting to cause them to capsize or blocking them from turning. The pursuit of a “culture of perfection” (p. 6) circumscribes the ability to laugh at oneself and others.

While I was a member of the Avaikinui Waka ama club in Wellington, we were allowed to make a game out of the turns during our training paddles. Every time we had to turn around something, we were either carefully trying to cut the team off behind us, or carefully spinning the team around those that were in front of us. No one got upset if the other team got the upper hand.

A 250m waka ama sprint at training is like a sports competition, but allowing only one stroke on each side makes it an enjoyable game. With so many changes of the paddle from side to side, errors will occur, and the ability to laugh them off is all part of the game.

Sport

Defining sport is important when contemplating whether waka ama is just a sport, or more than a sport. Sports hermeneutics is well tasked with describing the reality of

sport (Conill Sancho, 2016) via its “three moments; embodiment, capabilities and traditions” (Lopez Frias & Edgar, 2016, p. 346). Embodiment is basically the body being both the object and subject of perception, capabilities are humans’ ability to project meaning into the world, and traditions are theoretical and practical horizons of meaning that contribute to making sense of the world. All three moments intertwine for facticity and are “limits and conditions of possibility of any human undertaking, including sport” (Lopez Frias & Gimeno Monfort, 2016, p. 387).

A long-standing challenge is determining whether sports have significance beyond simply play, games or relaxation. The playfulness and creativity of sport have parallels to life, and life can be seen as a game. Sport and life should not be restricted by rationalism, scarcity, or convention. Instead, they will flourish with Dionysian and Apollonian balance like Nietzsche’s overman (Lopez Frias & Edgar, 2016; Nietzsche & Hollingdale, 2020). Sport can be experienced as a heterotopia and in a heterotopia. Bingham (2020) stated that they are “arenas of Dionysian performativity that emanate difference and, on the face of it, allow for the exhibition of behaviours that seem more dangerous, grotesque and wild” (p. 7).

Sport is seen by Henning Eichberg (2009d) in a less glamorous way, as a “social technique to create and record inequality” (p. 409). It aims at establishing winners and losers, elite and non-elite and divides participants based on ability or achievement. This is worthy of consideration when waka ama prioritises resources between development and sporting excellence.

Like Huizinga’s notion of culture coming from play, Conill Sancho (2016) preferred to see culture as an outcome of both productive and sporting activities. Along with Lopez Frias and Gimeno Monfort (2016) that, they viewed sports as being connected to humans’ desire for improvement. There is rising concern regarding the ethical considerations around advancements aimed at enhancing human performance in an unfair manner (MacRae, 2023; Trothen & Trothen, 2018).

Lopez Frias and Edgar (2016) believe participants can discover themselves through the medium of sport as part of the hermeneutic practice. An often-used saying is that 'it's all about the journey', implying less emphasis on the end goal or destination, and more on a journey of self-discovery (Jirásek et al., 2018). Breivik (2019) considers this as the meaning within sport, noting his belief that effort, development and connections are fundamentals in deriving fulfilment.

Sport can be impacted negatively by social, political and economic traditions (Hita et al., 2024; Lopez Frias & Gimeno Monfort, 2016). Their actions leave scars that are "visible in sport itself" (Lopez Frias & Edgar, 2016, p. 345). There are visible scars in waka ama from its history of colonisation and legislation. New scars are evident when discussing mainstream sport funding and waka ama's lack thereof. Constantly performing at the top level of waka ama internationally, waka ama remains restricted from paddling in the hegemonic waters of the mainstream. It seems apparent that the scar tissue has made waka ama more resilient in Aotearoa, determined to maintain its tino rangatiratanga and resist having its course determined by others.

Sport is a chance for equality, justice and freedom. However, the homological relationship often presents in the dichotomy of elite and non-elite participation that is often driven by factors such as ethnicity, culture, religion, socio-economic status, gender, and age, to name but a few. On the optimistic misconception that sport is an egalitarian activity in terms of race and religion, Scholes (2019) summarises, "Leaving it in the background or removing it from the frame altogether facilitates the deleterious perpetuation of the myth that we live in a post-racial society and that sport is the ultimate 'colourblind meritocracy'" (p. 11).

Participants assemble in acceptance of the diversity, to form a unified collective, a relational sport recognising a pluralistic humanism, a humanist culture. This is a bodily democracy according to Henning Eichberg (2009), "more than a set of abstract rules on the level of institutions and governments" (p. 446). It is tino rangatiratanga.

The experience of humanness is enhanced through the quest to conquer what Suits (1978) refers to as the superfluous complications of sports. Superfluous complications are not necessarily the most efficient way to act, but they create meaningful challenges, enjoyment, and promote engagement. Whether seen as [autotelic](#) or [heterotelic](#) in nature, an understanding of these definitions will help with the classification of waka ama as a sport or some other concept.

Rules

To usher kaihoe towards acceptable behaviours in sports, rules are utilised. The reason often noted is that in many societies, contests were thought of as representative of god's favour or of one side's military might over another. In more modern times, impartiality protects the moral values of contests and cheating in any form undermines this cause. However, rules are also viewed as the "great 'it' of learning through sport" (Henning Eichberg, 2009c, p. 313) as they teach participants the importance of conformism for success as an individual and as a society.

The Māori pastime of Ki-ō-Rahi starts with tatū, a period for the teams to negotiate the rules or tikanga for that match (McCreanor et al., 2010). Each team brings their regional version of the rules to find commonalities and discuss compromises to enable a fair challenge for all. Interestingly, this process remains, despite developing into a sport today. However, this may also be the reason it has not yet reached the notability of waka ama.

Waka ama exhibits this exact situation when paddlers arrange an informal race with others on the water. A race course is selected, startline and finishline designated and then "[hoea!](#)" Sometimes rules are strict, sometimes they are there to be broken.

Parkour and free running are activities that emerged as activities with no formal rules. Here rules are replaced with pillars or fingers that relate to values. This is aligned with

WANZ's values, which govern waka ama in Aotearoa. The aim in parkour is to move from one location to another in the most efficient manner possible (Potter, 2019).

Free running was created for the parkour purest after parkour seemed to become sportified and commercialised, requiring more aesthetic elements to improve results. The basis of each result is the nexus of spatial-temporal city locations transformed into playgrounds or an art studio. Like Huizinga's idea of play being related to the arts, parkour participants and free runners demonstrate a theatrical performance of flow, a spiritual experience throughout the cityscape (Trothen & Trothen, 2018).

Waka ama downwind paddling can be attuned to the skilled theatrical performance, carefully selecting lines, reading the wave patterns to transform a seascape into a paddling playground. With spirituality lending itself to ecology, play such as parkour, free running, and the aforementioned form of waka ama and their kinetic, tactile connection with its environment are likely components of such spiritual experiences (Potter, 2019).

At the heart of the rules is the goal of being fair. This is easily achieved when everyone abides by tikanga, or the correct way to do things. One would expect that Hawaiki Ora is a place where tikanga prevails, and any rules will be of relevance to those within the heterotopic social space.

Ethics are a set of moral principles for how society should conduct its relationships with one another, with the biosphere also (Fox & McAvoy, 1989). Moral excellence can in fact change the focus from what defines sport to what sport ought to be (Frias & Monfort, 2015).

Sportsmanship is often aggrandised as the "quintessential sporting virtue" (Devine & Lopez Frias, 2020). However, a deeper investigation illuminates the dichotomy of sportsmanship in competitive sport and that of recreational sport, and their associated acceptable ethical standards. Another option is the idea of sportsmanship being the

balanced state of scrupulousness and impartiality while maintaining a competitive spirit. Arguably inconceivable for many.

Henning Eichberg (2009d) views sport as a social construct that generates and documents inequalities. Fairness is needed to counter the by any means necessary mentality and at all costs philosophy that includes cheating, bribery, doping and other such corruption. Then, rules are needed, officials to monitor the rules, systems to monitor the officials, and so on, to establish an “ethical rhetoric” (p. 409). However, fairness is not always a prerequisite for ethical behaviours, as it is “bound to the monotheism of achievement, to the performance principle” (p. 410). This is evident in children’s games like tag, where there is no winner, just continual swapping, both voluntarily and non-voluntarily, to keep the enjoyment sinuous and escaping solemnity.

Māori have the concept of [whakahīhī](#), which means both proud (Moorfield, n.d.) and arrogant (Haar et al., 2018). I was taught that one should be whakahīhī of another, but not of yourself. Also associated with this is the requirement to acknowledge and maintain the integrity and mana of the opposition. Winning places one at risk of being whakahīhī by simple acts such as raising the hands in the victory sign. Acknowledging one’s victory is perhaps also acknowledging their opposition’s defeat or demise.

Heke (2025) explored the views of wāhine Māori with the idea, Te tangi o te kūmara, as being a way for Māori women to express their victories, successes and development. She demonstrates the need to sing the song of the kūmara, based on the whakataukī “kāore te kūmara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka” (p. 189) to eliminate negative colonial influences and thoughtfully adapt traditional kōrero to tackle contemporary issues.

Many indigenous athletes suffer criticism from Western sports commentators for not living up to what they expect are appropriate winning behaviours when they shy away from acknowledging their own success. A common reply for Māori is the proverb,

‘Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari taku toa i te toa takitini’ to express the sentiments of their culture regarding any success being a collective success. This has become a trait of New Zealand sports over time, the quintessential humble winners, and perhaps unveiling a cultural appropriation yet to be acknowledged.

Tikanga Māori guides ethics in waka ama. Therefore, anyone with an understanding of tikanga will find the transition into waka ama seamless. Thus, the sense of ‘home’ as mentioned by many kaihoe. Those without an understanding will soon become accustomed to the normative existence of tikanga in the waka ama space. From there, the transition into te Ao Māori is made easier.

High-performance sports can require ethical flexibility to maintain the appropriate level of performance. Ensuring that it never compromises tikanga Māori or te Ao Māori is necessary to avoid waka ama battling the foreign waters of [Te Moananui o Ahakoa te aha](#), distant from the waters of Hawaiki Ora. Waka ama is positioned in te Ao Māori, and sport, especially high-performance sports, needs to be carefully incorporated, not vice versa.

Movement

Three movements are presented by Loland (2009), each associated with the human dimensions of bodily, emotional and social movement. Relating each to the Nordic people’s context, it is easy to see similarities in the context of Māori and waka ama. The first movement is concrete human movement, such as in sports, dance, outdoor recreation and so on. This relates to the theories of body-practice and intentional movement, praxeology. Here we have the bodily paddling movement.

E-motions are the second movement, where humans are moved as a result of their feelings. Here we have fear, anger, joy and so on. In a waka ama context, for example, there could be a fascination with Māori traditions that move a waka ama paddler emotionally, as in the comments of Craig and Heeni on pride in one’s heritage, and

Turanga's comments on paddlers feeling the magic. Through this "psychology of belonging, togetherness and difference, identity is revealed" (Loland, 2009, p. 121).

The third movement is social movements related to peer groups, networks and associations, to name but a few. The waka ama revival by waka ama whānau is a movement, a movement of change. The waka ama whānau includes paddlers, teams, clubs, regions, national organisations and international organisations. This reflects the prior comments on the off-water experience and culture by Richard and Conan. There may be movements within and movement, like the waka ama movement having a movement within towards high performance, health and so on.

Combining the first and second, Cañas (2019) discusses the body's link to the world through the intuitive silent praxis of 'I can', and not 'I think'. An unspoken accord between the body and the subject is a priori to cognitive comprehension of a situation. Here may lie the reason why many Māori and Pacific paddlers say they feel at home on the water, paddling waka ama. Whether this is an internal [taonga tuku iho](#) from their seafaring ancestors is worth further investigation.

An internal taonga tuku iho is attuned to what Sheldrake (1981, 2005) considers morphic resonance, a collective memory that works across time. This is evident in living beings that know instinctively what their first actions should be. This is supported by Sutherland (2019) who states, "Instincts are heritable, whereas reasons have to be taught; what is important is how you behave, not knowing why you do" (p. 80).

Motricity is the independent lucidity of the body, void of intellectual input (Cañas, 2019). There are situations that require bodily adaptation of this primordial praxis, as in the case of para kaihoe. The blind may experience an adaptation, such as a broader perception of other senses, and may also need an external aid such as a walking cane. The cane becomes an extension of the body and their being in the world.

The cane and a prosthetic limb, the paddle and even the waka ama are examples of anthro-technological advancements (Humberstone, 2019a). They soon become part of the body's perceptual field and transition the kaihoe through a position and situation of vulnerability to one of strength (M. Thompson, personal communication, June 28, 2021). For para kaihoe, or adaptive kaihoe as they are also known, "modifications to equipment and rules are applied that will allow for those living with differing abilities to participate and compete" (Nuku, 2023). This is important due to the high participant rate of para kaihoe in national and international waka ama events.

Linked to the third movement, sport is more than a cultural behaviour; it is a form of movement evident throughout non-human primates and human evolution. Such behaviour possesses kinesthetic and phylogenetic foundations (Sands & Sands, 2010). Discussing the powerful performance of well-trained Māori martial arts practitioners, Pere and Nicholson (1991) state, "they are expected to stand tall like the trees in the forest, to move with the lithe spirit of birds, to have the stamina and prowess of land and sea creatures" and so demonstrate "poetry in motion" (p. 32).

This links to the comment concerning movement, "the language of a mute or silent body" (Jirásek et al., 2018, p. 12) and this could be extended beyond the physical to the body in terms of a spiritual, emotional and mental outlet of expression. This is how many kaihoe convey their relationship to their culture and their environment. As Henning Eichberg (2009c) discussed in relation to the movement of two opponents, "My movement is a rhythmical answer to your movement, and vice versa and rhythm fills the space between you and me" (p. 319). This eloquently sets the scene for waka ama, where the paddlers' movement is a response to that of both the waka and the water, and vice versa.

Raipoia explained her instinctive feelings and knowledge of steering, "I am very aware, maybe a sixth sense, the sea looks OK, but I don't think we should go out. I just had that feeling. It's just not quite right, I might be wrong, but I rely on that" (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Moana-Lee was struck by the way her first encounter made her feel, when taking her daughter to her first waka ama paddle, “I just realized...just knew innately that this is connecting, this is more than just getting on the water and paddling, but didn't really pin it down at that time. And Kimiora just took it like a duck to water” (M. Raihania, personal communication, January 27, 2021). She sums up the goal of this study very well with that comment. Perhaps a variation could be, Kimiora took to it like a Māori kaihoe to waka ama.

Kupu Whakamutunga

The first section, Kia Mau, aimed to illuminate the topic of evolutionary change that occurs through time as a kaihoe. It discussed the themes of lifestyle and identity. Wellbeing impacts lifestyle, which in turn influence's identity. This can be returning to an identity one lost, changing one's identity to something new, identifying as a Māori, identifying as a kaihoe, and so on.

Through the illuminating experiences of kaihoe, waka ama served as both a catalyst and a vessel for transformation. Lifestyle shifts, away from harmful habits towards holistic wellbeing, were not imposed, but emerged naturally from the waka ama environment and its embedded tikanga.

The Māori identity concept of tuakiri included the superficial presence, such as their geographic tūrangawaewae, and that which is unseen, like whakapapa. Tuakiri also evolves over time, encapsulating experiences and perceptions. Moeke-Pickering (1996) noted that the European ecology in which Māori exist now is weakening their tuakiri. Identity was not just asserted in waka ama, but cultivated and nourished by connections to whenua, moana, whānau and whakapapa. These experiences and alternative perceptions can shape and strengthen tuakiri to counter the oppression that Māori have suffered under colonial rule.

Entering into waka ama may require the reorienting of one's tuakiri, however the revised identity may begin to resemble that of one's ancestors, perhaps even of Polynesian superstars. That type of tuakiri exists within the collective and provides kaihoe with access into Te Ao Māori, and to Hawaiki Ora.

Kaihoe expressed that whānau whakapapa and friends were the major motivators in attempting waka ama. This was complemented by the concept of whanaungatanga, which in turn introduced kaihoe to Te Ao Māori. These types of circumstantial changes result in one's identity evolving.

In the second half of this chapter, the notion of waka ama being more than a sport has been investigated. While it was mentioned that waka ama is a great physical activity, it also meets the criteria for a sporting activity. However, it is perhaps steadily approaching the status of mainstream sport and the associated pros and cons. It employed both ontology and taxonomy to demonstrate that waka ama can be classed in a myriad of ways, one of the many being the sport classification. Pinpointing exactly what it is, however, is far beyond the scope afforded this chapter and study.

However, the stories of participants (kaihoe) revealed that "waka ama is more than just paddling" (M. Rogerson, personal communications, February 16, 2025). It is a space of reconnection and reawakening, a return to self, to culture, to collective strength. For some, it has demonstrated that one of the magical components of waka ama is associated with the social interactions that hold relationships, hauora and aspirations intact. For others, it was a pathway to a reclaimed or redefined Māori identity, one grounded in movement, community and embodied knowledge. Waka ama transforms bodies and spirits, creates meaning, and carves out a Māori-centred reality - a space of healing and belonging, a present-day manifestation of Hawaiki Ora.

The next chapter aims to understand the environmental perceptions of kaihoe through their views and the spatial temporal ontologies. Time and space will assist in clarifying

the environmental, physical and social. It will also demonstrate the shared space and time experienced in waka ama.

CHAPTER 5

MANA KI TANGAROA

Mana ki Tangaroa is the experience of the waka ama gliding through the waters of Hawaiki Ora, a moment of effortlessness, of accomplishment and the harmony found during the act of paddling. This chapter elucidates the environmental perceptions of kaihoe through their spatial temporal experience.

The urupounamu rangahau associated with this chapter is, *What are participants' perceptions of the waka ama environment?* It explores how time in Te Ao Māori is deeply cyclical, relational, and embedded in environmental rhythms. Unlike Western linear temporality, Māori time flows through whakapapa, memory, and connection, guiding kaihoe through past, present, and future in a single motion.

The chapter also examines space as a socially and spiritually constructed reality, a fusion of whenua, whakapapa, wai and wairua. It incorporates Lefebvre's Spatial Triad and Foucault's heterotopia to describe how waka ama creates an alternative space: inclusive, transformative, and grounded in tikanga Māori. As stated by Pittman (n.d.), it is essential to cross borders and join ideas to truly expand our sentiments and interpretations of time, and therefore space. Locating kaihoe in time and space provides an insight into what they perceive that differentiates the day-to-day existence from that of waka ama, or of Hawaiki Ora.

Waka ama, therefore, is not simply an activity on the water, it is an enactment of time and a production of space. It is where memories are felt, futures anticipated, and ancestral presence acknowledged in the embodied now. This chapter weaves together these complex threads to show how Hawaiki Ora is experienced, not only as a destination, but as a lived, breathing environment shaped by and for its people.

Again, this chapter will utilise thematic synthesis, with the researcher, the literature and kaihoe perceptions supporting each other like the kīato and ama. The layout will

be a weaving of kete kōrero and kaihoe perceptions to maximise relevance to each theme.

Time

The first section of this chapter aims to demonstrate the concept of time that kaihoe experience. Likening this to the action of paddling, this symbolises the cyclic nature of paddling and of time itself. It will be evident that time and timing play an important part in the reality of the kaihoe. They are also relevant to the description of the environmental conditions and situation of Hawaiki Ora.

As Lo and Houkamau (2012) state, “Time is a fundamental cultural dimension that provides clues about the values and norms in a culture” (p. 105). This examines schedules, periods, deadlines, movements and exposes the influence of culture on the understanding of time. This supports the idea that time is culturally constructed, as in the case of waka ama.

Turi explained that, “our concept of time is all based on events... the tides, the rising of certain stars, where the sun is in the sky. You know each phase, in terms of waka ama.” Here, he demonstrates that waka ama time becomes relevant to the waka ama world. Knowing when is the right time to be on the river or the ocean is an acquired knowledge.

The natural flow of nature can enhance or hinder training and events, too. Lo and Houkamau (2012) reinforce this connection with natural time, stating that Māori lived in balance with nature and it goes without saying that they followed the rhythms of nature. Therefore, the right time to paddle is based on what waka ama deems important and relevant.

Tides, blossoming flowers and the arrival of birds were essential to water activities such as waka ama and fishing (Best, 1922). An example in modern times for kaihoe in my region is the arrival of jellyfish to the bay. This signals the water temperature is

rising as summer approaches, but more relevant, it means the forthcoming flood of Iron Māori swimmers into the pond. More so, it is time to reinforce our tikanga of looking out for swimmers and sharing the water.

Turi's quote above is supported by Matamua (2017a) who asserts that Māori ancestors braided astronomy and astrology into their very existence within Te Ao Māori, both the physical and spiritual realms. Deciphering movement patterns of celestial bodies as coded messages from above pertaining to future outcomes. Māori divided their lunar year into seasons, months and nights. He goes on to state, "Māori understood that seasons, lunar phases and time itself is relative according to your location, environment and resource" (Matamua, 2017a, p. 37).

Best (1922) commented on these and the similarities of Māori time concepts and those of other indigenous people. The use of celestial bodies is a valuable method of recognition of both time and space. Although many celestial bodies indicated certain seasons and annual events, he suggests that they may have been the esoteric knowledge of the [tohunga](#) of different disciplines. The tohunga gardener, the navigator, the fisherman and so on would have been knowledgeable of the relevant celestial activities to their role and the survival of their people. The more crucial to survival the task, the more in tune these tohunga would have been with these [tohu](#).

Māori time was observed by Pākehā as a deficit of the Māori. This was due to it often misaligning with Pākehā clock time. The event time orientation generally has more flexibility around punctuality. While Māori can observe clock time, it will not supersede cultural, societal and circumstantial contexts (Lo & Houkamau, 2012).

Whereas, as mentioned by Turi, the Māori preferred to use the natural rhythm of the day, the night, and all the social interactions that occurred and constituted meaningful times or events to them. Western time has favoured imperial measurements and has therefore been a negative agent for Māori culture (Awatere, 1984; McKay, 2004; McKay & Walmsley, 2003; Rameka, 2016).

For context, Dowden (2004) provided a chronological description of Western attempts to understand time, starting with Aristotle, who saw time as the measurement of change, and Leibniz saw it as a series of moments or events. This was countered by Newton, who said time flows uniformly without external influence. Kant believed that we experience things and events in time, but never truly perceive time. Heidegger and Whitehead recognised time as an important form of becoming (Cooper, 1991). This promoted the manifest image via our senses, intuition and cultural perception, and not the scientific image. This upset many scientists and pleased many philosophers.

The debate between Henri Bergson and Albert Einstein demonstrates this uncertainty for even Western scholars when addressing the matter of time (Canales, 2015). Einstein saw duration as relative, not unique. Time could not exist in the universe without the sun, the earth and the many celestial bodies in the sky, which also have a connection to Māori concepts of time. Bergson also wanted a more detailed explanation of the concept of time; however he was focused on psychological time. He focused on subjective time and argued that the block universe theory spatialised time and that spacetime is a product of a mathematical conjunction of space and time (Canales, 2015). This spatialisation of time was contrary to the Māori cyclic time that was in tune with nature and life (Awatere, 1984).

There are three prominent Western times: physical, biological and psychological (Dowden, 2004). Physical time is measurable by clocks and seen as objective and scientific time. Biological time is physical time recognised by biological routes such as aging. Both are public times, as opposed to the private time of psychological time.

Psychological time is subjective and a phenomenological time. Unlike physical and biological time, it can vary its rate depending on one's frame of mind. If one is bored, it may be perceived as slow, and if one is excited, it may be perceived as fast. There exists a belief that psychological time is an awareness of time, not an actual time. McKay and Walmsley (2003) explain that psychological time can get out of synchronicity with physical time, and suddenly we have lost track of time, of physical

time. The perception and conception of time may blur the lines of exploration and explanation.

Connections – People.

The aim of this section is to determine how time connects people. Whakapapa serves as a Te Ao Māori link as it is “an embedded metaphor for linking the past, present and future in a single field of knowledge” (Whaanga, 2012, p. 67). Thus, unifying the time orientations generates a nexus for the physical and spiritual realms. It provides a strong and protecting structure for memory storage and recollection. The interpretation of these memories may be of importance when attempting to understand time in the Hawaiki Ora context.

Karmen demonstrated how precious the past and her tīpuna are while discussing her childhood activity of crossing their awa, an awa that became more important to her once she started her kaihoe life.

I look back at it now when I think about the beauty of doing that as a child. Dragging a log up so far. I knew how far I needed to take it to be able to drift down and cross. What I was doing at that time was, I know now, that I would be traveling the course of my nannies, of my tupuna wahine, Ruapūtahanga, to get across the river and where I will be buried one day. (K. Wallace, personal communications, January 28, 2021)

The representation of an ancestor can differ while one recalls or mourns, as opposed to one envisioning new horizons determined by the endeavours of that ancestor. Here, time is subjective to the individual and the situation. With undertones of Te Ao Māori, a character from *How to Stop Time* believed that people whom one loves never truly die and can provide redemption;

They don't die. Not completely. They live in your mind, the way they always lived inside you. You keep their light alive. If you remember them well enough,

they can still guide you, like the shine of long-extinguished stars could guide ships in unfamiliar waters. If you stop mourning them, and start listening to them, they still have the power to change your life. They can, in short, be salvation (Haig, 2018, p. 291)

Peace (2009) discussed the role of a canoe in providing a reference point in time for the indigenous people of Canada. Explaining that their ancestors accompany them down the river, supporting them from the banks, crossing from past time to present, and from the realm of the dead to that of the living.

The link between the living and the dead is described in the statement, “There is a world in which he lives and there is a world in which he is dead. And the move between the two happens with no greater ricochet than the whisper of waves crashing onto distant rocks “(Haig, 2018, p. 313). The waka traverses and negotiates these waves, linking the multiplicities of time. Transcending a nexus of past, present and future, it includes all perceivable things in the world (Mika, 2013).

Acknowledging her tipuna, and explaining they are with her on the waka, Liz stated, “I reach to the back of the canoe, throw water on it three times to acknowledge my tipuna are on my shoulders and on my back to help me move forward.” The waka ama provides a time to acknowledge and reconnect with deceased loved ones through to distant tīpuna. Modern life does not privilege such time too often. Therefore, this time element of waka ama could be critical to reaching Hawaiki Ora.

Connection - Time

This section aims to continue demonstrating the connections that are established in time, but focusing on the Māori time orientations and beginning with the past-present connection.

Craig explains an important time and event for his people, “the arrival of the canoe, our tupuna Te Raki Whakaputa laying down his rapaki on the beach to claim that Bay”

(C. Pauling, personal communications, February 2, 2021). The event was the arrival of the waka, and through his whakapapa he was able to take the audience back to Te Raki Whakaputa's time.

Many kaihoe belonged to clubs that started new waka ama whānau off with some history and whakapapa, kōrero about the waka names and the general environment they will be a part of. It is important, according to Lara, to maintain a connection with the past, the trials and tribulations.

There are many philosophical theories regarding time. Dowden (2004) explains presentism as holding firm to the belief that only present objects and events are truly real. The present experience, according to Pollock (1996) is understood with clarity in comparison to the vague recollections of past experiences and nebulous prospects of future experiences. Aesthetically stating a character's recollection, Haig writes, "all we can ever be is faithful to our memories of reality, rather than the reality itself, which is something closely related but never precisely the same thing" (Haig, 2018, p. 24).

Presentism does not align with Te Ao Māori because the [pūrākau](#) from ancient ages have been kept alive and exist within the present. Time can be perceived as a gestalt, not a collection of separate perceptions for moments that have distinct start and end points, or rhythms and progressions that are categorised into past, present and future. Instead, they overlap, and the whole allows the past to remain on the horizon, influencing without the need for recollection (Pollock, 1996).

Present is the field in which one experiences time, and it is the interaction of Husserl's and then Merleau-Ponty's concepts of protentions and retentions (Donohoe, 2017). Retention is that which one's consciousness holds, that at the same time is no longer in the present. One must reach through a thin layer of time to acquire it. Likewise, the present also antedates the presence of the future. The protention is an anticipation that our consciousness creates and involves projections, intentions and expectations

(Toadvine, 2016). A dialectical historically is truth as acceptance of both negation and confirmation, building on experience, which leads into the next theory.

The Growth-Past Theory accepts both the past and present as real, but denies the future of anything more than potential. Here, moa are real, but death is not. Death is potentially an abstraction awaiting everyone and everything. The Growth-Past theory aligns more with Te Ao Māori and the commonly used analogy of walking backwards through time (Irwin, 2022).

The backward orientation may refer more to the space on the timeline, but it implies a lack of interest or focus on the future by Māori. Turning one's back on the future does not necessarily mean there is a disbelief in the future. The Māori saying goes, "mā te wā", things happen in due time and in the correct time (H. Tumoana, personal communications, 2022).

Things happening at the right time was reinforced by Jason who stated about his time in a waka ama, "right there at that time, I don't know at what time it is, but at that time right there and then, it's just buzzy. You know, and I'm just absorbing it and it's like no photos" (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021). No photos refers to the ability to remember events, resisting the urge to capture a photographic representation that never fully encapsulates the moment.

The commonly experienced flow of time is said to be a misinterpretation (Henriksson, 2023; Kupervasser et al., 2012). It might well be what we experience psychologically, but it is not an objective truth. The flow of time for Māori also hinders the positioning in time. Walking backwards through time is in reference to the flow of time going from past to future (Rameka, 2016). Viewing time with your back to the future is like the present is not fully comprehended until it sits further into the past. The past is referred to by some phenomenologists as positioned on the horizons, or always in view and a form of temporal landmark, guiding one's present actions and thoughts towards the desired future.

Paddling through historical waterways and landscapes has the effect of suspending present time, transporting one into a 'mua' time, allowing mental time travel to connect with one's heritage and historical identity (Vertinsky & Bale, 2004). This is opposed to travelling through physical spaces and being confined in the present.

Dilthey (1990) mentions that modern man is able to process the past within himself, crossing his time into that of others to obtain their energy and pleasure to increase "his own happiness" (p. 231). Ruckenstein (1991) believes this happens in leisure activities where one considers the past and how it may enable happiness.

McKay and Walmsley provide an example of the commonly agreed-upon Māori time,

The Maori space-time construct can be thought of more like a constellation with the past and the people of the past always felt in the present, like the constellations of the sky to the voyager – enmeshing, surrounding, always before you, always behind, forming patterns that can be interpreted in various ways (2003, p. 92).

Heidegger's "acquisition of history for the present" (Heidegger, 1991, as cited in Martínková & Parry, 2016, p. 371) illustrates the phenomenological approach towards repetition and dasein. Therefore, we can paddle forward with the past in front of us, positioned in the present, with the future approaching from behind. Alternatively, the past and future spiral around the present, while we paddle through life. These notions depict Māori travel 'with time' rather than 'through time' as in the diagram below.

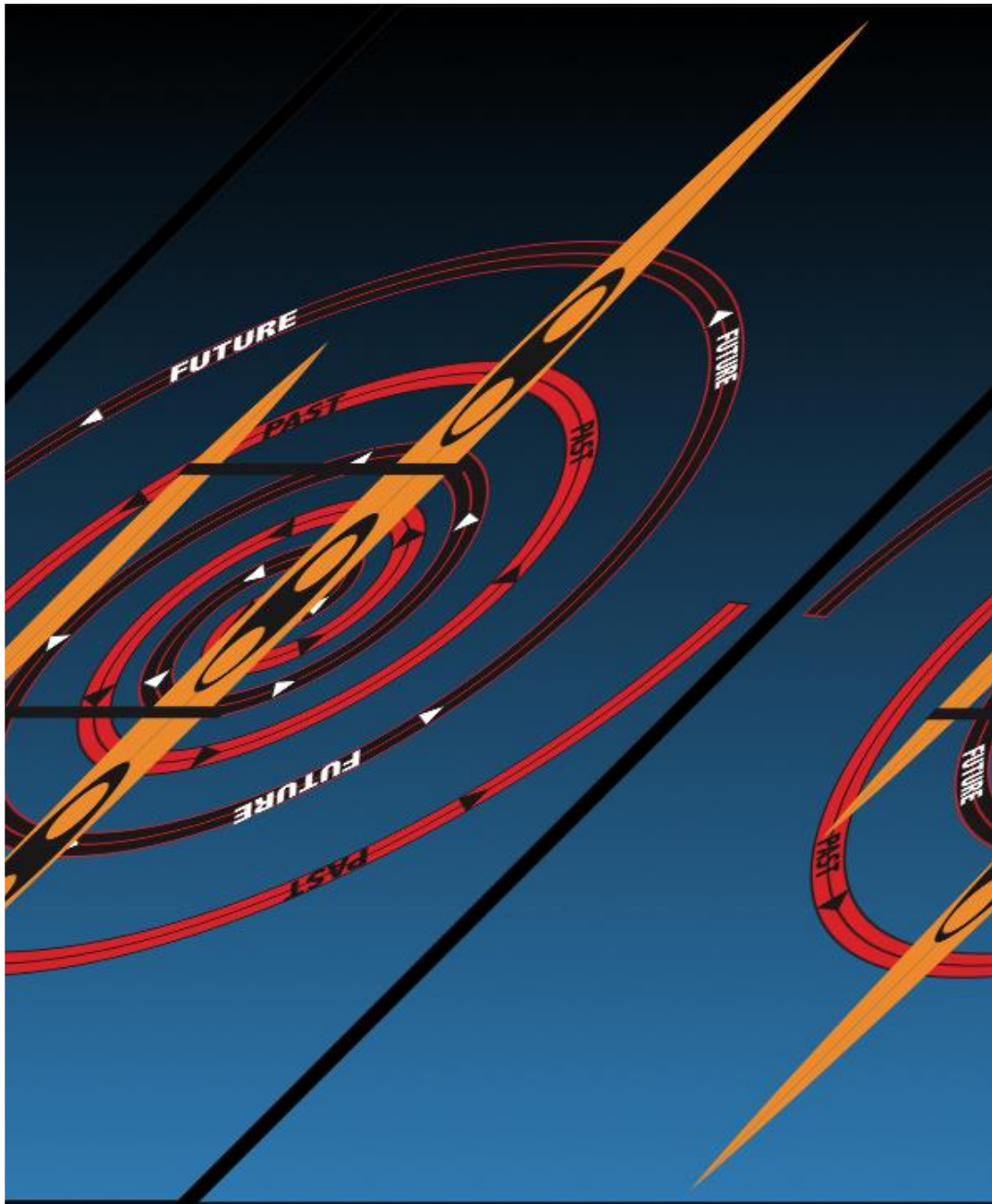


Figure 5. Hawaiki Ora, travelling with time. Note. Author created.

Time swirls around like an eddy, but travelling with the waka. It does, however, push and pull the waka ama, with different times impacting it along the journey. These are constant reminders of the past and contemplations of the future, occurring in the present.

Although the past orientation is generally promoted as the priority in Te Ao Māori, a future orientation still exists in concepts such as kaitiakitanga (Lo & Houkamau, 2012). A common Māori view is that establishing a positive future for one's descendants is the *raison d'être* of existence (Matekino Nuku, personal communication, 2020).

The future is given importance in the pūrākau of Māui's incredible feat of capturing and convincing [Tamanui-i-te-Rā](#) to slow his journey across the sky. This strategy allows more time for people to complete daytime activities, from that point onward into the future. However, it seems some still desire more time, as in the statement,

If only we could find a way to stop time...That's what we need to work on. You know, for when a moment of happiness floats along. We could swing our net and catch it like a butterfly, and have that moment for ever. (Haig, 2018, p. 178)

Summing up the future well, Haig continues by explaining that there is too much time wasted worrying about the future, when "it always happens" (Haig, 2018, p. 323).

The future is associated with predictions, which are untrue until or unless they eventuate. Shakespeare wrote, "We know what we are, but know not what we may be", (as cited in Haig, 2018, p. 20) to illustrate the impossibility of truly predicting our future. Pollock (1996) believes that any future truth claim based on the present must acknowledge the prospect of its contradiction.

The Western notion of the past denotes expiry, beyond usefulness, and a sense of non-recyclability. This enables Western colonisers to easily forget or disregard their horrific actions from the past. This is summed up in the dialogue, "All you can do with the past is carry it around, feeling its weight slowly increase, praying it never crushes you completely" (Haig, 2018, p. 61).

Māori, on the other hand, have '[mua](#)' that does not imply the same or allow them to ignore so effortlessly. The phrase 'i ngā wā o mua' refers to the time before. The 'before' is a space on the time continuum, however the 'time' refers to the durations of

that era. This is a completed duration and a combination of Bergson's subjective and Einstein's objective concepts mentioned earlier (Canales, 2015).

Awatere (1984) argues that Māori link the past of one's ancestors with themselves and nature. This is destroyed by the Western spatialisation of time, where the past is left behind in a place of irrelevance. In such a situation, the cherished kaumātua or elders become relegated from their [taumata](#) within Te Ao Māori.

Time from a Te Ao Māori perception is an intertwining of the past, present and future, like Heidegger's ecstatic temporality, "past, present, and future 'stand out' from themselves and function together in the self-circling process that is care" (Cooper, 1993, p. 303). Māori ontology concerning time and space is still at odds with Pākehā ontology. This shows the polarisation that participants in today's society may experience joining waka ama from non-Māori sport and leisure. The same could be true for Māori experiencing Te Ao Māori for the first time within the environment of waka ama.

History

This section aims to link the sense of nostalgia and familiarity experienced to Hawaiki Ora. There will be a discussion of history and of déjà vu to connect the past to the present.

The connection to the past can have associations with people, places and events. According to Haig (2018), "History isn't something you need to bring to life. History already is alive. We are history. History isn't politicians or kings and queens. History is everyone. It is everyday" (p. 17). Reinforcing this, Hodeib (2021) states that it is not the past, but the past lived in the present. Furthermore, it is incomplete due to the continuous reconstitution and evolving present, supporting the notion of history as a product of telling.

Lara shared her thoughts about history that occurred during some paddle sessions,

...how sometimes if you are paddling here, like how amazing it is to think that people would have been paddling a different kind of craft or whatever. I don't know, 100, 200 years ago what that might have been like. (L. Collins, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

This act of pondering the historical situation around paddling 100 or 200 years prior is made easier with objects, symbolic of that time. Being in a waka ama provokes an embodied memory that connects one's actions with the actions of the past. The ingenuity, survival and skill of a time pre-GPS, pre-carbon fibre and pre-AI. This historical awareness and cultural respect show an open-mindset.

Conan added a view of objects related to his paddling passion.

I do have paddles at home that they don't use, but they're like really old ones that had long time ago and like I'm pretty tight with them and ... and you tend to remember all your paddles like I still see some that you know, maybe that someone's brought it off me secondhand or whatever you Remember ... Remember them and remember the races you've done with them.

The paddles Conan mentions are what Aden (2024) describes as memory bridges. They are charged with generating the "presence of the past" (p. 824), that is, making the past a superior feeling to the present, in the present. The objects allow a backward glance to aid in identity formation. Reminding us where we came from, to assist in future navigation.

The marginal and residual forms of memory that reside in objects were investigated by Hodeib (2021). These objects embody more than memories, but reach across generations to inhabit past, present and future time. The ritual use is substituted by an unspoken embodied narrative, a symbolic presence. The narrative of a witness that cuts through non-linear time. Nostalgia void of reflective consideration creates a past that "becomes a static utopia, irretrievably lost, and shift off from any meaningful

relations with the present” (p. 43). Objects cut through this to seek restorative discourse.

Cameron (2024) promotes an Indigenous method of analysing and interpreting spiritual objects in archaeology. Relative methods are necessary to fully comprehend the non-human world that these objects portray. Without understanding the cultural epoch and cultural world view, interpretation is futile.

It is important to understand that not only do the embodied actions provide a connection to the past and situate one at the forefront of future actions, but so do objects. These objects, such as waka ama and the paddles, originate from a past time, and the waka ama kaihoe cherishes the connection. However, sports can exercise totemism in the search for advancements, to release any restraints of remembrance.

Déjà vu

This section will look into the comment Richard made regarding his feeling of familiarity when paddling. Perhaps this familiarity is connected to a recent period of his life, or even an ancient era pre-dating him. He stated,

I'd never been in a waka to actually experience what my tūpuna experienced. It was like a real connection with my tūpuna which is something special. There was a whole lot of, like déjà vu, as I was paddling. This is what my tūpuna did, wow!

Here we return to Sheldrake (1981, 2005) and the idea of morphic fields and morphic resonance. He was influenced by Henric Bergson's philosophies on vitalism, memory and duration to produce the theory of morphic fields, inspiring both physiological and psychological patterns across time and space. The act of remembering, according to S. P. Smith (2019) is representative of time travel into the past, where emotions of the present are entangled with those of a past context or situation. There is scientific

debate over the validity of his theory, with some claiming it is pseudoscience (Maddox, 1981, 1986).

However, as a taonga tuku iho, Richard's sentiments are embraced in the Māori ontological. Like morphic resonance, this waka ama paddling example demonstrates the ancestral patterns of paddling influencing present patterns. Emotions associated with whakapapa, history and a positive time and space of Hawaiki, generate the Hawaiki Ora of the present.

Richard expressed his experience of moments he had no knowledge of in the past, but appeared in his present as though they had. Therefore, the future is compared to the actual time in which the possible original occurrence happened. Culturally and contextually, one would say these experiences are a taonga tuku iho.

The déjà vu moment described by Richard demonstrates another concept of time related to waka ama. The Western scientific explanation states that déjà vu and déjà vécu mean already seen and already lived, respectively. Déjà vu is the feeling of familiarity, accompanied by an acknowledgement that it cannot be positive. Déjà vécu, on the other hand, is a conviction and belief that an event has happened before (Perrin et al., 2024). However, not everyone sees eye to eye on this topic. Although a universal phenomenon, interpretations can vary.

Nietzsche and Hollingdale (2020) present the eternal recurrence as a similar concept. The life one lives is repeated throughout time, eternally. It is this continuation that may promote déjà vu. Whereas Bergson (2012) argued that memories and perceptions interact, and are influenced by the images we see. Therefore, he saw déjà vu as an emergence of memory concomitantly with a present perception. This forms a blur or an overlaying in temporality.

From an Indigenous worldview, there is little research on déjà vu. It seems fitting that it would be connected to a reality contrary to that which we experience in our time. An

enchanted time intersection that is a privilege for the select few, or the few open to acknowledge it. Perhaps the Hawaiki Ora we have discussed is an environment that creates an openness where déjà vu and morphic resonance can naturally emerge. Not as strange, but as treasured experiences.

According to Foucault (1984), perhaps from a Western worldview, there has been a shift from an epoch of time and the focus on history and progress, to an epoch of time and the focus on spatial relationships, networks and simultaneities. Whether this is relevant in Te Ao Māori is likely to face strong opposition based on what has already been discussed in this chapter alone. However, it is an excellent segue into the next section on space.

Space

This section focuses on space, the concept, the physical dimension and the embodied experience to demonstrate that Hawaiki Ora is a space, place or environment. The kaihoe experience of waka ama space is paramount, therefore they will be central to the discussion once the fundamentals are presented.

Key to this section are the Spatial Triad of Lefebvre and Foucault's Heterotopia and Utopia. The concept of socially constructed space put forward by Lefebvre challenged the Western scientific concept of space, and with a collective focus, is therefore worthy of consideration in this thesis. Foucault challenges the dominant hegemonic spaces with what he identified as heterotopia. These spaces are also relevant to this thesis in establishing the characteristics of the waka ama space.

[Tuakiri](#) is a more profound sense of identity, including land, mountains, rivers, lakes and oceans that "ground an individual's personality to a place" (Mead, 2016, p. 273) or for the sake of this topic, to a space. Māori are connected intrinsically to the geographic structures and sites of significance of their people. Papatūānuku is a

physical and spiritual space, with whakapapa links to Māori. Therefore, it can be conceived that space is acknowledged differently in Te Ao Māori.

Space outside of Te Ao Māori is generally something that has provoked the long-standing geometric idea of 'emptiness' within an area or that which is between two objects. Social space as a social construct contravenes space as an absolute of Cartesian logic. Kantian space is held as a priori of consciousness, as transcendental and therefore an "ungraspable structure" (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 2).

Space cannot exist in isolation from the other two properties that constitute the cosmos, being time and energy. As stated,

When we evoke 'space', we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a timeframe. When we evoke 'time', we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein. Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction; likewise energy and time (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 12).

Here arises an interesting link to the Māori creation belief and linear whakapapa concept, existing within a cyclic time (Irwin, 2022). Te Kore is an abstraction of the cosmos, a point where discourse and theoretical understanding reign dominant. A time without space or energy, a space without time and energy, or even energy without time and space, all align with Lefebvre's statement. Therefore, as a space, Te Kore was a single point on a timeline with an unknown past and infinite potential futures. This time could be associated with a space void of content, and therefore void of energy, but an absence of space makes the location in a timeframe unfeasible.

As mentioned previously, energy requires space to act upon and to be realised. Many theories argue the concatenation of this primordial state, creating a cause-and-effect 'chicken or egg' scenario. Perhaps the question should then be, 'what came first,

space, time or energy?’ The idea above may imply that Te Kore is a simultaneity, the starting point for time, for space and for energy. This is paradoxical in that it cannot be conceived as the foundation, and likewise, the cosmos is inconceivable without it.

Hegelian belief is that historical time produces the space ruled over by the municipality, making time a part of space’s rationality. Also believed is that the end of history transfers “action to memory” and “production to contemplation” (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 21).

Lefebvre introduced three moments related to the production of space, the spatial triad: spatial practice, representations of space and space of representation. The triad has a dialectical relationship, opposing, contrasting and antagonising. The three moments link to allow individuals to access each freely and without confusion, albeit in unpredictable conditions (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991).

Spatial practice, or the [espace perçu](#), is the production and implementation of the material or the physical space. Furthermore, it applies to the location of a society and its spatial characteristics established to maintain continuity, cohesion and connection through an agreed-upon standard of competence and performance.

Spatial practice emits a society’s space. These practices unfold as society interprets the concatenation of routines that connect work, leisure and private places to particular spaces. It is a cyclic, productive, and reproductive space. A kaihoe will comply with certain prior established norms of behaviour to gain access to the waka ama whānau. These spatial practices can vary from one region or club to the next. Spatial practice takes place routinely and produces social space (van Ingen, 2003).

Space of Representation or [espace vécu](#) is a lived social space that combines “social struggle, counter-discourse and resistance”, a dichotomy of both “oppressive and enabling” (van Ingen, 2003, p. 204). It is where discrimination like racism and sexism

are practised, but also where critical counterspace is produced to resist and oppose such practices (van Ingen, 2003; Vertinsky & Bale, 2004).

A much-needed space for Indigenous people and minorities around the world, Space of Representation has the potential to lead Māori to a reality like the Hawaiki of their pūrākau. This is an area of study that can expose “exclusive practices that privilege certain groups over others, thereby opening up the potential to pursue greater equity and social change” (Glover, 2017, p. 875).

Social relationships influence the understood concrete sport landscapes. Space production-orientation is connected to identity and spaces that facilitate the production and expression of identity. As mentioned previously, Māori generally introduce themselves firstly in regard to locations, past and present, such as in the pepeha.

Representations of space or [espace concu](#) are abstract, accessed via thoughts, ideas, plans, codes and memories. They are also the realm of the spatial planner who often deprives representational spaces of “spontaneity, diversity, and symbolic content” (Wilson, 2013, p. 371) through the transformation and transition from perceived to the conceived. The poetic existence of humans in space is a characteristic of truly ‘being’.

Representational spaces embody symbolisms that are sometimes clandestine codes and associated with the hypogeal of social life. These codes of space can gradually morph into codes of representational spaces. It is of those who employ the space and those who wish to describe it. The result is the manifestation of meaning and identity for space (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991).

Waka ama as a space has the suitable vernacular and structure in place to maintain its enduring presence in Aotearoa, and within the bodies of those within waka ama. Clubs, whare waka, ramps and docks all have a sanctuary or [āhuru mōwai](#) concept attracted to them relevant to waka ama.

Abstract space is reinterpreted by Wilson (2013) while exploring its alienation and the disalienation sanctioned by differential space. An explanation of the Spatial Triad of Spatial practice, representational space and representations of space sets the scene for the evolutionary transition from historical space to abstract space.

Abstraction is a dialectical relationship of the material and representational, and as Wilson (2013) states, “confronting us as a space of domination, struggle and possibility” (p. 375). Abstraction leaves us alienated from the creative and symbolic realms of lived experience. It is controlled by the powerful. The right to differ from others suggests a struggle to find an identity outside that existing in the present abstract space.

Abstract space supplants historical space and functions as a group of objects or signs with corresponding formal relationships. Distinctions, however, are deleted from nature, time and the body. Centres of wealth and power have dominant forms of space that deal with any resistance to their authority. Here, the illusory transparency screens the power that states what is, and consequently extricates the lived from the conceived. As stated, “history is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret” (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 51) which demonstrates the power imbalance between the conceived and lived spaces.

Māori had long been subjected to these dominant forms, as explained earlier. Waka ama is not immune as it faces tribal waterways managed by non-Māori and even non-treaty partnership groups. Nostalgia and regret are common in the stories of waka ama and the waka ama revival. More frequently, Māori have pierced the lining of the bubble of silence so often engulfing the oppressed. The vocal reverberations tend to be of the elite or enlightened, despite having avoided mistreatment that would justify revolutionary discourse.

Waka ama is a positive action to reclaim a traditional safe and empowering space, which has correlations with wellbeing (Pihama, 2019). While discussing the Matatini

kapa haka nationals, Kaiwai & Zemke-White noted that such events as “culture-making” (2004, p. 156). Culture is what many people are looking for, especially those disassociated (Harvey, 2022; Zeppel, 2013) from their marae, their whānau or other things that create the sense of connection and importance.

There is a potential pride in activities performed in absolute space. Those spaces that maintain a presence with elements of nature that form sites of ceremonial symbolism. This absolute space is the lived and representational space, like those used in waka ama, the waka ama and the space waka ama whānau dwell and act in. The ocean that your ancestors sailed, the river marking the boundary to your ancestral lands or even the lake that everyone else talks about (Bale, 1988). Wheaton et al. (2020) investigated Māori surfers who also felt a sense of place for both the ocean and the proximal geographic features where they surfed. This is not uncommon in waka ama; Liz says, “it’s my happy place”, and Raipoia added, “it revitalises you” (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Although there are many ways to enjoy waka ama globally, such as an abstract online space, waka ama in Aotearoa has created a sense of place that includes as many people and cultures as possible. Managing the power relations that organisers possess enables them to set boundaries to mark inclusion and exclusion, or who is welcome and who is not (Vertinsky & Bale, 2004). This also presents privilege and potential measures to establish change and equity (Glover, 2017).

Utopia and Heterotopia are counter-hegemonic spaces. The utopia is an imagery and abstract space that epitomises harmony, justice and happiness. They are outside of the hegemonic space and challenge it by providing a goal or standard that motivates resistance or change. Hawaiki Nui, heaven, Janna, and paradise are some of the commonly used nomenclature for such idealistic Utopian spaces (Foucault, 1984).

Foucault (1984) describes heterotopia on the other hand as real, physical spaces, positioned inside the hegemonic space. From within, they challenge power systems,

paradoxically as tools of power and able to exploit weakness. Contrary to Foucault's concept of juxtaposing multiple spaces in heterotopia, Lefebvre (2014) introduced the heterotopy. This is a condition of space where a multiplicity of conflicting logics, ideologies and practices co-exist. However, Foucault's heterotopia will be the focus of this thesis.

The ambiguity positions it as a nexus of ideals and the site of conflict. The functions of Heterotopia are influenced by the social, cultural, political and technological matters, while also influencing these same elements. Furthermore, all are influenced by the epoch they exist. There are key principles that relate to waka ama and the Hawaiki Ora mentioned throughout this thesis.

Dalton (2014) explored heterotopia and was critical of the oversimplification of heterotopia as purely other spaces. He emphasised the involvement of power structures. Heterotopia is not an escape from utopia; they are intertwined with controlling systems to reflect and contest society at the same time. Bingham (2020) states that heterotopia, "are the opposite of anything utopian" (p. 7).

Heterotopia are spaces of crisis and transformation (Foucault, 1984). They provide space for those such as adolescents, mourning and even the elderly who are all dealing with the reality of perhaps not fitting in, or no longer fitting in the hegemonic ideals. This presents the potential for transformation. Kaihoe may find themselves dealing with such a crisis in a positive manner within Hawaiki Ora, utilising the inclusive space to transform. Non-athletic people can find the space in waka ama where they feel as if they should conform, but they can shape the heterotopia to be more inclusive of them, and in time, they stand equal with the athletic.

Closely associated with crisis, deviation heterotopia are spaces that isolate those behaving counter to hegemonic norms. Often, the reason people feel out of place is because their actions are out of place. It is evident in waka ama, looking back at those pioneers who navigated through the colonial suppression of the time. However, even

today, there are so many non-Māori participating that their involvement in waka ama is now not considered a rarity, as in the past.

There is the possibility that multiple spaces and sites can cohabitate within a heterotopia, despite being incompatible. Within waka ama, there is a series of events in different spaces, yet experienced from the heterotopia of the waka ama.

Heterotopia is associated with moments in time, evident in their ever-changing nature. They can also accumulate time, as in libraries and museums with historical information that continues to grow. Contrary, flowing and transitory time like that of Māori eliminates the common hegemonic time, reclaiming subjective time.

Entry and exit of heterotopia often require the completion of rites of passage. Blumenkrantz and Hong (2008) state that rites of passage have been the course for spiritual awakening for thousands of years, fulfilling an innate need within humanity. From another viewpoint, Kingsman (2024) showed the rites of passage assist in the development of responsibility, resourcefulness, respect and resilience, and a sense of pride and inclusivity within one's community. Inclusivity has hidden illusions, according to Foucault (1984). Entry denotes a prior exclusion. The excluded others are crucial in isolating and preserving the heterotopic social space from external ascendancy. They also protect the magic and enchantment of the inner collective. Waka ama aims to allow open access and goes above and beyond to assist, but there is always the possibility of restricted access due to several unavoidable situations. Early colonisation in Aotearoa was a restricted access situation for the non-Māori, who soon became the hegemonic power. Their voyage to Aotearoa was an example of heterotopia.

Foucault (1984) presents an example of the boat or ship as the "heterotopia par excellence." Existing as a place that is also not a place, with a restricted exit, but infinite possible voyage headings. Another relevant comment states that without maritime vessels, civilisations' "dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and

police take the place of pirates” (p. 9). Waka Ama allowed the Māori, and the non-Māori kaihoe to irrigate, propagate and simulate their dreams.

Bingham (2020) mentions that heterotopias are fictitious communities that are both outside the rational places of society, but also situated in these societies. They depend on humans for their existence. Continuing, he explains that they are collective and therefore social spaces; however, individuals can find their personal sense of existence within the heterotopia.

Social Space

To Liz, “getting to meet new people, and catching up with old friends, that's a real bonus for me with waka” (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021). Relationships make the environment or space special. Often, people are initially unsure when facing new challenges. However, in a social space, one can share the challenge, share tasks and even share experiences.

Demonstrating the strength of a social space, Warbrick et al. (2020) states, “an enjoyable environment, conducive to social interaction and support is likely more important, for adherence at least, than the type of exercise administered” (p. 807). Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith (1991) pioneered the concept of social space. Social space subsumes the fruits of productivity, but is neither an object nor imagined. It is the result of what remains in memory, and cultivates new actions that have the potential to produce or consume, and even exterminate others. There are sequential actions toward achieving goals that establish either spatial simultaneity or synchronicity, and temporal succession or concatenation to form relationships.

Physical boundaries attempt to separate social spaces, but there remains an indistinct continuation of the social space. The shoreline separates the water and land, but the waka ama social space continues regardless of this tidal line. New specialisations

initiate the fragmentation of space to suit their field of expertise, erecting mental barriers to maintain superiority.

Social space as a social product is a statement that some argue is paradoxical in terms of empowering society to produce space and of the society also becoming dominated within its space by hegemonic agents. However, it is established on a twin illusion, with each reinforcing and hiding the other. Illusion of transparency allows space to be accepting of action, thought and light. Thus creating an illusion of a safe space, free of hidden agendas, but actually a transcendental illusion that uses others' agendas to hide its own. While WANZ actively promotes inclusion, they cannot avoid the paradoxical exclusion of those unwilling to conform.

Absent from the search of 'space' and 'place' was the word *whenua*. The *whenua* could be land, territory, domain, state, nation and more. It is also the placenta that both nurtures the unborn within their mother's womb and nurtures the Māori within Te Ao Māori. The nurturing is reflective of their connection through whakapapa, mother to child, Papatūānuku to te iwi Māori. Here, everyday operations are exercised, along with growth, relations of identity, of productivity and understanding.

The following is from the mōteatea *He taonga, he tapu*:

- Ko ngā tohu o rātau tapuwae i kākahutia i runga i te mata o te whenua
- He taonga, he tapu

The *whenua* is dressed with the experiences of those who have gone before. They have left their footprint on the land, on society, and as it is not a physical impression, they are left on the land creating a special space of connection, commemoration and perhaps even restriction.

While [hapū](#), the baby exists with the [Whare Tangata](#). This is where the nurturing and development happen with the support of the *whenua*. Once born, the process

continues with the hapū transferring from a state experienced by the mother and the baby to a state established by the collective consanguinity of a particular eponymous ancestor. The whenua and hapū demonstrate both the praxis and theory.

Another omission that is useful in the discussion is *āhuru mōwai*, meaning calm place and sheltered haven. Here we have a potential association with the concept of a modern or ever-present Hawaiki Ora. The spatial practices routinely observed create a space that is perceived as calm and sheltering. Who uses the space, what is done in the space, and what relationships are formed in the space are all part of the whole that gives meaning to the space.

The representational space is the lived space in which one would experience a calm and sheltered space. The representations of space will include the discourse about the *āhuru mōwai* and its arrangement in space. The lived space produces the feeling of security. This is relevant to the marae, which is seen by Pere as “the one tangible situation that enables other cultures to connect with Māori, on Māori terms” (Pere & Nicholson, 1991, p. 46) and one could see this being the same for the waka ama heterotopic social space of Hawaiki Ora.

Social space can simmer down to a leaderless system of disorder, a contradiction of its archetypal, but in a state not uncommon with its genesis. Original relations are dispelled to allow room and create a need for new ones for what is a new space of difference, an antithesis space to the homogeneous abstract space. Waka ama has been through such deformations since its revival. Within this period and space, the regions, clubs, teams and kaihoe have also experienced evolution.

Society produces space and consequently what exists within it. As this space advances, some existence can find itself isolated in a differential space. An abstraction locked in a cultural realm, descending to folklore, “losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality” (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 53). This shows the tension between lived and conceived, the objective and subjective.

Each period has its associated space that is built on the previous era. The symbols of the prior duration lay the foundation or scaffold for the following space, lasting the test of time in some situations, and fading into historic memory in others. Many Māori symbols of pre-European contact have struggled to maintain their hold of relevance in the space post-European contact.

Māori would have experienced the colonial-led destruction of the traditional waka ama space. Many of the symbols of that era were lost due to the extreme shift in the triad of the new space. For a revival of waka ama to succeed, it would have to attempt the destruction of the dominant space at that time or create its own heterotopia.

Wisely, those at the coalface of the revival selected the latter. They presented the symbols of a period long forgotten, but still a reality in locations such as Tahiti. The revival of such symbols has ultimately helped in the creation of the present space. Revolutionary change must be experienced in daily lives, and this is evident through the widespread use of te reo Māori since its revival.

Waka ama's heterotopic space also demonstrates a revolutionary change in the number who participate, and more in particular, those who make it a lifestyle. These groups grasp onto the symbols and meanings of the past to give them purpose today in this new space.

Hard lines have been drawn in some situations, with waka ama clubs restricting membership to promote the tikanga and whakapapa of this physical activity. Mātauranga Māori and tikanga Māori are given priority in this special space. A space with its initiations and rituals, and resistant to the dominant culture's influence. However, there is always a connection between workspace, leisure space and living space, which are the general political powers of the time.

Waka ama has become a place referred to in reference for the participants who occupy the space. A space for water people, nature lovers, tikanga followers, and a space that

is peaceful, fun, inclusive and so on can be connected to this space via the discourse amongst the community. Proxemics is maintained through the structure of the waka ama, that is, the seating and the ama, which create individual places within the collective space. It is also achieved within clubs of a region, regions of a nation and nations of the IVF.

Funding is a constant hurdle for all Māori physical activities, and the lure of assistance can cloud the vision of those weary from their quest for a positive outcome. Once the assistance is obtained, reporting back is required, and the sovereignty of the physical activity and its space is lost.

To regain the space requires the destruction of the dominant space, as Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith (1991) suggested, “only bulldozers and Molotov cocktails can change” (p. 56) the aforementioned dominant space. Perhaps the heterotopic social space of Hawaiki Ora is the bulldozer and Molotov of change for the hegemonic space of Aotearoa.

Waka ama has elite divisions and selection criteria based on performance, as opposed to selection by social connection and camaraderie. Despite the high-performance push, WANZ has thankfully maintained a higher priority towards development and participation. It has delegated a proportion of resources in the quest for excellence in the sporting world.

Social space incorporates both the individual's and the collective's social actions. It facilitates a process of growth, development, establishment, continuation, discontinuation, and remembrance. A fundamental requirement for such a process to flourish is the availability of special places to exercise society's “practical capabilities and sovereign power” (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 34). Waka ama has allowed Māori and non-Māori access to a special heterotopia that has been untarnished by hegemonic powers.

Respect and appreciation of the natural bluespace, while being in tune with the natural rhythms of the natural space and social space, are distinguishable characteristics of a kaihoe. Contrary to this, the so-called advancing of Māori through the active pursuit of Western knowledge has arguably been detrimental to their position in, and awareness of Te Ao Māori.

Disassociation leads to the idea that social space prohibits and is evident in the lack of communication between societal intercourse between members, and members and themselves. Things in space and discourse of space, in turn, become critical in the productive process of space. Space is a totality that is expounded from within and without, influencing the past and the present diachronic and etymological conjugation.

Modes of performative embodiment, like identifying gestures, can both demonstrate being in the world and form the unalienating world. Through a unified focus of the alienated on such unalienating spaces, stabilisation of the space can transpire, and those who “live different ways of being in space” (Kinkaid, 2020, p. 183) can find solace. This revolutionary change in space must engage the body, and the body must challenge the status quo to “imagine and practice space otherwise” (p. 183). This leads on to the social space of the agents involved in the creation of Hawaiki Ora.

Embodied space

Kinkaid’s critical phenomenological analysis of the *Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre provides valuable insight into the text as seen by critical phenomenologists. The use of comparative discourse between the writings of Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty articulates the embodiment of experiencing and producing space. Nonnormative embodiment holds the potential for revolutionary change (Kinkaid, 2020).

Abstract space denies the subject and space of relationality, as opposed to the relational social space. Through embodiment, subjects comprehend space. The body

is the first space, and from there, reference to other spaces is possible as “practico-sensory totality” (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 62). The connection of the body and space complicates abstract space theory.

Kinkaid (2020) refers to space as “the horizon of our experience”, (p. 176) thus creating consciousness and subjectivity. Space, our subjectivity and our being-in-the-world are all interconnected and relational. Continuing with spatial practice, it is explained that Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty believed the body plays a critical role alongside space and practice in the production of space and instituting space as a “phenomenological totality” (p. 176).

Experiencing the spaces occurs through the utilisation of the whole body and its senses. This creates an understanding of the contradictions present in abstract space and of alternative spaces. When the connection between body and milieu ceases, there becomes spatial disorientation and the body is alienated, as experienced by those termed different, odd, queer, fat, and many other derogatory names.

The body of the minority can be alienated from the space of the dominant, perhaps “looked down upon” as the phrase implies. Looking from a different plane, that is the privileged space of the few. This abstract space elevates particular characteristics of the dominant, usually those of white males, as real space while dissociating other bodies from space, creating a space of intersubjectivity.

A contradiction of homogenised space is its tendency to be preserved and yet transmutable, allowing for the possibility of new spaces with new norms, but inevitably with new dominant perceptions. The waka ama space does not escape the alienation and contradictions. The Western-influenced perceptions doomed an ancient craft to the fate of the moa until the revival, when it was seen through a fresh lens as a way of returning to a past where dominant perception belongs to the Indigenous people of Aotearoa.

Regattas, parties and so on have a spirit and meaning. The hermeneutics of suspicion refers to the possibility of hidden meanings in spaces. With hermeneutics as a theory of being, it could be suggested that space is the location of potential existence and demise. This links to the notion that place is the “locus of encounter between world and self” (Janz, 2017, p. 32) making it the place of creation, a Hawaiki Ora.

Heidegger sees *dasein* not as a spatial object in the world, but as an interrelationship of individuals and the environment as a whole. This embodied nature and physical world that situates the body creates a foundation for human action to develop. The mood or emotional state plays a vital role in the particular way the body discloses the world.

The body is described as a dialectic, simultaneously a part of reality and a part of perception. The world is revealed by humans depending on the network of meanings they process about the world. Paddlers, joggers and anglers will see a river differently based on their networking of meaning; a great location to paddle, a scenic route to run and a means to provide food for their *whānau* (Lopez Frias & Gimeno Monfort, 2016).

Nature

Heeni conveyed her belief that when people articulate regarding their home spaces, such as in a *pepeha*, efforts should be made to go to these spaces and know these spaces. Situating oneself in these locations gives them a chance to experience significant things, and then communicate the highs and lows, the good and the bad that they know to be true for their spaces. “You can talk about your place, but you don’t know your place until you’ve walked that place, or you’ve paddled that place” (H. Hope, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

Natural environments are known to promote “psychological benefits” (Wyles et al., 2019, p. 137). Such environments are generally separated into two spaces, green and blue. As leisure spaces, they can improve the appeal of leisure activities. Some

sporting spaces induce a meditative quality, often due to the repetitive nature of the activity or the physical space one experiences. However, the same situations can cause a very diverse range of responses from others who are participating.

Nature-based locations possess intrinsic qualities that are subsumed in absolute space and consumed by political powers. As stated, “those who produced space were not the same people as managed it”, (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 48) and the pioneer kaihoe of the revival produced a waka ama social space, but it is now WANZ who generally manage it.

Nature’s creatures know not of their role on earth, on this expansive region of cyclic life. They are brought into existence, grow, mature, and life diminishes to death. The Māori view would tend to credit or privilege nature’s creatures with purpose and meaning. Likewise, Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith (1991) state, “a flower does not know that it is a flower any more than death knows upon whom it is visited” (p. 70). Nature, along with the gods and deities, is unfortunately losing the battle against the pro-development of modernity, and as a result, humanity is engaged in its destruction.

There is a naturalisation of the rational that is simultaneously usurping rationality by cloaking nature with nostalgia, providing a balance between idealism and materialism. The natural or physical space is disappearing, with resources and sources alike providing a pleasant background for memories.

The protection of nature is critical as it sinks below the “horizon behind us” (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 31). It is being lost to thought as a result of human tools of destruction and development. Nature’s utopia is becoming out of reach, or a [Hawaiki Pāmamao](#).

Bluespace

Bluespace is natural water bodies like rivers, lakes and oceans. Very rarely do purpose-built water features get classed as such (Nutsford et al., 2016). For Māori,

they are socially constructed by relationships and physical interactions. Māori have a strong relationship with water through whakapapa and pūrākau, creating a mutual obligation to [kaitiakitanga](#). Tangaroa links Māori to the physical and spiritual realm of the waterways, to cosmology, to Polynesia and thus to a Māori identity and culture. Karakia enhances this situation and often provides a sense of inner safety during water activities (Mita, 2018; Te Aramoana Waiti & Awatere, 2019).

The location of origin had a noticeable impact on Moana-Lee. Being from the Tairāwhiti of Aotearoa, they found water sustained them, was part of them, and they were equally part of it. She never experienced the same connection to land-based activities, even Māori activities such as Ki-o-Rahi.

Culturally, some have intergenerational fears associated with water. Minorities often have intergenerational fears related to water due to their overrepresentation in drownings, leading to an uninterest in learning to swim or enter the water (WaterSafetyNewZealand, 2016; Wheaton et al., 2020). Waka ama is a safe and stable craft, with strong tikanga concerning safety, and has the potential to slowly and safely assist the fearful to appreciate and enjoy the water.

Martin disclosed the idea that seeing the land from the water gives people a different perspective of their place, both land and water. This allows them to make a special connection with both. Noting that not everyone gets to see their maunga or other wāhi motuhake from the water and it can be an exciting journey of discovery for them.

One of the long paddling kaihoe, Turi, aired that he takes interaction with the bluespace for granted now as “it's so deep in your veins, ... when was the last time you took a breath and you had to think about it? So, when you're on the water, you love it so much” (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). Conan explained that it was not until he was away from being on the water for a lengthy duration did he experienced the longing to return to the water. Being in the elements, the peacefulness and meditative-like situation was of great enjoyment to him.

Other kaihoe also felt a special connection with the bluespace, with Liz adding that it was a cleansing environment for her.

It's my happy place. Whatever stresses that I have in life on land, when on the waka I'm calm and happy. It's a cleansing really. To be able to share that feeling, although I don't verbalise it, but to be with my teammates and having that cleansing, that's even better. I'm hoping that my vibe is rubbing off on them. (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021)

Her happiness being transmitted non-verbally, described as a rubbing off of her happy vibe onto others, shows the collective power within a waka ama team. She added that despite growing up around the water, she never considered herself a water person. However, since waka ama became a part of her life, she had become a water person with no limits and a new sense of freedom.

The lifetime kaihoe mentioned that they find themselves in a calm and comfortable state on the water, regardless of the conditions. Te Wai-a saying, "It's just another day...a familiar place" (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021). Another expressing feeling safe, but always respecting the water environment.

Matahi stated that everyone must respect the ocean as it is unimpressed by reputation or material possessions. He informed that,

...you must remember, no matter who you are, what you think you are, you have to respect the ocean because it doesn't care who you are, where you've come from, even if you own a flash canoe. It doesn't care!. (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021)

Respect for water as opposed to a fear of water was expressed by Heeni, for her, it is an 'I' versus 'nature' situation where the 'I' always comes off second best. It seems to her that some people are more comfortable than others in and on the water, whether

they have a long association with the water or like to be a bit outside their comfort zone.

The powerful nature of the bluespace and the way it surrounds those in or on the water were articulated by Craig. He stressed the requirement to stay calm, stay safe and stay focused. Reinforcing this, Lara informed that she had no history of water sports and water activities prior to waka ama, she found the appeal was the chance to push the boundaries and experience the unknown.

There is also the challenge of adverse conditions. All conditions were good as Conan stated earlier, and they all required making the most of the situation presented or maximising the potential available. The rhythm of the environment and the conditions are the higher-level connection strived for by many. To reach such a level warrants being called a *jedi kaihoe*, a water person, and [he karoro inu tai](#).

Discussing being in-tune with the water, Turanga described growing up with his *tūpuna* and them sharing *kōrero*, *pūrākau* and going out to collect *kaimoana*. However, he never really embraced the bluespace until waka ama allowed him to do so.

Hauora

There are noted benefits to hauora associated with bluespace, including activities in, on and under the water. Also beneficial is being proximal to bluespace, whether actively or not (Coleman & Kearns, 2015; Garrett et al., 2019; Gascon et al., 2017; Nutsford et al., 2016; Pasanen et al., 2019).

Raipoa mentioned that paddling gave recognition to her history and Tangaroa. When experiencing negative emotions or bad times, she regained the vitality and strength to overcome such situations by being on the water. She continued by disclosing that her connection to the environment is great, whether it is a lake, river or the ocean. It is expressed as a privilege. "Even paddling in a little river at low tide, they feel great" (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Further to this point, Liz commented that,

The water brings that affinity. It helps to clear the mind; the wind takes it away and the sun is the warmth I feel with whom I am with in the canoe. With the rain, it's cleaning out the yuckiness and the big water brings me challenges ahead. (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021).

This affinity is also discussed by Moana-Lee, who states,

When I get on the water, I think about those that've come before me and done this. I think that I'm carrying on a tradition for future generations. I think about the affinity and Tangaroa. I also believe our gods are kaitiaki and that if we treat them with respect and aroha, that will come back to us. (M. Raihania, personal communication, January 27, 2021)

Explaining the waka ama environment, Jason conveyed that the waka ama made him feel good by removing his anxiousness or signs of melancholy, allowing him to move on and be in the environment. He expressed what he experienced as a beautiful and fantastic place. From Jason's seating position in the waka, his view is unique and relevant only to him at that moment. Different from other seating positions, it is his own little space that is "worth more than money" (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021).

Nervous new kaihoe are told by Matahi that the water is the marae of Tangaroa. Tangaroa is described as the god of the ocean and art, and is known for taking care of people. Matahi continues by paddling alone, while the kaihoe in the waka simply feel the moment and movement. He encourages them to experience the gliding and weightlessness on the water, explaining that the water lifts and carries kaihoe through the motion of the tides or waves, which forms a unique connection of embodiment. Stating to his new kaihoe, "You are gliding. You are weightless...The water lifts you, carries you" (M. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Karmen felt a bit whakamā about her new paddling focus that has changed from racing to enjoying the serenity she feels at rest on the water. She expressed that she loved being out there on the water. Paddling or not, she will always maintain her connection and respect for her bluespace.

Raipoa conveyed her belief that Māori are yet to fully reconnect to Tangaroa to a level that their Pacific cousins still have. She referred to Māori as characteristically strong and steady like trees and the children of Tāne, whereas their cousins are fluid, rhythmic like water, and the children of Tangaroa. She suggested that being surrounded by water will do that to a person. It seems that regardless of where you paddle in Aotearoa, you can see the great land mass covered in trees to reinforce Tāne's dominance in atua terms.

Jason shared that he always tries to create a safe bluespace environment and that he wishes people knew their limits. He expressed his concern about the potential pain or sorrow that would be felt if someone from out of town lost their life in your waterways, especially if they were from outside of your region and under your protection or support. He also acknowledged that limits need to be pushed in order for improvements to be made, but at what cost, he asked.

As mentioned earlier, unfortunately, Māori are statistically highly represented in drownings, in 2022 being 21.28% of drownings, despite being only 17.3% of the population in Aotearoa (WaterSafetyNewZealand, 2016). In 2024, the Māori drowning rate was 1.76 per 100,000, and the Pākehā rate was 0.83 per 100,000 (Zealand, 2024). Sometimes learning the hard way occurs, but the goal is to mitigate or minimise the level of risk.

Raipoa simply explained that waka ama is just part of her and she does not think about it as new or beautiful, challenging or entertaining. Similar to asking a fish about water, or thinking about breathing, as Turi mentioned earlier. The other waka babies echo Raipoa's comments. It does not, however, mean they do not experience such

exceptional occurrences while paddling; they just take waka for granted, as one would when walking through the ngahere. They would not say walking is excellent, rather, the ngahere is.

Craig enthusiastically voiced his love of the challenge presented by paddling a W1 on the ocean, taking on the elements with a love triangle of kaihoe, a waka ama and a paddle. This is extended by Raipoia, who disclosed that despite the ability level of the kaihoe, they all unite with the environment, the waka, and the other paddlers in a team waka ama. Now we see the waka ama being considered in the equation determining the experience.

In a waka ama team situation, as Conan recollects, it is a group of people striving to [mahitahi](#) and ultimately achieving a flow state. A fast waka ama is the result of a united and therefore efficient team effort, according to him. Everyone is attempting to do their best for the others in the team, all responding to cues and reacting appropriately to various stimuli.

To make the Waka move fast, everybody has to be essentially one, to be efficient... that's one of the things I really enjoy about being in the team. You can have the Superstars, all the best paddlers in a one-man, but in the team, everyone is equal, everyone has a responsibility, and I think teams that understand that get the most out of their athletes. (C. Herbert, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Meditation-type spaces occur when everything is working so well, like a form of autopilot. An embodied community creating a collective flow state. This is supported by comments from Jason, who likened the feeling of one paddler lacking confidence is like a motor running with one cylinder out.

Creating the space for everyone to feel confident is essential and natural in waka ama. He carried on to say that racing is not everything, and people's safety should always

be paramount. Adding further that from his experience in waka ama, surf lifesaving, sailing and SUP, regardless of the water craft, there is a common kaupapa which is the intermingling amongst water users, a water people's whanaungatanga.

Turanga reinforced this by stating that the longer teams stay as a crew, the better the social environment. Here things become intrinsic, natural and just flow. They get better over time like a good wine. This is the sign that the environment inside the waka ama is what he stated as "sorted" (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). Supporting this, Raipoia mentioned that people stop looking for differences and instead focus on unity, "We are all kind of one body, one paddle" (R. Brightwell, personal communication, September 5, 2021).

Te Wai-a-Tauranga continued this by stating that it was always a social thing to her. Despite being a gold medallist in the open women's division, she still considered it a good chance to catch up and disclosed that there was never an anxious situation due to it being a part of her identity.

Lara said she loves being able to help others, especially kids, to experience the waka ama and the bluespace. She has been lucky enough to have a set of skills that were in high demand, and therefore, she had ample opportunity to assist. Richard mentioned the safe and comfortable feeling he liked in the waka ama and how he also tried to provide that same experience for other kaihoe. He likes to share the experiences of the different seating positions, different roles and responsibilities. This way, everyone develops a respect for those elements and possibly identifies their areas of strength.

Diving deep, Turi mentioned that what one person values may not be the same for others. He stated, "What I value from waka ama may only align with a very small percentage of paddlers" (T. Hodges, personal communications, 18 January, 2021). Perhaps suggesting that this study is in fact a Sisyphean task, but more likely stressing the diversity amongst kaihoe experiences.

According to Damaris Hollingway, “every space does something, we need to make sure it is the right thing” (TEDxTalks, 2018). Therefore, the waka ama space needs to be developed and nourished to help the people and the waka ama kaupapa. She continues by mentioning that if one can feel at home, it also creates a feeling of belonging. Waka ama is an aquatic seedbed capable of transporting kaihoe to a heterotopic Hawaiki Ora to establish themselves and flourish in the future.

Kaitiakitanga

The term kaitiakitanga has evolved to suit the changing environment and identity of Māori. Traditionally, it denoted supernatural protectors of both humans and the environment. Since the 1980s, the term has begun to invoke the concept of protection of whenua and resources. This is ever evolving, and no one definition can be labelled as the correct one (Mills et al., 2024).

Kaitiakitanga to Watene (2024) is another Māori philosophy that emphasises relationships. It is both a concept and a method of application to maintain and create further intersections to address the intergenerational responsibilities. Watene concludes that courage is required to alter the narrative and set a new course for an equitable tomorrow.

“Traditional Indigenous people were careful custodians of the environments that provided them and future generations with sustenance and help maintain physical health” (Mullane, 2023, p. 19). This statement is echoed by all of the kaihoe involved in this study. Conan mentioned that it is not a religious type of thing, forming a connection with the ocean. It is simply being grateful for the opportunity to be on the water. This creates a sense of obligation towards the protection of the water and also the surrounding whenua that impacts the water. He stated, “You want to look after your environment and you don't want to make your ocean [paru](#)” (C. Herbert, personal communication, March 24, 2021). Over time, he believed waka ama instils these values upon kaihoe.

A heightened awareness of the environment was something mentioned throughout the kōrerorero. It was well expressed by Turi, who said that his eyes hurt seeing the poor water quality. Several kaihoe mentioned that waka ama allows its participants to develop an awareness of the environment. Turanga suggests the theory that over time, individuals become more aware of the water quality issue and more aware of the changes as the water becomes connected to them and their activities.

Pollution levels are often noticed and identified by kaihoe before the regional council has time to test the water quality, according to Raipoia. She went on to discuss how the beauty of the water creates the space that kaihoe enjoy and cherish, and any risk or detrimental factors to the status quo stand out and grab one's attention. Sadly, as Turi mentioned, many waka ama participants have to participate in water well below health standard guidelines.

My own paddling involves paddling across a polluted waterway to get to the ocean. We once swam in that waterway after each paddle to cool down and stretch out. It was also a place to try things that could potentially end up with a kaihoe in the water, like balance drills and water changes. These all have to be performed in the clear ocean environment, roughly two kilometres from base, with a long, cool or cold paddle back if things do go wrong.

Located in an urban setting, like many waka ama clubs in Aotearoa, Turi expressed concern about the developments around their city happening faster and more frequently. The production of food, industry, and housing has also come at a considerable cost to our waterways. He also spoke about some rivers having all but disappeared, despite it not being a drought.

The anthropocene of man's engineering has negatively impacted the rivers, leaving only an experience of a waterway that seems to have a sickness. Such pyrrhic commercial gains have a negative impact that is often unseen by many from the shore. Adding to this, Turanga felt that from his ancestors' kōrero, he saw the health of the

waterways having a direct impact on the health of the people. This is echoed by Mita (2016) who states that “hauora of the environment is synonymous with our own hauora” (p. 155).

The waka ama is a vessel that allows Craig to speak openly, with confidence and conviction about issues concerning the protection of the moana, awa, and roto. He mentioned that waka ama establishes a connection with Tangaroa and other atua Māori of particular regions and realms.

Māori karakia allows for the establishment of a nexus of realms, beliefs and entities as our tūpuna did in the past. Craig believed that it may take time for some to comprehend this utopian state of connection with the atua and the environment, but it is part of the journey available in waka ama.

Adding to this kaupapa, Turanga communicated that someone who is training at various locations may not establish such a strong connection to each place, but again, that would depend on the examples they have followed in the past and their values towards the location and environment as a whole. Supporting this, Karmen discussed her new connectedness with her awa since starting waka ama. The awareness of the pūrākau and mahi kai that were situated on her awa created a link that was reinforced by waka ama.

Turanga also identified coaches and leaders involved in waka ama experiences as playing an essential role in the interpretation of kaitiakitanga. Stating it is commonplace in te ao waka ama to pick up any floating rubbish discovered during a paddling session, the kaihoe continues saying that mindful coaches and leaders demonstrate this, and their kaihoe learn that the race is never more important than the environment to the waka ama whānau. The kaihoe reiterated that kaihoe have a connection through whakapapa and now waka ama to this space.

Kaitiakitanga is not restricted to the geographical features of the environment, according to Jason. Manuhiri attending events in one's rohe receive the protection of the haukāinga, ensuring a safe and positive experience for them while in the rohe. Sharing of weather and tidal conditions, along with kōrero about local [taniwha](#) and dangerous rocks to help prepare them for the event, is all part of the process.

I'm like a kaitiaki or guardian of the area. I've got no control of them going out, but just knowing that you can at least give them some good advice and make them feel like they're in a good space and a good place. (J. Porter, personal communications, February 5, 2021)

The actions and values of kaitiakitanga are reciprocated when the roles and rohe are reversed.

I personally experienced a demonstration of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga towards my club the first time we attended a long-distance race. It was the Tauranga Harbour Challenge, and it was where I first met Jason. He noticed our waka ama trailer as he drove past our accommodation, so he stopped and came in to have a kōrero with us about the Tauranga waters. This was the establishment of long-lasting relationships between those present and Jason. However, it was also a good relationship with Tauranga as a [rohe](#), and as a people.

Such kaitiaki acts also extend to the waka ama whānau in teams, clubs and so on, as expressed by Liz. Making sure new and seasoned paddlers have a safe and enjoyable paddling experience in a safe and inclusive environment is her role in her club. The aunty to everyone and anyone in need, a common phrase of her club is, "Oh Aunty Krusty will know" (L. Savage, personal communication, May 2, 2021).

When on others' waters, as when on others' whenua, we still act as kaitiaki, but there needs to be a degree of humility used so as not to disrespect the kaitiaki that whakapapa to the area, Moana-Lee explained. Although it would be disrespectful to

let people abuse the area without attempting to intervene, it must be done carefully and respectfully. On one's tūrangawaewae or the aquatic equivalent, there is no holding back. "Hey, this is my tūrangawaewae! Fellas just come here and..." (M. Raihania, personal communication, January 27, 2021) demonstrates the difference in approaches.

Continuing on this theme, Moana-Lee stated that waka ama is a catalyst for revolution when addressing climate change. According to many kaihoe, WANZ has an opportunity to promote this to regions, clubs and whānau with wānanga informing participants of waka ama's part in educating the waka ama world on climate change.

There is more to the waka ama environment than just the on-water stuff. When paddlers return to shore, there is another side to be enjoyed. Along with others, Conan expressed that the biggest attraction in waka ama for him is the off-water culture.

Waka Ama appeals to several kaihoe because everything competitive stays on the water, showing the competition ends at the shoreline, and socialising becomes the prevailing ideology ashore. Richard supports this by saying that on the water is when the mahi is done; outside of that, a genuine desire to connect, to respect, and support occurs on land. Many kaihoe expressed their appreciation for the continuing of the safe and enjoyable milieu from water to land. Craig joyfully stated that every time a kaihoe steps from the waka to the shore, they are doing what our ancestors did.

At events or training, Moana-Lee explained that kaihoe can connect with the mana whenua and mana moana. Respecting the land and the people, and of course, the waterways. She reinforced what was mentioned earlier by stating "I expect people to respect my whenua" (M. Raihania, personal communication, January 27, 2021).

At paddling sessions, training, racing or social paddling, Richard disclosed that they like to think about the [āhua](#) of the other paddlers before they paddle. A quick catch-up

on land to avoid them impacting negatively on others, or vice versa. If the group knows someone is low, they can afford them some extra aroha or a bit of slack.

As soon as I grab my paddle, it's just like right, whatever happened 5 minutes before is finished, and I can leave that behind me because I'm starting a new journey...I'm not too sure what it's gonna look like on the way. I'm not too sure what they look like on the way back, but it's going to be different from the last time I did it. (R. Pehi, personal communications, February 25, 2021)

On the water at events, there are different people, clubs and regions, however, on land, they amalgamate into one group, all the same, waka ama whānau, explained Craig. Further adding, he also believed that the competition is very short, but the friendships endure much longer. Regardless of the outcome on the day, most paddlers are still happy to have participated and want to attend more training or events.

Highlighted by Turanga, at sprint events, “in total you'll probably only do about 18 to 20 minutes of racing and then you'll be doing like 8 hours of sitting down together” (T. Barclay-Kerr, personal communications, 18 January, 2021) and therefore there is a need for everyone to get along. Club members are part of the whānau, and thus everyone becomes very close.

On race days, there is a need to try to chill, but it's very noisy and busy with all the activity and other competitors talking smack, all part of it, explained Turi. Kaihoe also needed everything sorted before the races: fuel, whānau and physiology. He stresses that if the land time is utilised well, the waka ama environment on land and water will benefit. Te Wai-a-Tauranga mentioned that at nationals, after the race, on their return to the tent, they are looking out for friends and whānau they have not yet caught up with. Then she chills or relaxes until her race. She also aired concern that some kaihoe take it a bit too seriously, “people who are more competitive won't socialise or aren't allowed to socialise” (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021). Here is the

view of a lifetime, kaihoe of the possible paradigm shift towards a competitive focused environment.

It is a space where people exchange ideas, according to Liz. Experienced kaihoe openly sharing advice amazed her. Furthermore, they recollected being asked for advice from a very highly regarded kaihoe and thinking of it as both surprising and empowering. This is not uncommon and demonstrates the dichotomy of competitors on the water and whanaunga on the land, or opponent versus whānau.

During a walk around the WANZ national sprint venue, Turi explained the regatta has a result centre, an old school hub for coaches and managers to wait, watch and then study the outcome of the action on the water. This space is changing now, there are online live updates, reducing the necessity to cohabit the result centre and the chance for dialogue amongst coaches.

Continuing the walk, Turi noted that everyone tries to move in early to get the perfect spot for their tents, not like back in the day when there was voluminous space available. This tent city adds to the atmosphere at nationals. It has grown from an odd gazebo to several tents, and now there are kitchens and resting spaces, a kaihoe [kāenga](#) for the week. Amazing!

Explaining the movement of the kaihoe, Turi said that the kaihoe would walk to their races along the grass that is now covered in temporary shelters. The kaihoe do not want to interrupt or interfere with the viewing of spectators and other kaihoe, so they usually opt to battle the shoppers on the roadway. This also highlights the desire to avoid intruding on others' whānau and respecting their āhuru mōwai environments established all along the shore.

At the WANZ nationals, Karmen describes the infrastructure as a fine-tuned machine, making the land and water time more enjoyable for all participants. Minimising wait times, confusion and other stressful situations also makes for a pleasant experience.

The vibe at the WANZ nationals is what is often remembered and draws you back. The T-shirt is to remind you and help you share your experience representing the religious talisman. Win or lose, we want a positive experience, as said by Lara.

At training, Te Wai-a-Tauranga discussed having to lead due to her experience. She was happy to give back and also mentioned she would rather participate in training than watch training, stating it to be “boring!” (T. Nuku, personal communication, June 3, 2021). This is in contrast to the whānau and whanaungatanga on land that has been praised; the land-based task of coaching and managing can be a far cry from the pleasures of paddling on the water.

Sporting Space

The way humans interact with the sports environment is explored by Henning Eichberg (2009) and provides some practical considerations. Notably, the space of an event or where interaction takes place can be experienced as another opponent in the game or activity. Even between individuals can be seen as types of space, challenging, assisting and therefore an opponent or perhaps even an ally. Utilising such space can be a tactical opportunity. For waka ama, the headwind, the downwind and crosswind sections of an event can be considered opponents, challenging the kaihoe.

Peter Cowan, Para-Waka Ama medallist in 2024 mentioned with regards to the WANZ sprint nationals inclusion of para-waka, or adaptive waka ama as it is known by many, “its proven to be a safe space... physically and mentally...and culturally” (Te Karere, 2025). He hopes the division grows, allowing more opportunities for para-athletes to participate in physical activities.

Regattas such as the WANZ Sprint Championships at Lake Karāpiro are a sensory evocative space. Many water sports rely purely on visuals to stimulate and supplement the construction of the social and sporting space. Waka ama has lively race

announcements in Māori and English for the auditory, a market area with healthy food for the gustatory and olfactory. Although WANZ has attempted to cater for the masses, it has perhaps excluded the unhealthy eater and those who prefer quiet environments. As stated, “space encourages and discourages” particular interactions, establishing “social structure and ideologies” (Glover, 2017, p. 877).

Regattas are festivities, where people become intoxicated on the spatial-temporal actuality of the event. Participants embrace heterogeneousness, a dialectic of identity and non-identity. The ‘who I am’ and ‘otherness’ communicate mutually with no side possessing the actual truth, but a shared truth is established between the constituents (Loland, 2009). New realms and realities are formed as a paddler re-enacts the paddling feats of the past, of ancestors or previous paddling generations, embodying those characteristics they want to maintain and perpetuate. Heeni states that for those already in waka ama, regattas are great opportunities to reconnect with waka ama whānau from around Aotearoa.

The waka ama community can be seen as a social movement that actively constructs a social space that allows diversity and resists, but never mitigates, the formation of inequality. This is a challenge for waka ama, as it reaches new heights, with growing participation rates, ultimately creating new tensions (Chatterjee & Ahmed, 2019; Kinkaid, 2020; Thorpe et al., 2011). The expansion creates a dichotomy, as do men’s and women’s events (Chatterjee & Ahmed, 2019; Kinkaid, 2020), and as seen with transgender individuals in sport and recent vaccination mandates. These have added very real pressure to an organisation that is renowned for its inclusivity. This utopian, inclusive social space may well be the foundation on which Hawaiki Ora is constructed.

Kupu Whakamutunga

Chapter Five ‘Mana ki Tangaroa’ delved into the spatial temporal environment of waka ama. It revealed how kaihoe move with time rather than through it, guided by tohu,

seasonal change, whakapapa, and lived memory. Time, for them, is not measured solely in minutes or races, but in tides, stars, and shared moments on the water.

Space is more than an area between objects or background to life, with a focus on the social space produced by kaihoe. Kaihoe not only embodied the actions of the ancestors, but also embodied the space those ancestors once paddled in. This chapter illuminated the creation of the heterotopic social space by kaihoe, an āhuru mōwai for reconnection, resistance, and restoration. Hawaiki Ora emerges as a lived place of belonging, where kaihoe rediscover and uncover identity, develop whanaungatanga, and participate in a sacred cyclic tikanga of giving and receiving. Whakapapa links kaihoe back to nature, back to Ranginui and Papatūānuku, and Tangaroa. The connection to the water of Tangaroa and the water one's tīpuna travelled on by waka ama provided a respect and willingness to demonstrate kaitiakitanga. This altruistic concept has positive impacts on one's evolving identity and self-worth in society.

As vessel and metaphor, the waka holds these multiple realities, carrying people not just forward, but deeper into themselves, into their communities, and their kaitiaki responsibilities to the environment. These introspections accommodate the optimistic, impartial, auspicious and harmonious, to desire being-in-the-world or being absorbed in Hawaiki Ora. Therefore, Hawaiki Ora could be established within any social sphere, given suitable conditions for resistance and change. Given the political climate in Aotearoa, waka ama's Hawaiki Ora is an inviting option within the present hegemonic space.

In the intersecting currents of embodiment, whakapapa, and cosmology, waka ama becomes a taonga tuku iho, a living link between the past and the future, experienced in the present. The insights gathered in this chapter offer a powerful reminder that time and space are not only measurable, they are felt, shared, and shaped, giving form to the transformative environment that is Hawaiki Ora.

The following chapter will conclude this thesis. It will summarise the aims and findings associated with previous chapters. With this in mind, the focus will turn to the main implications of this study for the future of waka ama, and the preservation of the waka ama heterotopic social space and subsequent heterotopic social spaces within waka ama.

CHAPTER 6

HAWAIKI ORA

From the very first day I started paddling, I have always had the privilege of a supporting whānau navigating alongside me. That first paddle introduced me to waka ama, to the water of Te Whanganui-a-Tara and the whānau of Kōkiri Taipatu Waka Ama. Returning home, the whānau at Te Rau Oranga o Ngāti Kahungunu Waka Club joined the support whānau. Over time, this support whānau grew to include: Tūnui-a-te-Ika Outrigger Canoe Club, Porirua Canoe Kayak Club, Parihaka Waka Ama, Avaikinui Outrigger Canoe Club, Honu Waka Ama Club, Hei Matau Paddlers, Tūrangawaewae Waka Sports, Heretaunga Ararau o Ngāti Kahungunu Waka Ama Rōpū, Maraenui Rugby and Sport Association, Adventure Wairoa and the myriad of other clubs and teams that have openly supporter me and my whānau. Since establishing Haeata Ocean Sports, we have continued the practice of supporting others, club members or not, to allow them an opportunity to experience Hawaiki Ora.

This chapter signifies the end of the waka ama journey of discovery, a moment to reflect and rejoice as we have located Hawaiki Ora. The closing of this thesis aims to lay out in an easily understood way the key findings from Tū te Hoe, Manini te Waka, and Mana ki Tangaroa chapters. There is also a section to discuss the limitations and adaptations encountered during this rangahau. It will then discuss the original contribution to knowledge that this thesis has observed and its potential utilisation within the Waka AMA Model.

The aim of the thesis was firstly to ascertain why people began waka ama and what kept them captivated. Secondly, it established positive changes resulting from participation in waka ama. Lastly, the environmental perception within waka ama was explored.

The thesis sought to understand these factors to ensure the uniqueness of waka ama is maintained, regardless of the trajectory of waka ama into the future. Such knowledge will also assist other kaupapa to establish and foster similarly favourable environments and values.

Chapter One explained magic to show that tricks and illusions were not the focus, but instead, it was the enchanted and metaphysical concepts that are inherent in life. Next, a look into the world of the researcher is provided to establish an understanding of their lens. Then a background on Māori, waka Māori, and waka ama was presented to contextualise the situation, including its demise and rise in Aotearoa.

Chapter Two explained the process of transforming the waka rangahau into a waka ama rangahau, along with its rationale. Highlighting that this thesis is being lashed together by the Mātāpono Māori, to create a space for Kaupapa Māori research, Kaupapa Māori theory and Kaupapa Māramatanga Māori.

Fundamental components include the thoughts of kaihoe (ama) and beyond (kīato), via extensive literature reviews and in-depth semi-structured kōrerorero with a range of knowledgeable and experienced kaihoe from Aotearoa.

The research questions employed for this thesis were:

1. “What is the magnetic phenomenon that captivates kaihoe?”
2. “How does waka ama influence lifestyle?”
3. “What are participants’ environmental perceptions?”

The following sections reiterate the key findings of the study. They are set out in order of the research questions. Each research question was assigned a phrase or phrases from the Tūnui a te Ika Waka Ama Club’s haka. Question One is the focus of Tū te Hoe, Question Two is the focus of Manini te Waka, and Question Three is the focus of Mana ki Tangaroa. However, there is a nexus of ideas from all chapters that enabled the conclusion.

Chapter Three, 'Tū te Hoe', contained two sections: Kia Rite and Hoea. Each is a distinct era related to the captivating magnetic phenomenon of waka ama. Kia Rite explored the motivations for kaihoe starting waka ama. Hoea established the initial experience and motivation for remaining with waka ama.

Kia Rite, the call to prepare, found that the social component of waka ama is a key motivator. This was evident in the fact that whānau and friends were the prominent factor influencing kaihoe to attempt and start waka ama. With whānau already participating, there was a sense of ease and familiarity. This aided in overcoming the challenge of starting something new, transforming the challenge into a positive experience. This was the same for entry into Te Ao Māori via waka ama. Learning from scratch, or a desire to improve one's existing understanding of the Māori worldview, was an echoing sentiment from kaihoe. The supportive environment cuts through the new waters like an ancient karakia on a waka hourua.

Hoea denotes the command to paddle, representing when the 'hook' was experienced and the evolution from the 'having a go' stage to being a kaihoe. There were two sections, Hauora, which was framed within the four concepts of Te Whare Tapawhā. The second section, Te Ao Māori focused on tikanga and rangatiratanga. Whanaungatanga was the central hook for all kaihoe, with inclusivity as a concept that all kaihoe cherished. There was a challenge to the inclusivity, and this reinforced the importance of identifying these key themes and ideas. Ensuring their longevity through future stormy weather is crucial. Waka ama was expressed as beneficial to all elements of hauora.

Waka ama's bluespace provided a new perspective for kaihoe. A privileged view and action that Māori ancestors experienced in ancient times. A sense of home was established. Situated within Te Ao Māori, historical kōrero and tikanga are the normal every day. Manaaki and aroha from and towards others and the environment set the scene for a memorable experience. It was evident that waka ama caters for a

continuum from people new to Te Ao Māori to those already established with Te Ao Māori, from the thrill seeker through to the tranquillity seeker.

Chapter Four, 'Manini te Waka', was directed at the second research question, "How does waka ama influence lifestyle?" The first section, Kia Mau, explored the changes that occurred after becoming a waka ama paddler, changes to lifestyle and identity. The second section of this chapter, More Than Just A Sport, explored the claim to ascertain if there was a semantic significance to uncover the magic.

Kia Mau is the call to hold one's paddle, representative of holding on to components of the waka ama world that are determinants in the kaihoe lifestyle, and their identity as kaihoe. Lifestyle changes associated with participation in waka ama have had a significant benefit to the hauora of kaihoe. Kaihoe mentioned that there was no specific reason, rule, tikanga or policy that influenced their lifestyle changes. Motivations included having more time to paddle, being fitter and being proactive on environmental issues. It was waka ama as a whole package, perhaps a gestalt of perceptions aligning to recreate the idea and ideals of Hawaiki Ora.

The totality of several factors is the influence behind the changes experienced by kaihoe. Lifestyle has no quantifiable components, but constituents that all have an impact in their own way. Therefore, a small change can have a rippling effect on one's overall lifestyle and, in turn, one's identity.

Identity is a negotiation process of the self and others, producing new versions of the self over time. Parents and elders are influential in how to 'fit in', but challenges occur if one strives for independence and to 'fit in' to other social environments outside the whānau. There are benefits associated with identifying particular groups, once acceptance is gained (Kingsman, 2024). This rite-of-passage relates to Foucault's heterotopia. This chapter has shown that waka ama offers one way of gaining acceptance of self and others in te Ao Māori.

European ecology is weakening the Māori identity according to Moeke-Pickering (1996). Waka ama provides an alternative space with cultural embeddedness to counter the oppression that Māori have suffered under colonial rule. Reorientation of identity naturally occurs over time, and waka ama provides a time and space to incorporate positive elements from one's culture, one's ancestors, perhaps even from Polynesian superstars. This created a sense of belonging and pride amongst kaihoe. They repeatedly mentioned whānau whakapapa and friends as motivators in attempting waka ama. Ultimately, the heightened sense of identity experienced in the waka ama Hawaiki Ora will soon be possible outside this āhuru mōwai, in the dystopia of modernity.

The second section of this chapter, "More than a sport", considers the definitions of leisure, play, games, and sports to understand waka ama locality in terms of physical activities. The Waka ama physical activity definition is situational and contextual. The competitive have the sporting side, and those focused on the social side have the leisure and play aspect. Within a whānau, there can be a range of focuses, goals and applications for their paddling. The capacity to cater for all needs and desires further demonstrates the roots of the claim, waka ama is more than a sport.

Chapter Five 'Mana ki Tangaroa' investigated the spatial temporal environment of waka ama. Time for kaihoe is subjective, relative and cyclic. Following nature's rhythms formed a connection with nature, with the environment. This connection reached back through time to realities and realms seldom attained in modernity.

Space focused on the social space produced by kaihoe. Kaihoe embodied the actions and spaces of those ancestors before them. Whakapapa links kaihoe to nature, to Ranginui and Papatūānuku, to Tangaroa. The connection promotes a respect and willingness to demonstrate kaitiakitanga. This provides kaihoe with an opportunity to participate actively in the wider Te Ao Māori environment.

Like-minded, enthusiastic whānau are quintessential of the contemplation and imagination necessary to construct social space. These introspections accommodate the optimistic, impartial, auspicious and harmonious, to desire being-in-the-world or being absorbed in Hawaiki Ora. This social space has a myriad of avenues to positively impact one's hauora. What rose as an essential factor discovered in Chapter Five was that waka ama does not require a governing body to transport kaihoe physically and spiritually to Hawaiki Ora. It is autonomous while being inclusive. That is not to undermine the efforts of WANZ, but reminds kaihoe of their collective mana motuhake within their taonga tuku iho. That said, it is a positive cultural paddle stroke for waka ama that WANZ has now become WAANZ, Waka Ama Aotearoa New Zealand. When the NZ disappears, true re-indigenisation can occur. The requirement for four whakapapa Māori board members is another epic stroke forward for waka ama.

Therefore, whānau and friends, and whanaungatanga were the primary motivations in starting and staying in waka ama. These lead to changes in individuals and their whānau lifestyle. As a result of the lifestyle changes, an identity change occurred. The negative stereotyping associated with the label, once were warriors, has transformed to, once were kaihoe, still are kaihoe, and will always be kaihoe! The collective efforts of those who live as kaihoe and identify as kaihoe construct an environment on the water and the land that is a heterotopic social space called Hawaiki Ora.

Ki te Hoe!

As the proverb states, "[E kore te tangata e pakari i runga i te wai marino](#)" (Nuku, 2023). Based on the many praxis and theoretical concepts gathered throughout this Waka Ama Rangahau journey of discovery, some areas have the potential to benefit future kaihoe and the broader population. Returning to the metaphoric waka ama, the following Waka AMA Model is propounded to guide such voyagers. AMA is an acronym for Āhuru Mōwai Aroha.

The waka ama in this model represents the main conceptual findings of this study. The waka hull itself is metaphoric of the kaihoe travelling with time, and in time with others, united in rhythm and by vision.

The waka hull is designed so that best practice ensures it is firmly connected to the ama. The support of the ama is likened to that of the waka ama whānau. Their existence is unavoidable, however the connection to them is critical. The whānau are connected by whakapapa and whanaungatanga, being the two kīato. The kīato provides the vital and unshakable bond. Once established, nothing but the worst situation can cause a catastrophic disconnection or isolation. Neglect is a potential cause for this type of disconnect, along with self-isolation through the physical derigging of the kīato, the principles of whakapapa and whanaungatanga. The obvious result of this is a capsize or tumbling uncontrollably through space and time.

The kīato function in the creation of the social space in which the waka, by becoming a waka ama, increases its base of support. Ultimately, a waka will have the balance required to glide on the flow of time, resting assured that the support is there if needed, but not taking support for granted.

The non-ama side of the waka, however, reminds us that without the social space, there are limits to how far one can extend before imbalance occurs. This reflects the sentiments of the PCWA and reminds us of the perils associated with imbalance to one's hauora. One may choose to take time from the more collective existence, but they need not totally disestablish the connection to whānau. This allows an experience of the world as an individual, but always in contact with the whānau, on the peripheral of the social space. Whānau is forever, and the bigger and wider it is, the better.

Not connecting or isolating one's self from their whānau results in less support and more risk of capsize, or one's world turning upside down. Creating the social space can for some include their new whānau, perhaps their waka ama whānau, to fill in or

support the whānau unable to be present in time and space when needed. This way, one creates their Hawaiki Ora, on and off the water.

The waka ama has a unique environment of historical tales of superhuman feats that Māori ancestors accomplished. Therefore, it is considerably easier to recreate the historical spatial temporal reality of Hawaiki, of today's Hawaiki Ora. This déjà vu-like phenomenon is evident in comments related to feeling at home and being born to paddle. Waka Hourua would also be lucky enough to be located in such an environment.

The external factors that impact this Waka AMA Model are physical, psychological and spiritual. All of which a well-lashed ama can provide suitable support, stability and structure. That is, something to lean on in tough times, harsh environments and challenging mental situations.

The collective power of a collective society or collective culture, such as that of waka ama, prevents the feeling of isolation. There is always a cultural unit to identify with, albeit social, competitive, novice, experienced, rangatahi or kaumātua. This may be one of the most significantly overlooked factors, that the active whānau in waka ama is numerous today, all due to those earlier wise pioneers.

In these modern times, recognition of the power whānau possesses is missing. In general, modernity promotes the individual, and the culturally proven collectivism is classed as outside the norm. However, the fruits of modernity are being utilised to promote positive change. Waka ama shows that the collective triumphs. Not just collective paddling; same rhythm and action, but the collective force of those outside of one's paddling unit also. For example, one's opposition in a waka ama event are whānau, racing one minute, sharing food and stories the next. Waka ama is therefore far more than a sport. Here, it demonstrates its ability to provide space for Māori and Polynesian ideas as mentioned prior. It can provide an entry point into te Ao Māori,

enhancing society's understanding of one another. It also allows space for waka ama's spatial temporal reality to be present in time.

Waka ama is not without risk, and this relates to the navigational skills of the ancestors. Well trained, the risk was minimal. However, the risk also adds to the layers of creative power used to construct Hawaiki Ora. The Waka AMA presents a fundamental model for enjoyable engagement in culture, in physical activity, in nature and ultimately, in the ever-challenging reality of life.

The event policy denied this critical component of waka ama's holistic experience, denying some the experience of manaakitanga. However, the PCWA provided a social space for its comrades, utilising manaakitanga to maintain their mana and hauora, a heterotopia surrounded by the tempest of the time. The positives from this momentous blink in time are, firstly, that waka ama values survived within the PCWA, within the people. Furthermore, the fact that waka ama does not need to be governed in order to provide such values. In addition, waka ama was still able to create a positive social space in the darkest of times. Hawaiki Ora demonstrated its mana motuhake and its tino rangatiratanga.

The magic this study found is best described as the living experience of Hawaiki Ora: a present-day manifestation of ancestral values, embodied practice, and collective transformation.

Limitations and Adaptations

There was a genuine desire to include more participants, especially from kaihoe around the Pacific. There was, however, a goal for quality over quantity for both participants and research. Invites could not be sent to every established kaihoe in Aotearoa, so a list was created, and then the names were ranked in terms of categories (gender, age, and experience) and accessibility. Some did not reply, and then the next person on the list was invited.

A survey was to be conducted to capture information from a broader range of participants: rangatahi (youth), pakeke (adults) and kaumātua (seniors), both male and female, Māori and non-Māori. This would have supported the initial kōrerorero findings and provided more breadth to the application of findings and the conclusions. It would have provided quantitative data to provide a balanced account for those who prefer to crunch numbers. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, this was not possible.

Participants were asked to provide five to ten photos to assist in data collection through photovoice (Glenis & Boulton, 2017; Goodyear et al., 2013). Again, the COVID-19 restrictions cancelling waka ama events where photos would have been obtained meant this aspect of the study had to be withdrawn.

Despite the reduction in methods available to gather data for this kaupapa, an opportunity surfaced to provide insight into a group of waka ama kaihoe who were impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions Event Policy. The situation was a catalyst for in-depth discussions that revealed the many common themes that attracted and retained kaihoe to waka ama. Sadly, these were often the elements that were being manipulated or interpreted differently at that time. The group allowed their comments to be used, anonymously, for this kaupapa to highlight the impact that non-waka ama philosophy and tikanga have had on the very kaihoe who make it magic.

Ki te Ao!

The Waka AMA Model, developed through this research, conceptualises the following:

- The waka represents the individual navigating new or challenging terrain.
- The ama (outrigger) symbolises the ongoing presence of whānau and friends, providing balance, security, and emotional grounding.
- The kīato connecting the ama to the waka are whakapapa (ancestral connection) and whanaungatanga (sense of belonging), which bind the individual to the collective lifestyle, identity and values.

- Time spirals around and travels with waka, with past, present, and future in a dynamic co-existence.

This thesis affirms that the transformational potential of waka ama lies in its ability to cultivate spaces of āhuru mōwai, spaces of warmth, protection, and aroha within which kaihoe can reorient their identities, connect with whakapapa, enact kaitiakitanga, and flourish in Te Ao Māori. As a taonga tuku iho, waka ama connects generations, enacts whanaungatanga, and fosters resistance against the cultural erosion brought by modernity.

From this research, there is a desire to suggest three recommendations for kaihoe, organisations and anyone embarking on a new journey.

1. Provide opportunities for collectives to wānanga about the Waka AMA Model, maintaining or constructing Hawaiki Ora in their environments.
2. Relaunch the Waka Ama Rangahau on further research to analyse the validity and efficacy of the Hawaiki Ora throughout waka ama collectives, in Aotearoa and abroad.
3. Advocate for rangatiratanga and manaakitanga as waka ama faces new hegemonic waves of influence.

The first recommendation is that opportunities be afforded to collectives to wānanga the Waka AMA Model to assist them in maintaining or constructing the Hawaiki Ora mentioned in this thesis. This will align with the Indigenous value of Reciprocity. Importantly, the Waka AMA Model is not confined to waka ama. Its application can extend into schools, workplaces, communities, and whānau systems, wherever people face challenges or begin journeys.

Secondly, further research should be conducted to explore the phenomenon of Hawaiki Ora in other waka ama collectives; clubs, teams, regional or national

organisations. This will build on this thesis and allow for a more expansive understanding of the key concepts of Hawaiki Ora.

The last recommendation is to advocate to waka ama collectives for the implementation of Māori concepts and theories to keep at bay the pressures of modernity. These concepts need to become praxis to safely navigate waka ama away from the dystopia of highly competitive, isolating and extractive environments. Rangatiratanga will ensure that the Others do not dictate our course, and manaakitanga will ensure we do not treat our own as Others.

Kupu Whakamutunga

This thesis has explored the magnetic pull, transformative power, and temporal-spatial richness of waka ama, guided by Kaupapa Māori Theory and the lived experiences of kaihoe. The findings revealed waka ama as more than a sport, it is a dynamic, relational, and culturally grounded practice that cultivates identity, wellbeing and connection. Through three research urupounamu, it became clear that waka ama embodies the principles of Āhuru Mōwai and Aroha, and generates what this thesis calls Hawaiki Ora: a living, heterotopic social space of belonging, resilience, and revival.

From attraction (Chapter 3), to transformation (Chapter 4), to embodied time and space (Chapter 5), a consistent pattern emerged that support from whānau and friends is central to the kaihoe journey. This insight inspired the Waka AMA (Āhuru Mōwai Aroha) model, a metaphorical and practical framework for understanding the support needed when attempting something new. In this model, the waka represents the individual navigating their path. The ama, or outrigger, represents the ever-present whānau and friends who provide balance and safety. The kīato, connecting the ama to the waka, symbolises whakapapa (genealogical ties) and whanaungatanga (sense of belonging), the anchors that secure the individual to their wider world, enabling them to travel in time with confidence and care.

Crucially, the model situates the waka within spiralling currents of past, present, and future, recognising that Māori realities are shaped by time that is relational, cyclical, and embedded in environment and ancestry. Kaihoe do not simply move forward in time, they move with time, paddling through whakapapa, shaping and shaped by wheako, guided by the stars and by desire. The presence of whānau, the wisdom of tīpuna, and the lived experience all coexist in the motion of the paddle, in the movement of waka ama.

By conceptualising waka ama as a heterotopia, a real space that reflects and resists the dominant hegemonic space, this research positions Hawaiki Ora as both a destination and a condition. It is a state of being, where identity can be explored and affirmed, where the environment is respected and protected, and where the collective spirit of āhuru mōwai and aroha are nurtured.

In times where societal tides can be turbulent, Waka AMA offers a constant reminder that progress is not just forward, but inward and relational. The model calls for environmental conditions that are not only inclusive, but inherently Māori, where people can locate themselves through connection, story, and rhythm.

Like a magic card trick, once you know the magician's process, it becomes a simple sleight of hands, losing its mystery and enchantment. The magic of waka ama should remain as it is, a mystery for future generations to experience, untouched by the persistent grasp of imperial Western inquiry. Therefore, let the magic of waka ama continue to shape more than bodies, may it shape spaces, futures, and realities that honour Hawaiki Ora.

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APPENDIX

Glossary of Terms

<u>Māori Term</u>	<u>English Translation</u>
Ahakoā te iti, he pounamu	Although small, it has quality
Āhua	Character; nature
Āhuru mōwai	Calm place; sheltered haven
Ama	Outrigger
Ao te pō, pō te ao	All day, all night
Āpitianga	Appendix
Ārahi	To lead
Aroha	Love and compassion
Aruhe	Bracken fern
Āta	Intentionally; carefully, cautiously
Atua	Deity
Awa	River
E kore e mutu ngā mihi	Thanks
E kore te tangata e pakari i runga i te marino	Those who remain in calm waters will never get strong
Hā a koro mā, a kui mā	Breath of life from our ancestors
Haka	Cultural posture performance
Hapū	Sub-tribe; kinship group; pregnant
Haukāinga	Home people; people of the marae
Hawaiki (Hawaiki nui, Hawaiki roa, Hawaiki Pāmamao)	Names associated with the homeland of Polynesia
Hawaiki Pāmamao	Distant Hawaiki
He kai kei aku ringa	There is food at the end of my hands; my abilities and resources are abundant
He karoro inu tai	One apt to survive by the ocean

He rā kai tua	There is always tomorrow
Hīkoi	To walk or march
Hinengaro	Mind
Hītori	History
Hoa	Friends
Hoe	Paddle
Hoea!	Paddle! Command to paddle
Hoe Urupounamu Akiaki	Supporting Questions
Hoe Urupounamu Matua	Main Questions
Hoki atu, hoki atu	Return to repetitively
Hua	Intestines
Ihi	Excitement; psychic force
Ihu	Nose; bow
Ihu o te Waka	The Bow of the Canoe
Iwi	Extended kinship group
Ka mutu i reira	It ended there
Kāenga/kāinga	Home
Kahikatea	White pine
Kāhore e ārikarika ngā mihi	Endless gratitude
Kaihoe	Paddler; research participant
Kaihoe o āpōpō	Future paddlers
Kaimahi	Worker
Kāinga	Home; settlement
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship
Kaitūao	Volunteer
Kaiurungi	Steersperson
Kākahutia	To cloth; to or fashion
Karakia	Prayer; blessing
Karāpiro	Place name, location of WANZ Sprint Nationals

Kauae Raro	Earthly knowledge
Kauae Runga	Celestial knowledge
Kaumātua	Elder
Kaumoana	Seafarer
Kaupapa	Topic
Kei	Stern
Kete Tuhinga	Literature Review
Kia mahaki	Being humble
Kia rite	Be ready
Kīato	Outrigger cross beams boom; connector
Ko wai ka hua, ko wai ka tohu?	Who can know, who can say?
Koha	Donation
Kōhanga	Nest; kōhanga reo
Kohinga Kōrero	Data Collection Methodology
Kōpapa	Hull, canoe body
Kōrero	To speak; narrative; stories; dialogue
Kōrerorero	Discussion; interview process for this research; vocal exchanges
Kori tinana	Physical activity
Kōwhaiwhai	Rafter patterns
Kūmara	Sweet potato
Kupu Whakamutunga	Conclusion
Kura	School
Mā te arero ka hahū ake	A mere mention can exhume
Māhere	Plan; strategy
Māhere Pānui	Navigation of text
Mahitahi	United effort
Mākutu	Dark magic

Mana Motuhake	Independence; self-identity
Manaakitanga	Kindness; generosity
Māohi	Indigenous people of Tahiti
Māoli	Indigenous people of Hawaii
Marae	Courtyard or ancestral gathering place, sometimes includes the buildings
Mana	Prestige
Māramatanga	Enlightenment; understanding
Mātāpono Māori	Māori principles or values
Matariki	Pleiades
Mātauranga	Knowledge
Mātauranga Māori	Traditional Māori epistemology
Māui	Māui (demigod)
Mauri	Vital essence
Mirimiri	Massage
Moananui-a-Mātauranga	Ocean of Knowledge
Mokopuna	Grandchildren
Mōteatea	Laments; traditional chants
Motu	Island; island group
Mua	Front; past
Ngā kete o te wānanga	Baskets of knowledge
Ngā mahi a rēhia	Pursuit for pleasure
Ngā takaoreotanga o te Moananui-a-Mātauranga	The rigors of the Ocean of Knowledge
Ngahere	Forest
Ngākau	Heart; feelings; soul
Ngaru-nui	Large swells
Ngāti	Tribe prefix
Ōku Wheako Waka Ama	My Waka Ama Experiences

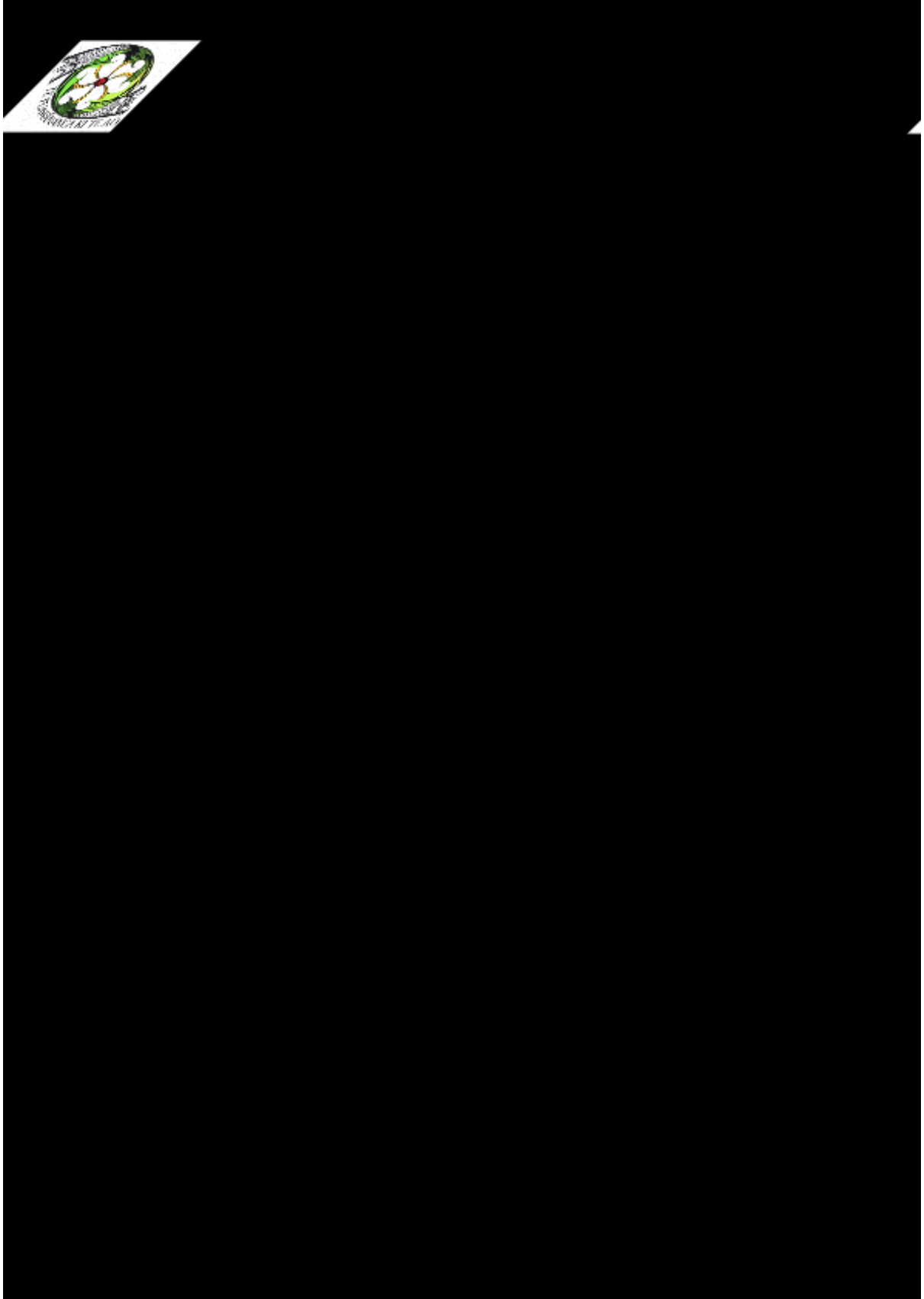
Ora	Health
Pā	Fortified village
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent; European settler
Pakeke	Adults
Papatūānuku	Earth mother
Paru	Dirty
Pāua	Abalone
Pēpi	Baby
Pōhara	Poor; impoverished
Pou	Pillars (carved to represent ancestors)
Pōwhiri	Welcome ceremony
Pūrākau	Traditional narrative
Pūrangiaho	Understanding
Rāhui	Temporary restriction
Rākau	Tree; stick; weapon
Rangatahi	Adolescents; youth
Rauawa	Gunwales
Reo	Language
Rohe	Region
Rongoā	Medicine; healing
Rōpū	Group; collective
Ruapūtahanga	Ancestor; voyager
Taha Hinengaro	Mental component of wellbeing
Taha Tinana	Physical component of wellbeing
Taha Wairua	Spiritual component of wellbeing
Taha Whānau	Social component of wellbeing
Tairāwhiti	East Coast region
Takahi	To stamp upon

Tamanui-i-te-Rā	Sun
Tamariki	Children
Tāne	Deity of the Forest and Mankind; man; male
Tangaroa	Deity of the Ocean
Tāngata	Person; people
Tangata whenua	Local people, acclimatised
Tangi	Funeral
Taniwha	Someone awesome; water spirit; water creature
Taonga	treasure
Taonga Tuku Iho	Handed Down Treasure
Tārai waka	Canoe adzing; waka carving
Taringa	Ears
Tātau, tātau	Absolutely all of us
Tātari Kōrero	Data Analysis
Tatū	To settle
Taumanu	Thwarts
Taumata	Zenith
Tāwhirimatea	Atua of winds
Te Ao	The World / time of consciousness
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview
Te Ao Tūroa	Long Standing World
Te ao waka ama	The waka ama world
Te Ao Mārama	The world of light, enlightenment
Te Hiku o te Ika a Māui	The tail of Māui's fish; The Northern region of New Zealand
Te Ika a Māui	The Fish of Māui; North Island; Aotearoa
Te Kore	The Voice / realm of potential
Te Matau a Māui	Hawke's Bay

Te Moananui o Ahakoa te aha	Ocean of Whatever it takes
Te Pae Māhutonga	Southern Cross (constellation)
Te Pō	World of Darkness; time pre-consciousness
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Wāhi Ngaro	Place of the lost
Te Wai Pounamu	South Island of New Zealand
Te Waka o Taramainuku	Great Waka of Tamarereti
Te Waka a Māui	The Waka of Māui; South Island; Aotearoa
Te Whare Tapawhā	A Māori health model based on the concepts of whanau, tinana, hinengaro and wairua
Tikanga	Custom; method
Tinana	Body
Tino rangatiratanga	Sovereignty
Tipua	Supernatural; superhero
Tīpuna, Tūpuna	Ancestors
Tohu	Signs
Tohunga	Expert
Tōtara	Totara tree
Tuakana	Older sibling of the same gender
Tuakiri	Identity
Tūāpapa	Platform; foundation
Tūmatauenga	Atua of war
Tūpāpaku	Deceased
Tūrangawaewae	Place to stand
Wā	Time
Wāhi Motuhake	Place of significance
Wāhine	Women; female
Wai	Water
Waiora	Total wellbeing

Wairuatanga, wairua	Spirituality
Waka Ama	Outrigger Canoe, va`a, wa`a
Waka hourua	Double hull seafaring canoe
Waka ama rangahau	Research outrigger canoe
Waka rangahau	Research canoe
Wānanga	Deep learning; seminar
Wehi	Awesomeness
Wero	Challenge
Whaiwhaiā	Possessed; enchanted
Whakaaro	Research Methodology. Thought; think; consider
Whakahīhī	Pride; arrogance; to be vain
Whakamā	Shy; ashamed
Whakamātūtūnga	Restoration; rehabilitation
Whakangahau	Entertainment
Whakapapa	Genealogy; lineage
Whakataukī	Proverb
Whakawhanaungatanga	Establish relationships
Whakawhānuitia kai	To broaden; widen for stability
tītahataha	
Whānau	Family
Whānau whānui	Extended family group
Whare tangata	Womb
Whare tipuna	Ancestral house
Whatumanawa	Heart of seat of emotions
Wheako	Experience
Wheke	Octopus

Ethics Approval



Participant Information Sheet

Waka Ama, It's a kind of Magic.

Research Information Sheet - Questionnaire

Tēnā koe,

My name is Myka Nuku. I am conducting research on Waka Ama. The aim of this research project is to find out what waka ama means to different people, and why they enjoy it.

This questionnaire seeks to collect data firstly regarding what attracted and retains you in waka ama. Secondly, how and what do you feel in the waka ama environments; on the land, on the water and in the waka. Your contribution to the research through completion of the questionnaire would be greatly appreciated. However, you are under no obligation to participate. If you do participate, and if you do supply your name (which you need not do), it will NOT be revealed to anyone except my research supervisors. The identity of participants will remain strictly confidential in the writing up and presentation of the research. If you wish to contact me to learn more about the research, please use the email address and/or telephone number below. Please send completed questionnaires to me using the pre-paid envelope attached or use the link to complete online.

Whether or not you decide to participate in the research, I would like to thank you very much for taking the time to read this message.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more please phone me or write to me at:

Myka Nuku

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao - Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato - The University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton, New Zealand

Email: mn244@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 027 277 6912

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact my supervisor:

Haki Tuaupiki

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Email: haki.tuaupiki@waikato.ac.nz

Office phone: 022 385 3924

Kaihoe Consent

I have read the **Participant Information Sheet** for this study and have had details of this study explained to me. My questions about this study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Participant Information Sheet.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.

I would like my information: (circle option)

A) returned to me B) returned to my whānau C) other (specify)

I consent / I do not consent to the information collected for the purpose of this research study to be used for any other research purpose. (Delete what does not apply).

Participant's Signature: Date:

Participant's Name:

Researcher's Name and Contact Information:

Researcher: Myka Nuku

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato.

Email: mn244@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 027 277 6912

Supervisor: Haki Tuaupiki

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato.

Email: haki.tuaupiki@waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 022 385 3924

Additional Consent as required.

I agree / do not agree to my interview responses being recorded.

I agree / do not agree to my image being used.

Participant's Signature: Date:

Participant's Name: