Te Whare Wānanga
o Awanuiārangi

KIA TAU Ō MATA KI NGĀ ATAKURA EXPLORING NOTIONS OF SUCCESS FOR MĀORI SINGLE PARENTS STUDYING AT POSTGRADUATE LEVEL

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A thesis presented to Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Indigenous Development and Advancement, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi

HE MANATĀ

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HE KUPU TŪTURU

DECLARATION

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This thesis contains no material that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university or other institution.

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Shelley Waimaria Hoani

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HE WHAKAKAPE

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HE TĀPAETANGA

DEDICATION

The purpose of this doctoral journey has always been to honour the belief I carried within; that with a courageous spirit, a willing heart, and people in your life who are valued, there is always hope. To my children, I dedicate this achievement to you all and to my eldest, my big girl, I send this special thank you.

Kiani, you said you wanted to see me walk across that stage so that you knew for sure this doctorate was done! Well, here we are! Thank you for encouraging me and believing in me.

Of all my children, you would have the strongest memories of me working my way through my degree, master's, and then this doctorate. You would also remember best what our life was like before I gained my qualifications and started working—and how much it changed afterwards. Having been with me from the very beginning of your life, you bore the brunt of everything, made to grow up well before your time. You lived through everything with me, and despite the struggles and the challenges, you've grown up to be one of the most beautiful young women that I will EVER know.

I look at you and your siblings and think 'I'm so grateful to be your mum.'

A reminder also to my son Te Uruti, yes, I'm a Dr, but no, not *that* sort of Dr.

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I always knew I wanted to pursue a doctorate qualification, firstly for myself, but ultimately for you to know as well—who you are and who you become in this world is up to you.

Nō reira, e āku tamariki mokopuna mā—kia tau ō mata ki ngā atakura!

HE KUPU WHĀITI

ABSTRACT

There is a prevailing narrative in Aotearoa New Zealand, one that perpetuates harmful stereotypes about the Māori single parent community. However, this narrative often overlooks the broader cultural and historical contexts resulting from colonisation and the suppression of cultural knowledge and practices. Historically, education has been a well-known site of struggle for Māori; however, recent data shows a gradual rise in the number of Māori single parents successfully attaining tertiary qualifications, particularly at the postgraduate level.

This rangahau explores notions of success—such as academic achievement, personal growth, professional fulfilment, and whānau wellbeing—for Māori single parents pursuing postgraduate qualifications. Centred on the voices and lived experiences of nine Māori single parents (kaituku)—six mothers and three fathers—their pūkōrero, or personal narratives, effectively redefine single parenting as an expression of rangatiratanga or the right to self-determination. By highlighting their resilience and strength as leaders of their whānau, this rangahau reveals a more nuanced understanding of single parenting within the Māori community.

The methodological approach for this study was grounded in Kaupapa Māori principles, a framework that ensures rangahau methods are respectful and beneficial to Māori communities. Hui, a process of gathering and discussion, and pātai, the act of questioning and inquiring, were both instrumental in capturing the rich pūkōrero of each kaituku, shedding light on their unique journeys of resilience and experiences of success as Māori single parents. Utilising Pūrākau as a tool for analysis, significant insights were gained.

Notably, the ability for Māori single parents to live as Māori, to engage in education as Māori, to parent as Māori, to lead as Māori, and to aspire to rangatiratanga for their whānau, means asserting their identity as Māori, reclaiming spaces of engagement, and pushing back against the day to day influences and impacts of colonisation. Whether they are securely established within their tūrangawaewae, or seeking reconnection,

rangatiratanga ensures that parents along with their whānau can weave their futures in ways that serve them best.

TE WHAKAMAHI I TE REO MĀORI

USE OF TE REO MĀORI

As with all things in te ao Māori (Māori world), te reo Māori (Māori language) embodies its own mana (prestige) and its own mauri (life essence). Described as “te tatau ki te ao” (the doorway to the world) by Karetu and Milroy (2018, p. 18), this thesis would not be complete without this taonga tuku iho (treasure handed down) from our ancestors. When a kupu Māori (Māori word) is used for the first time, a bracketed English translation is provided, with meanings derived firstly from my own knowledge base. Where additional support is needed with English translations, *A Dictionary of the Māori Language* (Williams, 1971) has been a key point of reference. For all subsequent uses of the same kupu, no translation is provided. To support the reader a papakupu (glossary) has also been provided for those kupu Māori that appear often in this thesis.

While I am of Waikato Tainui descent, within this thesis I follow the guidelines as set down by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori *Guidelines for Māori Language Orthography* (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2012). This is especially the case for the use of macrons over a long vowel rather than the use of double vowels. If, however, kupu Māori appear in quotes without macrons, the original text (as quoted) remains intact. Additionally, the use of apostrophe s (’s) following kupu Māori to indicate possession or a contraction of *is* and *has* is not supported.

When referring to the name of this country I use the phrase, Aotearoa New Zealand. Finally, where kupu Māori have a more unique or colloquial meaning, a brief explanation is provided to add more context, such as the words *hua and pā rat* that both appear in Chapter Five: He Nui Te Whakaaro.

HE PAPAKUPU

GLOSSARY

Note: Only proper nouns, names of Atua, and the Kaupapa Māori principles have been capitalised. All remaining kupu are written in lower case.

A

ā-hinengaro	intellectually
ā-kanohi nei	physically meet
ā-tinana	physically
ā-wairua	spiritually
ā-whānau	family-wise
āhuatanga	tradition
Ako Māori	Principle: Te reo me ngā tikanga
Aotearoa	Land of the long white cloud
aroha	empathy, compassion, understanding
arotahi	lens(es)
āta	purposeful intent
Atua	God-like beings
Awanuiārangi	Ancestor of Ngāti Awa /Te Āti Awa iwi

H

Hineahuone	First woman
hoa-haere	traveling companion, critical friend
hua	colloquial term for children
hui	gathering(s)

I

Io	Supreme being

K

kaiako	teacher
kaimahi	staff, employee, worker
kaitiaki	guardian(s)
kairangahau	inquirer/researcher
kaitiakitanga	guardianship
kaituku	contributor (aka participant)
kanohi kitea	to have a physical presence, the seen face
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
kaupapa	topic, subject
Kaupapa	Principle: Collectivity
Kia Piki Ake i ngā Raruraru o te Kāinga	Principle: Whānau Transformation
kōrero	discussion
Kura Kaupapa Māori	Māori medium education

M

mana	authority, self-respect
manaakitanga	care, hospitality
māreikura	female
mātauranga	knowledge
Māui	Demi-god
mauri ora	pursuit of wellbeing, human flourishing
mokopuna	grandchild(ren)

NG

ngā raraunga kōrero	statistics
ngako	essence

O

ōhāki	parting wish

P

pā rat	colloquial: someone who grew up at the pā/marae
Papatūānuku	Earth mother
pātai	inquiry, question
pū	base, source
pūkōrero	personal narrative
pūrākau	traditional narrative(s)/stories

R

rākau	tree
rangahau	Māori inquiry
rangatiratanga	leadership, authority, agency
Ranginui	Sky father

T

tamariki	children
tāne	husband
Tāwhirimatea	Atua of weather
tikanga	custom
taonga (tuku iho)	treasure, gift (handed down)
Taonga tuku iho	Principle: Legacy
tauira	student
teina	younger sibling (same gender)
tauiwi	foreigner
tūpuna	ancestors
te reo Māori	Māori language
tikanga rangahau	ethical considerations
Tino Rangatiratanga	Principle: Self-determination, autonomy
tuakana	elder sibling (same gender)
Tūmatauenga	Atua of War

U

ūkaipō	people/places that sustain us pre-dawn breastfeeding

W

wahine Māori	Māori woman
wairua	essence, spirituality
wetewete reo	unraveling the word

WH

whakawhanaungatanga	establishing relationships
whakapapa kōrero	ancestral narrative
whanaungatanga	relationships
whakaaro	thought, idea, decision
whakataukī	proverbial saying(s)
whānau	family(ies)
Whānau	Principle: Relationships
whare	house
whatukura	male

LIST: Abbreviations

Government Departments:

MHF	Mental Health Foundation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSD	Ministry of Social Development [MSD]
NZQA	NZ Qualification Authority
SUPERU	Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TEI	Tertiary Education Institute
TEO	Tertiary Education Organisation

Miscellaneous

AI App	Artificial Intelligence Application
DPB	Domestic Purposes Benefit
EPI	Education Performance Indicator
IDI	Integrated Data Infrastructure
IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NZIER	NZ Institute of Economic Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Wānanga:

TWWoA	Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi
TWoA	Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
TWoR	Te Wānanga o Raukawa

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HE WĀHINGA

PROLOGUE: MY WORLDS WITH YOU I SHARE

When I was eight years old, I wanted to be a teacher. I remember trying to teach my younger siblings how to count using a magnetic Chinese Checkers game. By age ten, I wanted to drive a Kenworth logging truck and own a chainsaw. While cooking and sewing were not my strengths as a teenager, I could mow lawns, chop firewood, fight with boys, and put down a hangi. I wanted to be a teacher, a writer, a counsellor, a psychologist, and so much more.

However, my life turned upside down within a year of starting high school. I converted to religion and by the time I finished high school five years later, all I wanted to do was get married and have children. Despite my English teacher telling me I had a future in journalism; I didn't see any value in carrying on to university—not if I would become a wife and a mother. By my 19th birthday, I had achieved my life's dream (or so I thought); I was both a wife and a mother.

Fast forward 30-something years and I am now a single mother, working full-time to support my children. At the same time, I am studying to complete a master's degree as a requirement of my ongoing employment. On one of my many dedicated thesis writing days, I hear two of my daughters arguing in another room. As the argument gains momentum, their voices become more agitated, to the point where it sounds like I need to intervene before someone gets hurt.

As I enter their space, which by now is overflowing with tension, the tuakana (elder sister by one year) quickly targets the teina (younger sister) and demands that she tell me what is going on. This is how their conversation went:

> ***Tuakana:*** *"Go on then. You tell Mum, I'm not going to do it!"*
>
> ***Teina:*** *"What? All I said was I'm going to study at Otago."*
>
> ***Tuakana:*** *"You can't! Who's going to look after you? We can't afford to move there. Why can't you just stay closer to home?"*

In the time that it took my daughters to repeat those words, I suddenly realised that our whānau narrative had changed. Somewhere along the way, my daughters' conversations had changed from boyfriends and babies to studying and university. Yet, we had never sat down together to talk about their educational futures. So much of our earlier lives had been focused on firstly surviving the violence in our home and then learning how to live without it. Working, studying, and full-time parenting were all integral to the new life I was trying to build with my children. So much so, that I missed the subtle transformations that my daughters were experiencing. They had started to imagine futures for themselves, beyond the confines of our home and community, boyfriends and babies, and I was only now finding this out.

CHAPTER ONE:
HE KŌRERO TĀTAKI

INTRODUCTION

Kai atu aku mata ki runga i a Taupiri
He maunga mātirotiro ki te ao e kanapa mai nei
Tauheke atu ki Waikato, te wai kaukau o ngā mātua tūpuna
Ka tū tangata whenua ahau ki tōku marae ko Horahora tērā
Ko Waikato tōku mana, tōku ihi, tōku manawa tū ki te whenua
E rere rā te waka o Tainui, ko te tangata o runga ko Hoturoa
Ko Shelley Waimaria Hoani taku ingoa

Hei Whakatau

Exploring notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level presented a unique opportunity to honour their voices, views, and lived experiences of parenting, all while managing the demands of academic study and working to support their whānau (families). As a single parent completing a doctoral qualification, I was well positioned to facilitate this rangahau (Māori inquiry), within the context of this kaupapa (topic). In sharing my own pūkōrero, or personal narrative, the significance of this rangahau and its proposed methodology became more evident, informing my approach and paving the way for the rest of the rangahau process to take shape.

I am my own case study

In 1999 I entered the gates of formal university education as a 'mature' tauira (student) on the Bachelor of Primary Teaching, having been out of the education system for close to two decades. At the time I had seven tamariki (children) at home ranging in age from two to fifteen years; three preschoolers and four older children spread out across primary, intermediate, and high school. I became a full-time tauira and my tāne (husband) became the primary caregiver. Five days a week I travelled from home to university—a two-hour round trip each day, and this remained my daily routine for the three years that it took to complete my degree studies.

Despite initial challenges experienced with returning to formal studies after a lengthy absence, I soon realised that I was suited to academic life, as reflected in my grades. In my first year of study, I ranked in the top 15% of all year one tauira and in my final year received an invitation to undertake an Honours degree. Considering my thirst for knowledge at that time was surpassed only by my passion *for* and enjoyment *of* learning, this invitation was a welcomed acknowledgement of my academic ability. Unfortunately, life had other plans for me, and within a year of graduating three unexpected events occurred. Firstly, two new babies came into my life, my first mokopuna (grandchild) and then my own baby. Secondly, I secured full-time employment with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (TWoA), a Māori Tertiary Education Institute (TEI), as a kaiako (teacher) of te reo Māori (Māori language), and lastly, I completed another course of study culminating in a Diploma in Te Reo Māori.

As a university tauira, I gained valuable knowledge specific to the teaching qualification that I was pursuing however, that same education also introduced me to the notion of 'Māori as other' (Moewaka-Barnes, 2008). In 1999, I had not yet learnt that my Māori-ness automatically relegated me to the fringes of society. Not until my master's journey eight years later would I gain a fuller appreciation of the fact that although being Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand was the only narrative that I knew, it was not the dominant narrative. That was when I realised that I needed to be better positioned to tell my stories as a wahine Māori (Māori woman), otherwise, others would continue to tell them for me.

Almost a decade later I began my master's journey, albeit as a part-time tauira. This time though, my circumstances had changed somewhat, and I was now a single mother with four children at home, working full-time to financially provide for my whānau. As a requirement of my employment, the decision to pursue a master's qualification was reluctantly made despite knowing that the reality of trying to juggle whānau, work, and study commitments would be challenging. Eight years later I completed my master's qualification and on graduation day I could not help but feel proud of my achievement, especially knowing how difficult a journey it had been, not only for myself but for my whānau as well.

More than two decades have passed since commencing my undergraduate qualification and finally, I am completing my doctoral journey. Knowing the reality of my lived experiences as a single mother and appreciating what success has looked like for me and my whānau served as a pivotal catalyst for wanting to amplify the voices, views, and lived experiences of more Māori single parents. Whether by choice or by circumstance, they too as single parents raised

their tamariki, while continuing to work and study; over time gaining a deeper understanding of what was most important to them and their whānau.

In a society whose prevailing narratives often marginalise Māori single parents, there is promising progress in the efforts being made to mitigate disparities within marginalised communities. Nonetheless, this kaupapa is about ensuring that we as the kaitiaki (guardians) of our tamariki and mokopuna can name and (re)claim those spaces that we inhabit. As we adjust our home lives to fulfil the responsibilities typically attributed to two parents, balance work responsibilities to provide for our whānau, and pursue educational opportunities to advance our careers and personal growth, we continuously challenge societal norms and attempt to redefine success on our own terms.

Setting the scene

Whether by choice or circumstance, the life of a single parent can be an experience fraught with challenges as well as opportunities. The single parent is not only the *primary* caregiver; for the most part they are also the *sole* provider of the whānau, carrying the roles and responsibilities of two parents in the home. Increasingly in the past decade, this whānau construct has become a growing reality for many Māori to the point that in 2015 Māori single parents were the highest sub-population of single parents in Aotearoa New Zealand (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit [Superu], 2015a).

Single parenting is my reality and has been since 2006 when I became a single mother, as a matter of choice rather than circumstance. Believing that my children and I deserved a better quality of life (one free from violence), I separated from my husband of twelve years. At the same time, I secured a new position with my employer following a major organisational restructure. This new position required a master's qualification and as a result, I commenced my Master's of Indigenous Studies at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi (TWWoA) the following year. TWWoA is an Indigenous tertiary education provider based in Whakatāne, Aotearoa New Zealand, named after Awanuiārangi, the ancestor of the Ngāti Awa and Te Āti Awa people. One of the biggest appeals of studying there was the noho delivery model of teaching and learning, as well as the fact that I would be studying with a small group of work colleagues.

In the beginning, we traveled as a group of five to our noho, sharing transport as well as engaging in many enjoyable discussions about the learning taking place. Four members of our

group were single parents at the time and three were Māori. Within two years, I was the only one still enrolled; for numerous reasons (such as competing work commitments, whānau responsibilities, or not enjoying the learning experience) my work colleagues had decided not to continue. Eight years after enrolling, I graduated with a Master's of Indigenous Studies and within three months of graduating I commenced the next stage of my educational journey, that being the Professional Doctorate of Indigenous Development and Advancement.

In my first doctoral class at TWWoA, I made several key observations about our cohort:

- Observation #1: Every tauira in our cohort self-identified as Māori.
- Observation #2: Wāhine outnumbered tāne.
- Observation #3: The majority of the wāhine were single mothers.
- Observation #4: All of the single mothers were employed in education-related positions.
- Observation #5: Several wāhine had utilised Mana Wāhine theory as the over-arching theoretical framework for their master's research.

Ironically, those observations took place around the same time that Superu released its 2015 Families and Whānau Status Report. This report highlighted that while most New Zealand whānau were doing well socio-economically, single parented whānau were the exception. Indicative of a more vulnerable population, single parents were more likely to be low-income earners, more prone to mental illness, and less likely to achieve qualifications at the higher end of the educational continuum (Superu, 2015a).

Considering this report's findings, our cohort of Māori single mothers studying at postgraduate level (while also employed), appeared to be an 'exception' to the expected outcomes. We were a group of wāhine Māori who through choices made, or circumstances experienced, became single parents. Belonging to this whānau construct gave us automatic membership to a minority community that comprised 15% of the total population in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, we did not quite fit the generic profile of a single parent as depicted in Superu's report because our socio-economic status (ie: employment status, educational achievement, income) was located outside of the parameters associated with this profile, hence my statement 'exception' to the expectation.

Exception or not, Māori single parents are continuously susceptible to the prejudice that accompanies the status of single parenthood in Aotearoa New Zealand. “Negative perceptions and social attitudes” (Todd, 2008b, p. 4) carried over into 21st century Aotearoa New Zealand stereotypically portrayed Māori single mothers as uneducated women, “under 20 on Domestic Purposes Benefit with kids to different fathers and lazy to boot” (Todd, 2008a, para. 1). The probability of words like ‘successful’ or ‘accomplished’ being used to describe Māori single parents was highly unlikely when labels like ‘family malformation’ existed; a label used to describe families that lacked “two married committed parents” (Mitchell, 2016, p. 40). Likewise, when there are perceptions that single parenthood was a contributing factor to child poverty and child abuse (Collins, 2016; University of Melbourne, 2013) it is not unusual that single parents both Māori and non-Māori alike felt “stigmatized and vulnerable” (Ellis et al., 2013, p. 18).

Contextualising success

Reducing and eliminating socio-economic disparities is integral to improving the quality of life and wellbeing experienced for all people, let alone Māori. That is why it is heartening to learn that over the past decade, there has been a gradual increase in the number of Māori successfully achieving tertiary qualifications (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017; NZ Institute of Economic Research [NZIER], 2012; Superu, 2015a). According to 2013 census data, 10.1% of the “Māori ethnic population aged 15 years and over” listed a degree qualification ranging from bachelor’s through to doctorate level as their highest educational achievement (Statistics NZ [Stats NZ], 2013, p. 13), a 3% increase from census data gathered in 2006.

However, despite more recent statistics highlighting an increase in Māori academic success, Māori are still overrepresented in educational underachievement. Research conducted over the past two decades has investigated a range of contributing factors to Māori educational underachievement with the intent of raising awareness (Houghton, 2015); identifying key determinants of academic success (Bennett, 2002; Funaki, 2023; Hendricks, 2022; Macfarlane et al., 2018; Theodore et. al., 2017; Webber, 2018); influencing educational policy (Hawaiikirangi-Pere, 2013; Johnston, 1998); challenging deficit models (Tiakiwai, 2001; Williams, 2010) and developing culturally responsive models for tertiary success (Dhillon et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2013; Hall & Smyth, 2016; Hunt et al., 2001; Macfarlane, 2010; Robust, 2006). All with a view of “remediating historic Māori underachievement in education” (Stucki, 2010, p. i).

Numerous researchers have investigated Māori educational success at the tertiary level, spanning from undergraduate to postgraduate studies; a topic of ongoing interest, rather than a novel concept (Chittick et al., 2019; Funaki, 2023; Kaumoana, 2013; McAllister et al., 2022; Millward et al., 2011; Nash, 2017; Reid, 2006; Theodore et al., 2017; Tiakiwai, 2001; Wikaere, 2015; Williams, 2010). Similar to Tiakiwai (2001) and Williams (2010), the intent of this rangahau was also to examine Māori students' stories of success at the tertiary level. However, because this rangahau reflected my journey, there were two distinct differences in the path that I proposed. First and foremost, I wanted to privilege the voices of Māori single parents, who like me, had engaged in postgraduate studies. Secondly, I intended to delve more deeply into the notion of success beyond the conventional confines of educational achievement, aiming to broaden its definition in the process.

Identifying key factors that contributed to postgraduate success among Māori single parents was my initial approach to this rangahau. I soon realised though that while there was a wealth of literature pertinent to western notions of success, "achieving a definition of success, particularly about indigenous and minority peoples [was more] problematic because of the domination of western research" (Tiakiwai, 2001, p. 49). Positioning myself within the context of this writing highlighted a need to ensure that marginalised communities, such as Māori single parents, were represented in ways that honoured our voices and our worldviews.

Doing so offered new insights into the realities and aspirations of Māori single parents, with particular reference to the success experienced while pursuing postgraduate qualifications. Success across multiple contexts such as, educational, personal, and professional success; all interrelated, but still distinct in many ways. Likewise, the distinction between Indigenous and colonial contexts also features prominently in understanding the educational experiences of Māori single parents and notions of success. Whereas Indigenous contexts value community, collective success, and the integration of cultural knowledge and practices, in contrast, colonial contexts often place a higher value on individual achievement, competition, and adhering to Western educational standards.

Navigating these dual contexts can be challenging for Māori single parents, something that I have personal experience with. The impetus for this rangahau arose after I graduated with my master's qualification in 2015. While congratulating me on my achievement, a work colleague asked, 'So how does it feel to be successful now.' At that moment I felt a mixture of annoyance and frustration that an academic qualification seemed to hold more value than my personal

circumstances of raising a whānau while also working and studying. This comment prompted me to reflect on the notion of success and how it manifested in my life as a wahine Māori, a tauira, a kaimahi (employee), and a single mother.

From the outset, the word 'success' was problematic for me as it was a term that often came with its counterpart of 'failure' in tow (Wikaire, 2015). Understanding though, that the word 'success' (like the word research) is not a word derived from te ao Māori, provided an opportunity to explore how success is defined and by whom. Success in relation to a number of related kaupapa, such as parenting, education, employment, life, and all of these in relation to the lived experiences of Māori single parents.

On a professional level, gaining a master's qualification provided me with a strong sense of accomplishment however, my personal aspirations were centred more on the hopes and dreams that I carried for my tamariki. The hope that my daughters would reach adulthood without being sexually abused; that they would be loving and supportive mothers to their tamariki. For my sons, my hopes centred on them becoming respectful and caring partners, and positive role models for their tamariki. Alongside of these deep-seated aspirations was also the desire that my tamariki might find a place for themselves in education and pursue, at the very minimum, a bachelor's qualification. This was premised on the belief that if a mother gains a bachelor's degree then her children are more likely to follow suit (Hu & Qian, 2023). If I had to include the word success in my kōrero (discussion), then seeing my aspirations for my tamariki come to fruition represented success in my eyes.

Purpose of this rangahau

The overarching purpose of this rangahau was to explore notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. To contribute, the participants, hereafter referred to as kaituku (contributors), had to meet three criteria:

1. They self-identified as Māori.
2. They self-identified as single parents.
3. They were engaged in postgraduate studies while single parenting.

These three criteria carried more importance than their geographic location and demographic characteristics, ensuring a more focused exploration of the intersections between education, employment, whānau responsibilities, wellbeing, and identity within the context of Māori

single parenting. While the initial whakaaro (thought) was to locate kaituku within a Wānanga tertiary context, widening the scope to include other tertiary providers allowed for a broader range of perspectives and experiences to emerge.

Guiding this rangahau were four key objectives:

1. To privilege Māori single parents' voices and lived experiences.
2. To identify key determinants of success for Māori single parents engaged in postgraduate qualifications.
3. To gain an understanding of the types of challenges experienced.
4. To consider how Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being contribute to Māori single parents' experiences of success.

These objectives helped to define the intentions of this rangahau, providing clear direction and focus, while also determining the boundaries and scope.

Importance of this rangahau

When a deficit narrative approach is applied to a kaupapa it perpetuates the belief that the problem responsible for causing that deficit is "*located within*, rather than *as pressing upon*" the individuals or communities most affected (Gorski, 2012, p. 3). This approach sits within an ideology that purposely "explains and justifies outcome inequalities" (p. 3) such as educational underachievement, low income, or high unemployment as a condition belonging to and stemming from the marginalised rather than the dominant; the oppressed rather than the oppressor.

Unfortunately, when this same ideology is applied to Māori single parents' circumstances, it perpetuates the belief that Māori single parents are a societal burden (Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012) responsible for the structural deficiency of the modern-day family unit (Coleman, 1988). In keeping with this deficit approach, any inequalities experienced by Māori single parents are indicative of their shortcomings and not the unjust social conditions brought about by colonisation, that impact their lives daily (Gorski, 2012). Conditions such as poverty, health disparities, and systemic racism, to name a few.

That is *why* this rangahau is important. Firstly, to address an absence in the literary and academic arenas where the perspectives and experiences of Māori single parents have been overlooked or underrepresented. Secondly, it provides a platform for Māori single parents to

counter prevailing narratives that perpetuate the notion of single parenthood as a societal risk and socio-economic deficit (Coe, 2011). Ultimately though, exploring narratives that originate from the Māori single parent community itself and (re)defining success based on their lived experiences (Whaanga, 2020) is both empowering and transformative.

Theoretical underpinnings

Indigenous researcher, Shawn Wilson (2001) actively encouraged Indigenous peoples to anchor their research within Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being, rather than merely offering an Indigenous perspective. Similarly, Kaupapa Māori requires the same anchoring founded upon the premise that we, as Māori, have our ways of knowing, doing, and being and we need to privilege these approaches (Mahuika, 2008). By doing so we are better positioned "to challenge and disrupt the commonly accepted forms of research" (p. 4) that sit within a dominant western paradigm.

Kaupapa Māori is an Indigenous approach localised to research where Māori knowledge is both valid and validated (Bishop, 2005). From an Indigenous standpoint, it "legitimises the spirituality, tikanga, traditions, and lived realities of Māori" (Gemmell, 2017, p. 3). Shaped and driven by a Māori worldview (Edwards, 2013; Mane, 2009), Kaupapa Māori is the epistemological foundation that will ensure that this rangahau remains theoretically and philosophically rigorous, by offering an approach that is deeply connected to Māori, while also honouring the positioning of "by Māori, for Māori, and with Māori" (Smith, 2015, p. 47).

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTER ONE: HE KŌRERO TĀTAKI

This chapter introduces you to 'my worlds,' providing a glimpse into my postgraduate journey as a single mother. Beginning with my pūkōrero (Ruwhiu et al., 2008) provides a backdrop to the overall aim of this rangahau, namely, exploring notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. The four supporting objectives are identified, along with clarifying my positioning in relation to this kaupapa and the approach that was taken. After cementing the importance of this rangahau it finishes by highlighting the potential of a narrative that builds on the views and experiences of Māori single parents.

CHAPTER TWO: TŌNA HŌHONUTANGA ME TŌNA WHĀNUITANGA

This chapter is comprised of four wāhanga, or sections, that provide an in-depth review of literature pertinent to this kaupapa. The first two wāhanga draw on literature relevant to single parenthood from a colonial perspective and from a te ao Māori perspective. This is necessary in order to unpack the complexities of the single parent identity and the subsequent implications for Māori single parents. Understanding the social construct of single parenthood from a colonial perspective is important, however, even more so is the obligation to present a Māori worldview. Following the same pattern, the final two wāhanga explore notions of success from both a western perspective and a te ao Māori perspective as well, with a particular focus on education.

CHAPTER THREE: HE WHARE RANGAHAU

This title refers to the 'whare' or structure that houses this rangahau acknowledging Kaupapa Māori as the paradigmatic framework that philosophically underpins this activity. To facilitate a Kaupapa Māori approach is to privilege key tenets of te ao Māori. Outlined within this chapter are six guiding principles designed to anchor this rangahau in Māori ways of knowing, doing and being. Implicit also within this framework "is the paramountcy of weaving both female (māreikura) and male (whatukura) perspectives" (Eruera & Ruwhiu, 2015, p. 2).

Also outlined in this chapter are the various practices employed as natural hoa-haere (traveling companions) of this rangahau, ensuring that I, as the kairangahau (inquirer/researcher), acted with respectful integrity at all times. To achieve this, a selection of principles were embedded within this rangahau, such as the practices of kanohi kitea (the seen face) (Rewi, 2014) and āta

(purposeful intent) (Pohatu, 2004). Kanohi kitea ensured that I was physically present and actively engaged with the kaituku, while āta guided me to act with purposeful and respectful intent.

Embedding this rangahau in a Kaupapa Māori framework ensured that my actions as the kairangahau were underpinned by "a cultural foundation that is distinctly Māori and driven from Māori world views and values" (Mane, 2009, p. 2). Hui (gathering), pātai (inquiry) (Pohatu, 2008) and pūkōrero were the preferred methods for gathering information, while pūrākau (traditional narratives) framed the process of analysis. Throughout this rangahau, tikanga rangahau (rangahau ethical considerations) were integrated at all times to ensure the quality and integrity of the rangahau undertaken.

CHAPTER FOUR: HE ITI TE KUPU

This chapter presents the kaituku who contributed to this rangahau, all of whom identified as Māori single parents. The processes of capturing, documenting, and transcribing pūkōrero were explained before introducing the PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū framework in detail, paving the way for the most important part of this chapter to unfold—the analysis of all of the pūkōrero. The four elements of PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū are presented in this thesis as arotahi (lenses), and reinterpreted as Arotahi PŪ *(sources of educational aspirations),* Arotahi RĀ *(pivotal moments),* Arotahi KA *(old friends in (k)new times),* and Arotahi Ū *(nurturance and sustenance).* Mā te Arotahi (Figure 6) collates the analysis results, presenting eight key themes which are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: HE NUI TE WHAKAARO

This chapter is dedicated to the kaituku and their respective pūkōrero—personal narratives emanating from lived experiences of what it means to be a Māori single parent studying at postgraduate level. Eight key kaupapa emerged from the analysis (as depicted in Figure 6) and each is discussed at great length, with kaituku excerpts adding richness and depth, while effectively illustrating and reinforcing each kaupapa. Moreover, the ensuing discussions connect each kaupapa to relevant literature, strengthening the theoretical underpinnings of this rangahau.

CHAPTER SIX: TUKUA KIA RERE KI TŌNA TAUMATA

All the elements of this thesis are drawn together, culminating in a final commentary on the overarching aim and objectives of this rangahau. As well as outlining the implications of this rangahau, there is an opportunity to reflect on the learnings gained, while also suggesting potential areas for further investigation. By weaving together the various strands a new narrative is created in the form of an approach to supporting marginalised communities in general, but Māori single parents in particular. This chapter brings further clarity, and a greater understanding and appreciation of this rangahau, the bodies of knowledge contained within and the kaituku themselves.

Hei Whakakapi

This rangahau is aspirational, seeking to foster greater respect, understanding, and support for Māori single parents. Drawing on the pūkōrero of each kaituku, all of whom were studying at postgraduate level while juggling full-time parenting and employment responsibilities, this rangahau explored notions of success within the context of Māori single parenting. Inspired by my personal aspiration of self-determination, I believed it was important to adopt a methodological approach that empowered Māori communities and validated their knowledge systems. Therefore, I chose Kaupapa Māori for its holistic approach to the rangahau, which both honoures and integrates Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura acknowledges the harsh impact of deficit-based narratives on the Māori single parent community (Coe, 2011; Todd, 2008). Narratives that unashamedly marginalise Māori single parents in Aotearoa New Zealand (Domett et al, 2023), rendering them invisible, voiceless, and powerless. In wanting to counter those narratives, this rangahau provided a platform for Māori single parents; one that privileged their views and voices and enabled them to openly share their experiences through the medium of pūkōrero. Through this process, I gained invaluable insights into the resilience, strength, and aspirations of Māori single parents, which both challenged and enriched my understanding of success.

The foundation for this rangahau was established in Chapter One, showcasing the context of my kaupapa, the rationale for carrying out this rangahau, and its importance to the Māori single parent community. While laying the foundation for understanding the broader implications of

this rangahau, this chapter also emphasised the need to shift from deficit-based narratives to ones that celebrate Māori single parents' experiences and achievements. This provides a natural segue to Chapter Two which is comprised of an extensive literature review that explores bodies of knowledge associated with notions of success and single parenting, from multiple perspectives.

CHAPTER TWO:
TŌNA HŌHONUTANGA ME TŌNA WHĀNUITANGA

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hei Whakatau

Rukuhia te mātauranga ki tōna hōhonutanga me tōna whānuitanga. Whakakiia ngā kete a ngā uri o Awanuiārangi me te iwi Māori whānui ki ngā taonga tuku iho, ki te hōhonutanga me te whānuitanga o te mātauranga kia tū tangata ai rātou i ngā rā e tū mai nei.

Pursue knowledge to the greatest depths and its broadest horizons. To empower the descendants of Awanuiārangi and all Māori to claim and develop their cultural heritage and to broaden and enhance their knowledge base so as to be able to face with confidence and dignity the challenges of the future.
(TWWoA, 2022, p.3)

The title of this chapter is an excerpt from the vision statement of Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi and a homage to the place that has been my second home since beginning my master's journey in 2007. As a doctoral candidate, there is an obligation to ensure that the rangahau I undertake is robust and rigorous in terms of providing a comprehensive overview of existing knowledge and research relevant to the kaupapa of Māori single parents and notions of success.

The overall focus of this rangahau is to investigate notions of success as experienced by Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. Within this focus the two key components of Māori single parenting and notions of success are explored in more detail in order to gain a better understanding of these two literary domains. In the process, both Māori and non-Māori bodies of knowledge are engaged in order to provide a more robust and holistic understanding of this kaupapa.

There are four wāhanga (sections) in this chapter. Te Wāhanga 1 unpacks several narratives that speak to the layered meanings of single parenthood nationally, while also considering the global situation, however the main reference point remains focused on Māori single parenting. It draws on literature relevant to colonial perceptions of single parenthood, a necessary step towards unpacking the complexities of the single parent identity and the subsequent implications for Māori single parents. At this stage in the journey, it is important to develop an understanding of the way in which Aotearoa New Zealand society views single parent families. Likewise, there is a need to examine the government's contribution to this growing phenomenon since the establishment of colonial rule and legislation.

Te Wāhanga 2 acknowledges the ever-present obligation to present a worldview more representative of Māori ways of knowing, doing, being, and engaging in, and with the wider world. This is expanded upon by Walsh-Tapiata who explains:

> As indigenous peoples we carry a sense of marginality, much of which has been the result of colonisation by groups who have conquered peoples who are racially, ethnically or culturally different from themselves. Indigenous peoples have therefore been marginalised as a result of conditions created by those who claim 'jurisdiction' over them. (2004, p. 2)

Te Wāhanga 3 provides a review of literature relevant to notions of success by focusing on how success has been defined and measured in Aotearoa New Zealand by the wider society, both generally and more specifically, broadly in terms of education, but in particular, tertiary education. In doing so we learn that one of the earliest colonial influences, both in terms of education and success was Christianity, with Māori academic achievement significantly shaped by the introduction of mission schools.

The final component, Te Wāhanga 4, is dedicated to "reclaiming a space where Māori theorizing of success can occur, and more importantly, where a Māori perspective of success can sit alongside other widely accepted notions" (Martin, 2012, p. 110). The rationale for this positioning is based on the knowledge that "Indigenous values and ideals have long been overshadowed, disregarded and dismissed as irrelevant and unimportant" (p. 110). As a result, and similar to Te Wāhanga 2 which provided a space for Māori bodies of knowledge to speak back to the notion of single parenting, this wāhanga acknowledges the need for a Māori response to notions of success.

TE WĀHANGA 1: Single Parenting

He Whakapuakitanga

The intent of this wāhanga is to examine what it means to be a Māori single parent in Aotearoa New Zealand by (re)tracing the historical origins of single parenting as a parental or familial construct. From an historical standpoint there is a 'hidden agenda' that sits in service of vilifying single parents as a deficit narrative; one steeped in right wing political and neo-liberal welfare reform discourses (Coe, 2011), and Christian historical rhetoric (Patterson, 2004). This may seem like a bold statement to make especially as Aotearoa New Zealand is deemed to have "made significant strides to advance the rights of Māori" (Anaya, 2011, p. 1). However, many Māori single parents continue to struggle with the impacts of deficit-based discourses that conveniently and erroneously otherise them as problematic and societal burdens (Domett et al., 2023; Patterson, 2004; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012).

Choice or Circumstance

Historically, single parenting has occurred as a result of one of two realities, by choice or by circumstance, and for the most part this responsibility falls predominantly on the mother (Ajandi, 2011; Keil, 2019; Matipou, 2017; Murray, 2016; Patterson, 2004; Waldegrave et al., 2011; Woessmann, 2015). From my own lived experience, I considered myself to be one of those parents who 'chose' to be a single mother as opposed to arriving there by circumstance. A decision fraught with conflicting emotions, but a choice nonetheless. From my perspective, choosing to become a single parent as opposed to staying in a marriage of domestic abuse was the only way in which I could protect my whānau—my tamariki, mokopuna, and myself. It was a necessary step towards restoring hope, rebuilding trust and reconfiguring our lives in order to heal.

Several studies in the US and Europe have already been conducted that examined the notion of single parenting as a matter of 'choice' (Bock, 2000; Graham, 2012; Hertz, 2006; Jadva et al., 2009). According to these studies, it was more common for mothers to choose single parenthood rather than fathers. These studies also developed an interpretation of what 'choice' looks like for single parents and determined that "single mothers by choice are generally well-educated women in professional occupations who become mothers in their late 30s or early 40s" (Golombok et al., 2016, p. 409).

In particular, Bock's (2001) research titled *Single Mothers By Choice: From Here to Maternity* focused "on a population of women who.... chose to proceed with parenthood as single women" (p. 88) through the means of adoption and sperm donors. As a "midlife white single woman ... who had long considered single motherhood" (2001, p. 88), Bock's socioeconomic status was a determining factor in her decision to become a single mother. This too was the reality of her 26 participants who came from similar backgrounds to herself.

All of the participants considered themselves to be well educated and financially sound; harbouring a belief that the old institutional scripts of marriage and childrearing needed to be broken and replaced. They also prided themselves for their "rational, moral and responsible" actions that set them apart from "those 'other' single mothers (ie: teen mothers, welfare mothers, single mothers by accident)" (Bock, 2001, p. 101), most likely of Hispanic and African American ethnicity.

Initially, I was drawn to Bock's research because of its title, *Single Mothers by Choice*, however despite the similarity in our focus on single parenting with respect to single mothers, there is little else that is relatable between our studies. Conducted in 2001 with white, middle-upper class American women, Bock referred to this group of women as "the fastest growing population of single mothers" (p. 89). By 2008 the US was deemed to have the highest occurrences of single parent families on a global scale and a decade later the US still ranked in the top five of developed countries with high percentages of single parent families.

In a New Zealand study of European single mothers Todd (2008a) stated, "international research suggests that an increased number of single mothers are declaring their independence of men and coupled relationships and claiming a legitimate space to live and parent alone" (p. 2). This statement clearly resonates with the notion of *choice* rather than *circumstance.* Todd's research illustrated though that while 'choice' was a major factor to becoming a single mother, for many this was still to a large extent dependent upon or heavily influenced by their surrounding circumstances.

By way of contrast, additional single parent studies have been conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand by Matipou (2017) and Stewart-Withers et al. (2010). These two bodies of research focused on Māori and Pacific single mothers respectively. Research conducted by Matipou (2017) involved six wāhine Māori, while Stewart-Withers et al. (2010) carried out research with nine Pacific single mothers. In both situations the majority of participants became single

mothers as a result of their circumstances rather than by choosing to raise their children on their own; circumstances brought about by separation, divorce or the death of a spouse. For those few women who made the choice, theirs was a choice to parent alone despite the father being known to them.

In another study by Waldegrave et al. (2011) the relational resilience in Pākehā, Māori and Pacific sole parent families (male and female) was examined, noting that while most became sole parents as a result of their circumstances, there were still a small number in each group of parents that chose this style of parenting for themselves. In matters of choice, some had chosen not to begin a relationship after finding out they were pregnant, and an even smaller number had chosen to leave/end a relationship. Of the 59 participants who took part in this research, almost 92% were sole mothers demonstrating again the prevalence of mothers as single/sole parents.

As early as 2006 Pacific parents featured relatively high in the single-parent demographic (Waldegrave et al., 2011). With the gradual increase in these numbers, Keil's recent doctoral research (2019) inquired further into the reality of Pacific parents designated as "parenting alone." A discussion surrounding choice and circumstance highlighted notions of power and agency (Duncan, 2011) and especially, that one (agency) is only possible because of the other (power).

The discourse surrounding single parenthood brought about by choice or circumstance is not a new phenomenon. Studies carried out by Bock (2001) and Todd (2008b) demonstrate that there have been differing perspectives on the nature of choice for nearly two decades. I myself have my own understanding of 'choice' and while I have personal knowledge of three instances where middle-aged wāhine Māori opted for single motherhood from the outset, this remains for the most part a phenomenon that I am not overly familiar with. Therefore, the approach in this rangahau is to allow the kaituku to determine for themselves whether they became single parents as a matter of choice or if in fact, their circumstances forced this type of whānau configuration upon them.

Statistically Speaking

In 1975, statistics revealed that single parent families accounted for 11% of all families within Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development [MSD], 2010). For the next three decades this figure continued to increase with the 2001 census reporting the highest rate of

single or one parent families at 29% (Stats NZ, 2004). The next two censuses noted a decline in numbers from 18.1% to 17.8%, perhaps due to the increase in two parent families as a result of marriage and a decrease in divorces during that period.

Gender-wise, single mother statistics have always dominated census results. However, during the years 1986-2006, Aotearoa New Zealand also experienced a 'growth spurt' in the number of families parented by single fathers, with this sub-population featuring "a higher percentage of Maori among single fathers than among the general population" (Breiding-Buss, 2000, para. 11). By 2006, single fathers constituted 17% of the total number of single parents, up from 14% in 1986 (MSD, 2008; 2010). By 2013, this number decreased slightly as census results now showed that "most families of one parent with dependent children were women at 84.2%" (Stats NZ, 2013).

A more detailed view of 2013 census data showcased variations in family structures across ethnic groups, with Māori being the largest ethnic group within the 'One Parent' family type at 34%. This was followed closely by Pacific families at 33%, while European and Asian families represented smaller proportions (Cotterell et al., 2008; Superu, 2015b). Previous census data from 2006 revealed that one-parent families accounted for 39% of all families with dependent children, with the majority being led by single mothers. This significant representation of Māori single mother households at 26% emphasises their importance as a subgroup. As identified by Lee and North (2013), contributing factors to these changing whānau configurations over the past decade included spousal breakups, single parenthood, and shared parenting arrangements,

In fact, almost a decade prior, the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development for the Families Commission highlighted that:

> Families in New Zealand have undergone profound changes in the last few decades—50 years ago families were typically made up of a working father and a mother who stayed home to look after the children. Men and women married in their twenties, and had children closely spaced, often three or more, soon after marriage. Children grew up and left home in their late teens. Māori families followed the same pattern, though they tended to have more children than Europeans, and to have closer links with grandparents and extended family members, who often lived with them. (MSD, 2004, p. 18)

Alongside Māori single mothers, the number of Māori adolescent parents was also on the rise, many of whom identify as single parents. Research on Māori adolescent parents highlighted that negative views of adolescent pregnancy were not ubiquitously held:

> Most current research fails to consider whether negative views of adolescent pregnancy are universal; overlooking the possibility that Maori may have different perceptions. In spite of how crucial the opinions of young Maori are in regards to adolescent pregnancy, dominant health research's failure to see this suggests that their voices are not important. The way in which adolescent pregnancy and parenting is dealt with therefore requires scrutiny, with particular attention given to the voices of Maori and adolescent parents. (Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012, p. 2)

While this statement was made in regards to Māori adolescent parenting, it highlights three points of significance regarding Māori single parenting. Firstly, there is little to suggest in the research conducted to date that Māori single parents' voices, views or experiences have been accorded time or space to contribute to a growing body of knowledge and discourse surrounding single parents in general and Māori single parents in particular. A landmark report released by Domett et al. (2023) in partnership with Ngāti Kahungunu has made an impressive and long overdue impact on this space, signalling that this scenario is changing.

Secondly, when a deficit approach is applied to Māori single parents' circumstances, a particular worldview is perpetuated with its own set of beliefs and values—a view that perceives Māori single parents to be a societal burden; a problem to be fixed; a risk to be averted (Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). Finally, the presence of this dominant worldview then highlights the silencing of Māori ways of knowing, doing and being and subsequently a distinct absence of "our knowledge, our traditions, our worldviews, our philosophies" (Royal, 2002, p. 11).

Collectively, these statistics reveal significant trends and disparities, especially for Māori single parents. The prevalence of single parent families indicates a significant shift in the basic family structure over time as well as changing gender roles in parenting, as evidenced by the rise in single father households. Furthermore, the higher proportion of Māori single parents compared to other ethnicities highlights the impact of historical and systemic discrimination in economic stability, education, housing, and employment (Cormack et al., 2020; Domett et al., 2023).

A Narrative Rife With Colonial Tensions

The legitimisation of Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial history began in 1840 with the establishment of a Crown colony under British rule (Goodger, 1998). The signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between Māori (the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand) and the coloniser (Britain) was integral to this event as it transitioned the country from a state of independence to one of 'shared' authority (Orange et. al., 2017). Not surprisingly, the establishment of colonial rule brought about significant changes to Aotearoa New Zealand's social, political, economical and cultural context (Pool et al., 2013). One such example was the introduction of the Destitute Persons Ordinance in 1846, likely to have been influenced by Christian ideologies, that "emphasised family responsibility for the support of the sick, the unemployed, the aged, deserted wives and unmarried mothers" (Goodger, 1998, p. 3).

According to Coates (2008) "identity becomes more controversial and complex when identification with a particular group is attached to economic or political rights, the law being one of the primary mechanisms for portraying these types of rights" (p. 49). The Destitute Persons Ordinance of 1846 is an example of this, inasmuch as two parental identities were created with one deemed to be 'more deserving' of community support in the form of government assistance and financial relief than the other.

As a result of this ordinance, the notion of sole parenthood became entrenched in this country's societal construct. War widows and deserted wives were first to be recognised as sole parents. In both instances war widows and deserted wives were considered to be "deserving of ongoing community support" (Goodger, 1998, p. 3). However, a clear distinction was made between married and unmarried mothers regardless of whether both were raising children on their own. Sole mothers were those women who were married prior to becoming widowed or deserted whereas single mothers were not. Because of this, sole mothers were entitled to receive full government relief however single mothers could only apply for 'relief' for their children, but not for themselves.

The 'sole versus single' debate proved problematic for both non-Māori (predominantly of British descent) and Māori mothers, but for different reasons. In 1846 the term 'war widows' only applied to the widows of soldiers who fought in the land wars against Māori; wāhine Māori widowed as a result of the same battles were not recognised in the same way. With an emphasis

on marriage as one of the main criteria for classifying war widows, wāhine Māori were again excluded from the conversation.

"The common law of marriage was imported" and with it the requirement that marriages "be formalized by a minister who had been episcopally ordained" (Law Commission, 2001, p. 123). However, in te ao Māori, the act of marriage at that time was not legalised by the church or the state, but rather by the couple themselves, their respective parents, and/or their immediate communities (Hiroa, 1950; Pool et al., 2013). Thus, from a legal perspective it was deemed that a 'Maori marriage' was "reserved for *de facto* unions established by mutual consent between persons not already married" (Metge, 1976, p. 139). Due to this viewpoint, Māori faced challenges in having their customary/traditional marriage practices recognised, both legally and politically.

Prioritising the wellbeing of non-Māori mothers through the Destitute Persons Ordinance was premised on the belief that they were more vulnerable to the effects of poverty should they lose their spouses to death or desertion. From the government's perspective, non-Māori mothers were seen as more likely to be isolated from their extended family and, as 'stay-at-home' wives and mothers, entirely dependent upon their wage-earning spouses for any form of income. Conversely, it was noted that wāhine Māori had a stronger support network of extended whānau often living in close proximity who could be called on in times of need. This resulted in the perception that Māori mothers were less likely to require government assistance.

Historically, Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial society was premised upon a nuclear family unit that consisted of two 'legally married' parents: stereotypically a 'wage-earning/main breadwinner' father and a 'stay-at-home/primary care-giver' mother. In his seminal work titled *The Coming of the Maori*, Te Rangi Hiroa (1950) remarked that "in Maori communities, mutual help was a fundamental expression of blood kinship as well as human kindness" (p. 375). The nature of whanaungatanga or kin relationships was a common thread in the way in which Māori society organised itself. In this context, whānau membership was not limited to a one-household unit of parents and children, but rather it meant "the large-family, and the small-family is seen as a subdivision within it, not a separate planting but a new shoot budding-off from the parent stock" (Metge, 1976, p. 142).

As a flow on effect of World War II more Māori moved to the cities in the 1950s in pursuit of employment. As such, urbanisation greatly impacted the way in which Māori grouped

themselves and how they identified as Māori (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). Subsequently, Māori mothers soon experienced a disconnection from their extended whānau support systems. This disconnection then meant that Māori mothers became "as vulnerable to poverty from sole parenthood as many of their non-Māori counterparts" (Goodger, 1998, p. 5). Ani Mikaere (1994) references this vulnerability when she discusses the detrimental effects of colonisation and urbanisation on wāhine Māori and the whānau unit:

> The deliberate destruction of whanau and hapu structures and the forcing of Maori women away from their whanau and into the Pakeha model of the nuclear family left them vulnerable in a host of ways. They became increasingly isolated as care givers at home. (Mikaere, 1994, p. 133)

A key political objective of the Destitute Persons Ordinance involved the provision of government support to women transitioning from a two-parent family unit to a one-parent family unit with the mother as the sole caregiver and provider. However, as discussed earlier, certain criteria were introduced that disadvantaged wāhine Māori. It would take more than a century before "all sole mothers in New Zealand, whether widowed, deserted, separated, divorced or single" (Goodger, 1998, p. 1) became eligible for government assistance. In reality, this eligibility only occurred because of the growing number of sole and single mothers struggling to support their families and not because the government recognised that the system was discriminatory or inequitable in its service provision.

For fathers, the criterion of marriage was equally problematic, whereby sole fathers were only those men who had previously been married, but as a result of separation, divorce or the death of their spouse were now parenting on their own (Goodger, 1998). Recognised by the government as sole fathers, they then became eligible to apply for government assistance. However, single fathers coming out of 'de facto' relationships would have to wait a further fourteen years (until 1987) to be eligible for government assistance despite the fact that they too were solely responsible for the care of their children, similar to those sole fathers who were separated, divorced and widowed.

With an increase in the number of sole and single parents needing financial assistance the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) was introduced in 1973 (Pool et al., 2007). According to Mitchell (2009):

> 33 percent of those on DPB were Māori, and by 2007, 41 percent. Māori men were also more likely to rely on a single parent benefit than New Zealand European men. In 2005, half of all male single parents were Māori. (pp. 17-18)

As a result, the DPB sparked a number of shifts in the political and social landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand, so much so that the subsequent influx of sole and single parents seeking financial relief through the DPB system was seen to be both problematic and controversial. Problematic as it highlighted that a larger number of New Zealand families were now more vulnerable to the effects of poverty, a situation exacerbated when "the escalation in beneficiary numbers seemed to threaten both the government's budget and the institution of marriage" (McClure, 1998, p. 311). Then in 1976, controversy set in when the Minister of Social Welfare "accused single mothers in defacto relationships of 'ripping off the system" (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013, p. 223). As a result sole and single parents as a subpopulation of Aotearoa New Zealand became victims of discrimination and negative stereotyping.

Unpacking the colonial narrative surrounding single parenting within Aotearoa New Zealand revealed how British influences of colonial policy, Christianity, and societal perceptions created a culture in which one group of citizens (sole parents) were deemed to be more deserving than another (single parents). A series of complex inequities arose out of gender, ethnicity, income earning value, and more specifically for Māori, cultural practices and beliefs, that resulted in socioeconomic disadvantage for single parents. On the other hand sole parents' experiences were less complicated, readily supported and more advantageous (socio-economically). Stephens (2013) argues that this colonial narrative clearly demonstrates how post-treaty government legislation, such as the Destitute Persons Ordinance of 1846 and the Social Security Act of 1938, "deliberately and actively pre-cluded Māori from the full entitlements and benefits of the system" (Stephens, 2013, p. 1).

From a Treaty of Waitangi perspective, Article 3 expressly "offered the Maori people 'protection' and 'all the rights and privileges of British subjects." These rights and privileges extended to "equal treatment in matters of law and order" (Orange, 2015, p. 26) with the main criteria that Māori demonstrate loyalty to the Crown. Ironically, the intention of the Crown's first colonial policy of amalgamation was to 'promote Māori welfare' and in turn save the natives from extinction. Ward (1974), however, clearly identified that "[i]ts most serious flaw was that it was emasculated by European attitudes of racial or cultural superiority" (p. 39).

Fueled by “ethnocentric assumptions” (Metge, 1976, p. 303) of British superiority and “settler prejudices” (Ward, 1974, p. 39), colonial leaders decided that the best way for Māori to “outweigh the prejudices of incoming settlers” and in the process earn their respect was to abandon their own (Māori) ways of knowing, doing and being “in favour of English law” (Ward, 1974, p. 39) and customs. In keeping with this view it was suggested that the sooner this occurred, the better off Māori would be. The literary works of Mikaere (1994) and Stephens (2013) are extremely poignant in this matter as both refer to the deliberate and dentrimental impact of colonial rule on Māori; Māori identity, wellbeing and development.

Prevalence of Single Mothers

Single parenting is a worldwide phenomenon yet, much of the literature available to researchers focuses predominantly on women-headed, single parent families, with little material available on male-led families (Burns & Scott, 1994; Kissman & Allen, 1993; Taylor, 1994). A plausible explanation for this would align with the fact that in a number of countries, such as the United States, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and for a number of ethnicities—African American, Hispanic, Māori and Black Caribbean—the majority of single-parent families were (and continue to be) headed by women (A.W: The Spaced Out Scientist, 2015; Gonzalez, 2005; Lee & North, 2013; Metrowebuckmetro, 2007; Rampell, 2010; Woessmann, 2015). This is supported by Ford-Gilboe and Campbell’s research (1996) which stated that “approximately a quarter of all American families and 13% of Canadian families are single-parent families; in both countries, more than 80% of these families are headed by women” (p. 173).

The underlying point, as identified by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2018), is that societal norms persistently reinforce the idea that women are primarily responsible for caregiving duties within families. This deeply ingrained societal expectation shapes traditional gender roles, leading women to shoulder the majority of childcare responsibilities. As a result, when relationships break down or circumstances change, women are more likely than men to become single parents, as they are already accustomed to fulfilling the role of primary caregiver within the family unit. (Murray, 2016).

Several factors contribute to the increasing inclination of women toward single parenthood. These factors include welfare incentives; increased economic opportunities; a reduction in the number of eligible males and spousal absence as a result of death or imprisonment (Gonzales 2005). Additional theories include the rise of feminism, changing societal attitudes, technology-

assisted conceptions/birth and inability of males to support families (Callister, 1999; Rothman, 1989). In the case of Ford-Gilboe and Campbell (1996) "separation and divorce" (p. 173) were cited as the main contributing factors in the growing prevalence of families parented by single mothers.

An earlier study encompassing seven single mothers from seven different countries, cited poverty and patriarchy as the main catalysts for the increase and subsequent continuation of women-headed single families (Taylor, 1994). Taylor argued the existence of a 'double-bind trap' whereby single mothers "are pitted against two enemies. The first is poverty, which tugs them down to the lowest rungs in their societies. The second is patriarchy, which sabotages their attempts to climb higher" (Taylor, 1994, p. 1).

Around the same time as Taylor's research, Burns and Scott (1994) introduced the *decomplementary theory*, an approach built on the assumption that "in Western societies men and women no longer have such complementary independent needs (i.e., they no longer need each other so much)" (p. xii). They also attributed the rise and subsequent continuation of women-headed single parent families to the notion that many of the social reasons that supported the two parent/mother and father led family were no longer as important as they once were. For example, in the 1990s women were able to support themselves (and their families) financially either through employment or welfare assistance, there appeared to be less issues associated with being a single parent and there was an increased awareness around contraception and family planning (Burns & Scott, 1994).

I can relate to Burns and Scott's theory inasmuch as my own decision to become a single mother was predicated on the knowledge that I had the financial means to support my family and no longer reliant on my husband's income or in need of government assistance. Equally as important though was the ability to rise above the stereotypical attitudes of others (be it family, friends, work colleagues or acquaintances) and recognise that my decision was in the best interests of my wellbeing and the wellbeing of my children. I am cognisant though that this theory does not entirely explain my situation, which in turn presents an opportunity to explore other theories (if any exist) or to formulate my own.

He Whakaotinga

To be a single parent is to face stigma and marginalisation, regardless of ethnicity, age, or gender. Society often fails to acknowledge this reality, as it characterises the typical two-parent

family as the “normative standard” (McAnally et al., 2021, p.2). According to Pihama et al. (2019) the “nuclear family structure has significantly permeated our society and has had a huge impact on our day to day living” (p. 45). Without the support of extended whānau, single parents, particularly Māori, face greater economic challenges in society.

Te Wāhanga 1 highlights that while multiple disadvantages exist for single parents from all walks of life, Māori especially have been significantly impacted by colonisation, primarily through policy and legislation. Whether by choice, circumstance or a combination of both, more individuals are becoming single parents in Aotearoa New Zealand, reflecting a growing global trend. For those who intentionally choose to become single parents, it can be underpinned by a desire for independance and autonomy or simply a better quality of life.

In my case, becoming a single parent was imperative if I was going to break the cycle of violence in my home, and yet it was not an easy transition. The ability to financially support my whānau necessitated that I gain a formal qualification, which I achieved in the form of a teaching degree. It also meant that I needed reliable transport and a job with a steady income. Lastly, it meant that I had to rely on my older children more to help me with the care of their younger siblings, especially when my job was located in another town.

These experiences highlight the levels of resilience and determination required of single parents, particularly Māori, as they navigate systemic challenges and strive for better outcomes for their whānau. Understanding these aspects is essential for developing policies and practices that acknowledge and address the unique needs of Māori single parents in Aotearoa New Zealand.

TE WĀHANGA 2: Māori Realities-Indigenous Insights

He Whakapuakitanga

Te Wāhanga 2 is prompted by scholarly references to Māori ways of knowing, doing and being and the notion of returning to our cosmological narratives to ascertain meaning and understanding for modern day phenomena (Edwards, 2012; Jenkins & Harte, 2011). Because of this, I was interested to see what I could learn from (and about) our primordial parents Ranginui (Rangi) and Papatūānuku (Papa). This interest extended to the roles of tāne and wāhine Māori as parents and the notion of parenting across and within the whānau.

Additionally, this wāhanga explores Indigenous perceptions of single parenting to enrich our understanding of parenting practices on an international level. Noting that traditional parenting practices have become sites of struggle throughout the Western world, literature shows that Indigenous peoples are continually asserting their cultural sovereignty by prioritising parental practices that integrate traditional values with contemporary contexts.

Rangi & Papa: A Cosmological Narrative

According to traditional narratives, Ranginui (sky father) and Papatūānuku (earth mother) were our first known parents in te ao Māori (Gabel, 2013; Grey, 2009; Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Martin, 2023; Mikaere, 2003; Murphy, 2013) and as Jenkins and Harte (2011) explain, "the first parents and their child rearing practices were found here" (p. 2). One of the earliest published renditions of this narrative is found in the December 1963 edition of Te Ao Hou (Māori Affairs Department) where Rangi and Papa lay tightly bound, enveloping their many children in darkness. Over time the children became uncomfortable in their enclosed surroundings and sought to separate their parents "so that there could be light" (p. 28). After much deliberation, the parents were eventually separated with the children then free to move about and eventually relocate themselves between the two. As Shortland (1968) then explains, "[f]rom Rangi and his wife Papa, the Earth, are descended man, beasts, birds, trees, and all things here on earth. (p. 1).

From the creation stories we know that a separation occurred, perhaps not by choice, but rather by circumstances beyond the parents' control, and yet a separation nonetheless. Based on this narrative it would seem then that Rangi and Papa were our first (recorded) parents in te ao Māori to take on the role of parenting alone.

Similarly, from the sacred writings of Pei Te Hurinui Jones (2013) another example of single parenting presents itself from within the realms of Tainui Whare Wānanga:

> A child was born to Tū-mata-uenga and Hine-ahu-one which was named Aituā (The Unfortunate One). But Tū-mata-uenga and Hine-ahu-one did not live happily together, and they were soon parted... One of the reasons why Tū-mata-uenga and Hine-ahu-one parted was because Tū-mata-uenga had become enamoured of a celestial maiden. (p. 81)

Both of these accounts suggest that parenting individually existed in te ao Māori prior to the coming of tauiwi (foreigners). However, for Māori to refer to Papatūānuku or Hineahuone as single mothers or Ranginui as a single father, cosmological or otherwise is a practice foreign to Māori. It is only when Māori ways of knowing, doing and being are examined through a colonised lens that the languaging of single mother, single father, and single parent emerges. While we acknowledge the separation of Rangi and Papa through pūrākau, Pere challenges this notion of separation in terms of physicality and totality when querying, "when you look to the horizon where the sky (Rangi) and the earth (Papatuanuku) merge do you see separation?" (Rose Pere, as cited in Murphy, 2011, p. 59).

Other messages are contained within these accounts as well. For example, in the case of Rangi and Papa, their separation was described as an opportunity "to promote growth and life" and in the process of separating bring mankind into the realms of light and increased knowledge (Ministry of Justice, 2001, p. 13). Becoming "associated with the aspects of the natural world of Māori" (Reilly, 2004, p. 5) through the separation of Rangi and Papa is indeed a different narrative to one that translates their union and subsequent separation to western equivalents of 'marriage' and 'divorce' (Best, 1976). Supporting this line of thinking, Te Ahukaramu Royal (1998) highlights several iwi whose own iwi-based narratives also speak of the separation process as being necessary to what Lawson-Te Aho (2013) describes as the "birth of humanity" (p. 56) and in turn the continued wellbeing of their descendants.

Tāne & Wāhine: A Complementary Narrative

Encapsulated within the pūrākau of Rangi and Papa is the notion that even in their separation, they continued to complement each other as the male and female essences and elements of te ao Māori. When Pere asked the question "do you see a separation?", the response given was "[t]here is no separation.… The sacred seed and the sacred river are one" (Rose Pere, as cited

in Murphy, 2011, p. 59). As a result, Simmonds (2014) concluded that "when we look to the relationship between Ranginui and Papatūānuku … mana wahine and mana tāne are intimately entangled" (p. 151).

Researcher Yates-Smith (1998) identified a "theme of balance and complementarity" (p. 11) in relation to the roles of tāne and wāhine Māori, and yet the foundation for this discussion began as early as 1967 with Metge's (2010/1967) description of the functional roles of tāne and wāhine Māori as complementary. In later years Mead (1994) and Mikaere (2003) commented on how this complementary nature of male and female, tāne and wāhine, existed prior to European contact and the arrival of colonisation, where the roles of wāhine Māori held the same importance as tāne Māori. This line of thought was continued by Turner (2007), who spoke of traditional accounts of wāhine Māori; "strong, positive roles Māori women fulfilled in traditional societies which complemented Māori men" (p. 7).

However, there are also those who challenge this positioning of complementarity. In a society such as Aotearoa New Zealand, James and Saville-Smith (1989) stated that "the structures of masculinity and femininity are central to the formation of society as a whole" (p. 6) and similarly Holmes (1997) commented that "gender is a salient dimension in New Zealand Māori culture" (p.263). Feminists will argue that women have been subjugated to a position of subservience (Pihama, 2001), and this is true. Exponents of mana wāhine will argue that wāhine Māori have been marginalised and otherised and therefore society needs to remedy this by privileging wāhine Māori ways of knowing, doing and being (Hoani, 2014; Thatcher, 2012), and this also is true.

To view the roles of tāne and wāhine Māori as complementary is a bold position to take, especially in a society that is more comfortable with "the colonised version of Māori cosmogeny" (Mikaere, 2011, p. 206). A version where Papatūānuku "is described as the passive agent, the *whare moenga*, the receptive female element acted on by the fertilizing-power represented by Tane" (Best, 2005, p. 88). It might also be a naïve position to take considering the realities of today's society. Jahnke (1997b) speaks of how Heuer (1972) attempted to "reconstruct the role of Māori women in customary Māori society"; an attempt that was heavily reliant "upon the Victorian interpretations of white male ethnographers and economists" (Jahnke, 1997b, p. 97). With Heuer's interpretation comes the added baggage of (male) power relations (Jahnke, 1997a) that seek to denigrate wāhine Māori ways of knowing, doing and being and to displace wāhine Māori to the point of silenced invisibility.

In further considering this notion of complementarity, it is these words that most resonate with me:

> Both men and women were the essential parts of the collective whole, both formed part of the whakapapa that linked Maori people back to the beginning of the world and women in particular played a key role in linking the past with the present and the future. The very survival of the whole was absolutely dependent upon everyone who made it up, and therefore each and every person within the group had his or her own intrinsic value. They were all a part of the collective; it was therefore a collective responsibility to see that their respective roles were valued and protected. (Mikaere, 1994, p. 125)

Viewpoints that consider the complementary nature of relationships, genders, roles and responsibilities are not shared here to challenge the state, status or validity of single parenting. Rather an Indigenous worldview and subsequently the knowledge that informs that worldview "is predicated on the idea that all life is connected and inter-related" (Lawson-Te Aho, 2013, p. 52). The notion then that Rangi and Papa became 'separated' is subjective inasmuch as a colonial worldview has always "undermined whakapapa by 'disconnecting' the people from their whakapapa through strategies of individuation. In the process people were disconnected from their stories and their shared histories" (Lawson-Te Aho, 2013, p. 58).

Whānau Parenting: A Māori Approach

Jenkins and Harte (2011) narrated the pūrākau of Rangi and Papatūānuku within their published works, *An Historical Review of Literature of Traditional Maori Child Rearing Practices in Pre-European Times*. Through the retelling of pūrākau relevant to the demi-god Māui and their whānau, these same researchers also introduced us to the notion that "parenting was shared by the whanau who surrounded the children … through the teaching and guidance of the tuakana (older relative), matua (father, uncle), whaea (mother, aunt), and matua tipuna (grandparents)" (p. 18). In the case of Māui and their brothers, they were often left in the care of their extended whānau due to the continued absence of their mother Taranga.

This next example of whānau parenting also comes from a Māui narrative. Below is a summary of this narrative as retold by Jenkins and Harte:

> One of Maui's wives was the beautiful Rohe, sister of the sun. They had a son named Rangihore but Maui laid a spell on Rohe and swapped faces with her. As a result Rohe went to live in the darkness of the Underworld "to exact revenge on" the spirits of humans "as the ferry woman". In doing so she left behind her child to be raised by her husband and the wider whanau. (2011, p. 6)

In my own experiences as a single mother, the notion of whānau parenting is familiar to me. Out of necessity it has been the ongoing support of my daughters that has helped me the most in the past seventeen years. Collectively we have raised our tamariki, sharing responsibilities and resources in order to meet the needs of our whānau. In my case, my daughters have helped me in numerous ways to care for their younger siblings, especially when work-related travel has taken me out of town or out of the country. Similarly, I too have provided ongoing care and support to my daughters and mokopuna.

Despite the fact that we reside in separate homes, we are all mothers and the ability for us to whānau parent because of shared tikanga and values has become our mainstay. Because of this shared style of parenting, I have been able to maintain full-time employment, successfully achieve a master's degree and very soon complete my doctoral journey. Likewise, my daughters have each been able to pursue their own employment and educational aspirations with the knowledge that their tamariki still have whānau attending to their needs. Those daughters with partners have maintained "certain exclusive rights and duties to each other" (Metge, 1976, p. 21), however over time even the sons-in-law have become accustomed to this style of parenting across our respective whānau.

While this approach to parenting may be unfamiliar to many, "in Maori communities, mutual help was a fundamental expression of blood kinship as well as human kindness" (Hiroa, 1950, p. 375). Hiroa goes on to say that within Polynesian homes it was common practice for multiple generations of whānau to live together until such time as the need to establish a new household arose. This living arrangement is characteristic of my own circumstances where three generations of whānau reside together in our home. Similarly, at the time that this thesis was written, my widowed mother and my eldest daughter who was a single mother with her three daughters, also lived together. Both of these examples indicate that this approach is less of an anomaly for us, and more of a welcomed solution wherein the practice of whānau parenting, and to some extent communal living, is both our reality and our relief.

The practice of whānau parenting is not a new phenomenon for Māori. In the early 1990s, Aotearoa New Zealand's statistics started to reflect an increase "of children living in shared households – most commonly children with sole parents living with other relatives" (Herbert, 2001, p. 13). Prior to the advent of colonial influences, whānau parenting was considered a natural practice within te ao Māori. This is contrary to a colonial system of social organisation that focused only on the nuclear family unit consisting of a mother, father and an average of two children.

Gabel describes the 'Euro-Western' nuclear family system within Aotearoa New Zealand as "isolating and disempowering" (2013, p. 8). Several researchers (Gabel, 2013; Herbert, 2001; Herewini, 2018; Hirini, 1996; Hopa, 1996; Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Kruger et al., 2004; Lawson-Te Aho, 2010; Mutu, 2017; Ware, 2014) have provided commentaries on whānau parenting as values-based and culturally responsive expressions of traditional Māori practices. Practices such as:

- Whakapapa, described by Kruger et al. (2004, p. 18) as "sets of relationships, conditional obligations and privileges that determine a sense of wellbeing between whānau, hapū and iwi"
- Whānau, identified by Moeke-Pickering as "the smallest of the common Maori social structures and consists of 3 or 4 generations of extended family" (1996, p. 8)
- Manaakitanga, explained by Lawson-Te Aho as a "reciprocal exchange of practices that indicate a duty of care" (2010, p. 148)
- Whanaungatanga, posited by Herbert as "caring, sharing, guardianship, empowerment and planning that encompassed the extended family responsibilities" (2001, p. 14).

Both two parent and single parent whānau are beneficiaries of this traditional style of whānau parenting. Furthermore, this practice exemplifies this quote, as recorded by Te Rangi Hiroa, of "an old friend in a new place" (Sorrenson, 1986, p. 226). Later Pohatu (2004) further elaborated that the kupu Māori for place is 'wāhi' which also encapsulates the kupu 'wā', meaning time, thus extending the quote above to also mean 'an old friend in a new time'. Hence, whānau parenting can be acknowledged as 'an old friend' in the form of a traditional practice having a valued presence 'in a new time' (referring to today's modern society).

Indigenous Insights:

Indigenous peoples, including Māori, have their own traditional ways of knowing, doing, and being, along with a desire to "to meet contemporary challenges from within their own cultures, communities, and with their own political interests and cultural values" in tact (Champagne, 2008, p. 1). This holds true for Indigenous parenting practices, which are often found lacking when viewed through a Western lens. However, Indigenous researchers such as Lindstrom et al. (2016) suggest that there are "gaps in Western perspectives that cannot account for the differences in childrearing practices between Eurocentric based notions of family and those of Aboriginal cultures" (p. 19). As an example, they state that "in traditional Aboriginal societies, the family was the only institution and was made of relational networks extending beyond kinship ties" (p. 14). This is in stark contrast to the typical 'nuclear family' narrative that dominates Western societies.

In an Indigenous context, the notion that 'it takes a village to raise a child' is synonymous with the communal approach to parenting found in many Indigenous cultures (Eni et al., 2009; Fiddler, 2021; Halliwell, 2024). However, Quinless' (2013) study of First Nations teenaged female lone parent families in Canada demonstrated that the needs of lone parents are diverse and therefore the types of support needed should reflect this. Quinless also emphasised that while Aboriginal families differ from non-Aboriginal families in Canada, the realities and subsequent needs of First Nations lone parent families will differ from those of Métis, and Inuit families.

In many situations, lone parents have become isolated from their 'villages'—literally and metaphorically. They often lack not only the essential resources needed for daily life but also the means to access them due to financial constraints, health issues, mobility challenges, or limited knowledge and know-how (Johner et al., 2008). Likewise, the reasons for becoming a lone parent are varied as well. Bohnert et al.'s (2014) investigation of Canadian censuses over a 100-year period focused primarily on the living arrangements of children. In the earliest period, widowed lone parents featured prominently, however in the second third of that century, the data highlighted changes in the lone parent construct. Indicative of changing societal norms, economic conditions, and legal reforms, divorce, separation, married (with absent spouses) and to a lesser degree, single parents who never married became the most prominent factors of the lone parent identity.

For transborder Maya families, or those families that are spread across national borders between Central America and the United States of America, a new demographic of single parent families exists. While male emigration has been identified as a major contributing factor to "family disintegration" (Loucky & Goger, 2020, p. 92), the underpinning circumstances are consistent with many Indigenous cultures suffering from the impacts of poverty, loss of traditional lands and culture, assimilation policies, and geographic isolation. In response, extended family members will often take on additional caregiving responsibilities to support single mothers and to help maintain the cohesion of the family, in the absence of husbands and fathers.

He Whakaotinga

The purpose of Te Wāhanga 2 was to unpack the varied narratives attached to the familial construct 'single parent'. In doing so an examination of the term itself was undertaken, clarifying that the origins of this word and practice were steeped in a colonial discourse designed to privilege one group of people over another. With the Crown focused on asserting its colonial agenda, Māori single parents have been subjected to decades of imposed discrimination, cleverly masked within legislation.

Through this examination of what it means to be a single parent in Aotearoa New Zealand and glimpse into the realities of single parenting for First Nations, Métis, and Mayan peoples, it is important to remember the importance of looking to our own ways of knowin, doing, and being in order to exercise strength and resilience within settler colonial societies. This approach not only challenges dominant colonial discourses but also promotes a deeper understanding of the ways in which Indigenous families are impacted in today's fractured world.

TE WĀHANGA 3: Notions of Success

He Whakapuakitanga

In the wāhanga it is important to understand how Western and Colonial contexts have historically defined notions of success, both within mainstream society and in particular, education. Western notions of success often prioritise individual accomplishments, a competitive mindset, material wealth, and social status. Often it is quantified and we see this throughout academia, in the corporate world, sporting contexts, and in the arts and entertainment industries. By understanding these contexts, we can better appreciate their influences on Māori, with a view to crafting more inclusive and culturally responsive definitions of success.

Christian Influences of Success

Previously in this chapter, I made reference to the ways in which British influences of colonial policy, Christianity, and societal perceptions directly contributed to the notion of single parenthood within Aotearoa New Zealand. In attempting to further develop my understanding of success and what this looks like within the context of this nation, I adopted the same approach which in turn led me to the foothold of Christianity. This is not surprising considering the impact that Christianity has had on the assimilation and subsequent displacement of Māori people and practices since the early 1800s (Mikaere, 1994; 2016; Pihama, 2001; Walker, 2004; 2016).

One of the earliest references to notions of success can be traced back to the King James Bible's Old Testament, whereby Joshua was promised by the Lord that if he remained "strong and of good courage" and held steadfast to the 'Book of the Law' he would be blessed with prosperity and success (1769/2017, Joshua 1:6-8). The Book of Matthew provides another example when the Lord says "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Matthew 25:23). What then is the relationship between these biblical references and the focus of this rangahau?

The idea that Christianity impacted Māori has already been mentioned in this chapter. This is captured in Te Wāhanga 1 where I highlighted that only marriage ceremonies conducted by 'episcopally ordained' ministers were legally recognised in this country. As a result, te ao Māori experienced a deliberate shift away from the more customary practice of marriage in preference

of religious marriage ceremonies. Doing so then enabled wāhine Māori who had become single parents to receive similar benefits and governmental assistance that previously were only available to women, predominantly of British descent.

More importantly though, the early 1800s is recorded as a strategic period of civilisation and evangelisation within Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial timeline (Storey, 2016; Walker, 2004; Yates, 2013), to the extent that the conversion of Māori to Christianity and the civilisation of Māori (Owens, 1968) were seen as tactical components of the colonial agenda. According to Walker (2004) "missionaries were the cutting edge of colonisation" (p. 85), tasked with civilising the heathenistic and barbaric Māori. For that reason, Christianity "became the major process that colonisers adopted to minimise Maori resistance to the real intent of colonisation – that of taking over resources that had formerly been under Maori ownership" (Nicholson, 2000, pp. 49-50).

Idealistically, Christianity gave Māori the impression that by accepting the word of God they would then become the recipients of an array of physical and spiritual rewards, including what Nicholson (2000) describes as greater access to the Western world and subsequently its resources. Alongside this was the growing assumption (by Māori) that converting to Christianity would then entitle Māori to receive the same rights and privileges as full British subjects. Evidence in support of this assumption noted that "faith in Christ brought tangible privileges. For example, Maori Christians were able to participate in the colonial courts from 1840 because they were able to swear an oath upon the Bible not to perjure themselves" (Storey, 2016, p. 34). Therefore, if we return now to the Biblical references made earlier and the idea that the good and faithful would experience prosperity and success, it is not surprising then that Māori engaged with Christianity in the belief that they too would be rewarded for their faithfulness (Binney, 1969; Yates, 2013).

With the advent of Christianity and the ensuing strategy of "conversion and evangelisation" (Heredia, 1995, p. 2332), missionaries and mission institutions played a pioneering role in bringing Western education to Aotearoa New Zealand and in turn, Māori. Interestingly, this was a common practice in many countries where colonisation occurred such as India, Asia, Africa and Latin America, affirming Heredia's (1995) stance that the "close association between education and religion has been a common phenomenon in all societies" (p. 2332). Mission schools became a key exponent of the assimilation agenda in this country, premised

upon the colonial belief that it was a "divine right" for the British "to impose their world view on those whose culture they were displacing" (Walker, 2016, p. 20).

Without being privy to the inner workings of the coloniser's mind and agenda, Māori embraced the introduction of mission schools and Western knowledge, as demonstrated in the following statement:

> Although Māori had whare wānanga (schools for teaching their own genealogy of knowledge), they wanted to send their children to the mission schools to access Pākehā knowledge that produced large ships, powerful weapons and an amazing array of goods. Perhaps schooling would unlock the secret to this material wealth. (Walker, 2016, p. 21)

Fueled by Christian teachings that reinforced the prospect of eternal salvation (and damnation should one reject the teachings), it is not surprising then that Māori became more invested in the knowledge and practices of the coloniser, seemingly disregarding their own traditional ways of knowing, doing and being in the process (Lineham, 2011; Mikaere, 2016; Walker, 2016; Yates, 2013). As such, a notable impact of Christianity on Māori came in the form of a trust premised upon goodwill. Trust firstly in a Christian God espoused as "the way, the truth and the life" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, John 14:6) and secondly, in the missionaries who for the most part were well received by Māori.

This is not to say that Māori blindly accepted Christianity (Newman, 2010). On the contrary, the transition to Christianity in the early 1800s (1814-1830s) was a relatively slow process. However, as Māori became more familiar and intimate with missionaries and Christian teachings, they began to see that:

> The culture from which the missionaries, traders and settlers came was obviously blessed with great material wealth, and this was seen as evidence of the great power of the God of that culture…. So the growing interest in transferring allegiance to this greater power, or at least adding it to their other deities, was a more legitimate move. (Elsmore, 2011, p. 19)

On this matter though, Mikaere (2017) remained cautious:

> I had always been troubled by the suggestion that our tūpuna were uncritical recipients of the Christian message and that they enthusiastically complied with Pākehā law.... According to this view it was inevitable that our tūpuna, like colonised 'natives' all over the world, would come to appreciate the inherent superiority of British beliefs and custom: it was in the natural order of things that Māori should ultimately defer to their greater wisdom. (p. 5)

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013) added to this discussion, asserting that "our people were totally engaged in schooling because they believed that it would deliver the promises that we had been given. That it would deliver justice and it would deliver equality" (2013, 17:16). Smith's words aligned to the idea that Māori embraced Christianity because they believed that as good and faithful servants they would reap the rewards and blessings that the Christian God had promised all of his followers.

Education: A Colonial Tool for Success

Māori embraced Native Schooling out of a genuine belief that this would enable them to live successful lives. However, Native Schools were not introduced until 1867. Prior to the Native Schools system, missionaries led the campaign to 'educate' Māori; education for the purpose of 'civilising and assimilating' Māori (Barrington, 2008; Simon & Smith, 2001; Walker, 2016). As such, mission schools were utilised as a means of "encouraging them [Māori] to abandon their traditional cultural values, customs and language in favour of those of the European" (Simon & Smith, 2001, p. 7).

Europeans held the belief that only by taking away the language, culture, and heritage of Māori would the process of colonisation progress smoothly. As Penetito (2010) so aptly states, "colonising nations have always recognised the power of replacing the language of those being colonised" (p. 73). This mindset was upheld with the introduction of the Education Ordinance of 1847, described many years later by Tearney (2016) as an assimilation policy. Effectively, it meant that church boarding schools would be eligible to receive government subsidies if they met certain criteria, as determined by government. One of these conditions resulted in the English language being designated as the only acceptable medium for instruction. Still, Māori held the belief that they could embrace the 'new' without abandoning the traditional (Anderson et al., 2015). Unfortunately, with the advent of the Native Schools Act in 1858 the government's agenda of "civilizing the natives" (Walker, 2016, p. 23) did not allow leeway for traditional

ways of knowing, doing and being to co-exist in Aotearoa New Zealaland's educational system, let alone in society.

Walker (2016) summised that "the underlying objective was to prepare Māori for a future as a labouring underclass" (p. 23), as confirmed by Henry Taylor in 1862, a New Zealand school inspector who stated:

> I do not advocate for the Natives under present circumstances a refined education or high mental culture; it would be inconsistent, if we take into account the position they are likely to hold for many years to come in the social scale, and inappropriate, if we remember that they are better calculated by nature to get their living by manual rather than by mental labour. (p. 38)

Mikaere (2011) recalled childhood experiences where she was singled out for her academic achievements and the ensuing discomfort she felt because of this. In later years she was able to identify where that 'discomfort' emanated from:

> It was not so much the case that they were acknowledging my achievements; it was rather that they were commending me as living proof that Māori could live up to Pākehā standards of excellence, if only we tried hard enough. I was being held up as an example of successful assimilation. (Mikaere, 2011, p. 11)

It is clear from the experiences shared by Mikaere that the benchmark for success expected of Māori at that time fell well short of what was expected of Pākehā students. In fact 'well short of' may not be an accurate descriptor as it is more likely there were 'no' expectations at all placed upon Māori students. Emphasising this line of thinking in her doctoral thesis, Mikaere makes reference to "heart-wrenching photographs of Māori children of generations past working in the school gardens and model cottages, being equipped for the roles deemed appropriate for them by the educational authorities" (2011, pp. 206-207). Those photos were published as part of Simon's (1998) insightful examination into the New Zealand Native Schools system and they did indeed illustrate "that Māori children 'were set to work as servants" (p. 9) for up to eight hours a day, while receiving less than three hours of lessons on a daily basis—all under the mantle of mission schooling.

Mission schools were a cleverly disguised vehicle of assimilation established for the express purpose of assisting the state to secure control of valuable Māori resources (Marshall et al.,

2000; Orange, 2015; Simon, 1998; Sorrenson, 2014).—resources such as land and food, and natural products such as flax fibre, timber, and metals (Petrie, 2006). In contrast, Māori embraced "schooling as a means to maintaining their sovereignty and enhancing their life chances" (Simon, 1998, p. 9).

Simon (1998) proposed that Māori were quick to adjust to the required levels of competency for literacy and numeracy, to the extent that they could transfer their newly acquired knowledge to other Māori. If need be, they also had the means with which to establish schools within their respective villages for Māori students to attend. However, the successful engagement of Māori with the written word came at a cost. In keeping with mission schooling, the main forms of written material available to Māori at that time were predominantly biblical, resulting in an ongoing exposure to European Christian values. This constant exposure to the coloniser's values and belief systems subsequently led to the successful marginalisation of Māori ways of knowing, doing and being; a state that still exists to this day (Jenkins, 1991; Henry & Dana, 2019).

Unfortunately, the successful introduction of Māori into the world of Pākehā education was short-lived. In establishing mission schools, the missionaries deliberately witheld the English language from the curriculum for fear that it would contaminate Christian teachings (Jones & Jenkins, 2001; Walker, 2016) and instead focused only on providing written material deemed Christian-worthy, in te reo Māori. As a result, Māori students quickly developed their ability to read and write in te reo Māori, which in turn increased communications between Māori as they took to letter writing.

The colonial state considered this to be in conflict with their greater intent to assimilate Māori into European ways of knowing, doing and being. This became so problematic for the government that consequently, the ruling Governor of that time (Governor Grey) introduced "his Education Ordinance of 1847" (Walker, 2016). Effectively, this incentivised schools to exclude all te reo Māori from the curriculum, by only providing funding to those schools who taught in the English language. As a consequence of this political positioning, the next century would witness the denigration of Māori ways of knowing, doing and being.

This period of New Zealand's historical timeline was significant for Māori for three reasons. Firstly, Māori were consigned to the underclass—"a British brown proletariat" (Walker, 2016, p. 23). Subsequently, Māori were only to be given access to education that produced manual

labourers and home-makers rather than academic intellectuals or professionals. Since then, many Māori have continued to be classified in this manner, leading to a deficit narrative that implies success is synonymous with emulating Pākehā achievements. Yet, when Māori have worked to align with Pākehā notions of success, there have been other barriers in place such as a 'glass ceiling effect' whereby the benchmarks for Māori achievement and success have been set significantly lower than what is expected of their Pākehā counterparts (Gattey, 2013; Pack et al., 2016; Stephens, 2013; Tawhiwhirangi, 2003).

Secondly, a hierarachical structure of knowledge was established, and as a result, mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori ranked in the lowest echelons of that structure while the English language and English bodies of knowledge were elevated (Walker, 2016). This created a persistent tension between Māori and the dominant Pākehā culture regarding 'what knowledge counts and what counts as knowledge.' A tension that has become embedded into the psyche of Aotearoa New Zealand's educational system (Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Edwards, 2013; Savage et al., 2014), resulting in ongoing conflict. This was exemplified in 2021 by a a group of non-Māori academics from the University of Auckland who challenged the equivalency of mātauranga Māori and science stating, "Indigenous knowledge may indeed help advance scientific knowledge in some way, but it is not science" (Henry, 2021, para. 5).

Thirdly, there is a societal perception of a 'gap,' and most certainly, gaps have existed between Māori and Pākehā. Mahuika (2011) wrote that this "expanse was not measured in kilometres or miles but in 'cultural capital', signposted in the particularly disparaging landscape of deficit theorizing" (p. 15). This perception of a gap has perpetuated inequalities and reinforced the marginalisation of Māori within various societal structures, such as education, health, and employment.

Western Notions of Educational Success

Religion and Christianity were the earliest colonial influences designed to expedite the propagation of English social norms, religious morals, and cultural practices. Under the leadership of local missionaries, mission schools quickly became a key contributor in the assimilation of Māori. With the introduction of the Native Schools Act in 1867, the responsibility of education was diverted away from the missionaries, who to an extent were still subject to the "moral influence of Government" (Walker, 2016, p. 23) and redirected entirely through central government (Anaru, 2011). Native Schools soon replaced mission

schools and the colonial agenda of civilising and assimilating Māori took on a more political role, with education as its focus.

By the beginning of the 20th century (1900s), the "structural relationship of Pākehā domination and Māori subordination" (Anaru, 2011, p. 20) was firmly established. What did all of this mean for Māori? "The most adverse effects of the colonial encounter included population decline, domination of chiefly mana by a foreign power, political marginalisation, impoverishment, and the erosion of language, culture and self-respect" (Walker, 2016, p. 20). Education became a political platform and Māori became pawns for political parties. This is expressed in Grace's writings where he states that "as part of its political commitment to the creation of a just and more equitable society, the Labour Government placed education at the centre of its plans for social, political, and economic transformation" (Grace, 1991, p. 28).

The 1930s is a pivotal era in the timeline of New Zealand's education system as this saw the establishment of the Labour Government's "founding charter of New Zealand's modern education policy" (Grace, 1991, p. 28). The intent of this policy:

> that every person, whatever his [sic] level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers. (Beeby, 1986, p. xxii)

The catch phrase in this quote are the words 'for which he is best fitted'. Matthews (2008) explains that Native Schools existed alongside State Schools right up to 1969 and Māori could choose which school they attended. However, teachers were not required to continue teaching Māori children beyond Standard 6 (now known as Year 8), as they were thought to be more suited to working the land and manual labour (Barrington, 2008; Matthews, 2008; Mikaere, 2017; Simon, 1998). If, by chance, Māori students wanted to attend school beyond Primary, there were two options available to them. District high school was one option, however, it was rare to see Māori at these schools. Māori denominational fee-paying boarding schools were the other option, but only if parents could afford the fees or the students were able to secure a Ministry of Education scholarship. With both of these options problematic in their own ways, the likelihood of Māori students continuing with formal education beyond Primary level was considerably reduced (Matthews, 2008).

This one-sided view of education as a tool for assimilation did more than just impede the ability of Māori to experience success within the coloniser's education system. Theoretically, 'the powers that be' had already predetermined that Māori were not intellectual beings nor could they possibly hope to have a place of belonging in the world of academia, so limiting Māori potential was understood to be an act of kindness on the government's part. Moana Jackson (2016) reminds us that the education system was:

> fundamental to the colonising process, because in order to dispossess us of our lands, lives and power, the colonisers had to educate us to think that what we already knew, or might know from our own traditions, our own education and our own cultural understanding of the world, was not worthy. (p. 39)

Education Gaps in the New Millenium

In the year 2000 the governing power formally introduced as social policy, the 'Closing the Gaps' initiative—gaps that resulted in high educational underachievement, high incarceration, high unemployment and high health statistics for Māori. At surface level, it appeared to be responsive to Māori needs and yet, its approach cast Māori as deficit. Nepia Mahuika (2011) noted that it:

> Identified us [Māori] as a group whose current situation required special attention and care but was ultimately damaging, in that it perpetuated negative stereotypes that placed Māori on the margins and Pākehā standards of living as the benchmark in New Zealand society. (p. 15)

As a result, Māori soon realised that in order for this initiative to be successful it was Māori "who were and are expected to relocate, assimilate and adjust to the more 'civilized' political and social order" (p. 15) of the dominant power. Within the educational arena, an established culture of deficit thinking towards Māori disparities ignored the possibility that there may be major flaws with Aotearoa New Zealand's education system and instead shifted the focus to difficulties 'accessing' the right educational opportunities and outcomes (Humpage, 2002).

As such, 'Closing the Gaps' became a government focused initiative to alleviate access issues rather than acknowledge the underlying issues concerned with the rights of Māori, as Māori. It is not surprising then that ten years after the implementation of the 'Closing the Gaps' policy, Bedford et al. (2010) reported:

> Gaps in educational achievement in New Zealand between major ethnic groups persist, especially when the standards for attainment used are those for the majority European population…. but for many Maori the critical issue is not so much about closing gaps but about the way students are empowered to learn in the mainstream classroom setting. (pp. 53-54)

Delving into 'Closing the Gaps' exposed the societal fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand as seriously flawed, with social inequalities (gaps) brought about, and then maintained by an assimilationist agenda. In 2008 though, '*Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012* launched (Goren, 2017). Premised on the notion that Māori educational success was a 'Ministry-wide responsibility', government began to look at the quality of education on offer for Māori students, both in Māori medium and English medium environments (Berryman et al., 2013). Whereas 'Closing the Gaps' seemed to make little headway into reducing disparities, 'Ka Hikitia' appeared to be the difference that was needed.

According to Goren (2017), the earliest instalment of the Māori education strategy in 1999 initially "focused on raising the quality of English medium education for Māori, supporting the growth of high quality kaupapa Māori education, and supporting greater involvement and authority of Māori in education" (p. 7). However, by 2008 this initiative had evolved to cater to a wider spectrum of educational provision for children and youth. At this point the "overarching strategic intent of Ka Hikitia" expanded from quality provision and engagement to include "Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori" (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 14). The approach taken recognised that the system itself needed to transform in order for Māori to achieve their potential in the educational arena and in turn, experience success. This is a far cry from laying the blame at the feet of Māori, as experienced with elements of the 'Closing the Gaps' initiative.

Managing for success became the primary goal of the Ministry's Māori educational approach from 2008-2012. The next phase of 'Ka Hikitia' enabled the Ministry to refine its educational focus on key areas, one of which was tertiary. "Māori with higher level qualifications are more likely to be employed and earn higher incomes. They are also more likely to live longer and have better life outcomes" (MoE, 2013, p.1). Armed with this ideal, 'Ka Hikitia' targeted youth as the primary beneficiaries, however, the ideals set out in this strategy were also applicable to older Māori engaged in tertiary studies.

In the process of unpacking the development of 'Ka Hikitia', a tension was exposed between the intent of this strategy and the governmental paradigm within which this strategy is housed. Unsure of where this tension was coming from, it was not until I read two additional pieces of research that clarity was forthcoming. The first was an article titled *A Kaupapa Māori Analysis of Tātaiako* (Hetaraka, 2019) and the second, a doctoral thesis titled, *Effective Implementation of 'Ka Hikitia' Into the Mainstream Education Sector: From Theory to Praxis* (Rifle, 2019). Hetaraka questioned "the potential of a strategy designed to transform Māori education experiences while positioned within educational structures that have an enduring tradition of systematically redefining and excluding Indigenous knowledges" (2019, p. 161).

'Ka Hikitia' presents the idea that Māori can engage in an educational environment that allows Māori to enjoy and achieve educational success 'as Māori'. In other words, Māori can engage in an education system that provides opportunities for Māori to realise their potential, and do so in a way that is legitimately Māori. Furthermore, educational underachievement of Māori is not the fault of Māori.

However, Hetaraka explains further that "the overarching education framework in which the strategy is expected to function … arguably continues to maintain deficit ideologies" (2019, p. 162). Because of this, Māori are still positioned "as lacking, as inadequate and problematic" (Smith, 2012, p. 11), despite the strategy attempting to say otherwise. Likewise, the benchmarks used to determine whether Māori have been successful or not, are still Western benchmarks. Missing from this approach is a "truly enlightened and transformed Māori education praxis" that will allow Māori "to genuinely achieve success *as* Māori throughout every step of their journey" (Rifle, 2019, pp. iii-iv).

Validating Māori successes according to Western notions of success and Western criteria is not a new phenomenon. Tiakiwai (2001) spoke about this issue almost two decades ago when commenting that "Western notions of success are often defined in terms of academic standards attained, or in terms of outputs" (p. 49). Standards attained in terms of grading or levels of qualifications and outputs in terms of tangible items produced such as published articles, books, speeches, and presentations (York et al., 2015).

One of the key instigators of this Western approach is Aotearoa New Zealand's Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), a Crown Agency that seeks to:

> Lead the Government's relationship with the tertiary education sector in New Zealand and provide career services from education to employment…supporting the tertiary and careers system to ensure New Zealanders are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need for lifelong success. (TEC, 2021., para. 1)

TEC has its own set of overarching success indicators or Education Performance Indicators (EPIs) that it uses to measure how well tertiary providers are doing in New Zealand. These EPIs align to four key areas and it is these categories that every Tertiary Education Organisation (TEO) is required to report against and in turn, provide evidence for. As such, successful course completion, retention rate, qualification completion rate, and progression each represents an element of success for TEOs and therefore, from an academic perspective, an element of success for students as well.

Education providers then overlay these EPIs with their own student success indicators, which in turn are meant to demonstrate how they (as a TEO) are meeting the needs of their stakeholders. These indicators may often align with key priorities identified through the Tertiary Education Strategy, such as how they evidence, not only educational achievement, but also the wellbeing of their students, or how their educational planning and practices take into consideration "the learners' needs, identities, languages, and cultures" (TEC, 2020).

Other factors such as the transitioning of students from a qualification to gainful employment is considered an important indicator of success, not only for the graduates, but for tertiary providers and government departments alike. In 2013, the Ministry of Education published a paper that examined the employment outcomes of tertiary education. According to its authors Park et al. (2013):

> The Government makes a very large investment in tertiary education each year – funding tertiary education providers, providing subsidised student loans and granting student allowances. One major purpose of the Government's investment is to help raise the level of skill in the population – which helps make our society more productive, contributes to the creation of wealth and leads to better social outcomes. (p. 2)

Almost a decade later, it would be fair to say that this statement still holds true today for tertiary and government agencies. Yet, while educational success is a key contributor to our nation's proposed economic and social wellbeing, it is not the only factor. Especially for Indigenous

Māori who "face the consequences of socioeconomic injustice, rooted in the colonial history of New Zealand during which they were largely dispossessed of their lands and natural resources" (van Meijl, 2020, p. 81). Additionally, van Meijl (2020) states that Māori also "face cultural or symbolic injustice, rooted in social and cultural patterns of representation, interpretation and communication in contemporary, multicultural New Zealand" (p. 81).

Looking at the Data

There is no denying that education plays a pivotal role in shaping individual lives, communities and society in general. Over the past two decades, concerted efforts have been made to enhance Māori educational attainment through the implementation of a number of initiatives, yet challenges persist. 'Closing the Gaps' and 'Ka Hikitia' are examples of two such initatives, and while both contributed to the ongoing dialogue surrounding equity and inclusion, achieving substantial and lasting changes have varied.

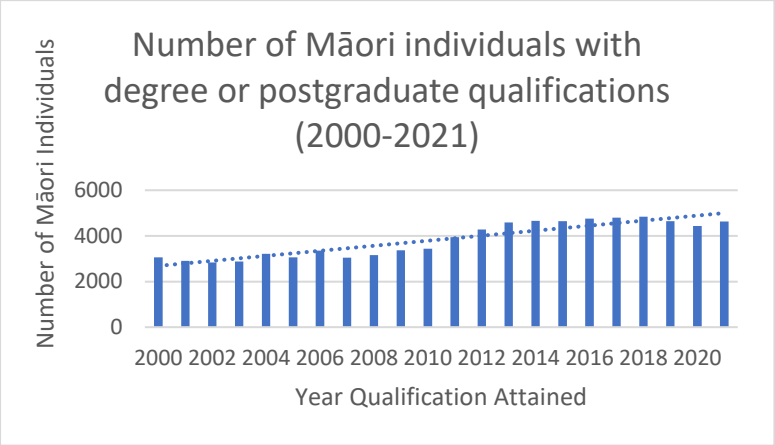
While this next discussion focuses on Māori in general, rather than a specific focus on Māori single parents, each table offers a lens through which we can better view the educational journey of Māori learners as a whole. Tables 1-4 provide information on the number of individuals identified as having Māori ethnicity in the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) who have obtained degrees or postgraduate qualifications, as identified by New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), for the period 2002-2021 (Stats NZ, 2023). As a side comment, Chapter Three: He Raraunga Kōrero provides a more detailed explanation of the IDI and the processes employed to ensure the integrity of the data presented in this thesis.

Māori Education Trend

Sourced from Stats NZ (2023), the graph in Figure 1 depicts a consistent upward trend over the past two decades, reflecting progress in Māori educational attainment of degree and postgraduate qualifications. While the overall trend, for the most part is encouraging, suggesting that efforts to improve Māori education have yielded some positive results, it is not possible to pinpoint what specific factors have contributed to that trend. Further research on contributing factors, equity considerations such as access to higher learning and funding, and an exploration of retention and completion rates would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Māori educational attainment.

Figure 1

Māori Education Trend



(Source: Stats NZ) (Graph created by author)

Note: Degree and postgraduate qualifications range from Levels 7-10 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Māori Educational Pathways

Figure 2 shows that a substantial number of Māori attained a Level 7 qualification (equivalent to a bachelor's degree in Aotearoa New Zealand), representing a commendable commitment to higher education within the Māori community. As the levels increase, approximately 18.9% of Māori who attained a Level 7 qualification subsequently went on to pursue, and achieve, a Level 8 qualification, suggesting a growing commitment from Māori to more specialised bodies of knowledge and research. Of those with Level 8 qualifications (possibly postgraduate diplomas and honour degrees), almost half (49.3 %) attained a Level 9 qualification (equivalent to a master's degree) and finally, from the pool of Māori master's graduates around 14.7% then progressed to attain a Level 10 qualification (doctoral degree).

While the transitions from one level to the next signify a growing resilience amongst Māori learners at degree and postgraduate level, there are also several key considerations arising from the data. Firstly, the progression from Level 7 to Level 8 demonstrates a commitment to higher education from Māori, however, it is important to ensure that ongoing importance is placed on equitable access for all Māori wanting to engage in this space, regardless of their socio-economic status, geographic location, or any barriers (cultural or otherwise) that might arise. Secondly, there is a need to ensure that curricula choices in these higher levels are relevant and meaningful to Māori and that learning environments support their learning needs. Additionally,

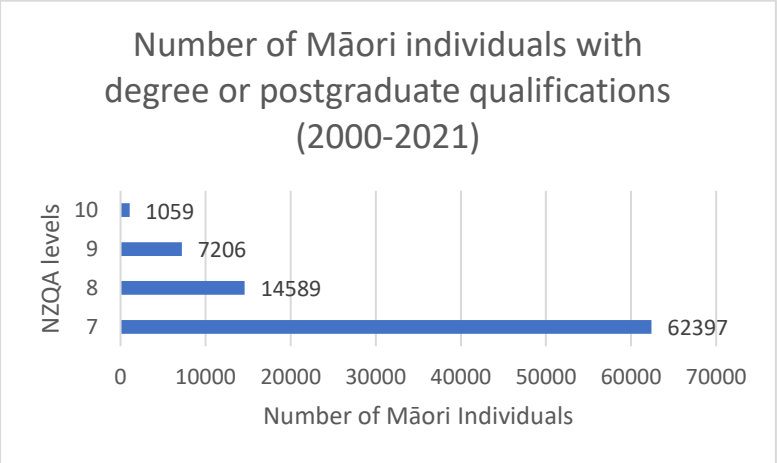
promoting doctoral research among Māori scholars is essential to the mātauranga Māori continuum (Winiata, 2016), knowledge production, the notion of lifelong learning, and the enhanced wellbeing of Māori and their respective whānau, hapū, iwi, and extended communities. Ultimately though, ensuring that Māori are well positioned to disrupt dominant narratives within academia, ensures the decolonisation of knowledge production.

Noting the extremely low numbers of tauira Māori achieving a doctoral qualification in Figure 2, Funaki's doctoral research (2023) offers up potential reasons for these results:

> Understanding how Māori doctoral students experience their postgraduate studies is essential to any kōrero about Māori advancement and building Māori capability. Without insight into the nuances of their everyday influences, including the challenges they face, Māori PhD students remain at risk of being exploited, pushed to the margins, or withdrawing from future academic careers. The implications of these mean the already low numbers of Māori academic representation will either remain pitifully low, or even worse – decrease. (p. 33)

Figure 2

Māori Educational Pathways



(Source: Stats NZ) (Graph created by author)

Notably, the purpose of these tables is not to show (or make) comparisons between Māori and non-Māori populations, however, it would be correct to say that while these numbers are high, when viewed alongside the numbers of non-Māori for the same period, these would be

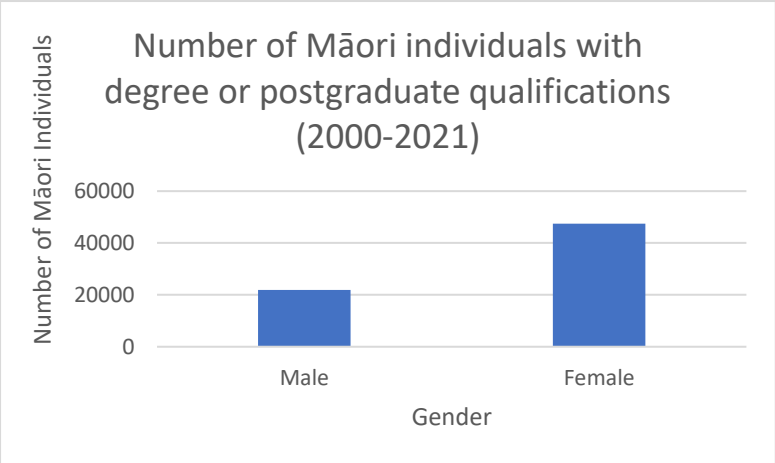
significantly lower in comparison (Nash, 2017; Theodore et al., 2017). Funaki (2023) has already identified possible reasons for this. Other reasons include issues of inequality and ethnicity (van Meijl, 2020) and socio-economic deprivation (Loring et al., 2022) that impact accessibility, affordability, and overall opportunities available to Māori.

Gender Specifics

Globally, the world has experienced a rising increase in the number of female tertiary enrolments and qualification attainments since the early 2000s (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021). This trend is also evident in Aotearoa New Zealand as reflected in Figures 3 and 4, depicting high rates of wāhine Māori attaining qualifications across degree and postgraduate qualifications. This growing phenomenon of wāhine outnumbering tāne in higher education has been named as the "female advantage" by a number of researchers including Buchmann and DiPrete (2006), Niemi (2017) and Williams and Wolniak (2021). Possible causes for this growth could be attributed to family resources and support, educational pathways, or career aspirations. From a Māori perspective, this could be explained by a number of factors, including those mentioned already, as well as cultural resilience and identity, whānau and community support, evolvement of traditional gender roles and expectations, wāhine Māori representation and visibility, and progressive educational initiatives (Hayward, 2012; Kukutai & Rarere, 2017; Middleton, 2007).

Figure 3

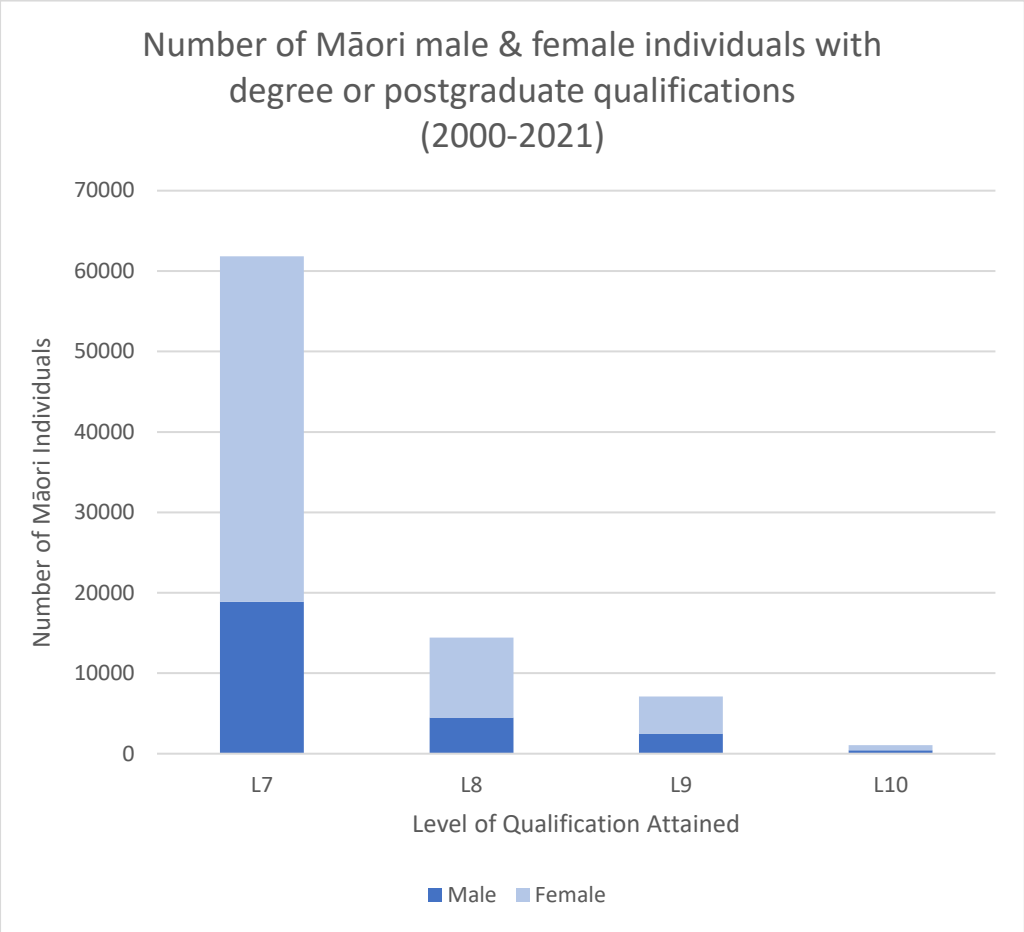
Gender Disparities in Māori Education



(Source: Stats NZ) (Graph created by author)

Figure 4

Qualification Distribution by Gender



(Source: Stats NZ) (Graph created by author)

He Whakaotinga

Depending on the context, success is a term that can be defined in a number of ways. For educational institutes it can be represented as retention, completion, achievement, and progression rates. On the other hand, society might view it as a citizen's ability to contribute to the economic development and wellbeing of the nation. Researchers might equate success to the amount of funding they attract and parents might perceive success as their ability to provide for the needs of their families.

Aotearoa New Zealand's education system holds clear and distinct perspectives on what qualifies as success, with many of these criteria deeply entrenched within its framework. For Māori, this often means navigating a system that may not fully align with their cultural values,

perspectives, and ways of knowing. The criteria for success in the education system may not always acknowledge or value Māori knowledge, language, and cultural practices, leading to potential challenges and barriers for Māori students. This can contribute to disparities in educational outcomes between Māori and non-Māori students and perpetuate systemic inequalities. Māori may also face pressures to conform to mainstream definitions of success, which may not necessarily reflect their aspirations or strengths within their own cultural context. Therefore, addressing these disparities and promoting culturally responsive education that recognises and respects Māori perspectives is essential for supporting Māori students' educational success and wellbeing.

TE WĀHANGA 4: Notions of Success for Māori

He Whakapuakitanga

In exploring 'Notions of Success for Māori,' it is essential to recognise the diverse and deeply ingrained aspirations that define Māori success. This concept extends beyond individual achievements to encompass the collective well-being of whānau, hapū, and iwi. For Māori single parents, success is often intertwined with the ability to provide a nurturing and culturally rich environment for their children, ensuring the preservation of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and Māori values, principles, and practices. These aspirations resonate with broader Indigenous perspectives, where success is measured not only by personal milestones but also by the strength and resilience of the community. By embracing a holistic view, we can appreciate the unique ways in which Māori, like other Indigenous peoples, define and pursue success, honouring their rich heritage and enduring spirit.

Varying Definitions of Educational Success

A body of longitudinal research published in 2017 investigated Māori educational success across New Zealand's eight universities with the intent of "building an evidence base of the factors that may promote indigenous higher educational achievement in New Zealand and internationally" (Theodore et al., p. 1). Qualification completion was the benchmark used to denote educational success and family support was identified as the most important factor helping qualification completion. Ironically, family was also the most identified factor for hindering educational success, citing "caregiving responsibilities, and family commitments, obligations and crises" (p. 5) as contributing factors.

The fact that 626 Māori students had the opportunity to identify for themselves what helped or hindered their educational success is hugely promising for influencing potential changes in the education system. Noting that family featured strongly in this research as both an aid and a hindrance also denotes a shift in how Māori learners are perceived, especially as western academic pursuits are often regarded as an individualistic endeavour. Whereas, for Indigenous peoples education is experienced as more of a collective, whānau-oriented journey that both impacts and influences past, present, and future generations.

Inviting Māori to contribute to a body of rangahau that seeks to define success from a Māori perspective was a requisite of this doctoral study. Funaki, (2023), Kaumoana, (2013), Martin

(2012), Tiakiwai (2001) and Williams (2010) to name but a few, have all engaged with this same kaupapa within the context of education. As such, each has addressed the importance of speaking back to the dominant, non-Māori discourse by bringing Māori voices to the fore. My rangahau therefore has the capacity to be a hoa-haere—a companion piece to their respective contributions, and while their research has already provided several definitions of success, within the context and scope of my study, I envisage something more specific to Māori single parents will emerge, perhaps something not already captured.

What this looks like exactly is not yet known, however within the fields of academia and education there is a need for a more inclusive and culturally informed approach to defining success:

> Achieving a definition of success, particularly in relation to indigenous and minority peoples, is problematic because of the domination of western research which has previously focused on issues of hereditary intelligence, personality and ethnic constructions. (Tiakiwai, 2001, p. 49)

This is supported by McAllister et al. (2019), who argued that "Pākehā and non-Indigenous academics are overrepresented in universities in Aotearoa and consequently institutional systems, policies and practice tend to default towards Pākehā norms and values" (Funaki, 2023, p. 39).

In the meantime, Māori continue to develop their own interpretations and understanding of success that go well beyond conventional measures such as educational attainment, homeownership, income and employment, or social status. While these measures align more closely with a western notion of success, Indigenous perspectives offer a distinct richness that reflects cultural worldviews, principles, values, and social circumstances. For Māori, a holistic understanding encompasses the collective as well as the individual, the spiritual as well as the physical, and the traditional as well as the contemporary.

This is also why it is important for the kaituku within this rangahau to give their own meanings to the notion of success. In essence, this approach reinforces the position that within a Māori worldview "our bodies are epistemological agents" (S. Edwards, personal communication, May 30, 2012), which in and of itself is also a cultural narrative. As such, single-parents' experiences (like all others' experiences) locate them physically (and spiritually) as situated knowers within

their own contextualised realities. This means that their first-hand knowledge and experience of success is inherently subjective, personal and unique.

Reclaiming Space

Martin (2012) spoke of "reclaiming a space where Māori theorizing of success can occur, and more importantly, where a Māori perspective of success can sit alongside other widely accepted notions" (p. 110). The rationale for this positioning was very simple, "Indigenous values and ideals have long been overshadowed, disregarded and dismissed as irrelevant and unimportant" (p.110). This provides a sound foundation from which to add another chapter to an evergrowing body of knowledge surrounding cultural notions of success. Martin contextualised her doctoral research to Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori medium education) and in particular Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi, thus bringing through the successes of the kura.

By contextualising my own rangahau to the journeys of Māori single parents who have engaged in postgraduate studies, I (like Martin) am also wanting "to challenge the dominant discourse on success" (2012, pp. 110-111). Herein lies the importance of the kaituku who shared their journeys with me, as it is their explanations and definitions, viewpoints and opinions that will help to shape this rangahau as they are "encouraged to remember, reflect and essentially, retell" (Martin, 2012, p. 111) their stories. In essence, placing their pūkōrero at the centre and providing opportunities for this group of Māori single parents to name and claim success for themselves, both sit comfortably within a Kaupapa Māori methodological approach.

Generally speaking, refusing to be "named and represented solely from the perspective of the dominant cultural narratives" (O'Reilly, 2004, pp. 6-7) is a reality for all Indigenous peoples including Māori (Bird, 2014; Haenga-Collins, 2011; Hoani, 2014; Lee, 2009; Mahuika, 2008; McRae et al., 2010; Pihama, 2001; Sabbioni, 1996; Shizha & Kariwo, 2012; Smith, 1997; Tiakiwai, 2001; Waitere-Ang, 1999). However, in acknowledging that culture is not limited to ethnicity alone, single parents worldwide are also familiar with dominant narratives that locate them 'outside' of the traditional two-parent family unit (Faul, 2012). Bereft of two parents (more specifically a mother and a father), single parent families are oftentimes viewed "through a lens that illuminates difference, abnormalities and deficits rather than capacity, abilities and unique skills" (Maier, 2014, p. 1). Although Maier made this statement in relation to student disability, it is indicative of how single parenting is often viewed as a 'parenting' disability, if not a 'familial' disability.

Shifting the emphasis from a space of "deficit thinking .... to affirmative repositioning" (McRae et al., 2010) is both deliberate and intentional. Similarly, focusing on Māori single parents' notions of success through this doctoral journey, like McRae et al. (2010), could be considered a "refreshing ... and relatively unexplored" terrain (p.7). Undoubtedly (as highlighted by Tiakiwai, 2001) there are "western measurements of success" (p. 51), derived from "western notions of success" (2001, p. 52) and while Tiakiwai's comments are made in relation to educational and academic success, they remain pertinent across all contexts.

That is why it is important that Māori single parents articulate their own notions of success and in the process develop (if needed) their own measurements of success as well. That is also why the focus of this rangahau has evolved from an exploration of my own journey as a Māori single mother to one that embraces a more robust discussion, inclusive of other parental voices and viewpoints:

> While there are certainly situations where the experience of single mothers and their children may not have been positive and single parents have been less than successful, if we are to have a well-balanced picture it is also important to unpack what single parents are doing well. (Stewart-Withers et al., 2010, p. 7)

In keeping with the statement above by Stewart-Withers et al. (2010), emphasis has been placed on "trying to discover positive representations and experiences of parenting" (p. 7), the only difference being that this doctoral work focused on Māori single parents, not Pacific single mothers. This is not to say that the narratives shared will focus only on the positive aspects of their experiences. It is highly likely that from the shared pūkōrero a variety of contributions will be made to this rangahau. Firstly, through a recount of the challenges experienced; socially, financially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Secondly, through the 'words of wisdom' shared by the kaituku—words engendered with hope, potential, opportunity, and life. As an example, from their research on Pacific single mothers, Stewart-Withers et al. (2010) identified a range of disparities in the areas of housing, health, employment and education, however, they also discovered how individual strengths such as resilience, connectedness, and cultural security contributed to their participants' experiences of success in the form of successful parenting.

Flourishing as Māori

The concept of human flourishing is not a new idea. Rather, it is the application of flourishing within the context of Indigenous approaches to wellbeing that has highlighted it as a notion of success—one that resonates with Indigenous peoples, including Māori. According to Anand (2016), "human flourishing encourages us to think about the ultimate wellbeing outcomes we want to pursue and achieve" (p. 12). With origins tracing back to Aristotle's philosophical works on the pursuit of eudaimonia, or the greatest human good, happiness and wellbeing are intimately connected to the concept of human flourishing, as are the notions of realising one's potential and living a good life (Huppert & So, 2013; Lear, 2004; Las Heras et al., 2023; Seligman, 2011). Moreover, Seligman argued that human flourishing is as much a collective pursuit as it is an individual pursuit, which strengthens its appeal to Indigenous peoples, many of whom place a significant emphasis on flourishing within the context of community and collective wellbeing.

From a Māori worldview, Mauri Ora (Durie, 2012) holistically encapsulates the essence of human flourishing in relation to the pursuit of wellbeing, happiness, and vitality for Māori across multiple dimensions of health and prosperity. However, Derby and Stevens (2021) state that "such concepts are culturally and socially grounded and can mean different things to different social, cultural, and ethnic groups, both at the individual and the community level" (p. 7). Therefore, "achieving a state of wellbeing is as complex as attempting to define the term" (p. 7).

In 2010, the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) of New Zealand determined that "when someone is flourishing, they experience positive emotions, positive interest and engagement with the world around them, and meaning and purpose in their lives most of the time" (p. 2). Building on this interpretation, Blissett (2011) sought to develop a Māori worldview of flourishing, evidencing "that the ability to flourish is inextricably linked to the values, practices and communities in which individuals and collectives interact and exist" (p. 3). Anchoring his research in whānau centred initiatives, Blissett (2011) reported three key findings, each with its own nuances of flourishing from a Māori perspective:

1. Relationship with the environment:
    a. whānau connections to whenua
    b. health of the land

    c. Māori identity, sense of belonging

2. Intergenerational
    a. platform for future generations to build on
    b. educational opportunities
    c. culture

3. Collectivist:
    a. collective responsibility for the whānau
    b. health
    c. individual agency
    d. self-determination, tino rangatiratanga

In a similar vein, Kingi et al. (2014) explored the concept of flourishing within whānau Māori. Based on their research, the "Markers of Flourishing" (p. 4) framework was developed "as a starting point so that the concept of flourishing as applied to whānau may be better understood and used to measure progress towards whanau 'success'" (p. 36). Similar to Blissett's 2011 research, these six markers (as listed below) also offer additional insights into the nuances of flourishing:

1. Whānau Heritage:
    a. culture, identity, whakapapa, traditional practices

2. Whānau Wealth:
    a. access to resources and wealth

3. Whānau Capacities:
    a. education, health, employment

4. Whānau Cohesion:
    a. whanaungatanga, quality relationships, intergenerational

5. Whānau Connectedness:
    a. participation, engagement, contributions

6. Whānau Resilience:
    a. resilience, adaptation, future planning

While each of these bodies of research are distinct in their particular focus, they align when highlighting the importance of cultural identity, whanaungatanga, and holistic wellbeing for

whānau Māori. Both also challenge the commonplace dominant narratives that magnify Māori deprivation and inequities, rather than emphasising strengths and positive aspects within whānau. The convergence of these research themes, under the umbrella of 'flourishing whānau,' reinforces the notion that success for whānau Māori requires a holistic approach that encompasses cultural identity, relational connections, and overall wellbeing. Hence, by continuing to challenge deficit narratives it is possible to advocate for a more inclusive and empowering definition of success that celebrates strength and resilience within Māori communities.

E Tipu E Rea

Tā (Sir) Apirana Ngata—respected elder, scholar, and politician of Ngāti Porou descent is famous for a quote, penned as words of inspiration in 1949 to a young child who was just beginning their educational journey. Over the years, these words have been memorialised in numerous bodies of literature (Keelan, 2001; Mead & Grove, 2004; Penetito, 2010). As an ōhāki (parting wish), it has become "widely known for its imperative that Māori grasp the new ways of the Pākehā, while still remaining true to the traditions of their ancestors as a way of moving forward into the future" (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2010, p. 261). As taken from the work of Ka'ai-Mahuta, those infamous words of Ngata are shared here in both Māori and English, so that we may all appreciate the foresight of what he wrote more than seventy years ago:

> E tipu, e rea, mō ngā rā o tōu ao
>
> Ko tō ringa matau ki ngā rākau a te Pākehā hei ara mō tōu tinana
>
> Ko tō ngākau ki ngā taonga a ō tīpuna Māori hei tikitiki mō tō māhuna,
>
> ā ko tō wairua ki tō Atua, nāna nei ngā mea katoa
>
> Grow up oh tender plant
>
> To fulfil the needs of your generation
>
> Your hand clasping the weapons of the Pākehā
>
> As a means for your physical progress,
>
> Your heart centred on the treasures

Of your Māori ancestors

As a plume upon your head,

Your soul given to God

The author of all things.

This prose is perhaps the most prophetic in terms of what success might look like from a Māori perspective. Over the years, Ngata's words have unwittingly provided a road map of how Māori and non-Māori, more specifically Pākehā, can co-exist "through the advantageous amalgamation of two different knowledge systems: ngā rākau a te Pākehā—Western knowledge; and ngā taonga a ō tīpuna Māori—Māori knowledge" (Rangiwai, 2017, p. 195). For Māori to walk confidently in both worlds—to take "all that is good in the past, in the world of our ancestors, and place it alongside all that is good from the Pākehā world" (Royal, 1992, p. 16), has long been considered a recipe for success for Māori. No matter how much this differs from the historical backdrop of Aotearoa New Zealand, intent on the subjugation of Māori ways of knowing, doing and being, Ngata believed that this was the best way to ensure the survival of Māori and the reclamation of rangatiratanga for Māori.

Educating for Rangatiratanga

Te Wāhanga 3 highlighted the intent of *Ka Hikitia*—for Māori to experience educational success 'as Māori.' In a body of writing titled *Decolonising Education*, Jackson (2016) advocated that rather than educating Māori for success, the education system should be educating Māori for rangatiratanga. In doing so, the system (and by default those people responsible for enacting the system) would need to move beyond, what I consider to be, a one-dimensional line of thinking—one that sees Māori predominantly as 'at risk' learners. Conversely, it would require a move to a more culturally embracing, mana-enhancing positioning that strives to unlock the potential of Māori learners (Rameka, 2021).

Educating for rangatiratanga requires educational practitioners first to re-consider the purpose of education. Before it became a colonial tool (prior to 1840), education was a site of enlightened learning for Māori, not a site of resistance, as it is now. Questions could be asked and mātauranga could be shared, although the ability to both know and understand was related more to a state of being, rather than ages, stages or gender. Elkington (2011) referred to these states as 'cycles of development'—āhua or abilities that one has throughout their personal development, whereas Doherty (2010) addressed these as 'ranga' or strands of knowledge and

knowing that depict a person's readiness to engage with mātauranga. Despite the differing terms, the main point to take from these examples is that rangatiratanga requires us to engage 'as Māori,' utilising Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being.

What then is the meaning of rangatiratanga? Articulated below are three definitions, as outlined by Smith et al. (2021b) within the Whakatika Research Project—a four-year study that investigated racism (and its impacts) as experienced by Māori in their daily lives:

> 1. A system of Māori leadership, extending through the many generations in Aotearoa, and understood in other Pacific nations. The rangatira system is connected to hapū [cluster of extended families] and mana [power] over specific areas of land and sea. At times, rangatira can exercise mana over large hapū collectives with affiliation to a single waka or iwi [tribe].
>
> 2. It is a term used in the Declaration of Independence in 1835 and Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840, and is discussed as 'tino rangatiratanga', the translation of the English phrase 'a most-high form of chieftainship'.
>
> 3. Rangatiratanga is a term that encapsulates the political struggle fought by Māori to uphold sovereignty and self-determination as whānau, hapū, iwi, and as a nation. It is commonly understood as the rights that Māori 'should' have received under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (Smith et al., 2021b, p. 5)

Ultimately then, the notion of educating for rangatiratanga, rather than success means to envisage an education system that goes beyond qualification grades or completion and retention rates. An educational experience that enables Māori to engage with mātauranga according to their respective whānau, hapū, and iwi ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Jackson (2016), highlights though that this would require a decolonisation of both the education paradigm and the education system. With colonisation described as "the violent denial of the right of Indigenous peoples to continue governing themselves in their own lands" (p. 106), the process of decolonisation becomes one of restorative justice for colonised peoples. A process imbued with the notions of "healing, releasing, remembering, reviving, reclaiming, reasserting, and confronting the continuing colonial agenda" (Murphy, 2016, p. 182). In essence, education needs to be a practice that enables Māori "to think critically, to ask questions, [and] to recognise

the fullness of who we are and might be….to know that we are entitled to determine our own destiny and to make our own political and constitutional decisions" (Jackson, 2016, p. 42).

Educating for rangatiratanga signifies the importance of Māori realising their potential as Māori. It is also a natural progression towards tino rangatiratanga—Māori exercising "authority and agency over their mātauranga, tikanga and taonga" (MoE, 2021, p. 7). As Te One and Clifford (2021) identify, the keystone of tino rangatiratanga is the "centrality of mātauranga Māori" (p. 2), whereby a culturally-specific, context-rich, and practice-based worldview is key to understanding.

> For Māori therefore, issues and acts of self-determination refer to the collective well-being of a group, for Māori these social ties include iwi (tribes), hapū (sub-tribes) and whānau (families), all of which form the main sites through which Māori tino rangatiratanga is claimed and exercised. (Te One & Clifford, 2021, p. 2)

Tino rangatiratanga is not a utopian ideal. Rather, it is way of being that guarantees all Māori the inalienable right to live *as* Māori. Māori who come with their respective whānau, hapū, iwi and community affiliations. In its deepest sense, "colonisation is a *process* of dispossession and control" that denies "Indigenous peoples the right to be fully free in their own lands" (Jackson, 2020, p. 134). Thus, in terms of what success looks like for Māori, tino rangatiratanga is the primary redress that fosters the notion of self-determination, making it the most appropriate measure of success for Māori.

However, self-determination should not be the ultimate measure. Why might we ask? Simply stated, self-determination in and of itself, is a Western construct (Toki, 2017). Subsequently, the definition of self-determination in regard to Māori living and succeeding *as* Māori, still falls short of what is both expected and required of tino rangatiratanga. At best, it serves as a stepping-stone towards tino rangatiratanga, rather than an alternate destination.

Kia Tau ō Mata

Māori aspirations are integral to the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga, yet acknowledgement must be given to the fact that "Māori are not one homogenous people" (Wilkie, 2006, p. 56). Māori society is extremely diverse; for every individual there are whānau, hapū, and iwi affiliations. This is echoed by van Meijl who states:

> This assumption of homogeneity is inherently problematic since the concept of Māori in New Zealand covers a wide range of different cultural practices at the level of family and/or tribe, living either in predominantly rural areas or in cities, involving tremendous varieties in terms of tribal organisation and associated customs (*tikanga*), protocol (*kawa*) and language, not to mention variation in future aspirations. (2020, p. 86)

Māori aspirations encapsulate many aspects of our lives, connecting to cultural, political, social, and economic wellbeing through the collective nature of kaupapa (Bean, 2018). Kaupapa bring people together for a common purpose and the diversity within Māoridom means that multiple kaupapa may exist at every level of Māori society yet differ from one grouping to the next. As an example, educational success may be a collective aspiration set at iwi level as part of their long-term educational strategy, wherein determinants of success have been established by the iwi for the benefit of its tribal members.

This however, does not deter whānau from having their own autonomy to discern for themselves the meaning and value of education. It does mean though, that for many Māori parents, unless they themselves have experienced education in a positive and beneficial light, are critically invested in their children's educational wellbeing, and resonate with the belief of Māori experiencing success as Māori, the full potential of education may be lost to them. While many Māori students are able to reap the benefits of learning within Māori-medium educational settings, due to the continuing impacts of colonisation, the majority of Māori children can still be found in English-medium schools (Hancock, 2023).

As represented in the title of this rangahau, *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* invites us to achieve success on our own terms as Māori, across all aspects of our lives, rather than expressing and manifesting success in terms of western constraints. Education has the capacity to be much more than a grade premised upon a dichotomy of failure or success, or a piece of paper that says you now possess a certain qualification. Bringing Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being (back) to the forefront of education requires a reclamation of Māori voice and vision.

Wider Indigenous Contexts

For Aboriginal Community Liaison officers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, community engagement is one of the primary contributors to educational success (Housnia, 2021). While this is aimed at children, the same holds true for Indigenous students

studying at tertiary level where aspirations for the collective often sit at the heart of educational pursuits. In Canada, a 2008 report issued by the Canadian Council on Learning identified that for First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis peoples of Canada, learning should be grounded first and foremost in their respective languages and knowledge systems. This includes their beliefs, values, and practices.

Furthermore, the need to redefine how success is measured was also a key component of that report. It stated that "current approaches are oriented to learning deficits" (Canadian Council of Learning, 2008, p. 8). Therefore, if Indigenous markers are used to define success in Indigenous terms, then the tools used to measure success should also be culturally relevant and reflective of Indigenous perspectives. In the broader context of success, this is an important distinction as it highlights the need to create more inclusive and equitable systems that respect the contributions of all communities.

He Whakaotinga

The journey towards educational equity and genuine success for Māori, particularly for Māori single parents, is both complex and multifaceted. While there has been a gradual increase in Māori achieving tertiary qualifications, disparities persist, necessitating a deeper examination of the contributing factors and a shift towards more culturally responsive educational models. The exploration of Māori educational success at tertiary level, particularly within the context of postgraduate studies, reifies the importance of privileging Māori voices and worldviews.

In wanting to offer new insights into the realities and aspirations of Māori single parents, this wāhanga emphasised the need to redefine success from a Māori standpoint. By centering Māori notions of success and advocating for the reclamation of Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being, we move towards a vision of rangatiratanga—self-determination and sovereignty. However, it is crucial to understand that self-determination, while a step forward, is still a construct of the Western paradigm. Perhaps true success for Māori lies in a holistic approach that acknowledges and embraces Māori identity, culture, and collective wellbeing.

Education must transcend conventional measures and align with kaupapa that reflect the unique values and goals of each whānau, hapū, and iwi. This rangahau urges Māori to redefine success on Māori terms, fostering a transformative educational experience that empowers individuals and collectives alike. In essence, the pursuit of educational success for Māori is intertwined with the journey towards rangatiratanga—a journey that requires Māori to challenge dominant

narratives, reclaim Indigenous knowledge, and strive for holistic wellbeing across all aspects of life. With the wisdom of tūpuna, the tools of the present, and a vision for the future, Māori success seems inevitable.

Hei Whakakapi

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, tracing the origins of single parent identity revealed that legislation, more specifically the Destitute Persons Ordinance of 1846 (Goodger, 1998), had significant implications for Māori single parents. This legal framework heavily shaped the single parenting discourse, often placing Māori, who by choice or circumstance became single parents, at a disadvantage. Conversely, exploring the whakapapa kōrero of parenting within te ao Māori highlighted the importance of the collective supporting the parenting process as opposed to the individual.

Furthermore, in a country such as Aotearoa New Zealand, the advent of colonial rule and Christianity has left an indelible mark on perceptions of success with regards to education, morality, and economic stability. As a result, any elements of success that Māori may have experienced were often at the expense of cultural assimilation, loss of autonomy, and displacement. While some Māori were able to navigate this complex landscape successfully, it often came with sacrifices and trade-offs.

This is why it was also important to explore notions of success from a Māori perspective, one that honoured ancestral wisdoms, collective wellbeing, and connections to people, kaupapa, and the land. The ability to remain aspirational while marginalised speaks to the resilience and determination of Māori in general, and Māori single parents in particular. Whether it is through a framework or a whakataukī (proverbial saying), continuing to theorise a Māori perspective of success based on lived experiences is essential for challenging dominant narratives and storying mana affirming narratives of rangatiratanga.

Continuing with the privileging of Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being, Chapter Three extrapolates the inner workings of He Whare Rangahau, illustrating how this doctoral inquiry is supported within the paradigm of Rangahau, rather than research.

CHAPTER THREE:
HE WHARE RANGAHAU

RANGAHAU DESIGN

Hei Whakatau

> The soul of a people, the essence of their being, exists within the warmth of their philosophy, it is nurtured and sheltered by the wisdom of their culture and their law. To oppress a people, to set in place the bloody success of colonisation, is to try to destroy the soul. (Jackson, 1994, p. 128)

> Our survival, our humanity, our worldview and language, our imagination and spirit, our very place in the world depends on our capacity to act for ourselves, to engage in the world and the actions of our colonizers, to face them head on. (Smith, 2021, p. 253)

Jackson (1994) and Smith (2021) collectively highlight the significance of Māori identity and culture while also acknowledging the enduring impact of colonisation. The historical oppression of Māori has forcibly constrained agency and self-determination. In particular, research has continued to perpetuate the marginalisation of Indigenous/Māori perspectives and experiences (Kovach, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative for kairangahau to actively engage in rangahau endeavours aimed at reclaiming narratives, amplifying the voices and lived experiences of Māori, and fostering the empowerment of whānau, hapū, iwi, marae, and communities. Through such endeavours, kairangahau can better position themselves to challenge prevailing research paradigms by advocating for methodologies that centre Indigenous perspectives and elevate Māori voices within academic discourse.

Kaupapa Māori maps the methodological approach taken to guide this doctorate investigation into notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. In tandem with this is an exploration of the theory and principles that underpin a Kaupapa Māori approach. The primary aim of this rangahau is to explore notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. It is supported by four objectives that set out to magnify the voices and lived experiences of Māori single parents, while exploring success factors, challenges, and Māori cultural perspectives that have all shaped their journeys.

A breakdown of the main methods employed to collect data is provided, detailing the value and appropriateness of hui, pūkōrero, and pātai. This is supported by an explanation of the use of statistical data and the importance of data sovereignty for Māori. The chapter concludes with explanations for the processes of kaituku engagement, tikanga and ethics, and pūrākau analysis.

In framing this journey within the context of rangahau, it was also necessary to clearly establish my own positionality. This step was essential to ensuring that I could always find my way back to the original intent of this journey: to elevate the voices of Māori single parents, including my own, with the aim of highlighting their achievements and aspirations. The overarching goal of this doctorate is to shift the narrative from one of deficit to resilience, strength, and transformation.

Rangahau Positioning

Rangahau is an ethnocentric space that privileges Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being, one that has existed since before the coming of the Pākehā to Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud. Replete with wisdom and history, songs and stories, language, whakapapa kōrero, and practices of our ancestors (Whaanga et al., 2018), rangahau is both a repository and a seeding ground for te ao Māori. “To feel a connection to rangahau through whakapapa (ancestral heritage)” (Hoani, 2016, p. 22) and traditional knowledge in the form of pūrākau reifies that the rightful place and purpose of rangahau is situated within a Māori paradigm—within the realms of te reo Māori, tikanga (custom), āhuatanga (tradition), and mātauranga (knowledge) Māori.

Yet, within the academy “rangahau is often and mistakenly identified as research” (Rangiwai, 2018, p. 662). The kupu rangahau carries several English meanings including to seek, search out, and yes, even research, therefore, it is not surprising that academia already subscribes to this definition. However, Mika (2022) posits that in the process of translation “a term’s “essence”—some might call this its “wairua”—has been modified to refer and equate to an English language term, and also to conform to a colonising worldview in the background” (para. 12). Therefore, reclaiming the word rangahau is “an opportunity to put a stake in the ground and take back the kaitiakitanga [guardianship] of rangahau” (TWoA, 2016, p. 9) and all that it represents:

> For too long Māori have had to explain themselves in relation to a pervasive Eurocentric worldview, philosophy, paradigm or methodology. In our view as long as Māori continue to allow themselves to be positioned as part of a broader fundamentally Eurocentric research perspective, the beauty, the clarity and the depth of what is Rangahau will continue to be lost in translation. (TWoA, 2016, p. 8)

From the outset, the desire to position myself within rangahau and not research was a purposeful decision that reflected my own journey in the "subtle but distinctive repositioning away from the word research" (Tiakiwai, 2009, p. 5). Therefore, just as the term 'single parent' has orginiated from within a Western worldview, so too has the word research. However, within a Māori worldview we have the ability to look within our own pūrākau for the concepts that most resonate with us. The beauty of these pūrākau, as described by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (2019), is that "each whānau, hapū, and iwi have their own way of knowing, doing and being in relation to rangahau (para.5).

For Māori, pūrākau also act as a segue—a cultural vessel that conveys "the mauri, the living force, of the tangata whenua ethos through time" (Hakopa, 2019, p. vii). Within my tribal lineage of Tainui, there is a pūrākau that tells the story of Hani and Puna, the male and female essences of life coming together to create a being called Tikiāhua from clay. According to the writings of Pei Te Hurinui Jones (2013), Hani and Puna then fashioned a heart for Tikiāhua which was named Rangahau, the questing, searching heart. "And when this heart was implanted it was purified by Io [the supreme being] with these words:

This is Ranga-hau (The Questing Breath of Life)

This is Manawa-tina (The Beating Heart)

It is Manawa-toka (The Throbbing Heart)

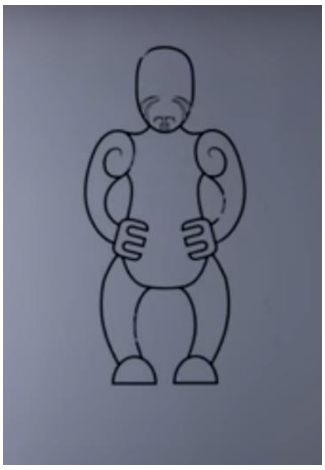
(Jones, 2013, p. 97)

Embedded within the teachings of the Tainui Sacred House of Learning lies the deep-seated notion that it is the essence of the blood of Tikiāhua and the heart of Rangahau that ignites the human spirit, compelling individuals to seek and attain the wisdom of ngā Atua and ngā tūpuna. An eternal quest, conducted with manawatina/perseverance and manawatoka/fortitude (Jones, 2010, 2013).

Figure 5

Tainui Pūrākau: Creation of Rangahau

PUNA & HANI



TIKIĀHUA

RANGAHAU

(TWoA, 2016)

Having a firm foundation and being aware of my positioning within the realm of academia constantly reminds me that as a kairangahau, I have responsibilities and obligations, both as a doctoral student and a kairangahau Māori. I am accountable to the academy in ensuring that my rangahau activity is rigorous, robust, and academically fit for purpose. More importantly, I have an obligation to tūpuna and mokopuna, to the past and present, and to myself as the segue between these worlds—an acknowledgement that "each generation links through whakapapa to each other and we are a reflection and a continuance of our ancestral lines (Cameron et al., 2013, p. 4). This is the foundation upon which I launched my doctoral journey titled *Kia Tau o Mata ki ngā Atakura – Exploring Notions of Success for Māori Single Parents Studying at Postgraduate Level*.

Insider Positioning

Embarking upon this doctoral journey in 2017, I was always cognisant of the fact that I am a doctoral candidate, a kairangahau, and a wahine Māori who by choice became a single mother. Sitting alongside these roles are the accompanying obligations and responsibilities that each requires, all of which influence and inform the objectives of this rangahau. Intent on improving the quality of life for me and my whānau, this rangahau provided an opportunity to explore

notions of success through a Māori lens with the honourable intent of challenging dominant discourses (Martin, 2012).

With confidence, I initiated this rangahau from the inside out (Milne-Ihimaera, 2018); my ability to do so premised upon my knowledge and lived experiences (Greene, 2014). Savage et al. (2012) stated that "this standpoint positions Māori at the centre, with exploration of deeds, thoughts and events being undertaken from within a Māori perspective" (p. 25). Similarly, Bloomfield (2013) contends that "if you choose to conduct research within a community where you are already a member, this navigation of insider/outsider terrain will be necessary" (p. 184). Understanding that for Indigenous peoples, relationality is central to the ways in which we engage with life, highlights the intrinsic value of Indigenous knowledge systems and the unique perspective that someone operating from within gains.

In this rangahau, I drew insights not only from the narratives shared by the kaituku, but also from the scholarly works that have enriched my understanding. Berryman (2013) draws attention to the value of insider perspectives, emphasising that subjective and passionate approaches can still result in "authentic interpretations of the Māori world" (p. 265), a sentiment echoed by Marsden and Henare (1992). Similar to Gemmell (2017), when the rangahau being undertaken is important to me, I too acknowledge that I am "subjective in my thinking and that I am influenced by my thoughts, upbringing, perception of the world and my education and employment" (p. 111). This may be contrary to the fundamentally flawed ideal of objective research which only acknowledges the importance of observation, evidence, and scientific methods of knowledge acquisition (Windchief et al., 2017). However, by understanding how my worldview and experiences influence the way in which I build knowledge, it is possible to engage subjectively without negating, nor compromising, the depth and breadth of the rangahau itself (Chilisa, 2020; Smith, 2021).

Primary Aim & Objectives

As posited in Chapter One, this inquiry into what defines success for Māori single parents engaged in postgraduate studies arose after the completion of my master's degree. A brief, yet significant exchange with a colleague served as the catalyst for this rangahau. The primary aim of this rangahau was to explore the perceptions of success among wāhine and tāne Māori who

were single parents while at the same time pursuing a postgraduate qualification. Guided by four objectives, this rangahau sought to:

1. Privilege Māori single parents' voices and lived experiences.
2. Identify key determinants of success for Māori single parents engaged in postgraduate qualifications.
3. Gain an understanding of the types of challenges experienced.
4. Consider how Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being contribute to Māori single parents' experiences of success.

Methodology

When engaged in any form of rangahau that involves Indigenous peoples (including Māori), the term methodology reveals a variety of meanings and understandings, as articulated by these four researchers. The first researcher, Fabish (2009), a Pākeha scholar, emphasised the importance of "finding methodologies that are respectful and people centered" (Kaupapa Māori, para. 2). The second, Botswana researcher Chilisa (2020), advocated for methodologies that are culturally responsive and relational. In her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2021), the third researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith, reminds us that Indigenous methodologies should privilege "Indigenous values, attitudes and practices" first and foremost (p. 146). Finally, the fourth researcher, Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson (2008), explains that:

> Methodology refers to the theory of how knowledge is gained, or the science of finding things out. Your view of what reality is, and how you know this reality, will impact on the ways that more knowledge can be gained about this reality. (p. 64-65)

Building on this kōrero, Smith (2005) also recommends the use of a methodology that is "transformative in terms of privileging 'indigenous knowledge, voices and experiences'" (p. 87), while Mahuika (2008) advocates specifically for the prioritising of Māori "approaches and perspectives" (p. 4), and in this regard, Kaupapa Māori methodology encompasses both.

Kaupapa Māori Approach

Since first proposing this kaupapa rangahau, my approach has shifted slightly. Originally, under the mantle of Mana Wāhine, I only intended to privilege the voices of Māori single mothers. At that time, I was newly graduated from my Master's journey, having been motivated and sustained by the key tenets of Mana Wāhine theory and the privileging of wāhine Māori views, voices, and narratives for at least three years. It is no surprise then that this influenced my initial thoughts on which methodology to employ. Critically positioning myself within the Mana Wāhine framework was always about speaking back to historical narratives intent on subjugating and marginalising our very existence as wāhine Māori (Gemmell, 2013; Hoani, 2014; McRae, 2014; Ranga, 2014).

However, my master's also highlighted the complementary roles of wāhine and tāne within te ao Māori. As a result, adjustments were made during the proposal stage to ensure the inclusion of the experiences and perspectives of Māori single fathers alongside those of Māori single mothers. This adjustment aimed to present a broader and more inclusive understanding of single parenting overall. Similarly, echoing Gemmell's sentiments (2017), the intention of this rangahau was not to marginalise, but rather to unify the voices of both Māori single parents, freeing them from eurocentric ideologies that perpetuate racism and gender biases. Furthermore, by incorporating the experiences of tāne Māori, this rangahau aimed to provide insights into the broader context of te ao Māori, thereby enriching our understanding of its interconnectedness.

Accordingly, Kaupapa Māori now underpins the methodological approach to this rangahau. Toi (2019) noted that the most obvious reason for this choice is the fact that Kaupapa Māori "affirms and legitimates being Māori" (p. 52) by "re-privileging," as Simmonds (2009) explains, "the histories and experiences of Māori" (p. 19). Locating tikanga and āhuatanga Māori at the centre of the rangahau experience presents an opportunity to speak back to a dominant Western research paradigm that uses its findings to "further dispossess and marginalize Indigenous people" (Walker, 2015, p. 160), rather than emancipate and empower. As such, a Kaupapa Māori approach seeks to transform the lives of its people and in the process, challenges Euro-Western ideologies and practices that have led to the oppression of Indigenous communities throughout the world.

Engaging in any kaupapa as a Māori requires an understanding of what it means to *be* Māori. This is important because depending upon the narrator, 'Māori' can mean different things to different people. While King (1994) described Māori as "a person of New Zealand Polynesian descent" (p. 5), Maaka and Fleras (2005) stated that "[as] Ngā Tangata Whenua o Aotearoa ('original occupants of New Zealand'), Māori represent the indigenous peoples of New Zealand" (p. 66). King et al. (2018) described Māori "as a construct describing Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa" (p. 188). On the other hand, Doherty (2010) expanded further, stating that for some, to be Māori is to be "sure of their identity as Māori in the context of their respective iwi" (p. 82), citing "Tā Rangihīroa Buck, Tā Turi Caroll, Tā Apirana Ngata, and Tā Maui Pōmare" as examples.

According to Doherty (2010), these four leaders were "steeped in their 'tribalness'" (p. 82), "each clear on their identity, their space and place within the iwi which formed their place and space within Māori" (p. 82). As a result, they became the first Māori parliamentarians and established the Young Māori Leaders Party, their ability to engage in and with the non-Māori world grounded in the security of their respective iwi identites. Pitman (2013) emphasised that "who you are [as Māori] is important. We must reclaim the right to define ourselves because it's that constant redefining of us by the coloniser that causes schizophrenia, confusion and separation from each other" (p. 46). Smith (2015) advocated further that if "we cannot control the definitions we cannot control meanings and the theories which lie behind those meanings" (p. 47) and while this statement was made in relation to Kura Kaupapa Māori, Smith's positioning is equally as relevant, if not more, to the term 'Māori.'

On that premise, a defining aspect of being Māori is my whakapapa, where I am Waikato-Tainui on my mother's side and Ngāti Mākino-Te Arawa on my father's side. This means I am Māori by birthright. However, having grown up in Christchurch, a city with a small population of Māori, I experienced a complete culture shock at the age of eight when I first learned that I was Māori (Hoani, 2007; 2021). Since becoming a mother though, I gained a newfound appreciation for my Māori identity and have engaged in a purposeful journey of reclamation ever since. In essence, a reclamation of those intrinsic facets that I perceive define what it means to be a wahine Māori—te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, āhuatanga Māori, kaupapa Māori, mātauranga Māori, mātauranga wāhine, and mana wāhine.

In a blog titled *Kaupapa Māori Theory, Research Methodology, Practice and Expressions of Rangatiratanga,* Pihama (2022) spoke of the impact of colonisation on Māori ways of knowing and being and the importance of knowing with a Māori heart and mind:

> As Freire consistently reminded us, to know the word is to know the world and to have the capacity to retain control over our lives. In this context I am drawing upon that notion to affirm that as Māori to know our words, to know our ways, our tikanga, mātauranga and reo is to know a world that is framed by distinctly Māori ways of knowing and being. (para. 14)

This is not just a matter of controlling the narrative, it is about knowing the narrative intimately—through lived experience, whakapapa kōrero, and taonga tuku iho handed down through the generations. Fortunately, Kaupapa Māori has provided me with a platform from which to launch my rangahau, the language to articulate it, and the tools to facilitate this inquiry through to its completion.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Kaupapa Māori is a transformative approach intent on realising the aspirations of Māori for the betterment of whānau, hapū, and iwi. Interestingly, while it is well known that Graham Hingangaroa Smith first introduced Kaupapa Māori theory to the world of research, Linda Smith (2011) reminds those who engage in this space that Kaupapa Māori cannot be attributed to a specific individual or reduced to a single framework or theory:

> … it's not my creation, or Graham's creation, or any single individual's creation. It is *ours* [emphasis added]. It is our language, our terminology, and we will make it what it will be. When I think about kaupapa Māori research, I see it really simply: it's a plan; it's a programme; it's an approach; it's a way of being; it's a way of knowing; it's a way of seeing; it's a way of making meaning; it's a way of being Māori; it's a way of thinking; it's a thought process; it's a practice; it's a set of things you want to do. It is a kaupapa and that's why I think it is bigger than a methodology. (p. 10)

During the development of Kaupapa Māori theory, Smith (1997) drew heavily on the works of these four major theorists—Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon, Michael Apple, and Antonio Gramsci, describing their contributions to critical theory in the following ways:

> Freire's work emphasises the linkage between conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis; Fanon's work speaks viscerally of indigenous struggle at multiple levels of cultural oppression and economic exploitation; Apple is one of the few theorists who connects meaningfully and accurately with recent Maori experience with respect to the interface of culture, education and economics, he also speaks meaningfully about organic intellectual practice: Gramsci's understandings give impetus to both critically understanding how oppression is practised and how it may be transformed by the organic actions of communities. (p. 34)

According to Smith (1997), juxtaposing his work alongside these four theorists highlighted a correspondence between their viewpoints and the lived experiences and struggles of Indigenous peoples. By situating themselves within these communities, Freire, Fanon, Apple, and Gramsci positioned themselves to better understand the struggles of marginalised peoples, enabling them to advocate for transformative change with a foundation firmly grounded in the realities of the oppressed.

Despite resistance from the academy, theorising Kaupapa Māori was a vital step in Smith's (2012) strategy to upend academia's entrenched frameworks and paradigms. Underpinning this was the knowledge that historically Māori perspectives were often marginalised as primitive knowledge, unscientific, and nostalgic (Hamilton, 2022; McAllister, 2022; Smith, 1997; Smith, 2021). By positioning Kaupapa Māori in relation to critical theory, Smith (1997) deliberately set out to leverage the strengths of both approaches—Kaupapa Māori and critical theory, thereby fostering the incorporation and validation of Māori ways of knowledge and thinking in a more definitive manner.

In this respect, rangahau that takes place within the paradigm of Kaupapa Māori theory attempts to redress the many imbalances that exist in today's Māori society; imbalances brought about by the impacts of colonisation on Māori, across all facets of society. Two decades later, Kaupapa Māori theory is now a seasoned response to "continued power imbalances and the consistent use of cultural deficit theory as seemingly logical explanations for the position that Māori occupy within New Zealand society" (Mahuika, 2008, p. 6).

Smith (1997) also asserted that theories, due to their construction within a societal context, are likely to be influenced by 'cultural' and 'social' perspectives. Consequently, the true value of a specific theory can only be seen from its practical implementation and application. Therefore,

the crucial concept of praxis holds importance in this context. Ruwhiu (2009) expands on this stating that "Kaupapa Māori theory is a localised form of critical theory that focuses on Māori liberation by using Māori philosophies" (p. 49). Adding to this, Pihama (2011) highlights the fact that Kaupapa Māori theory "is not a singular theory" (p.50) and sheds further light on its origins stating that:

> The term "kaupapa Māori theory" is exactly what it says it is. It's a theory that is underpinned by Māori philosophies of the world, that has Māori foundations, that has Māori understandings. It is a theory that is about working for our people (p.49).
>
> The term "kaupapa Māori theory" grew out of a need for us to say, "We have theories of the world. What can we call them in an academic context and a research context?"…"What do we call our theory?" and then coming up with the point of, "Well, we've called our schools kaupapa Māori, so why don't we call our theory kaupapa Māori theory?" The term was born from that context. (Pihama, 2011, p. 50)

Overall, Kaupapa Māori theory is a distinctly Māori framework that emerged from the unique historical and cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand. While it draws inspiration from various critical theories, it also represents a response to the specific challenges and aspirations of Māori. As such, it integrates both Indigenous and critical perspectives to create a framework that prioritises Māori knowledge, self-determination, cultural reclamation, and revival.

A Principled Approach

Under the umbrella of Kaupapa Māori theory, Smith (1992) developed six principles, referred to by Mahuika as "crucial change elements" (2008, p. 7) that governed its application within education as a site of struggle for Māori. These principles "had obvious potential for addressing the educational crises facing Māori students within schools in Aotearoa" (Mahuika, 2008, p. 7). Each of the six principles signifies an integral component of te ao Māori, a signpost with which to navigate Kaupapa Māori research. As articulated through the years by a number of Kaupapa Māori researchers (Glover, 2000; Hudson, 2020; Lipsham, 2023; Pihama et al., 2019; L. Pohatu, 2015; Smith, 1997; Smith, 2003b), these principles are:

Tino Rangatiratanga:

Tino rangatiratanga, a central concept in te ao Māori and a fundamental concept in the context of te ao Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Within the context of this rangahau, there were many expressions of Tino Rangatiratanga. Firstly, the ability for each of the kaituku to express in their own words what it means to be a Māori single parent and secondly, what success looks and feels like for them, according to their own circumstances. These two expressions resonated with the principle of self-determination – the capacity to reclaim autonomy over one's life and cultural wellbeing.

Taonga Tuku Iho:

The principle of cultural aspirations – te reo, tikanga, mātauranga, and āhuatanga Māori are at the forefront of what it means to be Māori. This rangahau highlights important aspects of mātauranga Māori, in particular, the practice of parenting and notions of success through the lived experiences of kaituku. How each of the kaituku navigated their respective worlds is indicative of the taonga tuku iho they engaged with on a daily basis.

Ako Māori:

The principle of culturally preferred pedagogy – tikanga Māori concepts and their application to Māori pedagogies. This principle advocated the importance of teaching and learning *as Māori,* validating practices that are underpinned by Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being. Integral to this is the notion of educating Māori for rangatiratanga, rather than educating for success (Jackson, 2016).

Kia Piki Ake i ngā Raruraru o te Kāinga:

The principle of socio-economic mediation – transformative approach to ensuring whānau well-being. The focus of this rangahau was Māori single-parents in the pursuit of mauri ora (enhanced wellbeing) for their whānau, while navigating the ebbs and flows of parenting full-time, working, and studying. The ways in which each parent achieved this were specific to their personal circumstances, but the end goal of achieving mauri ora for their whānau remained the key priority for all of the kaituku, ahakoa ngā piki me ngā heke (despite the inevitable ups and downs).

Whānau:

The principle of extended family structure – the practice of whanaungatanga and collective responsibility. The nature and composition of whānau has evolved over time in response to social, economic, and cultural changes within Aotearoa New Zealand. However, this rangahau highlighted a strong emphasis amongst Māori single-parents on the importance of extended whānau relationships, mutually shared caregiving responsibilities, maintaining strong connections, and collective decision-making, all in the pursuit of wellbeing for their whānau.

Kaupapa:

The principle of a shared and collective vision – the ability to articulate and connect with Māori aspirations, politically, socially, economically, and culturally. The title of this thesis, *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* is about whānau aspirations, notions of success, and achieving one's potential as Māori. As the main contributors to this rangahau, Māori single parents expressed their aspirations for themselves and their whānau (personally, professionally, educationally, and culturally). In the process similarities arose, demonstrating that despite the separate journeys each kaituku has travelled, there were common threads weaving them together.

Born out of the collective experiences of Māori parents wanting the best educational opportunities for their tamariki (Smith, 1997), these six principles hold a privileged space within Kaupapa Māori research. At the very least they signpost the ways in which I could approach this investigation and the narratives of the participating kaituku. On a much broader scale, these principles ensured that mātauranga Māori, tikanga Māori, and te reo Māori were prioritised throughout the rangahau journey.

Tikanga and Ethics

According to Mead (2016), "[u]nderpinning all activities that members of whānau, hapū and iwi engage in is an ethical system and a system of common law that we refer to as tikanga Māori" (p. 18). This system of ethics is essential to all facets of te ao Māori, guiding actions and behaviours "according to notions of right and wrong and what is good and fair" (Stewart, 2017, p. 118). Applying the same measure of accountability to this rangahau, ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Research Committee of Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi

(TWWoA) in 2018[1]. In general, this process was designed to ensure that all research activity undertaken by tauira and kaimahi of TWWoA is carried out to the highest ethical standard.

At the very least, "ethical research systems and practices should enable indigenous nations, peoples and communities to exercise control over information relating to their knowledge and heritage and to themselves" (Battiste, 2008, p. 503). In that light, a Kaupapa Māori methodological approach underpinned by tikanga Māori ensured that this imperative was realised. Of all the tikanga that guided my practice as a kairangahau, "whakawhanaungatanga: allowing time and space to establish relationships" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 70) proved to be one of the most crucial. It ensured that in every aspect of this journey, my obligations and responsibilities as a kairangahau, as a wahine Māori, and as a doctoral candidate of TWWoA remained respectful. It also ensured that my practice was in keeping with Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being. In doing so, whakawhanaungatanga served not only for establishing relationships, but also set the benchmark for maintaining the ethical integrity of this rangahau as a whole.

Supporting whakawhanaungatanga as an ethical practice were several principles and values. These included Munford & Saunders (2011) notion of manaakitanga (care and hospitality) and Sadler-Howe's expression of aroha as "notions of empathy, compassion, and understanding ensures that our practices express sincerity, genuineness, and transparency" (2019, p. 341). Additionally, Lipsham's (2023) articulation of kaitiakitanga emphasised "the importance of taking care of, not only ourselves, but also the metaphysical and physical realms of our world, so that all things are well, balanced and healthy" (p. 183). The interrelatedness of whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga, aroha, and kaitiakitanga demonstrates the inherent nature of these values, applied principles, and tikanga as they each exist in their own right, but also in relation to each other.

While ethical considerations addressed crucial elements, such as safeguarding the rights of kaituku to anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy, tikanga necessitated expressions and articulations that honoured and aligned with the values and practices of each kaituku. Jones et al. (2006) asserted in their Hauora Tāne research project that possessing an "understanding and recognition of the special tapu of each participant and of the information and experiences they have shared, protects against the misuse or exploitation of their kōrero" (p. 67).

[1] See Appendix 1: TWWoA Ethical Approval letter

This resonated with me, particularly given the extended timeframe between when I initially received their kōrero and when this thesis was ultimately completed. A period spanning five-seven years, during which, significant life changes occurred, both for myself and the kaituku. Finally, it is also important to note that the ethic of tapu also accompanies the ethic of noa. As Mead (2016) reminds us, noa is not the absence or opposite of tapu, but rather an acknowledgement "that a balance has been reached, a crisis is over, health is restored and life is normal again. This means relationships are restored" (p. 34).

This section ends with the the knowledge that tikanga and ethics both hold essential roles in today's contemporary society and are accessible to researchers and kairangahau alike. Anchored in distinct cultural and philosophical foundations, tikanga and ethics offer valuable guidance for addressing contemporary challenges. However, when working implicitly within tikanga, adherence to principles such as listening, understanding one's role, humility, relationship building, decolonisation, and empowerment collectively embody its beauty and practicality (Mahuika, 2015).

He Kohinga Kōrero-Methods

Going into this space of methodology, I acknowledged Smith's (1997) cautionary comment of ensuring that the information-gathering methods employed were appropriate hoa-haere/critical companions for the chosen methodology. For that reason, I explored a number of methods (Māori and non-Māori) that might be appropriate for this rangahau. Table 1 illustrates the relationship between each of the six principles, the key concept(s) arising from each principle and potential methods that were considered. The six principles areTino Rangatiratanga, Taonga Tuku Iho, Ako Māori, Kia Piki Ake i ngā Raruraru o te Kāinga, Whānau, and Kaupapa.

Table 1

Alignment of Principles, Concepts, and Practices

PRINCIPLES	KEY CONCEPT(S)	POTENTIAL METHODS
Tino Rangatiratanga	Self-determination, Autonomy	Pūrākau (Traditional narratives) Pūkōrero (Personal narratives) Whakapapa kōrero (Ancestral narratives) Pātai (Inquiry) Ngā raraunga kōrero (Statistics)
Taonga Tuku Iho	Legacy	Pūrākau / Pūkōrero Whakapapa kōrero Pātai Maimai (Songs for the dead) Whakatauāki / Whakataukī (Proverbial says) Tohu (Signs) Ngā raraunga kōrero
Ako Māori	Te Reo me ngā Tikanga	Pūrākau / Pūkōrero Whakapapa kōrero Whakarongo/Titiro/Kōrero Hui / Wānanga / Pātai Tuakana / Teina Rongo momoe
Kia Piki Ake i ngā Raruraru o te Kāinga	Whānau Transformation	Pūrākau / Pūkōrero Whakapapa kōrero Pātai Hui-ā-whānau Photovoice Reflective Journaling Ngā raraunga kōrero
Whānau	Relationships	Hui-ā-whānau / Hui-ā-kaupapa Tuakana / Teina Whakapapa Kaupapa / Case-study

		Pātai
Kaupapa	Collectivity	Hui-ā-kaupapa Wānanga Kanohi kitea

It is important to highlight that the purpose of Table 5 was not to provide an exhaustive list of potential methods. Instead, it was to illustrate that as Māori, we have our own bodies of knowledge, practices, and cultural identity that inform and influence the ways in which we engage with each other, with kaupapa, and with the world in which we live. Pohatu (2011, p. 2) wrote about the importance of being "able to select our own choices to transcend and journey through the world of facts and experiences, in any context." After considering the growing list of methods that could potentially help to facilitate this rangahau, hui, pūkōrero, and pātai were chosen as the primary means of gathering the kōrero of each kaituku. Consistent with a Kaupapa Māori positioning (Jones et al., 2006), these choices resonated with the concept of kanohi kitea and reaffirmed "the significance of being seen in the flesh" (Rewi, 2014, p. 252).

Hui Method:

From an Indigenous perspective, the seeking and gathering-in of "knowledge must be understood in the context of relationships formed to develop a holistic understanding" (Thomas et al., 2016, p. 3). Whakawhanaungatanga then acts as a powerful mobiliser of people and kaupapa premised upon "relationships with people, ancestors and the environment" (Thomas et.al., 2016, p. 3).

When rethinking approaches to research, Pohatu (2008) explained that the hui method signalled "the importance of always consciously coming together then engaging in dialogues on specific kaupapa" (p. 25). This could be achieved through the actions of "Huia te whakaaro (gathering of thoughts), Huia te kōrero (gathering of discussions), and Huia te take (gathering of issues)—each in relation to the kaupapa. In that light, hui became the main forum for engaging with kaituku. To assist with this approach, three guiding principles prevailed—"whakapapa, mihi whakatau (protocols/principles of initiation) and whakawhanaungatanga (building respectful relationships)" MacFarlane (2013, p. 130).

Mihi whakatau was a time for welcoming, for acknowledgements, and for making the unfamiliar familiar. It was also a time for 'settling in'—to the space, to the kaupapa, and to a relationship with each other (MacFarlane, 2013; Rewi, 2010). Whakapapa supported the

facilitation of our hui in two distinct ways. Firstly ensuring that whakapapa and by default whakapapa kōrero, encapsulating pūkōrero, tūpuna kōrero, and Atua kōrero, contributed to the richness of whakaaro, kōrero, and take (issues) shared (Macfarlane, 2013; Ngawhare, 2019; Smith, 2000). Secondly, knowing that whakapapa connects us as Māori, physically and spiritually; philosophically and metaphysically (Cheung, 2008; MacFarlane, 2013; Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2016; Roberts, 2013), means recognising the interconnectedness of relationships that bind us in a myriad of ways. As the third guiding principle, whakawhanaungatanga acknowledged the significance of relationships, belonging, and collective responsibility, again through kaupapa (Bennett, 2017; Berryman, 2013; Beverland, 2022; Bishop, 1996; Cameron et al., 2013).

The majority of hui were organised ahead of time to better align with the availability of the kaituku and their whānau-work-study commitments. There were however opportunities when impromptu hui also took place simply because our paths as kairangahau and kaituku brought us together, affording us time and space to hui and kōrero. Unlike meetings, there were no set agendas, pre-determined meeting lengths, or minute-taking and for the most part, these hui were kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face). With kaituku consent, hui were audio recorded and notes were taken. At the heart of each hui experience was the intent to provide time and space for kaituku to share their lived experiences of parenting, studying, working, and anything additional that they wanted to share in relation to their specific circumstances.

An invaluable lesson that I gained from my master's experience helped me to reframe the way in which I engaged with kaituku during this doctoral journey. During the 2013 He Manawa Whenua Indigenous Research Conference, Moana Jackson (2015) shared his philosophy of ethics. While he presented ten in total, it was the fifth ethic—the ethic of time that stood out for me. Jackson advocated a shift away from 'Māori time' as a deficit thinking space to one of reclamation, as explained here in more detail:

> Our notion of time is whakapapa based, and like whakapapa it has its own sense of never ending beginnings in which time turns back on itself in order to bring the past into the present, and then into the future. Above all it is a notion of time that recognises the interconnectedness of all things. (Jackson, 2015, p. 59)

Individual hui with kaituku took place from March 2018 – August 2020 and duration-wise hui ranged from 1.5 hours to several days, depending on the needs of the kaupapa and the kaituku.

Sometimes the entire kaupapa could be covered within one sitting, however, there were also times when a hui would finish one day, only to resume the next. Because the hui approach supported the gathering of whakaaro, kōrero, and take arising from kaituku kōrero, time became an essential koha/contribution, both to the kaituku and to the kaupapa.

In addition to time, space was also an important consideration during the hui process, both physically and mentally. Kaituku often led the way when it came to deciding where their respective hui took place. As a result, hui spaces varied widely, encompassing living rooms and dedicated hui rooms to cafeterias and hotel suites. These spaces also extended to campus classrooms and offices, travelling in a car, and picnicking beside the ocean.

Pātai Method:

Acknowledging that kaupapa are rich and diverse, with multiple layers and facets to them, the pātai method was employed to gather information for this rangahau. By fashioning "questions that are important to the mauri-ora of the kaupapa" (Pohatu, 2008, p.23) the intent was to ensure that any information given and received was done so in a respectful and mana-enhancing way. Pohatu wrote of the importance of the mauri ora of kaupapa and in this sense, he meant "the constant acknowledgement that at the core of any research kaupapa and activity is the pursuit of wellbeing" (2008, p. 21). Rather than formulating a series of pre-determined questions that only reflect the intent of the kairangahau, this approach advocates that pātai are introduced as prompts, encouragements, and invitations. In this way, kaituku are guided in the sharing of their knowledge, understanding, and experiences of the kaupapa. Additionally, pātai provided time and space for each of the kaituku to locate themselves within their lived experiences and dialogue from that positioning.

Āta wetewete, or the careful unraveling and thoughtful consideration of a word or concept, is essential to appreciating the depth and nuances of meaning encapsulated within. As such, the word 'pātai' can be revisited through its two elements of pā and tai, with 'pā' meaning to touch, to affect, or to concern oneself with something, while 'tai' is often associated with the ocean, sea, and tides. When contextualised to this rangahau, pātai can then be seen as an inquiry that influences the flow and sharing of mātauranga, shaping the shoreline of understanding as it touches upon it.

In a similar fashion, the Indigenous practice of yarning "does not follow the formal conventions of research interviewing and can weave in and out of the yarning story where the role of the

researcher is to listen for cues related to the research topic" (Kennedy et al., 2022, p. 3). These notions of 'seeing,' 'feeling' (Pohatu, 2008) and 'listening' (Kennedy et al., 2022) suggest that holistically our bodies are epistemological agents (Edwards, 2007) that inform and influence knowledge and knowing; understanding and wisdom.

The pātai were arranged into four clusters, with whakawhanaungatanga guiding our initial interactions as kairangahau and kaituku. Through whakawhanaungatanga, kaituku were encouraged to talk about themselves, their whānau, and their guiding tikanga, values, and beliefs. After laying down this foundation, the second cluster of pātai focused on their experiences of education throughout their lifetime, before turning their attention to the third cluster which explored their experiences of single parenthood—both the challenges and the celebrations. The final cluster focused on notions of success and what this meant for them, before finally inviting them to share their own personal success stories.

Pūkōrero Method:

> Te Ao Māori has a soul that moves to a unique heartbeat and rhythm .... Māori have formed our language, to recognise, interpret and represent those beats and rhythms in its own way. This 'way' is the potentiated power held within te reo Māori; that is the power to activate within its members, powerful images, symbols, passions, energies and joy of belonging to a collective of people with a unique heritage. (Pohatu, 2008, pp. 18-19)

The kupu 'pūkōrero' has several English translations, all of which connect to the notion of 'speaking.' It can reference an orator, the person speaking—often one who is articulate, eloquent, knowledgeable, and skilled in the art of speaking (Lewis et al., 2023). It can also reference story and story telling, narratives and more specifically, personal narratives (Eruera & Ruwhiu, 2015).

Within the context of this rangahau, pūkōrero are critical to disrupting dominant narratives which have become standardised in the social conscience and public domain of Aotearoa New Zealand (E. Fitzpatrick, 2016). They come in the form of 'pū' – "vibrations and origins of sound" (Solly, 2021, para. 3), or in this case, kōrero that originates from within each individual kaituku. Rich with lived experiences, memories and recollections, pūkōrero provide unique perspectives on notions of success, educational journeys, whānau and whānau parenting, and Māori single-parent realities and aspirations.

Conducive to the sharing of pūkōrero were the pātai that prompted the ebb and flow of kōrero as each of the kaituku chose which parts of themselves they wanted to contribute to this rangahau. Where permission was given, pūkōrero were recorded, and in time transcribed. In one instance, permission was not given to record kōrero and only a very minimal form of note-taking was allowed. Despite those restrictions, the pūkōrero shared by that particular kaituku was still rich in context and content.

When referring to kaituku directly and quoting excerpts from their pūkōrero, the importance of using correct pronouns became an added measure in honouring each of their voices and views. As such, kaituku were asked to confirm their preferred pronouns, which they did, resulting in the pronouns she/her/hers and he/him/his being applied in this rangahau. This practice not only maintained the integrity of the ways in which kaituku were represented, but also reaffirmed my commitment as a kairangahau to respecting their identities and their contributions.

Pūrākau Analysis:

A thorough analysis of each pūkōrero shared by kaituku is a necessary step in the rangahau journey. This involves examining the narratives to reveal underlying insights, commonalities, differences, and overlapping of key messages. In keeping with a Kaupapa Māori paradigm, I chose an "approach to analysis that involves mapping the data onto a culturally relevant narrative" (Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021, p. 88).

Within this rangahau, pūkōrero are framed as the personal narratives housed within the body, intellect, emotions, and memories of each kaituku. Similarly, Jenny Lee (2005) elaborates that our traditional narratives or pūrākau "can be interpreted stories that represent the experiences, knowledge and teachings that form the pū (base)" (p. 7) of our collective existence. From this base, "many branches, versions, or interpretations" (p. 8) emerge, growing collectively to become rākau (trees). When these two elements of 'pū' and 'rākau' are viewed as a whole, we gain a better appreciation of how "pūrākau are central in the connecting, nurturing, sustaining, and flourishing of our people" (p. 8).

The use of pūrākau as a tool for analysis was inspired by Rebecca Wirihana, a wahine Māori scholar who documented the creation of the PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū framework in her doctoral work, *Ngā Pūrākau ō ngā Wāhine Rangatira Māori ō Aotearoa: The Stories of Māori Women Leaders in New Zealand*. Through the process of wetewete reo (unraveling the word), Wirihana unpacked the concept of pūrākau through "the four words which comprise its whole, pū

(source), rā *(light),* ka *(past, present, future),* and ū *(from within)"* (2012, p. ii). Building on Wirihana's work, I reinterpreted the PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū framework to suit the specific context of my rangahau. Integrating this framework ensured that, first and foremost, the voices and experiences of the kaituku were honoured and accurately represented, while also contributing to the ongoing development of this rangahau and Kaupapa Māori as a methodology.

He Raraunga Kōrero – Data Collection

The politics of data play a crucial role in determining who has the authority to make decisions and shape the narratives that impact the lives of Indigenous peoples. On a global scale, it is not Indigenous peoples themselves who have the most say in these matters, a situation that also rings true for Māori here in Aotearoa New Zealand (Kukutai & Cormack, 2020; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). This then raises an important question about how do we ensure that Māori/Indigenous peoples retain this sovereign right, which according to Jansen (2016) "requires us as indigenous peoples to consider both substantive issues of data, its collection and storage and the shadow of data, its interrogation, analysis and application" (p. 195).

Māori Data Sovereignty

Poor (2022) goes on to highlight that data sovereignty for Indigenous peoples strives to guarantee that data accurately reflects their identities, wisdoms, and perspectives, which by default also means that their knowledges and data outcomes remain within their control or authority. Yet in reality, data governance for the most part sits with "the colonial settler states within which they reside" (Smith, 2016, p. 119). This power imbalance affects how policies are made and how Indigenous perspectives are understood in society, reinforcing the position that "if we can not control the definition we can not control meanings and the theories which lie behind those meanings" (Smith, 2015, p. 47). A position echoed by Johnson-Jennings et al. (2019), who stated that "to control data is to control the details from which information is derived and stories are told; data is infused with implicit cultural biases, which affect the context of what, how, when, why, and by whom stories are told" (p. 27).

For Māori, "Māori Data Sovereignty reflects a longstanding aspiration for rangatiratanga (sovereignty)" (Sporle et al., 2021, p. 5). Implicit in this "is the desire for data to be used in ways that support and enhance the collective wellbeing and self-determination of Indigenous

peoples" (Kukutai & Cormack, 2019, p. 204). Self-determination, sovereignty, tino rangatiratanga, and mana motuhake are all terms used to articulate a person's or peoples' right to make their own decisions not only for the ownership and ethical use of their data, but also its collection and storage, however each term comes with its own nuances of meaning and understanding (Greaves et al., 2024). The important factor here is that for Māori, data is more than a commodity or resource to be touted. Data is recognised as a living taonga and in that sense it should be respected and protected as a fundamental cornerstone of today's interconnected world (Greaves et al., 2024; Hudson et al., 2017; Kukutai & Cormack, 2019; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Poor, 2022; Sporle et al., 2021).

Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)

In attempting to answer the question—what does success look like for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level, data was also gathered through the IDI. The original IDI prototype was developed in 2011 and since then its many iterations have shaped policy, informed government operations, and contributed to academic research (Jones et al., 2022, p. 2). Maintained expressly by Stats NZ, the IDI is "a database of potentially-linkable datasets containing individual level information sourced from government agencies, Censuses, and several surveys conducted by Stats NZ" (Greaves et al., 2024, p. 3). These datasets cover areas such as education, income, benefits, migration, justice, and health. Through tax data, the IDI also links to the Longitudinal Business Data or LBD, which covers business-related data. Through the interconnection of these two databases, IDI researchers have access to a comprehensive coverage of individual data and business data.

The decision to include IDI data in this doctoral rangahau was made after careful consideration of the potential benefits and problems that could arise. As an example, the process of linking datasets involves access to identifiable information such as names, dates of birth and other personal details. In general terms, while the data in the IDI is de-identified, there is still the potential risk of re-identification occurring, which in turn could compromise privacy and confidentiality (Greaves et al., 2024; Kokoua et al., 2019). Furthermore, from a Māori perspective, Greaves et al. (2024) identified that "a lack of consistency and quality for Māori ethnic identifiers with individuals having different ethnicities recorded in different sources of data" (p. 195), could lead to inadequate resourcing and representation for Māori.

With regards to supporting this rangahau, basic statistics were requested on the number of Māori who completed degrees or postgraduate qualifications and those results were broken down by gender and further for single parents. An approved IDI researcher undertook a comprehensive review of existing data sources housed within the IDI to ascertain the quality and availability of data crucial to the data analysis process. The data analysis made use of several datasets within the IDI, which encompassed:

- Ministry of Education administrative data, which included information about education providers and subjects.
- NZ Qualifications Authority administrative data, covering qualifications data.
- Data from the 2013 and 2018 Censuses, offering insights into aspects like ethnicity, gender, and parenthood.
- Administrative Population Census data, also providing information about ethnicity, gender, and parenthood.
- Administrative data from the Ministry of Social Development, specifically focusing on single-parent benefit information.
- Births data, which provided essential information about parenthood.

During the initial stage of the process, the role of the IDI researcher was to confirm the quality and timeliness of the data from these sources mentioned earlier. It is worth noting that in some cases, it may not have been feasible to definitively identify single parents within the data. Nevertheless, the analysis incorporated information related to births, benefits, and student allowances to offer a valuable indicator in this regard. In the next stage, the data analysis phase drew upon existing code, wherever possible, to ensure consistency and comparability with published statistics. The IDI researcher conducted this analysis within the IDI, with the specific objective of generating simple summary data tables. These tables were designed to break down qualification attainment.

Following the data analysis, a stringent quality assurance process was administered to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the statistics. Subsequently, the data underwent thorough scrutiny through Stats NZ's IDI output checking process. Once the statistics were verified and validated, they were disseminated in the form of straightforward summary data tables provided in Excel format. This approach ensured that for the purpose of this rangahau, the findings could be easily accessed and comprehended. It is important to note that these results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure

(IDI) and/or Longitudinal Business Database (LBD), both of which are carefully managed by Stats NZ.

Throughout this process the following principles were in effect – principles that also resonated well with the underpinning philosophy of Kaupapa Māori:

- Māori-centred research: The specific research questions were directed by kairangahau Māori and the entire process was Māori-led.
- Principles of Māori Data Sovereignty guided the IDI researcher's approach to the analysis of Māori data. Included in that was the explicit commitment that iwi data would not be analysed without the express permission of iwi representatives.
- Implicit also in this process was the commitment to ensuring that the final deliverables would be utilised for the benefit of Māori communities and researchers.

Upon receiving the necessary information, I undertook training to ensure that I was better equipped to derive meaningful insights from the information at hand and effectively communicate those insights within this thesis. As a result, a series of tables were included and unpacked in Te Wāhanga 3 of the literature review.

It is important to note that while the data presented in Te Wāhanga 3 does not relate directly to the primary focus of this rangahau, which is exploring notions of success for Māori single parents, it provides a broader context for understanding the educational journeys of Māori learners within Aotearoa New Zealand. The data serves as a backdrop against which the pūkōrero of the kaituku can be better understood, For example, Table 1 shows a substantial number of Māori attaining qualifications at the higher levels, with a notable progression from bachelor's to doctoral level. The commitment of Māori learners to higher education suggests that when educational pathways are aligned with Māori values and aspirations, engagement and success rates are likely to be higher also. This alignment is integral to appreciating the resilience and achievements of Māori single parents within the wider educational landscape.

Hei Whakakapi

My decision to name this chapter ‘He Whare Rangahau’ was premised on this tongikura (prophetic saying) of Kīngi Tāwhiao—one that I have come to know intimately as a descendant of Ngāti Mahuta (Nock et al., 2021, p. 113):

“Māku anō e hanga tōku nei whare	*I shall build my own house*
Ko tōna tāhuhu, he hīnau	*The ridge pole will be of hīnau*
Ko ōna pou he māhoe, he patetē”	*And the supporting posts of māhoe and patetē*

Tāwhiao’s words are a constant reminder to us as Māori that we should be self-determining and innovative in our approach to life, highlighting that we have at our disposal a wealth of resources to draw on, many of which are oftentimes undervalued. In this spirit of self-determination, Chapter Three introduced us to the inner elements of this whare rangahau—a philosophical and theoretical space that anchored this exploration into notions of success for Māori single parents. Understanding the importance of each layer, from methodology and methods to the guiding principles and tikanga, provided assurance that privileging the voices and lived experiences of Māori single-parents studying at postgraduate level would be a transformative journey.

I fashioned its structure from the inside out, taking on the roles of kairangahau and kaitiaki within its walls. With the principles and practice of Kaupapa Māori as its foundation, I extended invitations to kaituku, elders, scholars, and fellow kairangahau, Māori and non-Māori alike. Through hui, pātai, kōrero and the literature review, I encouraged them to engage with a kaupapa meaningful to me as a Māori single mother. My ultimate goal—to create a nurturing environment for the purpose of sharing collective wisdom. A transformative space where the voices, views, and lived experiences of Māori single parents could be celebrated and honoured.

With my whare rangahau in place, Chapter Four: He Iti te Kupu follows next, introducing the kaituku, and detailing the processes used to capture, transcribe, and then analyse their shared pūkōrero. This is also where my adaptation of Wirihana’s (2012) PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū analytical framework is applied in its fullness to reveal the findings and offer deep insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of the kaituku.

CHAPTER FOUR:
HE ITI TE KUPU

ANALYSIS

Hei Whakatau

> The memory of the world is not only in each language, but in each word. It is the connection of our language that is the key to opening the door to the worlds and knowledge of our ancestors – that enables us to theorize about the meaning, the intent, and the practice of pūrākau today. …From the inside, pūrākau are stories that matter, stories not just of, but for survival, for courage, for strength, for resilience, and for vitality. Stories for healing – they too have rescue remedies. Stories of the heart, they teach us about compassion, generosity, reciprocation, and responsibility. Stories of struggle and stories for tino rangatiratanga. (Lee-Morgan, 2019, p. 164)

This rangahau journey would not be complete without the kaituku and their contributing pūkōrero; personal narratives that provided invaluable insights and perspectives into this rangahau. Fostering a deeper understanding into those insights and perspectives is an important aspect of the analysis stage especially within a rangahau paradigm that is both relational and holistic. By analysing these pūkōrero through the analytical framework of pūrākau, we shift from the personal worlds of each kaituku to the broader context of this rangahau, remembering that the intent is to explore in detail notions of success for Māori single parents.

Aptly titled ‘He Iti Te Kupu,’ this chapter acknowledges the kaituku and the unassuming manner in which they imparted their pūkōrero; the title reflecting the modesty and humility characterised by their kupu and their generous contributions of time and energy. Moreover, I present Pūrākau as an analytical framework (Wirihana, 2012). This framework is particularly effective in attributing significance to their words—rich in meaning, their pūkōrero convey wisdom and understanding.

Kaituku Engagement

Within the context of this rangahau, kaituku is used in reference to the ten participants who graciously shared their pūkōrero in support of this doctoral kaupapa—a mix of six wāhine and four tāne who were all single parents at the time that they embarked on their postgraduate studies. In regards to the kaituku wāhine, their introductions to this rangahau were very organic as most had been aware of my kaupapa since its inception in 2015. While two more kaituku came along at a later stage, all were known to me prior to agreeing to take part, either as colleagues or as fellow students within the same tertiary institution.

A formal invitation was extended to each kaituku and whakawhanaungatanga played an important role in the continuance of each relationship. Everyone was in varying stages of their academic journeys, with wānanga and mainstream universities both represented as host institutions. While the majority of hui were kanohi ki te kanohi, due to distance the option to provide written responses was also offered to kaituku.

For the four kaituku tāne who participated, wānanga featured more prominently than university. However, where whakawhanaungatanga had already been established with each of the wāhine, this was not the case with the tāne. From the beginning, making a commitment to include Māori single fathers seemed 'tika'—the right thing to do. As mentioned in the previous chapter, theirs was an important voice that I wanted to include in this rangahau. What I underestimated though, was the levels of anxiety I would experience when trying to reach out to tāne, whom for the most part I did not know. Knowing that my anxiety emanated from traumatic childhood experiences meant that extra care and attention was needed to ensure that I could continue with this aspect of my rangahau in ways that were tika and pono—to myself, to the kaupapa, and to the kaituku.

Originally, there were two tāne that I felt confident in approaching, having known both for several years, and during our intial conversations both were keen to be involved. However, after making formal contact with them and discussing my kaupapa in more detail, one confirmed that he no longer had the capacity to take part due to his full-time parenting, work, and master's studies commitments. The second, while agreeing that his parenting situation could be viewed as 'single parenting' from the outside (that is, those who were not aware of his whānau circumstances), having reflected further he decided that the single father identity did not wholly account for his parenting circumstances.

It is important to emphasise that self-identifying as a Māori single-parent was a key criterion in this rangahau, and while I was aware that there might be other Māori single fathers willing to take part, I was hesitant to approach tāne with whom I had no prior connections or relationships. After openly sharing my anxiety with a few of my wāhine colleagues, whakawhanaungatanga (in the form of networking) once again came to the fore, leading to the successful recruitment of four kaituku tāne.

Through their networking connections, friends and colleagues shared my kaupapa with tāne who they personally knew were single fathers and studying (or had studied) at postgraduate level. Following their discussions, those same colleagues then acted as a segue to each of the prospective kaituku. Whakawhanaungatanga with the newly introduced kaituku tāne was established via emails, which in turn led to a commitment from all four, three of whom agreed to hui ā-kanohi nei (physically meet) with me. Due to distance, the fourth tāne wrote his responses and sent those to me via email.

At this time, I also want to acknowledge another wahine Māori who, in support of my rangahau, openly shared her pūkōrero with me. It was not until much later that I realised the criterion of studying at postgraduate level while a single parent had not been met. For that reason, I did not include this kaituku and their pūkōrero in my rangahau, however their generosity of spirit remains with me today. They reaffirmed that a successful experience at bachelor's level creates a strong foundation for continuing on to postgraduate studies.

The overall aim of this rangahau was to investigate notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. In order to achieve this, hui were held with the ten kaituku (six wāhine; four tāne) and through the guided use of pātai, kaituku shared their pūkōrero. Nine of those personal narratives were recorded, transcribed, and then analysed through the PŪ-RĀ-KA-U framework of 'Mā te Arotahi' revealing eight distinct kaupapa (refer to Figure 6), all of which will now be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

In wanting to respect the rights of all kaituku to their confidentiality and privacy, the tenth pūkōrero was not included as part of 'Mā te Arotahi.' Due to the nature of his employment at the time, one of the tāne did not give permission for his pūkōrero to be recorded, although he was happy to take part in the hui and share his experiences. Acknowledgement is given to the invaluable insights and perspectives that he contributed to this kaupapa rangahau. Finally, as this chapter is dedicated to privileging the voices and views of each kaituku, where appropriate

their first names have been shared alongside excerpts from their pūkōrero—unless a pseudonym was requested.

Table 2 provides an overview of the kaituku who participated in this rangahau:

Table 2

Kaituku Overview

Name	Gender	Age Range	Postgraduate Study	Host Institution
Molly	Wahine	40-50 yrs	Master	Wānanga
Georgie	Wahine	50 – 60 yrs	Master	Wānanga
Jacqui	Wahine	50 – 60 yrs	Doctorate	Wānanga
Raumati	Wahine	40 – 50 yrs	Master	University
JO	Wahine	40 – 50 yrs	Master	University of Technology
Maria	Wahine	50 – 60 yrs	Doctorate	Wānanga
Jason	Tāne	40 – 50 yrs	Master	Wānanga
Maru	Tāne	40 – 50 yrs	Master	University
Mikaere	Tāne	30-40 yrs	Master	Wānanga
Tangaroa	Tāne	30-40 yrs	Master	Wānanga

Honouring Pūrākau

In Chapter Three, I identified that the methodological foundation of this whare rangahau began with honouring the Tainui pūrākau of Hani, Puna, and their child Tikiāhua, who was given the questing heart named Rangahau (Jones, 2013). This notion of honouring continued with the ten kaituku and their respective pūkōrero shared through hui, pātai, and pūkōrero. Honouring their pūkōrero meant engaging in a process of ‘sense-making’ and for that purpose, the analytical framework of pūrākau as developed and documented by Wirihana (2012), was utilised to infer meaning. More than just a tool for thematic analysis though, pūrākau acknowledges the sacredness and spirituality of the pūkōrero (Hendry, 2007; Wirihana, 2012) and in a similar fashion, emanates from a source that is characteristically and unashamedly Māori.

This rangahau recognises the importance of looking to our own traditions and narratives (as Māori) in order to make meaning of life's experiences and lived realities. No matter how diverse these realities may be, te reo and tikanga Māori ensure that our knowledge and knowing are culturally grounded. According to Lee (2008) the main focus of pūrākau lies in generating, preserving, and sharing knowledge within a Māori cultural context. "Embedded within pūrākau is traditional ancestral scholarship" (Hakopa, 2019, p. vii), therefore, rather than attempting to persuade "non-Māori or 'outsiders' of the value of our voice or the worthiness of our beliefs, practices, values, and experiences" (p. 76), pūrākau enable Māori to speak *as* Māori on matters that are relevant and important *to* Māori, and in ways that are imbued with te reo, tikanga, and āhuatanga Māori.

Documenting Pūkōrero

In March 2018, I met with the first kaituku and hui continued with subsequent kaituku until the final hui in August 2020, with all the content of those hui sessions captured in audio format. Elaborating on that point further, each audio file was recorded with the assistance of an artificial intelligence application (AI App) on my personal phone, that both recorded kaituku as they shared their pūkōrero and transcribed in real-time, with the assistance of voice recognition software. Due to the nature of the AI App, the audio recording captured everything, however the initial transcription did not generate a verbatim record. This was because the app itself was programmed by the developer to ignore such things as filler words, interjections, and hesitation markers, as well as non-verbal cues such as silence, sighs, and laughter. Furthermore, while the transcription seemed to cope well with the English language, this was not the case with te reo Māori, often resulting in a very chaotic transcription.

Similar to Perez (2022), I too "created my own process for writing a verbatim transcription of the interview which included multiple rounds of engagement" (p. 44). The first round involved listening only to the audio recording so that I could reacquaint myself with the kaituku and their pūkōrero without being distracted by the AI generated text. This was an important first step because "inviting people to tell you their story is not simply a matter of conducting research. It is also an act of mutual confidence. You ask people to confide in you, and when they do" their stories unfold (Lillejord & Søreide, 2003, p. 92). In that light, it was important to respectfully re-enter this space of pūkōrero with the intent to āta-noho – "to give quality time

to be with people and their issues, with an open and respectful mind, heart, and soul. This signals the level of integrity required in relationships" (Pohatu, 2013, p. 16). Although the kaituku were not physically present, a space was still being held for them through their shared pūkōrero, and I wanted to acknowledge that.

The second, and subsequent rounds of listening focused more on transcribing in order to achieve a verbatim transcript for each recording. Verbatim offered a better understanding of the speaker's emotional condition, along with any underlying meanings that sat beneath their words. While the number of times I re-listened to a recording varied from one pūkōrero to the next, on average one hour of recording resulted in eight hours listening time. This increased where the audio level was compromised. A final round of transcribing was undertaken to produce clean verbatim transcriptions, that could then be analysed more easily. During the cleaning process, it is important to note that the original text was not distorted, summarised, or paraphrased, nor were any sections of the pūkōrero removed.

Once this final transcription process was completed, the analysis then followed. Healey and Tagak (2014) stated that "the goal of data analysis is to find meaning and understanding in the stories, to return to the research question and to examine the data in the context that was set at the beginning of the study" (p. 8). However, they also highlighted that "some meaning-making occurs immediately in the moment of the conversation" (p.8), as was my experience also. By this, we can see that "thinking about and analysing dialogue at the time of the conversation" is just as important as post-conversation.

Perhaps the best example of this was the appreciation I gained for each of the kaituku and how they both viewed and located themselves in relation to single parenthood—understandably, opinions varied. While most kaituku did not refer to themselves as single parents or view themselves as such, Jacqui openly acknowledged:

> *I was raised by a single father so I always thought it was actually very natural for me to be a single mother. … Because it was the normal space for me I didn't really look at single parenting like it was the worst thing out.*

Further along in her pūkōrero, Jacqui also expressed that while consciously choosing single parenthood, she did so with the knowledge that her father had long served as a positive parental figure in her life. Drawing upon his example, she acknowledged his influence in shaping her

understanding of good parenting and the ongoing support he provided as she navigated the responsibilities of caring for her daughter, while also studying and working.

Overall, the various experiences shared by kaituku emphasised the importance of understanding the origins and evolution of the single parent identity within the societal discourse of Aotearoa New Zealand. This included an examination of legislation and the widespread presence of deficit-based stories and perspectives often associated with the single parent identity (Coe, 2011; Domett et al., 2023; Todd, 2008b; Willson, 2022). During the proposal writing stage, I originally underestimated the need to examine legislation. However, after spending time with each of the kaituku I realised it would be irresponsible not to do so. Consequently, the literature review evolved into a more comprehensive and nuanced examination, acknowledging the interconnectedness of legislative influences and societal narratives.

Introducing the PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū Framework:

Similar to Wirihana (2012) and researchers Davis and Came (2022), "the four concepts of this analysis framework were used to make sense of the themes that emerged from the stories" (p. 417). When first approaching PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū, I adopted each of the four concepts as kupu and explored these in relation to one another. Just as "our kōrero tuku iho can be expressed and carved out in multiple shapes, from its aural origins to regurgitations in the same form, or new and enhanced versions in visual and other forms" (Mahuika, 2012, p. 134), so too can te reo Māori, in all of its beauty, be expressed in ways that not only consider the kupu in its wholeness, but also the parts that comprise the whole.

In familiarising myself more with PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū and its purpose as an analytical framework, the notion of 'aro' emerged, inspired by the quote, 'Me aro ki te hā o Hineahuone' / Pay heed to the dignity of Hineahuone (Tu Tangata, 1983), with 'aro' translated as 'pay heed to.' Other meanings for aro include focus and pay attention to, while arotahi (as an extension of aro) carries the meanings of 'lens' and 'to focus intently' As I result, I reinterpreted the concepts or kupu of PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū as 'arotahi'—each serving as a dedicated lens through which pūkōrero were analysed.

After an indepth exploration of the PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū analytical model informed by the research of Wirihana (2012), Davis and Came (2022), and my own interpretations, the following insights for each of the arotahi were gained. *AROTAHI PŪ* revealed an innate source of physical and spiritual wealth and presence (Shirres, 1986). *AROTAHI RĀ* represented light and enlightenment, encapsulating the notion that pūkōrero are receivers, carriers, and transmitters of that light. *AROTAHI KA* incorporated the ideas of past, present, and future; a time continuum where ancestors of the past planned for today's beings so as to ensure the futures of tomorrow's descendants (Weaver, 2001). The final term *AROTAHI Ū* recognised that each of the kaituku were positioned at the centre of their respective pūkōrero and the goal was to reveal those kura huna or "insightful ways of knowing, meaningful ways of doing" (Hawkins, 2016, p. 46) that lay within the kupu, the whakaaro, the experience, and the memory. Alongside each of the key concepts contributing ideas were identified; ideas that emerged from the pūkōrero and resonated with the nature of the corresponding concepts. Below are more detailed explanations for the four arotahi.

AROTAHI PŪ – DRIVERS OF EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

As a standalone kupu, PŪ offers up several meanings, all centred around notions of source, root, root cause, issue, origin, and foundation (Davies & Came, 2022; Elkington, 2011; Martin, 2023; Matthews, 2013; Walker, 1996; Waretini-Karena, 2014; Wirihana, 2012). In the analysis component of this rangahau, AROTAHI PŪ was applied to each pūkōrero in order to explore the motivators or drivers of their educational aspirations and subsequent experiences of success.

As we know from the data shared in the literature review, a significant number of Māori have attained a bachelor's degree qualification since the year 2001, however the progression to postgraduate level has not been comparable. Yet more recently Funaki's (2023) research highlighted that despite the low numbers of Māori studying at postgraduate level in general, there has been an increase in the number of Māori graduating at doctoral level since 2002. Gaining insights into what motivates and inspires graduates to continue on to higher levels of learning has the potential to shed light on the factors contributing to the decline in postgraduate pursuits among Māori. This will not only enrich our understanding but can also work towards developing strategies that reverse the decline and, in the process, enhance educational success.

Table 3

Pūrākau Analytical Framework: AROTAHI PŪ

AROTAHI	PŪ
KEY CONCEPT	Drivers of educational success
CONTRIBUTING IDEAS	• *Influence, Support, Whānau* • *Wellbeing, Mauri Ora*

AROTAHI RĀ – PIVOTAL MOMENTS IN THE LIVES OF KAITUKU

For McLachlan et al. (2021), RĀ represented "a state of mauri moe, a proactive state of reflection and potential by which engagement in cultural practices facilitates a journey outwards towards safety and wellbeing (mauri ora and a strong cultural identity)" (p. 87). Additional interpretations included illumination, light, enlightenment, sun, sunlight, day, and time (Davis & Came, 2022; Martin, 2023; Ngamoki, 2018; Wirihana, 2012). All of these interpretations suggest positive aspects such as clarity and understanding, engagement and wisdom. Collectively, while conveying a sense of positivity there is also potentiality—the unfolding of possibilities, of something as yet undefined, all in the pursuit of wellbeing.

In the context of this rangahau, AROTAHI RĀ directed focus toward pivotal moments in the lives of the kaituku. Pivotal moments that led to fresh outlooks, transformative possibilities, and the opening of doors to new avenues of growth and self-awareness.

Table 4

Pūrākau Analytical Framework: AROTAHI RĀ

AROTAHI	RĀ
KEY CONCEPT	Pivotal moments in the lives of the kaituku
CONTRIBUTING IDEAS	• *Aha moments, Ako moments* • *Transformation, Life-altering*

AROTAHI KA – OLD FRIENDS IN (K)NEW TIMES

Similar to Wirihana (2012), AROTAHI KA explored how past and present experiences of kaituku influenced their future aspirations, both personally and professionally. Marsden (2003) interwove the notions of time and space whereby "ātea is the word for space and was usually combined with wā or time, to form wātea, space-time" (p. 61), while Soutar (1991) reaffirmed that for Māori, "it is the relationship one has with past events, not their distance from it, which is important" (p. 70). Additionally, Campbell (2019) reminds us that "taonga tuku iho have their own life force" that convey memories from the past to guide us today and into the future (p. 190). As such, the very nature of taonga tuku iho is intergenerational, encapsulating "both theoretical and practical, tangible and intangible" (Te Kanawa, 2022, p. 53). These are the gifts (taonga) handed down through the generations "to ensure that successive generations flourish" (McLachlan & Waitoki, 2022, p. 197).

Table 5

Pūrākau Analytical Framework: AROTAHI KA

AROTAHI	KA
KEY CONCEPT	Old friends in (k)new times
CONTRIBUTING IDEAS	• *Taonga tuku iho* • *Intergenerational*

AROTAHI Ū – NURTURANCE AND SUSTENANCE

The final lens, AROTAHI Ū, delved into the key ideas of nurturance and sustenance. Within the context of this rangahau, Ū stemmed from the notion of ūkaipō, often acknowledged as the wellspring of sustenance, encompassing both physical and spiritual dimensions (Gabel, 2013; Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2022; Tangaere, 2012; Webber & McFarlane, 2020). In traditional times, ūkaipō referenced "the pre-dawn breastfeeding hours when a mother provides her baby physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual nourishment and sustenance" (Murphy, 2011, p. 35).

Also noteworthy is understanding that the term 'mother' extends beyond the parameters of biological parenting to include Papatūānuku as one of very first mothers (Martin, 2023) in te

ao Māori. As such, "ūkaipō is both place and people. Those places and people that physically and spiritually sustain us" (Simmonds, 2020, p. 15). Therefore, maintaining ūkaipō connections to ancestral lands also cultivates a strong sense of belonging (Greensill et al., 2022). This awareness of ūkaipōtanga serves as a cornerstone for resilience and determination, shaping not only physical well-being but also nurturing emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions for sustained growth and development, fulfilment and happiness.

Table 6

Pūrākau Analytical Framework: AROTAHI Ū

AROTAHI	**Ū**
KEY CONCEPT	Nurturance and Sustenance
CONTRIBUTING IDEAS	• *Belonging, Sense of home* • *Fulfilment and Happiness*

When the four arotahi of PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū finally came together, a more holistic understanding emerged. Like characters in a story, the four elements synergised to form a unified narrative, revealing the essence of pūrākau as carriers of "philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori" (Lee, 2009, p. 1).

Mā te Arotahi: Process of Analysis

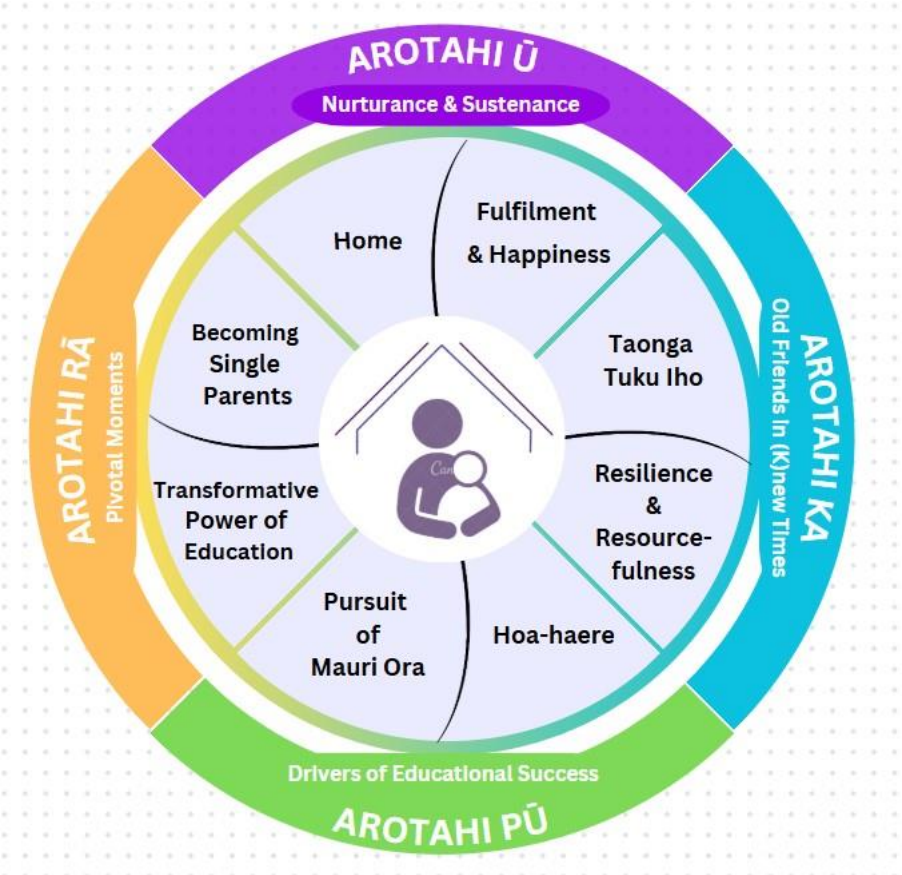
Once all of the transcriptions were completed, several engagements were made with each body of text, first of all as standalone accounts, and then in relation to each other. Engaging with each of the arotahi: PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū in this manner allowed for a more focused analysis of the pūkōrero with the intent of drawing out key messages and emerging themes. Subsequently, this led to a greater understanding and appreciation of the unique journeys and perspectives of each kaituku.

Following this, the next round of engagement sought to establish connections and patterns across the pūkōrero, emphasising the interplay of each arotahi and their collective experiences. AROTAHI PŪ as drivers of educational aspirations, AROTAHI RĀ as pivotal moments, AROTAHI KA as old friends in (k)new times), and AROTAHI Ū as nurturance and sustenance. To support this process, the principle of āta was applied, namely āta-whakaaro (Pohatu, 2013). Āta-whakaaro is a purposeful approach that means "to think with deliberation, allowing space for creativity, openness, and reflection, the consequence of which is that action is undertaken to the best of one's ability" (p. 16).

'Mā te Arotahi' (Figure 6) is the name given to the analysis process, acknowledging that for each arotahi, key concepts were identified and through the analysis process, two key findings were confirmed. Therefore, Figure 6 is a visual representation of all the key elements coming together.

Figure 6

'Mā te Arotahi'



AROTAHI PŪ

KAUPAPA: PURSUIT OF MAURI ORA || HOA-HAERE (INFLUENCE & SUPPORT)

Within the conceptual paradigm of AROTAHI PŪ, the drivers or motivators of educational success for kaituku were deeply grounded in notions of mauri ora, or wellbeing, firstly for the kaituku themselves, but ultimately for their whānau. As such, the *Pursuit of Mauri Ora* in terms of personal growth and development was identified as a key finding; integral to all of their journeys, especially after transitioning into the role of single parenthood. Tightly interwoven with this was the desire to provide for their whānau in all ways possible—emotionally, financially, and socially; culturally, intellectually, and spiritually. In referencing whānau, the second kaupapa to emerge centred on *Hoa-haere (Influence & Support)*; significant people who were integral to shaping the educational aspirations of kaituku and supporting them throughout those journeys towards achievement. The influence of friends and whānau resonated deeply across all pūkōrero, with the whānau unit especially serving as both a repository of cultural wisdom and a source of inspiration for their educational aspirations.

AROTAHI RĀ

KAUPAPA: BECOMING SINGLE PARENTS || TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION

While there were many pivotal moments in the lives and journeys of each kaituku that served as catalysts for change, growth, or transformation, two in particular emerged from the application of AROTAHI RĀ. Whether the realities of *Becoming Single Parents* were prompted by choice or circumstance, all kaituku experienced conscious shifts in their priorities and perspectives. Not only in response to the immediate challenges of single parenthood, but also as a reflection of their growing maturity. At the same time, kaituku also experienced a shift in the nature of education; a paradigmatic shift that played an intricate role in shaping and influencing their educational choices and commitments. Kaituku recognised the *Transformative Power of Education*; an ongoing and iterative journey that suggested a dynamic, personal, and transformative experience, as opposed to the linear and isolated process of knowledge acquisition that many had experienced growing up.

AROTAHI KA

KAUPAPA: TAONGA TUKU IHO || RESILIENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS

AROTAHI KA emphasised the notion of influences from the past and present that contributed to shaping kaituku aspirations for the future (not including educational aspirations as these were already explored earlier through AROTAHI PŪ). *Taonga Tuku Iho* emerged as one of the main kaupapa signposting the interconnectedness of generations in te ao Māori and the intergenerational transmission of Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being such as knowledge, language, and cultural practices. A second kaupapa to emerge from 'Mā te Arotahi' highlighted how each of the kaituku demonstrated diverse levels of *Resilience and Resourcefulness* in response to the many challenges they individually experienced; many of which were born out of the impacts of colonisation on Māori. Those impacts subsequently set in motion deep and impactful processes of introspection, resilience-building, and reclamation of identity.

AROTAHI Ū

KAUPAPA: HOME || FULFILMENT AND HAPPINESS

Across all of the pūkōrero, and under the nurturance and sustenance of Arotahi Ū, *Home* emerged as an overarching kaupapa. Extending beyond the confines of physical spaces, this finding encapsulates a much broader understanding that weaves in elements of culture and identity; whānau, whenua, and whakapapa; educational pursuits, community engagement and the ever-present notion of ūkaipō. Finally, just as physical sustenance nourishes the body, emotional nurturance nourishes the spirit, and these two qualities have contributed to the final kaupapa to surface from 'Mā te Arotahi,' that being *Fulfilment and Happiness.* This kaupapa acknowledges both the kaituku as individuals and the kaituku as an integral component of a collective, be that whānau, hapū, iwi, or community. It also intersects with the concept of success and what this might look like for each kaituku, extending beyond academic achievements to encompass long-term satisfaction and wellbeing.

Hei Whakakapi

This chapter brought together the mainstays of this rangahau journey, that being the kaituku, their respective pūkōrero, and the Pūrākau analytical framework. Through the four arotahi of PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū, a total of eight kaupapa (key findings) emerged from 'Mā te Arotahi' (the

analysis process) and while each kaupapa had the capacity to stand alone, it soon became apparent that they existed because of, and in relation to, each other; a reflection perhaps of the interconnectedness of te ao Māori in general.

These eight kaupapa are:

- Pursuit of Mauri Ora
- Hoa-haere: Support & Influence
- Becoming Single Parents
- Transformative Power of Education
- Taonga Tuku Iho
- Resilience & Resourcefulness
- Home
- Fulfilment & Happiness

Each kaupapa contributed a unique resonance to the overall picture and in the next chapter titled “He Nui te Whakaaro” the richness and depth of the collective narratives will be revealed more fully as we shift to discussion mode. This is where we will be able to clarify, in terms of this rangahau, what success looks like for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. Each discussion point ends with ‘Hei Tāpiri’—a supplementary discussion that offers a broader interpretation and understanding of the key findings. Drawing on existing literature and theoretical frameworks, ‘Hei Tapiri’ aims to contextualise the findings within broader academic discourse, providing additional insights and potential kaupapa rangahau pathways for future focus. Bringing ‘Hei Tapiri’ to a close is a personal observation that offers my insights into each discussion point.

CHAPTER FIVE:
HE NUI TE WHAKAARO

DISCUSSION

Hei Whakatau

> It is here at this point that I sit in a multi-cultural skin, understanding my relationships to other indigenous nations within. It is here that I acknowledge that I now live in a Western world who still, in this modern time, cannot accept the knowledge of our nations equal to their knowledge. It is here that I acknowledge their knowledge, but will no longer sacrifice my knowledge that I know can heal my people better than Western paradigms. I do not need your permission to practice what my tūpuna left me as a legacy of healing—not just for us but also for you, the other. (Kohu-Morgan, 2021, p. 3)

Respected female elder Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan opens this discussion chapter, reminding us that our traditional ways of knowing, doing, and being are not accountable to Western paradigms. Rather, tūpuna (ancestors) have given us the necessary tools to navigate our lives in ways that are healing and culturally affirming. Next is the rejection of Western paradigms that do not acknowledge the value of Indigenous knowledge, such as Western notions of success. This is followed by the themes of empowerment and self-determination, where Māori single parents are able to determine for themselves, what success looks like for their whānau and raise their tamariki according to their values, principles, and tikanga.

Kohu-Morgan (2021) succinctly reminds us as Māori, and as Indigenous peoples, that we live in a colonised world governed by Western paradigms. Western ideals of success often prioritise individual achievement, material wealth, and professional advancement. In contrast, Indigenous worldviews, including those of Māori, prioritise collective wellbeing, the interconnectedness of people, land, and kaupapa, and the honouring of traditional ways of knowing, doing, and being (Durie, 2003; Houkamau & Sibley, 2010).

There are many alternatives to the word ‘success,’ such as flourishing, fulfilment, happiness, achievement, attainment, prosperity, and mastery. Likewise, there are many markers of success like graduation, promotion, completion, awards, and recognition. However, success can also

be personal and subjective like personal growth and development, whānau relationships, and holistic wellbeing, or objective such as test scores, standardized testing, and industry benchmarks. Notions of success are scattered throughout the the pages of this thesis, expressed in numerous ways through the shared pūkōrero of the kaituku and published works of Māori and non-Māori researchers and scholars. In this chapter, we delve deeper into discussion mode exploring each of the eight kaupapa in more detail.

The chapter's title, 'He Nui Te Whakaaro' acknowledges that through the reclamation of Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being, Māori single parents are able to speak to their realities in ways that are relevant and meaningful. Each of the eight Arotahi is expanded upon throughout this chapter, through the words of the kaituku and the interpretations I have placed alongside them. Furthermore, to ensure that the focus of this rangahau is not lost, I constantly ask myself 'how does this relate to notions of success for Māori single parents' and respond accordingly.

AROTAHI PŪ – Drivers of Educational Success

Understanding what motivates and inspires Māori single parents to pursue postgraduate qualifications provides invaluable insights into the factors driving educational success. These factors can illuminate the potential impact of education on wellbeing at both individual and collective levels, shaping policy, and informing professional practice. With that in mind, this chapter begins with the first discussion point which focuses on the *Pursuit of Mauri Ora* (wellbeing) and its relevance to each kaituku. Love et al. (2017) described mauri ora as "a profound sense of wellbeing" as well as "a measurable life-affirming Māori cultural construct" (p. 116). As such, the pursuit of wellbeing, or in this case, the pursuit of mauri ora was integral in driving the educational aspirations and goals of kaituku.

The second discussion point, *Hoa-Haere*, acknowledges that each kaituku received personalised guidance and support throughout their educational journeys. Hoa-haere manifested in various forms, including the physical presence of whānau, friends, and significant others such as peers, mentors, and colleagues. Additionally, beliefs, values, and personal attributes such as passion or resilience also served as hoa-haere—intangible assets that shaped perspectives and guided actions.

DISCUSSION: Pursuit of Mauri Ora

> A Māori sense of self is fundamentally interconnected. It is made up of personal and collective identities and takes form through ongoing interactions with other people, the environment, physical and spiritual domains, history and the present, and extends beyond the individual body. (Rua et al., 2017, p. 55)

Given the interrelatedness of te ao Māori, the pursuit of mauri ora is seldom an individualistic pursuit, despite being carried out by individuals. Furthermore, "for Māori there is no differentiation between physical, psychological, spiritual and social wellbeing—all must be well and in balance for optimal wellbeing to exist" (Wilson et al., 2019, p. 83). Within a Māori context, mauri ora itself carries many nuanced meanings, such as "happiness, flourishing, wellness" (Lipsham, 2023, p. 190), "an active state of wellbeing" (McLachlan et al., 2021, p.78); "the essence of life and wellbeing" (Pihama & Smith, 2023, p.23); and "the conscious pursuit of quality and integrity (Pohatu, 2017, p. 17). The pursuit of mauri ora then can be seen as the pursuit of wellbeing "demonstrated by a spirit that is enlightened, a mind that is alert and inquiring, a body that is fit-for-purpose and free of pain, and with relationships that are nurturing and mutually beneficial" (Poutama Pounamu, n.d., para. 2).

Through the pursuit of mauri ora we learn that although success embraces the attainment of educational qualifications, the initial goal may align to more personal aspirations of maintaining or enhancing personal and cultural wellbeing. We get a sense of this from Mikaere as he explains that his foray into postgraduate studies was an endeavour undertaken for the enhancement of kaupapa, himself, and his children:

> *It was about enhancing the kaupapa that I was already engaged in. Yes, and doing it for me, initially doing it for me, but that's I guess, the superficial vision. But under that, doing it for me means doing it for my future generations, that's where my thinking always is—with my babies and always wanting each generation to be better than the one before.*

Mikaere clarified that his motivation to engage in postgraduate studies initially came from a personal desire to revitalise te reo me ōna tikanga within his iwi. Ultimately though, his long-term vision was to normalise te reo and tikanga Māori throughout Aotearoa. By aligning his personal educational goals with a broader vision of revitalising te reo and tikanga for the benefit

of his community, Mikaere's kōrero shows how success can encompass both personal and collective dimensions at the same time.

When faced with the prospect of restructuring within the workplace, a qualification upgrade seemed timely for Molly:

> *When I set out to do something, it has to have a purpose. It's more than a means to an end. To have a master's would mean the more likelihood of remaining employed and that was my main priority…. Even as a kid I didn't do things just for the sake of it. I could always see value in the way we were brought up and manaakitanga was always big in our whānau, so we did things because it helped the people, and it helped the kaupapa and I guess it helped me too in a way.*

Growing up with responsibilities and expectations within the whānau resulted in a strong emphasis on being responsible for oneself and others. Those childhood experiences also helped Molly to develop a deep sense of inner determination, highlighting the importance of independent problem-solving, doing the mahi and doing it well. Initially, the pursuit of mauri ora was not her main reason for considering postgraduate studies. However, in terms of her chosen career path and ongoing stability for her whānau, she could appreciate the value of furthering her education at master's level. Molly's kōrero reminds us that many of the skills and attributes developed through childhood experiences have assisted this community of Māori single parents in navigating the challenges of life, postgraduate education, and career choices.

Collectively, the desire to be positive role models for their children was consistent across all kaituku as was the realisation that in order to support the growth and development of their children, they also had to focus on themselves. This was articulated well by these kaituku:

> Maria*: I was not a bright student, I was in the lowest of classes, the lowest levels in my subjects. I went to 5th form, but I didn't pass. I stayed and did the exams, but I didn't pass. When my girl started school at five, I realised that I needed to get an education so that I could help my girl with her learning. That's when I decided to go back to school with her, so I became an adult student.*
>
> Maru: *As an adult and single parent, it was my time to excel. I now had a child who was learning from me every day, so I had to be an excellent example.*

> Georgie: *I just thought I was going to work in a factory but it was really because of my kids and being with kōhanga reo, and I feel like I grew up with my kids, learning about education with my kids, learning te reo Māori with my kids.*
>
> Jacqui: *Everything was about my baby. Everything I did was because of her and it became my journey, the one that set me on my path to my master's.*

Amidst the hustle and bustle of working, studying, and parenting Jason expressed the importance of self-care in the form of a hobby, which for him was exercising at the gym. Not only was it a dedicated time to focus on his own health and fitness, it helped to clear the mind, relieve stress, and prepare him for the new day. Another aspect of his self-care focused on the importance of maintaining a balance between whānau life, studies, work, and friends. The notion of balance incorporated re-evaluating, prioritising, and pre-planning, all of which were necessary to support his studies from bachelor through to postgraduate level. By incorporating self-care and a balanced life style, Māori single parents like Jason are able to achieve a more holistic and sustainable form of success that encompasses personal wellbeing, whānau responsibilities, and educational aspirations.

Sometimes though, one can embrace a growth mindset without fully appreciating the enjoyment that comes from those experiences. This was the case for Raumati whose educational aspirations were heavily influenced by two distinct, yet bitter experiences earlier on in their life, the first during high school and the second as a young adult:

> *I think much of my motivation stems from failing high school and constantly trying to prove that I am smart enough/good enough for academic study.*
>
> *The motivation behind my studying was almost superficial, I wanted to be qualified enough rather than enjoying the growth and learning postgraduate level study offers. ...I decided that I would never be put in the position where someone would tell me that I was not 'qualified' enough.*

For a long time the desire to be 'qualified' overshadowed Raumati's enjoyment of growing and learning from her postgraduate experiences. Yet despite that, better job opportunities and a higher salary meant better prospects for Raumati and her whānau, along with an increased sense of credibility amongst her profession and extended whānau. Raumati exemplifies how

Māori single parents can redefine success in ways that acknowledge their personal and cultural values, while also securing better futures for themselves and their whānau in the process. Her journey also reflects the value of a growth mindset and lifelong learning as important drivers of success and the pursuit of mauri ora.

It is interesting to note that both Mikaere and Raumati mentioned that initially their educational aspirations felt 'superficial'—perhaps implying that their motivations were initially driven by surface-level considerations, such as societal expectations, external pressures, or personal desires that might have been perceived as egocentric. However, the use of the term 'superficial' also suggests a realisation or reflection on the initial nature of their educational ambitions. This realisation prompted them to re-evaluate their motivations, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the purpose and potential impact of their educational pursuits.

For Jacqui, pursuing postgraduate qualifications became a vital avenue for reclaiming her sense of self and fostering personal growth. Past university experiences, exposure to Indigenous perspectives, and a heightened desire to contribute meaningfully in academic spaces for Māori significantly shaped her personal development and educational aspirations. Ultimately, Jacqui recognised that engaging in academia was essential if she were to bring about positive change within her chosen profession, changes that would have wide-reaching and long-lasting benefits for Māori. Success then can also come from creating positive change, not only in one's personal growth, but also within their profession and communities:

> *For there to be changes in my profession, I'm going to have to create that change so I have to generate this new academic knowledge that currently doesn't exist. That prompted the beginning of my journey into a master's degree and the decision that put me on my path to my doctorate.*

JO took a slightly different approach with her postgraduate aspirations which were motivated by peers wanting to deliver a Raranga bachelor's degree within their local community. To do so, kaiako were required to be master's qualified and having already completed a degree in that particular discipline, continuing on to master's level was a natural progression for JO. Thus, her passion for learning coupled with the educational needs of her community and her own affinity with raranga were the driving factors that led JO to pursue and attain a master's qualification. Through JO's experiences we learn that succes can be motivated by what is best for the collective wellbeing of the people or the kaupapa rather than personal wants and needs.

Similarly, we hear from Georgie who saw the wellbeing of her marae as an extension of her own wellbeing, exemplifying a broader notion of success that includes preparing for future leadership, setting future generations up for success, and sustainability:

> *We've got to look at good succession plans for the marae and these stories hold the values of it; they keep us connected. So that was the kaupapa that gave me the desire to move on to the next space, the master's space. Yeah, the master's provided a vehicle for me to be able to re-tell those stories, to keep the whare warm, and to reconnect whānau; all the things that are important to me.*

In examining PŪ, or the driving factors behind the educational successes of kaituku, it is important to recognise the motivations that led them to pursue postgraduate studies. They had already embarked on their educational journeys through various forms of formal education, whether vocational or academic. Their decision to advance to postgraduate highlights the importance of building on existing knowledge and skills. Each kaituku experienced success in different ways, such as course completion, knowledge acquisition, career progression, or personal growth. The pursuit of mauri ora emphasises how success for Māori single parents is driven by a combination of personal achievements and the desire to create positive change for themselves, their whānau, and their communities.

HEI TĀPIRI

A Māori sense of self can be both individual and collective (Rua et al., 2017), with the all encompassing pursuit of mauri ora grounded in a holistic Māori worldview (Anderson, 2019). This is apparent from the unique pathways each of the kaituku have taken in their personal development journeys, as influenced by whānau, culture, education, and other personal factors. For all of the kaituku, postgraduate education was an important 'next step' in their developmental journeys, driven by the value placed on higher education within this small community of Māori single parents. Integrating all of these elements highlights that balancing individual and collective wellbeing, valuing higher education, and embracing personal development are key drivers of success for Māori single parents.

Adding depth to this discussion is Freire (1998) who reminds us that "education does not make us. It is our awareness of our unfinishedness that makes us educable" (p. 58) and as such, the pursuit of mauri ora as an ongoing pursuit contributes to that awareness. Thus, "being able to reset, clarify and renew our purpose for being, in our own time, should be an accepted and

exciting undertaking in our lives" (Pohatu, 2023, p. 78). The pursuit of mauri ora involves self-awareness and positioning oneself at the centre of one's own wellbeing. By doing so, kaituku gain a deeper understanding of the journeys they are on and are better equipped to navigate their way—all while working, studying, and parenting.

Durie (2001) asserted that "Māori development is about reaching for Māori goals, defined by Māori" and as such, should not be "measured against the relative wellbeing of non-Māori" (p. 172). Similarly, the necessity for Māori single parents to be self-determining in relation to their own wellbeing is also integral. Recently, the *Mako Mama – Mangopare-Single Parents Project* reported that "a primary prevention and social change is needed to address high rates of stigmatisation of single parents in New Zealand and create safer and more inclusive communities and families" (Domett et al., 2023, p. 17). A key driver of this research was to ensure that the actions and recommended solutions aligned with the voices and views of the participants. Even though the results of the Mako Mama project may differ from the results of this rangahau, one of the most important factors derived from both is that the participants were able to articulate their own realities, highlighting what they believed was necessary to their wellbeing.

When considering the development of Māori, Durie (2003) affirms the universality of wellbeing asserting that it is not exclusive to any particular group but rather a shared aspiration among all people. However, when examining the intersection of wellbeing and education within the Māori context, a distinct Māori-centric perspective emerges. Education, in this context, transcends mere academic achievement; it becomes a vehicle for cultural reclamation, empowerment, and the advancement of Māori aspirations. In support of this, a number of researchers affirm links between Māori wellbeing and educational aspirations (Durie, 2001; Hawaikirangi-Pere, 2013; Love et al., 2017; Macfarlane et al., 2014; Rata, 2012; Williams, 2010). Moreover, when extending this discourse to Māori single parents, the potential for thriving, rather than merely surviving, is exponentially heightened, serving as a catalyst for breaking cycles of intergenerational disadvantage.

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* embodies hope and optimism, inviting us to 'set our sights on the red tipped dawn's early morning light.' It reminds us, as Māori single parents, that the pursuit of mauri ora is not only achievable but also worthy of intentional effort and focus. Through the lens of mauri ora, drivers of educational success go beyond conventional metrics, to include personal growth, cultural identity, and community wellbeing.

DISCUSSION: Hoa-haere (Influence & Support)

> Te Ao Māori however, does not leave each generation to 'figure out' how to undertake its purpose and obligations. It has fashioned enduring hoa-haere (valued travelling companions) that journey through time, constantly available, waiting to be invited into our contexts, kaupapa and relationships (Pohatu, 2008, p. 17)

At the heart of this discussion are valued travelling companions and from a Māori perspective, hoa-haere can refer to enduring qualities such as tikanga and values; principles and attributes. Hoa-haere can also refer to the people who travel alongside us, both personally and professionally, such as whānau, friends, and significant others. Within the context of this discussion, hoa-haere captured all of those elements that have in some way influenced kaituku aspirations to engage in higher education and/or supported kaituku throughout their respective journeys. The term hoa-haere (written as a hyphenated kupu) is specific to the writings of Ngāti Porou elder Taina Pohatu and usually *carries* several meanings, such as crucial companion, valued travelling companion, and essential companion.

The concept of hoa-haere aligns well with notions of success for Māori single parents, noting that success is not solely defined by individual achievements but by the collective support and enduring qualities that guide and sustain them. By recognising the importance of hoa-haere, we can better understand how Māori single parents define and achieve success and gain an appreciation for the diverse drivers that motivate and support their educational aspirations.

In his pūkōrero, Maru introduced the notion of heroes as *"models of human excellence that I learn from"* and then talked about his mother and father. From there we see the seeds of excellence being sown very early in his lifetime, across the contexts of learning, relationship building, and parental roles and responsibilities:

> *My mum was a successful entrepreneur and did many masculine jobs over my lifetime, like mechanics, and engineering. My mum is my hero, she was a super-mum, she read to all us kids growing up, and always went the extra mile in boosting anything we were involved in. …My dad was the life of the party, and had a way of engaging and building positive relationships with a very diverse demographic of people.*

From the pūkōrero that Molly shared, a lot of earthly qualities emerged from her parents' and tūpuna stories reinforcing the importance of belonging, such as whakapapa kōrero grounding her in the whenua and tikanga grounding her in te ao Māori:

> *In our whānau, I always thought of Mum and Dad as the pou of our whānau and I trusted in the decisions that they made, the choices that were made for us, and the way that we did things.*

To Molly, a pou represented stability, steadfastness, and humility. It symbolised leading, guiding, and caring for those around you, taking responsibility for your actions, and treating people the way that you would like to be treated yourself—qualities commonly associated with positive role models. Much of this learning came from bitter sweet experiences, but through it all, Molly developed a very strong sense of self and a tikanga-based way of life that kept her grounded and connected to people, whenua, and kaupapa. By choosing to undertake a mātauranga Māori centric master's degree within a wānanga context, Molly demonstrates how cultural alignment and a sense of belonging can motivate our educational aspirations.

There were many hoa-haere who influenced Jacqui's educational aspirations and despite *"being kicked out of high school,"* her educational journey continued over the years, leading to a commitment to pursue a master's degree. Pivotal to that journey were various mentors who believed in Jacqui and the value of education; her greatest influences though were whānau. In fact, the voice of her koroua came to her during the birthing of her baby telling her what her chosen career would be. At that time Jacqui brushed the words of her koroua aside (after all she *was* having a baby at the time), yet two and a half years later, influenced by her daughter's determination to start kindergarten, she remembered the words of her koroua and began her educational journey into midwifery. That career choice then became the driving force that led her to pursue a master's and a doctorate. For Māori single parents, Jacqui's kōrero demonstrates that having a network of supportive individuals who believe in their potential is essential for navigating the challenges of higher education.

As the eldest of four sisters, Raumati acknowledged that she had traveled the furtherest in terms of education, in both her immediate and extended whānau. She spoke of having "*the best village of supporters*" when starting her bachelor's degree; a village that consisted of whānau, friends, and mentors; all of whom supported her at different stages of her educational pursuits. Special mention is made of her mentors here:

> *I also have two mentors that adopted me very early on in my career, that had expectations of me when no one else in my world did. They continue to mentor me today—their support is everything.*

It is also important to note that Raumati first mentioned her 'village' when she started her degree and her child at the time was still very young. Later, when she embarked on her master's journey, her child (now older) was a natural part of her village as well. Raumati reminds us that success for Māori single parents often involves creating a supportive environment where tamariki are actively involved and contribute to the educational aspirations of the whānau. They provide motivation and a sense of accountability which are important drivers for achieving higher educational goals.

Mikaere's childhood experiences greatly influenced his educational choices later in life:

> *I was pulled under the wings of a lot of my kaumatua, so I had a passion for te reo and I had a passion for tikanga that was instilled in me quite early, and I guess is still here now.*

During his formative teenage years at Hato Pāora (a Roman Catholic boarding school for Māori boys), Mikaere was fortunate to learn from several respected and knowledgeable hoa-haere who opened doorways to whakapapa, knowledge, and ideas:

> *There was a priest that pulled me aside and actually opened the doors for me around the whakapapa of Christianity. Because he could see how passionate I was, so he pulled me aside and he gave me the whakapapa around the Roman Catholic Church and the influence on Aotearoa whānui, which kind of opened my eyes and I really appreciated his sharing of that.*

From a young age, all of these experiences instilled in him a strong *"hiahia ki te tuku pātai"* (desire to ask questions). An energy of curiosity and enquiry; of wanting to know and understand certain kaupapa and their whakapapa of how they came to be. That energy came with its hoa-haere as well, that of passion and commitment, and it was that collective energy that continued to nurture his forays into education later in his adult years. Mikaere's innate curiosity and commitment to learning are essential drivers for educational success and while a thirst for knowledge is not a pre-requisite, it can significantly enhance the journey. His

experiences illustrate how embracing a passion for learning and exploring one's cultural can redefine success in ways that are meaningful and impactful for Māori single parents.

For Jason, although there were other whānau members in his life, it was his father's words and teachings that influenced him the most, laying the foundation for his educational aspirations, particularly the value of pushing himself and trusting the process. His motivation though, were his children:

> *I wasn't really interested in school. I went to school but passing wasn't too much of a priority. ...I was already here [NZ] with my mother, but if my father was here too from the start I probably would have done better at school because he was someone who would push you—not push you hard but give you that motivation to get there. That's just the way he was, because he's from the north, they don't take crap and they don't take excuses. You can cry all you want, but you're still doing it. There's no exit plan, you just get things done, and I think that's what got me to master's level.*

With the ongoing support of her hoa-haere (whānau), Georgie was one of three in her whānau to pursue formal education and gain a qualification. However, it was the early teachings, love, and support of her mother and father that cemented the importance of te ao Māori within her and encouraged her learning at school. In turn, those experiences had a direct influence on her educational aspirations and career choices. Also noteworthy is the arrival of hoa-haere, in the form of friends or acquaintances, who opened doors for Georgie at opportune moments, thus influencing her educational choices as well.

JO spoke fondly of her grandparents, her earliest hoa-haere in life, who instilled in her from a young age the importance of education, a love of learning, and the value of hard work:

> *So I would go home to my grandparents, my father's parents ... and I would have to read. I think it was pretty much reading through dictionaries ... and I had to pick four or five words from a page and learn how to spell them and learn how to use them in a context. They didn't have any particular reasoning for that, but education was of the utmost importance, balanced with a love of learning.*

> *They didn't really care what I wanted to do although it had to be something academic, but it was about keeping the love of learning alive and so I love learning still to this day. But also, they were hard workers, so it was very clear that although education was really important, it wasn't the be-all and end-all of being a good person; a hard worker was more important.*

Maria described her parents as her first hoa-haere in life who exemplifed what it is to be Māori, connected to Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being. Initially though, it was her daughter who most influenced her to pursue education. Upon completing her first degree, it was the teachings of her mother that then inspired her to enrol in a second degree, one that resonated more with herself as a wahine Māori. As the first in her extended whānau to study at postgraduate level, it was oftentimes a lonely journey. However, through her career and studies, a new whānau took shape, one filled with other wāhine Māori in similar circumstances as herself, all in varying stages of their own educational journeys. Through kaupapa they became a whānau.

Jason, Georgie, JO, and Maria all remind us of the importance of our first teachings and teachers in the form of parents and grandparents. Those early teachings are integral to notions of success for Māori single parents as they provide the cultural, emotional, and motivational foundation that drives individuals to achieve their goals and contribute positively to their communities.

HEI TĀPIRI

As highlighted by Taina Pohatu (2015) "whānau is an acknowledged rich source of applied knowing and experience to draw from" (p. 32). Thus, parents and grandparents played a pivotal role in shaping the educational journeys of kaituku, leaving a lasting imprint on their pursuit of educational goals. Through the teachings, tikanga, and values of parents/grandparents; their exemplification of leadership and service to others, and for many, their affinity with the importance of education, kaituku were able to navigate their way through the many levels and layers of formal education. Transitioning into the role of single parents, kaituku continued to benefit from the ongoing support offered by their hoa-haere—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This support, both in real time and in perpetuity, highlighted the value kaituku placed on trying to achieve their educational aspirations.

This discussion acknowledges whānau as agents of change (Durie, 2011) and recognises them as key sources of support, inspiration, and motivation for kaituku. Similar findings align with research by Williams (2010), Theodore et al. (2017), Chittick et al. (2019) and Simmonds (2021) all of whom explored the success of Māori students in Aotearoa New Zealand. Notably, a more recent study, focused on the impact of whānau on the educational success of Māori children (Highfield et al., 2023), revealed that "the educational aspirations of Māori whānau are vast and include dimensions such as their child's happiness, the development of strong cultural values, a sense of belonging, responsibility and integrity for others in the community" (p. 4). While Highfield et al. (2023) stated this in relation to children, it is worth mentioning that the applicability extends to the context of this rangahau as well.

The educational aspirations of whānau Māori encompass more than just academic achievement. As Māori single parents navigate this space, considerations such as happiness, cultural values, a sense of belonging, identity, accountability, and responsibility are all interwoven. This holistic view of success is particularly relevant to Māori single parents who strive to achieve a balanced and fulfilling life for themselves and their whānau.

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* is about whānau. They are the heart of our journeys, providing the love, support, and guidance needed to navigate life's challenges. As a Māori single mother, I know that it is the strength and collective wisdom of my whānau that keeps me grounded and motivated. My educational successes are theirs, just as their educational successes are mine, but more than that, if I am able to rise above the struggles and challenges of being a Māori single parent, then as my constant hoa-haere, my tamariki mokopuna will see this, experience this, and remember this.

AROTAHI RĀ – Pivotal Moments in the Lives of Kaituku

This section derived its findings through the lens of 'RĀ,' a concept that drew on notions of potentiality and enlightenment. Within the context of this rangahau, pivotal moments were acknowledged, recognising that as human beings, our lives are not scripted or predetermined. Instead, they unfold organically, shaped by various experiences and interactions. The acknowledgement of pivotal moments recognises that profound shifts in perceptions and

perspectives can occur as a result, inspiring new ideas, creativity, and unprecedented growth and development.

As the first discussion point, Arotahi RĀ highlights the impact of transitioning into the role of single parenting, revealing the complex challenges and potential opportunities that come with this major life-changing event. This transition is a significant aspect of success for Māori single parents, as it involves overcoming obstacles and embracing new roles. The second discussion point delves into the transformative power of education, exploring its capacity to reshape the lives of each kaituku, impacting personal growth, societal advancement, and the realisation of one's potential. Education is a key factor in the success of Māori single parents, providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to achieve their goals and contribute positively to their communities.

DISCUSSION: Becoming Single Parents

> Parenthood is challenging under the best conditions. With one parent, the challenges are multiplied as the road of a single parent may consist of obstacles such as loneliness, grief, hurt, sadness, rejection, guilt, insecurity, and depression.… So, being a single parent in our society is tasking. (Egaran, 2023, p. 959)

Whether by choice or circumstance, becoming a single parent comes with its own realities and the ways in which kaituku experienced those realities were diverse. In their pūkōrero, kaituku were quite candid about the events leading up to their transition into single parenthood. Some shared words of empowerment, embracing the new role with determination, choosing to navigate parenthood solo. On the other hand, others spoke of the upheavals they experienced, describing the emotional challenges they faced due to the breakdown of their relationships and the changing dynamics of their whānau. By candidly sharing their pūkōrero, kaituku provide insights into the complexities of single parenting, and it is this openness that helps to redefine success for Māori single parents, emphasising the importance of resilience, adaptability, and the ability to overcome obstacles.

GEORGIE: Key Message

Georgie's pūkōrero highlights the importance of resilience and whānau support. Despite facing significant challenges, Georgie demonstrated resilience by making difficult decisions for her well-being and that of her children. Additionally, the support from her whānau, especially her father, played an important role in helping her navigate tough times and rebuild her life. This

highlights how success for Māori single parents can be deeply connected to their ability to persevere and the strength of their whānau relationships.

STARTING ANEW

There were a few factors that influenced Georgie's decision to become a single parent and while she felt that it *was* a choice, she quickly clarified that the decision came as a result of the circumstances involving her husband. Controlling behaviour towards her, stealing money meant for the home and children; long periods of not speaking to one another and many nights when he didn't come home at all, all took its toll on Georgie's personal wellbeing. Finding out that there was another woman who was also hapū (pregnant) though, really opened her eyes to the reality of her situation. After the revelation of their affair, Georgie took some time away from her whānau to fully consider her options. She knew though that staying in a marriage without trust was not an option. Believing that she was in a good headspace, the decision *"not to try to mend this marriage"* was made and Georgie began to prepare herself to parent her five children on her own.

It wasn't an easy decision though as it put her at odds with her parents' beliefs:

> *It was a time where my parents were brought up believing that once you married into that family you gave up as a wahine. You gave up all your rights and you were to take his name, take his whānau.*

With nowhere to go, Georgie and the children moved back to her parents' home so that she could begin to put her life back into order:

> *My dad had put a tent up and baby was about two-years old, so he was able to sleep inside. We had a set of draws and bunks; it was awesome when it was raining. I remember dad coming out and digging a trench to drain all the water away.*

In wanting to start anew, Georgie changed jobs and then moved her whānau into a new home. She stayed visible in the community and made sure that her tamariki were safe and well cared for. When times were tough financially, her whānau, in particular her father, would step in to help.

Other than that:

Being tired, was one of the hardest things. I was tired but I still had to stay up with my kids all night if they were sick and I still had to get to work the next morning. Yeah, I hated being tired. If I wanted a rest, I couldn't send all of my kids over to mum's, I could only send one or two and that would be fine, but for her to have the whole whānau I knew was too much.

JO: Key Message

From JO's pūkōrero we learn the importance of adaptability and self-reliance**.** Despite the sudden and challenging transition to single parenthood, JO demonstrated remarkable adaptability by setting and achieving goals, such as getting off the benefit and securing employment. Her ability to maintain stability for her children, continue her education, and manage her household independently, highlights how success for Māori single parents can be defined by their resilience, resourcefulness, and determination to create a better future for themselves and their whānau.

PROUD OF MYSELF

When asked about how she became a single parent, JO replied, *"Oh just lucky I guess"* and whether those words were intended as light comic relief, an ice-breaker, or a deep reveal, they provided a glimpse into the ambiguity of JO's experiences:

After our fourth child was born. ... their father, my ex-husband, internally decided that he had other priorities, and literally got up one day, shared that with us, and left. So yeah, it wasn't a choice that I made.

By the time JO was 19-years old, she was a mother of one, newly married, and a homeowner. More than that though, she was a beloved granddaughter with a strong sense of whānau and an intelligent young woman who had tolerated high school yet loved learning. At the time of separation, she had four children, the youngest of which was only eight months. Education had remained an important aspect of her life, from supporting Playcentre (both locally and nationally), to home schooling her three eldest children.

Despite the abruptness of single parenthood, JO was able to quickly realign her path, demonstrating adaptability, resilience and resourcefulness:

So as soon as I became a single parent I went on a benefit and my first meeting was pretty hideous. I was being asked to think about my future or whatever, whereas I'm there still crying over the fact that my bloody husband left me with these hua kids. So for one of my goals, I decided that I wanted to be off the benefit and have a job before my child was five. Yeah, and I met that goal.

Eventually, JO was able to buy the home back from her ex-husband, gain a degree qualification, and secure employment, all while being a single parent:

I didn't have to move the kids, so we didn't have all the upheaval, and I knew I was in a much better position than some other people that I knew. Even though we were on the benefit, I never worried about there not being enough kai or whatever. I never had a debt collector and never had the power cut off. I was really proud of myself.

MOLLY: Key Message

From Molly's pūkōrero we learn about the importance of self-identity and practical support**.** Molly emphasises that being a parent is her primary identity, regardless of her relationship status. Her decision to become a single parent was made for her own well-being, and she found strength in her self-reliance and the support of her whānau. Over time, she learned to let go of guilt and adopted a practical approach to parenting, teaching her children to prioritise and plan for themselves. This highlights how success for Māori single parents can be linked to a strong sense of self, practical life skills, and the support of their extended family.

LETTING GO OF THE GUILT

For the purpose of this rangahau, Molly self-identified as a single mother, based on the knowledge that she was parenting her children by herself. However, she was quick to share her whakaaro on the matter of single parenting:

I don't think of myself as a single parent. I'm a parent, I'm a parent, first and foremost, whether I'm single or what, you know. Yeah, but if someone asks, Do I have a partner I say no. Yeah. I never like, I never understood it, I don't know. What's a solo mum? You're a mum whether you're single or not. We don't go

around saying we're a coupled mum, or a married mum, so why would I say I'm a single mum, a solo mum? Yeah, I don't get it.

Molly also shared that it was *"by choice rather than circumstance"* that she became a single parent, pointing out that for her own wellbeing, it was the right decision to make:

What I didn't like though was our relationship and I found that I was with somebody that I didn't actually like and I thought 'that' was a relationship, but it wasn't. He didn't do anything that I couldn't already do. He was just there, was just like, someone who's here that you share your body with. I already had four children and it felt like I was actually carrying another child.

Although Molly's children all shared the same father, after the birth of her first child, Molly became a single parent for the first time. During this period, her parents were her greatest support. By the time she became a single parent again, she had gained a bachelor's degree, was working full-time, and was much more settled in life. Whānau support remained close by if needed, especially since she now had four children to care for. While there were initially feelings of guilt if she wasn't able to support her children in the ways that she wanted to, over time, Molly learnt to prioritise her time and energy, let go of the guilt, and take a more practical approach to caring for her children. For example, she taught them how to prioritise and plan for themselves.

JASON: Key Message

From Jason's pūkōrero the importance of responsibility and stability emerges**.** Jason took full responsibility for his children, ensuring their stability by reorganising his life and prioritising their needs. His proactive approach to budgeting, education, and maintaining a stable home environment highlights how success for Māori single parents can be defined by their commitment to providing a secure and supportive upbringing for their children. Also highlighted is the significance of self-identification as a parent first, rather than focusing on the single parent label.

DOING WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE

When I became a single father, me and the children's mother weren't really getting along. We had two children, but there was pretty much only one parent at home raising them. So, one day I'd just had enough and made the decision

for us. I told her, 'You go do what you have to do and I'll just look after the children.' My son would have been seven at the time and my daughter would have been 10. So, when that happened, their mother moved away, but the kids were alright because there was a big lead up to it and mum wasn't really around, even when she was around.

In Jason's situation, taking over the full-time parenting of his children and reorganising his life to suit the changes made was an important step towards maintaining stability in his children's lives. Within two months he realised he had to start budgeting and prioritising to ensure that his whānau didn't go without the necessities, and it was then that his journey into formal education began.

For Jason, there were no issues or concerns with becoming a full-time single father. His pūkōrero suggests that he had already assumed that responsibility before the separation occurred. There were still challenges along the way, including the transition from manual labour to academia, but he was motivated and determined, believing that his children's futures rested entirely on him, as their father. When asked about being a single father Jason shared:

It's not a label I really give myself; I'm just a dad. My children, they just say 'this is my dad' and my family didn't really say 'oh, he's a single dad.' Even in the community, I'd just say that I'm a dad with two kids. If they asked where's mum, I'd just say she was 'down the line' (meaning she's left the relationship and is now living somewhere else).

MIKAERE: Key Message

Mikaere's pūkōrero speaks to the importance of community and collective support as he emphasises that raising his daughters is not something he does alone; he relies on the support of his whānau and friends. This collective approach, encapsulated in the saying "it takes a village to raise a child," highlights how success for Māori single parents can be grounded in the strength and support of their extended community. This support network is crucial, especially for providing diverse perspectives and assistance in areas where he might need additional help, such as te taha wahine (the female aspect) for his daughters.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

When Mikaere first met his partner, she was a single mother with two children from a previous relationship. She then had two children with Mikaere, both daughters, who were aged 11 and

12-years old when he contributed to this rangahau and shared his experiences of becoming a single parent:

> *When my first girl was born, I got injured and I ended up with some spinal problems. …I couldn't move without an explosive pain in my spine, which really changed my outlook on life and put me out of action for about five years. There was no actual event that happened, I just woke up like that. There was some wairua stuff that happened though due to stress, due to how I was living at the time, and what I was allowing to come into my life as far as our relationship was concerned, as far as what was surrounding me. During that time my second daughter was also born.*

From Mikaere's perspective the quality of his relationship with the children's mother was not at its best when his health was impacted, citing a number of contributing factors, including "*wairua stuff*." Eventually, as a result of ongoing difficulties, the couple separated, and their daughters lived with their mother for a few years. However, their mother experienced more difficulties which left her quite vulnerable and as a result of a legal process, the two daughters returned full-time to be raised by him. Throughout all of this Mikaere maintained that she was a good mother, rather it was her circumstances that made it difficult for the children to remain in her care.

Like the previous kaituku, Mikaere also had views on the notion of single parenthood:

> *The idea of single parenthood—I do have a conflict of claiming that, I guess what people would call a status, because it's never just me. I'm lucky to have whānau and friends that support me. I guess as far as te taha wahine goes for my girls, because I'm a male and they're coming into puberty now. Although I understand puberty pretty well and I think that I have a good grounding as far as whakaaro Māori, and as far as how our world connects to us and vice versa it's always good to have that female perspective for my girls to be exposed to, so I'm lucky to have sisters including one biological sister, but I've got heaps of friends that also support me. That's why I'm hesitant to claim that and really, it does take a village to raise a child yeah, so it's really important in my mind to acknowledge that because they have been a big portion of my life as far as*

supporting and just being there; being the māreikura contributions to my girls' lives.

MARIA: Key Message

Maria's pūkōrero highlights the importance of self-determination and safety**.** Her decision to become a single parent was driven by her desire to create a safe and stable environment for her daughter, free from the control and fear she experienced in her own childhood. By prioritising her independence and well-being, Maria was able to walk in her own mana (authority and self-respect) as a wahine Māori, ensuring a better life for herself and her daughter. This highlights how success for Māori single parents can be defined by their ability to make empowered choices that prioritise safety, stability, and self-respect.

WALKING IN MY OWN MANA

As shared here, Maria's decision to raise her child on her own was greatly influenced by her childhood experiences:

How did I become a single parent? I always used to think about my mum and dad's relationship. My dad was quite a controlling man, and my mum had seven of us children, and my dad had this thing, this idea that when the man comes home from work, the kai's ready, the kids are fed etc. My dad, when he disciplined, he did so with fear and I always thought I'd never want to be in a relationship where that was happening. When I got hapū, I thought I was in a good relationship until he came home one afternoon, and it became a habit that he'd go to the pub first and then come home and expect to have dinner on the table. And I kind of thought, I don't want to be in a relationship like that. That's kind of what he saw me as, so I thought that's it, I'm going to move out, so I did.

Notwithstanding Maria's love for her parents, her experiences of their relationship served as a poignant reminder that she did not want to be in a relationship based on fear and control. Not only did Maria end the relationship with the father of her child, but in order to raise her daughter in a safer community environment than what her home town could offer, she also relocated to a new town, stating:

I wanted to maintain my freedom, my control, independence and freedom for me and my daughter. I wanted her to be safe, and I didn't want her to be in an environment that was volatile or violent.

Maria believed that she became a single parent due to childhood trauma because of her father's behaviour. Concerned with history repeating itself through her partner's behaviour, she made a conscious choice to end their relationship. Since the birth of her daughter, Maria has remained a single parent; initially because she wanted to ensure her daughter's life was safe and stable. Over time though, Maria preferred the single parent lifestyle over long-term relationships. As a single parent she was able to walk in her own mana as a wahine Māori, as a mother, and later in life, as a grandmother.

JACQUI: Key Message

In her pūkōrero, Jacqui emphasises the importance of self-reliance and foresight. Jacqui's decision to become a single parent was influenced by her understanding of what a supportive environment should look like, based on her own upbringing. When the father of her child proved unreliable, she chose to raise her daughter without him, demonstrating self-reliance and the foresight to prioritise her child's well-being. This highlights how success for Māori single parents can be defined by their ability to make independent decisions that ensure a positive and nurturing environment for their children.

THE TRUST WAS GONE

In Chapter Four, Jacqui was quoted as saying that it felt very natural for her to be a single parent. This is not surprising considering her father raised Jacqui and her siblings as a single parent also. As such, her expectations of a father figure were clearly imprinted on her from a young age. That is why, when the father of her child walked out on their relationship very early in her pregnancy, Jacqui knew that he wouldn't be able to provide a stable environment for her and their daughter and made the decision to continue her pregnancy without him:

I already knew what single parenting looked like and because of that, I knew that I didn't actually need my daughter's father around us. When I told my father I was hapū he asked me 'Where's the baby's father at?' Then when I told my father that he wasn't in the picture anymore, he asked me, 'Who's going to help look after the baby?' and I said 'You are, you're going to help me.'

Then my father said, 'So I'm going to be looking after mokos? When are you due?' and that was it.

Later in the pregnancy, when the father of the baby returned and wanted to resume their relationship, he was rejected:

My whakaaro to him at the time was like, if you can leave me three months pregnant then want back in a couple of weeks later, what are you going to do when the baby is up all night? You're gonna walk out the door. So, I can't trust you… and that's purely the reason, actually the main reason, why I became a single parent. The trust was gone and my baby deserved better, deserved more from her father.

MARU: Key Message

Maru's pūkōrero captures the importance of an entrepreneurial spirit and proactive parenting**.** His approach to single parenting involved not only a deep commitment to his daughter's well-being but also an entrepreneurial mindset. He actively sought resources, studied parenting and home-schooling education, and leveraged his support network to provide the best possible start for his child. This highlights how success for Māori single parents can be defined by their innovative and proactive efforts to create a nurturing and enriching environment for their whānau.

THE BEST POSSIBLE START

In Maru's situation, becoming a parent was a highly anticipated life-changing event; a commitment that he was both ready for and eager to embrace:

As a young man, I was in a defacto relationship with a young woman. We were together for four years and when she became pregnant, she asked me what I wanted to do. My response was immediate. I said something along these lines: 'Let's have our baby. …That is absolutely fine, you can be 100% certain that our child will be well cared for, nurtured, and protected by me.' She agreed with me immediately on our kōrero, and we proceeded with bringing our daughter into the world.

Not long after the birth of their daughter, circumstances with Maru's partner changed, trust was broken, and despite staying together in the hopes that their relationship would heal, they parted.

Although they were no longer a couple, they remained steadfast as friends and parents, and Maru recalls this as a 'precious' period in their life. When he eventually took on the sole responsibility of parenting, their daughter was still in nappies and bottle-fed, but he was determined to be an example of excellence to their daughter.

Maru's experience of becoming a single father came as a result of a breakdown in the relationship with the mother of their child. However, he was able to maintain a connection with the mother, even after she started a new whānau with a new partner. Sadly, their daughter's mother passed away a few years later and Maru laments that their daughter grew up "*without her beautiful, loving, intelligent presence."*

As much as he loved being a father, single parenting still came with its challenges:

> *The challenge I encountered was a few people's perception of a father raising a baby girl by himself. It was actually very easy for me to overcome though, because I had the mother's blessings that I was a great father and the best person in the world to raise our daughter, and I had the continued support of family and friends. The biggest help was my own connection with my daughter and belief in myself that I would be a super-spectacular dad. I took parenting seriously, and studied parenting and home-schooling education to give my daughter the best possible start in life.*

RAUMATI: Key Message

From Raumati's pūkōrero we learn the importance of managing multiple responsibilities in the form of educational, parental, and her duty as the eldest daughter in the whānau. Raumati's experiences highlight the challenges of pursuing higher education while raising children, including the difficulties of childcare, finances, time management, and fulfilling roles and responsibilities within the wider whānau unit. Her reflection on the time missed with her whānau reiterates the need for Māori single parents to effectively juggle their academic and parental duties. Achieving this balance is crucial for the well-being of both the parent and the children, and it can be a significant marker of success for Māori single parents.

TIME MISSED

Although Raumati did not go into great detail regarding the circumstances that contributed to her single parenting experiences, this kōrero insightfully highlights how misaligned goals in a relationship, timing, and maturity can take a toll on couples:

> *I became a single parent halfway through my Bachelor of Education programme and again just before I started my Master of Education study. On reflection, I think it was a case of immaturity on both of our parts and our goals not being aligned.*

Raumati's single parent experiences differed from other kaituku as indicated by the two separate occasions in her life where she was a single parent. Upon reflection, she noted that there were challenges during those times, such as studying while parenting, childcare, finances, and time:

> *Perhaps the most challenging of them all was time. While I had the most amazing support system, I felt like I missed out on valuable time with my kids and family.*

Participating in this rangahau provided Raumati with an opportunity to interrogate those two periods of single parenting and, in doing so, perhaps gain a better appreciation for the complexities of her experiences. While reflecting, Raumati also expressed her concern regarding the stigma and racism she experienced as a single mother while studying. While she does not go into more detail to clarify her concerns, it is still important to note that it was prominent enough for her to be concerned.

HEI TĀPIRI

Single parenthood comes with diverse challenges, influenced by individual, cultural, and societal perspectives. Utilising data sourced from Stats NZ (2020), Edmunds (2020) reported that the financial strain experienced by single parents in Aotearoa New Zealand is significant, particularly for those receiving a benefit or working part-time. Single parent studies across multiple European countries echoed similar experiences of financial hardship impacting health and mental wellbeing (Campbell et al., 2015; Stack & Meredith, 2018; Van de Velde et al., 2014). This was also the case for kaituku, especially those who were either working full-time or part of a two-income whānau, prior to becoming a single parent, highlighting that as Māori single parents navigate the economic challenges of single parenthood while striving to provide

for their whānau, financial resilience becomes an indicator of success. In fact, several kaituku mentioned that as a temporary measure, they received a government benefit when first transitioning into the role of single parent; a necessary arrangement in order to continue providing for their whānau.

Emotionally, this discussion sheds light on several issues impacting kaituku wellbeing. The natural worries inherent in raising children are compounded by the added pressure of guilt stemming from work and/or study commitments. Specific examples, such as the juggling act between parental duties and professional or educational pursuits, candidly portray the struggles experienced. Findings revealed a nuanced gendered experience in relation to kaituku experiences of guilt, with the six wāhine generally expressing these feelings more prominently than their three tāne counterparts. Longhurst et al. (2012) suggests that the influences of colonial constructions, such as gender norms and religion, often contribute to this mindset. Further exploration of these societal constructions could offer valuable insights into the root causes of these observed differences. However, this thesis is not the space for this additional rangahau.

Reevaluating personal expectations during the adjustment to single parenting proved important for all kaituku. Similar to Willson (2022), many expressed "positive associations with raising their children alone" (p. 50), yet acknowledged the importance of seeking help from whānau and friends when needed. While research has shown that children in single parent households tend to experience more negative effects than positive ones (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023), kaituku shared the view that transitioning to single parenthood resulted in more positive outcomes for their whānau than negative. Admittedly, no two kaituku experiences are alike, yet within the context of all kaituku being Māori, certain shared elements inevitably weave through everyone's narratives, such as the multiple effects and influences of colonisation that impact Māori on a daily basis.

The link between colonialism and racism, both historical and contemporary, is undeniable. Building on this understanding, a recent report titled *Whakatika: A Survey of Māori Experiences of Racism* (Smith et al., 2021b) confirmed that Māori individuals, inclusive of single parents, are subjected to various forms of racism on a daily basis:

> Everyday racism attacks our rangatiratanga and prevents us from living our lives in the ways we want to, both as individuals and as groups (whānau, hapū, iwi). Racism enables and maintains existing power structures that systematically disadvantage Māori.

> Racism also damages our connections with tūpuna and compromises our ability to pass on Māori ways of knowing and being to future generations. (p. 9)

The influence of colonialism is also evident in the notion of single parenting, a phenomenon foreign to Indigenous peoples. In traditional Māori society "raising children was a responsibility of the whānau as a whole, not just the parents of the particular child" (Herewini, 2018, p. 5). Consequently, whānau parenting is underpinned by the belief that raising a child is nurtured by the collective, not just the individual. Furthermore, a recurring theme that emerges from the collective pūkōrero of kaituku is the reinforcement of the resilience of traditional Māori values and practices, persistent even in the face of significant societal changes. This collective approach to parenting and resilience can both be considered as key notions of success for Māori single parents as they draw strength from te ao Māori, whānau, and communities to overcome challenges.

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* is uniquely attuned to each individual's experiences; there is no 'one size fits all approach' to coping when it does happen. Out of necessity I became a single parent—it was a choice that I made in order to be happy and a way of ensuring that my home and my whānau were free from violence. It took time for me to become comfortable with my new lifestyle and in the process, I experienced a myriad of emotions, however it also provided me and my children with a new beginning, and that's what I most needed.

DISCUSSION: Transformative Power of Education

> We are all traversing our own unique mātauranga pathways, and we all share in these common values that define us as a people. For where there is mātauranga there is life, and where there is life there is mātauranga. (Durie, 2021, p. 35)

Education has long been recognised as a site of struggle for Māori within Aotearoa New Zealand (Hauraki, 2019; Lee-Morgan, 2016; Smith, 1997; 2003). While there is now an opportunity to embrace education as a catalyst for transformation, the stories of each kaituku highlight the enduring challenges that persist. Smith et al. (2023) emphasise the ongoing need for concerted efforts to establish and uphold educational spaces where Māori can freely express and embody Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being. When these ways are acknowledged and valued, educational experiences become more relevant and engaging for Māori resulting in increased opportunities to be successful, both personally and academically.

MOLLY: Key Message

Molly's experiences highlight that for Māori single parents being in a supportive and culturally affirmative learning environment provides them with the necessary support systems to manage their studies, work commitments, and parental responsibilities more effectively, leading to better outcomes academically and personally.

I Loved Learning

Going back through the generations, knowledge and mātauranga were important to Molly's whānau. On one side of her whakapapa, formal schooling and Pākehā education featured strongly in the whānau, while on the other side it was Wānanga, also known as a sacred school of learning, housing traditional Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being. By the time Molly came along though, the only choice available to her was mainstream schooling:

> *That's where I learnt about racism; we were treated like we were different and even though I had a lot of friends, there were always snide remarks about 'those maris.' That's what we were called—'the maris.' But that aside, in terms of learning, I loved learning. I remember struggling with learning how to read—that took a long time for me to grasp. But as a whole, I loved learning, and I especially loved learning about new things.*

Throughout the remainder of Molly's schooling years, nothing really changed in regard to attitudes within the educational system. There were some bright moments in there, mainly as a result of individual teachers rather than the schools she attended, and for the most part Molly was able to hold on to her love for learning, despite the challenges she experienced.

As a rangatahi who had made the decision to finish school, it was her mother's motivation to learn te reo Māori that saw Molly return to formal learning and within a year she was enrolled at Aotearoa Institute, which later became Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in 1994 when it achieved tertiary status from the government. Molly spoke about this experience:

> *From the time that we walked through the front door, we were greeted with a warm welcome and smile, very much like today when manuwhiri arrive at reception. I thoroughly enjoyed being a tauira with the organisation. By the end of the course, I had befriended many of the tauira and kaimahi. The kaimahi treated each other and all tauira as equals, equal in the sense that the kaiako was not just about 'I teach, you learn,' but in the sense that inclusive of*

the kaiako, we were all learning. I classified myself as a second chance learner, so being treated and valued as an equal did wonders to my self-esteem.

That sense of belonging, of being respected, and of being on an equal footing with the kaiako made a lasting impression on her, just as much as the physical environment in which she studied. Years later, she would embark on her master's journey, again in a wānanga context; a purposeful decision in keeping with her desire to intentionally continue learning in Māori tertiary spaces.

Molly embarked on two separate master's programmes at different times in her career due to expectations tied to her employment. Initially, she enrolled in the first master's at one wānanga but had to put it on hold due to personal circumstances, intending to return later. However, as time passed, her priorities shifted. Both programmes required extensive long-distance travel and as such, were offered through noho, a delivery mode tailored for students like Molly who were balancing full-time employment while also studying. Unfortunately, the second master's programme encountered administrative obstacles and ultimately did not eventuate either.

Throughout all of this, Molly was a single parent of four in full-time employment and the decision to pursue a master's qualification related directly to her employment. In time her mahi changed and as a result, the master's requirement was removed. While she has not given up on the idea of pursuing a postgraduate qualification, it is no longer an immediate priority, and her experiences thus far have proven that timing is just as important as intent. What she gained from her educational experiences within a wānanga context, both as an employee and a tauira, have shown her that the environment you surround yourself with and the values and principles that guide you in those spaces are just as important as the learning itself.

MARIA: Key Message

Maria's pūkōrero highlights for Māori single parents a culturally relevant educational context ensures that the curriculum and teaching methods are aligned with Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being, making the learning experience more meaningful and engaging, and ultimately empowering them to succeed in their educational pursuits.

Manaaki Tangata

Maria had several moments in her life where she experienced the transformative power of education. The first began at home and carried over to the marae, under the care and guidance

of her parents. Those first teachings of tikanga, reo, and mātauranga Māori were deeply embedded within her, transforming her life on a daily basis:

> *I grew up at Tūrangawaewae marae. Because our dad took us to work at the marae, we grew up around Kīngitanga and one of the values that we grew up with was manaaki tangata, which was to feed the people. It was about upholding the values of Kīngitanga and making sure that the visitors were well taken care of.*

Re-engaging with formal education as an adult student, Maria found her main source of motivation in her daughter. This experience allowed her to view education more positively, ultimately leading her to pursue tertiary studies. In time, she graduated with two bachelor degrees, the first because she saw computing as a highly sought-after skill for the future and the second because she hated her computing degree experience. As an older wahine Māori student and a single parent, Maria faced the added challenge of studying in a predominantly young white male environment. This cultural and demographic difference contributed to her sense of isolation, impacting greatly on her confidence and her ability to connect with her peers who held different cultural norms, backgrounds, and life experiences.

However, those experiences unexpectedly led her down a new path:

> *I was doing my Computing degree and every Wednesday morning in the Ataarangi class, they would have this beautiful karakia and I so longed to be amongst that. Then there was this wahine on the same bus as me who told me what she was studying and said 'you should come and do the course I'm doing.' So, after I finished the Computing degree, I swapped disciplines and jumped into a Social Services certificate. Learning about Kaupapa Māori helped me to recognise power and control and to realise that I didn't want to be in a class where I was the only Māori. From there I went into my next degree, which was also the beginning of my chosen career in an industry that supported the notion of manaaki tangata.*

From there, Maria continued her educational journey on to master's level. She attempted a university qualification, however being cognisant of white privilege enabled her to see the disparate reality of her situation:

> *They didn't try to be white dominant, they just were, but they didn't recognise it, which made it worse. So, when I finally walked into Awanuiārangi, it resonated with me and my world. I just loved it. I loved not having to excuse myself for being Māori, or to explain to anyone about being Māori; I just felt comfortable there.*

Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi was another defining moment for Maria, highlighting the transformative power of education within a wānanga context. Firstly, she was learning in a Māori environment where traditional knowledge, localised knowledge, and customary practices were integral to the educational experience. Secondly, she was studying with other Māori, in particular wāhine Māori, who all held aspirations for their whānau and whānau whānui.

JACQUI: Key Message

Jacqui's pūkōrero highlights that engaging with education in a context that respects and incorporates Māori values and practices can be immensely healing and empowering for Māori single parents. Both healing and empowerment are crucial components of success.

Healing Retribution:

From a young age Jacqui loved learning, despite feeling the opposite towards schooling. That feeling of animosity towards an education system where she felt stifled and out of place remained with her throughout the entirety of her compulsory schooling years (six years to 16 years), however a glimmer of hope came when Jacqui was placed on an ACCESS programme (a 12-week course designed to teach life skills, vocational skills, and work-based training). As part of the course, she learnt te reo me ngā tikanga Māori through the Ataarangi method, as well as karakia and waiata mōteatea, all under the care and guidance of three wāhine Māori. The kaupapa, kaiako, and the ways in which they taught, all gave her a new and enjoyable experience of education.

Interestingly, Jacqui shared that she felt 'swindled' into tertiary education as her kaiako had enrolled her on a bridging course certificate at the local university, without her knowing. Similar to her high school experience, she hated being at university, believing that "*these people are all up themselves."* Despite everything though, she managed to reconnect with a former high school mathematics teacher who was now teaching on the bridging course; a relationship that sustained her attendance and engagement throughout the remainder of the course.

Like Maria, Jacqui also completed two bachelor's degrees, both fueling her passion for learning. Resultingly, Jacqui's commitment to honouring the wisdom of her koroua strengthened her resolve to effect change for Māori and Indigenous peoples:

> *My dream job … I was going to be a policy analyst working in international foreign affairs with Indigenous peoples, that's what my dream job was. I was all about politics, and social politics, and social justice, and I wanted to be traveling internationally, going to Indigenous reservations.*

However, the unexpected trauma of a professional incident forced Jacqui to reassess her life and, in the process, her "pīkaokao screamed for retribution" (Martin, 2023, p. 24). The kupu 'pīkaokao' was shared with Jacqui by one of her respected elders and in this context refers to the fact that her entire being, right down to the smallest living cells in her body, screamed for retribution:

> *My world fell apart around me. I couldn't make sense of anything. I hated what I was doing. I didn't know who I was and I felt so… you know, and being somebody at 16 years of age who was intensely proud to be Māori and had her language and all of that to 20 years later and feeling like my being as a wāhine Māori and a Māori practitioner was being unjustly judged and devalued by non-Māori in positions of power… it was a lot to deal with.*

Returning to education became a necessary part of her journey towards retribution, but this time she chose an Indigenous provider "dedicated to knowledge systems, beliefs and values that originate from te ao Māori" (Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa, n.d, Te Aratiatia, para. 1):

> *They gave me the safe space, the āhurutanga to be me, the me who was an angry woman and I realised that the tools I needed to heal me, to help me find some semblance of what was going on couldn't be found in the Pākehā world and it couldn't be found in my job either. But I could find them when I went to wānanga. It's those spaces where I can just be me. I can critique and I can question and it's okay. All of those things like whakapapa, whanaungatanga, kaitiakitanga and āhurutanga helped me to make sense of my lived experiences and showed me just how much of my life was being impacted by colonisation.*

From this space, Jacqui moved to other Wānanga tertiary spaces where she completed her Master's of Applied Indigenous Knowledge and in 2023, a Professional Doctorate of Indigenous Development and Advancement. Subsequently, education facilitated within Wānanga contexts has been transformationally healing and empowering for Jacqui. The incorporation of Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural practices, and community engagement not only enriched her academic pursuits but also nourished her holistic wellbeing and development.

GEORGIE: Key Message

Georgie's pūkōrero highlights that transformative education can lead to personal growth and enhance our ability to contribute to the wellbeing and revitalisation of our Māori traditions, practices, and communities, fostering both individual and collective success.

A Wānanga Journey

Georgie's educational journey is unique in that all of her qualifications, from Certificate to master's level, were achieved within a Wānanga context, more specifically, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. Since conception though, te reo and tikanga Māori have been her mainstays; as natural to her ways of knowing, doing, and being, as is breathing:

> *I grew up knowing that whānau and whakapapa were #1 in my mum and dad's eyes so you could say that those were my first teachings. It didn't matter where we were—at home, at the marae, or at my aunty and uncle's whare during the school holidays, I just knew and so that's how I lived my life.*

Education, in a general sense, was an important kaupapa to Georgie and one that she was passionate about. As she worked her way through Te Kōhanga Reo (early childhood total immersion centre), Kura (school), and then Wānanga (tertiary) in various teaching positions, her tamariki experienced it all alongside her. The decision to pursue a master's qualification arose out of concerns for her marae; the loss of valuable mātauranga and a decline in the number of whānau returning to the marae. Georgie viewed the master's qualification as an important vehicle for addressing her concerns.

Prior to commencing her master's journey though, which was in and of itself extremely transformational for Georgie, the turning point in her educational pursuits came when she enrolled in a certificate level Indigenous Research programme:

> *Within my Indigenous Research study, I was able to dig deeper into pūrākau and I realised there was a space for those stories to open doors. I believed too that whānau would want to come back once those doors were opened.*

That realisation set Georgie on her master's path, enabling her to bring her vision to life—for her marae and hapū, but especially for her whānau:

> *My whānau are taking this trip with me and they have supported me on this journey because they know how important it is for me to do this. But it's not just for myself, ultimately this is going to be good for all of us. For me, that's what transformation looks like.*

MARU: Key Message

Maru's pūkōrero demonstrates that success for Māori single parents involves a dedication to lifelong learning and the ability to transform oneself and one's community through education.

Aspirations of Excellence

From a young age, Maru's sense of curiosity, explorative nature, and entrepreneurial spirit were nurtured by his parents, and to a larger extent, inspired by his mother:

> *At home education was fun, an exploration of whatever was interesting. My parents would tell me stories and read me books. They allowed me to climb trees and dig holes for my toy trucks and tractors. They warned me of potential dangers like power-points, roads and rivers or beaches, and would supervise me. They inspired me to invent my own games or would build me a skateboard when I wanted one.*

While his schooling years were fun, Maru believed that if he had understood the importance of academia while at school, he would have applied himself more in his learning. As it was, he enjoyed sports, made some good friends *"and even started to excel in mathematics and writing, because of a great teacher."* In the process though, there were missed opportunities to academically excel more.

After transitioning to single parenthood, his desire to be an example of excellence for his daughter was the motivation needed for him to return to formal education. It was during the earliest stage of this journey that he was introduced to Robert Kiyosaki's book *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*; a hugely transformational moment for Maru, impacting his entire perspective on life—"*I*

had found my calling." In order to be a father that his daughter could be proud of, he attained his high school qualifications, then returned to tertiary education.

At one point in his life though, he took a break from formal education, instead choosing a more informal pathway, through books and online courses. Ten years later, he returned to tertiary education once more, completed a bachelor's degree, and then began his master's:

> *I chose to pursue a postgraduate qualification because I know I have so much to offer our people and the world, but I do not yet have the stellar work history to get great employment. I also love learning and teaching or sharing what I have discovered. I am giving a PhD qualification serious thought too, I know it requires a lot of hard work, but the rewards of contributing to mātauranga Māori will be well worth it. I really just want to become more confident to be able to help others transform their lives through education. I have become whānau with so many great people on my master's, along with my professors who have all helped me grow, develop, and transform, while supporting me to stay completely true to myself and my kaupapa.*

Maru studied in both Wānanga and university contexts, and while gaining immense value from the varied experiences, he was particularly appreciative of Wānanga, as expressed here:

> *Even though I am a fair looking Māori they [Wānanga] always gave me respect and aroha, made me feel welcomed and at home. The Wānanga way of learning is diverse, layered, and I had multiple ways of learning the material. From all the reading I have done, I sometimes present outlandish and astonishing ideas and stories, and in the Wānanga context my contribution is received as powerful and positive.*

Overall, education became a powerful platform for Maru; one that was transformational—academically and culturally. Finding his calling and pursuing that as his chosen career path, immersing himself in mātauranga and celebrating his indigeneity, all while continuing to be the best father that he could possibly be for his daughter, attest to his experiences of transformative education.

RAUMATI: Key Message

Raumati's pūkōrero highlights that success for Māori single parents can be achieved through perseverance, a passionate attitude to education, and a willingness to embrace both the challenges and rewards of lifelong learning.

Addicted to Learning

Raumati's experience of transformative education was more subtle when we consider that Maru 'found his calling' through his educational experiences. Nonetheless, this does not detract from Raumati's journey, which saw her complete not one, but two separate master's qualifications.

From a young child who enjoyed learning and thrived at school to a rangatahi who was suspended twice and finished 7th form without any qualifications, Raumati's diligence saw her aspirations of postgraduate study come to fruition when she advanced from bachelor's to master's. However, during that intense time of studying, she experienced two periods of single parenting, which may have contributed to her mindset at that time:

> *My experience and attitude towards education was C's get degrees. I put in 'just enough' effort to pass. The motivation behind my studying was almost superficial, I wanted to be qualified enough rather than enjoying the growth and learning postgraduate level study offers.*

While Raumati expressed her motivation as 'superficial,' in reality, the bitter feeling of *"failing high school"* became one of her strongest motivators to do well in all of her academic pursuits from that point onwards. In time, learning became her passion, and she was eventually able to enjoy the growth and learning that came from those pursuits, so much so that she in turn began to look for ways to encourage and mentor others. Her own experiences of education, both good and bad, highlighted the value of lived experience and the transformative nature of education.

JO: Key Message

JO's pūkōrero highlights that success for Māori single parents can be achieved through early exposure to positive learning experiences, determination, and personal goal setting, and a commitment to personal and professional growth.

> *So, I suppose as a child, and it wasn't just at school, I was quite nerdy. I'm still called that today by people I went to school with at home and I can look back now and say I was fortunate.*

To be able to look back on one's educational experiences and feel fortunate speaks more to the quality of people in her life, rather than education itself. From a young child, and under the nurturance of her grandparents, JO was raised in an environment that valued learning and education, but more importantly, hard work.

However, attending school in the town where she was born and where she knew everybody differed vastly from the boarding school life she endured at a neighbouring city high school:

> *It was like being in another world … I had never seen so many Pākehā people in my whole life … and I was also a boarder, so I was among minority, in the minority of the minority.*

Surprisingly, JO still loved learning, despite experiencing racism from her English teacher and then having her complaint dismissed by the principal:

> *That was in the fifth form, and it really put me off. So, school-wise, I just did what I had to do, to get through. Otherwise, I just played more sports, which I was really good at.*

When JO was in her sixth form year, her grandmother passed away, so she just kept *"chipping away at school and sports."* Another pivotal moment in JO's life came in her seventh form year when she became pregnant. As a result of the pregnancy and subsequently being labelled by the school as a *"bad example,"* she was made to leave the boarding hostel; at the same time her name was removed from the House Captain board. Despite not completing her final year of high school, JO still met the minimum requirements to be accepted into Teacher's College, however by that time, her baby had been born, and she was beginning her next journey as a mother and a wife.

Becoming a parent added a new path to JO's educational journey, culminating in a 15-year relationship with Playcentre, where she worked her way up to a national role with the NZ Playcentre Federation. During that time, JO also home schooled three of her children for a

number of years, developing her own curriculum, resources, and learning experiences to support their educational development. Throughout all of this activity, raising the newest baby, and then becoming a single parent, JO also completed a diploma qualification, which in turn led to her degree.

Having worked diligently to support her whānau and continue with her studies, being able to transition from a benefit to employment was a memorable moment for JO:

> *And I remember the first thing I did because I was also brought up to be grateful and acknowledging those things that I'm grateful for, such as my first pay. I went and bought a pound of butter and put it on the table at home. None of the kids were home at the time, it was just me at home, and I just sat there and stared at it, and cried… as a symbol of my 'I've made it to here' moment.*

Since then, JO has completed a master's qualification, enjoyed career advancement, and continued to develop her professional practice as a kairaranga (weaver). However, it is the first teachings that she received from her "*old people"* who raised her and the lessons she learnt from their stories that prepared her most for life and the educational pursuits that she would later encounter in life.

MIKAERE: Key Message

Mikaere's pūkōrero highlights that success for Māori single parents can be achieved through self-awareness, cultural grounding, and the knowledge that success is not solely about formal qualifications.

Self-determination

Mikaere's first experience of formal education came through Te Kōhanga Reo, so growing up surrounded by kaumātua and te reo Māori was a natural way of life for him. Unfortunately, with Kura Kaupapa Māori not available to him at that time, mainstream education became his only option. Furthermore, due to the Catholic influence in his whānau, religious education was incorporated as part of his school curriculum:

> *Being blessed as a Catholic growing up, I bounced in between the two worlds, where those two worlds at times were quite conflicting—Catholic and Māori. Growing up in a world where there's tikanga and then there's ture; there's spirituality and then there's religion. And quite often, there's conflict between*

the two—one is to control you in doctrine, and the other one is to empower you in tikanga.

The conflicts that Mikaere experienced as a child were still present in his teenage years, but fortunately those conflicts heightened his critical awareness and his ongoing quest for clarity and understanding:

I was always someone that enquired and wanted to make sense out of everything. If I'm going to be passionate about supporting something, I need to know the whakapapa, especially if I'm going to commit to a kaupapa that is life-changing. I need to know who, how, why, and where all of this kaupapa has come from before I can actually invest. That was instilled in me early on and that same energy has carried me throughout my life.

Mikaere's decision to continue his educational journey at the tertiary level allowed him to explore several postgraduate options. These included an applied master's within a Wānanga context and a master's within a mainstream provider. Additionally, Te Panekiretanga o Te Reo, an Institute of Excellence in Te Reo Māori established by Tīmoti Karetu, Te Wharehuia Milroy, and Pou Temara in 2004. Ironically for Mikaere, none of those options were about pursuing a qualification, *"it was about enhancing the kaupapa that I was already engaged in."* Despite exploring several potential pathways, his final decision was not to pursue a qualification, as the following kōrero shows:

I think education is self-determined; it's the perspectives that you allow to come into your world to have an impact. That's my perspective on education and that's the attachment that I've put on that word. It's not about getting to any level, and there are quite a lot throughout education. Even with our language you're trying to get to a certain level, just to qualify to get to the next level. But in my mind, education is what you invest in to bring about a perspective that impacts your life and your world.

In the end, it was Mikaere's lived experiences, both the positive and the challenging, that led him to his overall understanding of the purpose of education in his life, especially during the time when he was forced to stop everything because of a serious injury:

It was a long process, very painful. Many nights where there was no sleep, there was just screaming pain. But in the calm moments, lying there, counting the dots in the roof in the hospital, it's really humbling. And I learnt that when you're always in a humble perspective, that's when your ability to learn grows. Luckily, I had a good foundation from all the mātauranga that was shared with me growing up. So, with that came a lot of learning around healing, self-healing, and life skills really. Going through all of that, I guess that's what became my master's experience. Being able to master myself first and foremost, and also, understanding that it doesn't matter what environment I'm in. If I've mastered myself, I can still move forward and achieve anything, regardless of systematic validation.

JASON: Key Message

Jason's pūkōrero highlights the transformative power of education and that for Māori single parents, investing in education can lead to profound changes and inspire future generations in the process.

A Whānau Journey

For Jason, transitioning from his daily physical, hands-on mahi to a bachelor's qualification consisting mainly of reading and assignment writing took some adjustment:

When I first started my bachelor qual. I struggled because the closest thing I did to reading was probably reading the sports page of a newspaper.

So much so that it was only in the final year of his degree study that he really began to understand what was required of him, academic-wise. Ultimately, he was able to expand his skill set and perspective in ways he had not anticipated and upon completion, he then felt motivated to continue on to master's level. This too required adjusting as his master's qualification was delivered out of town, via a series of noho, whereas the degree had been locally-based.

By this time, Jason was also a single parent with two school-aged children to care for, so managing the noho components of his study around the continued care of his children required careful, long-term planning and effective routines to keep everything flowing smoothly. Knowing that his children were being cared for at home while he was away studying made the master's journey more manageable. Added to this was the decision to study full-time in order

to complete his master's within two years, which meant he was studying full-time and still working part-time, all while continuing to parent his children.

Many of the transformative aspects of Jason's educational journey may not have been immediately noticeable however, the impact of his endeavours on his whānau were apparent. For whānau members watching a livestream of his master's graduation, it was a proud moment, celebrated with tears and accolades. As the first in his whānau to experience academic success at master's level, it is understandable that his whānau were moved by his achievements, yet Jason's personal fulfilment came from knowing that education had *"become a shared journey now"* with his children, as opposed to a meritorious endeavour.

Not only did Jason complete a master's, but in support of the career that he was now carving out for himself, he then added a postgraduate diploma to his kete mātauranga. At one point in his pūkōrero, he was able to reflect on his journey and acknowledge how far he had come since his teenage years:

> *I remember when I was a kid and one of my family members saying, 'you're smart, you'll go to university.' That was when I was about 13 or 14 years old and I was like, 'whatever.' I didn't realise it until I went to Awanuiārangi and then graduated, that those words came back to me 22 years later. I had to laugh because back then it was like—'yeah that will never happen' and yet, here I was, being a dad, and studying, and working.*

Knowing what he is now capable of and how much education has contributed to his growth and development, Jason is keen for his children to also experience for themselves the transformative potential of engaging in education.

HEI TĀPIRI

In this discussion, kaituku not only articulate the essence of transformative education; they also embody it in their respective pūkōrero. Their experiences of transformation are closely related to the challenges they encountered, highlighting the relationship between "conscientisation, resistance, and praxis" (Smith, 1997, p. 25). According to Smith, challenges such as these, are essential "not only for making sense of one's life" but also for transforming it in "meaningful ways, and ultimately reclaiming it" (p. 25).

Extending on this is the notion that education for Indigenous communities is understood as a continuous journey throughout life, involving both deep inner reflections and external explorations. This educational process encompasses the entirety of cultural traditions within many Indigenous communities, such as beliefs, customary practices, interpersonal connections, and oral traditions (Cajete, 2000; Dhillon et. al., 2021).

In an interview with E-Tangata author Dale Husband, Mason Durie (2018) stated that education is:

> … not just about school or university. Education is a lifelong journey. For our people, my view is that it should ultimately bring about māramatanga or enlightenment and it's important not to allow the potential of our people to diminish or stagnate as the result of a system. (Para. 1)

In keeping with Durie's assertion, the experiences of the kaituku affirm that their educational journeys commenced long before they entered formal schooling. The ability for kaituku to grow up 'as Māori' with their tikanga, te reo, and mātauranga intact, exemplifies Maisey's (2022) valued positioning that language, culture, and identity are integral assets in education. As such, the transformative potential of education for Māori communities lays the foundations for ongoing personal and collective growth, development, and transformation.

Re-tracing the educational journeys of each kaituku offers invaluable insights into the diverse range of experiences they encountered. Yet, while kaituku articulated the meaningful and transformative impact of their educational experiences, criticism towards Aotearoa New Zealand's mainstream schooling system demonstrated that transformation occurred despite the schooling system and not because of it.

As evidenced by the experiences of kaituku, postgraduate education can be a rewarding experience in many ways for Māori and Indigenous peoples (Barnhardt, 1991; Durie, 2011; Theodore et al., 2017; Villegas, 2010). In some instances, achieving postgraduate qualifications positioned kaituku for higher-level roles and increased responsibilities. This often translated into higher salaries, reflecting the specialised skills gained as a result of their studies. Opportunities to further their academic journeys through doctoral studies also arose, enhancing the potential of kaituku to make contributions of consequence to their respective kaupapa and communities of practice.

Beyond the tangible benefits, there were also notable intangible rewards associated with postgraduate engagement for kaituku. For many, the journey of pursuing higher education instilled a meaningful sense of personal fulfilment and intellectual growth. The rigorous academic challenges encountered during postgraduate studies cultivated critical thinking skills, resilience, and a deeper understanding of their chosen kaupapa. Additionally, the opportunity for several kaituku to pursue their postgraduate studies within a Wānanga context highlighted the importance of ensuring that their chosen learning space "values, validates and supports being Māori—both for individuals and the collective" (Simmonds, 2021, p. 45). This in turn facilitated meaningful connections with peers and mentors, fostering a real sense of belonging within their respective rangahau communities.

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* celebrates the transformative power of education. Through my educational journey I found my voice again and quickly learnt that I could shift the world around me with my words, my intentions, and my energy. In time my voice gave rise to the voices of my tamariki mokopuna and while we all have our own stories to share, our collective journey is testament to the strength and resilience of our whānau.

AROTAHI KA – OLD FRIENDS IN (K)NEW TIMES

Through the analytical lens of KA, the notion of 'old friends in (k)new times' emerged, acknowleding the relevance of time for Māori. What makes this idea more interesting is captured in this whakataukī/proverbial saying "kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua" which Rameka (2016) interprets as "I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past" (p. 387). Attributed to this interpretation is Rameka's assertion that "[t]he strength of carrying one's past into the future is that ancestors are ever present, existing both within the spiritual realm and in the physical, alongside the living as well as within the living" (p. 387).

This gives credence to the thinking that for Indigenous peoples (which includes Māori) ancestors and tūpuna are old friends whose wisdom is often called upon in today's contemporary times to help resolve issues or concerns. Looking to old friends allows for traditional ways of knowing, doing, and being to be present and to offer solutions. Because of their traditional nature, they are not 'new' in the sense of something that has recently come into existence. On the contrary, they are (k)new, denoting something that has been passed down

through the generations. Being able to integrate these timeless teachings into their lives and their educational pursuits, Māori single parents can achieve success that continues to honour these 'old friends in (k)new times.'

This leads us to the first discussion point, which introduces *Taonga Tuku Iho* as precious conveyors of tradition, knowledge, and wisdom; heritage, artifacts, and practices. Discussion point two then hones in on the attributes of resilience and resourcefulness. Often cultivated over time, these attributes can be considered timeless, as they hold universal relevance and offer enduring value across generations of people and places.

DISCUSSION: Taonga Tuku Iho

> There once was a girl with no voice. She had a kind heart and carried a kete with her which was old and had a hole in the bottom. She lived with a whānau who she loved but she wasn't really sure if she belonged. Her calling was to help and support the whānau, but she was too whakamā to speak, and felt ashamed of her old, broken kete. Although she loved everyone around her and did what she could to help and support them, without a voice her influence was limited.
>
> One day her whaea told her about a new calling—one that could be done alongside her old one—and asked the girl if she would accept it. She did. She was frustrated with having no voice, and wanted to see if a new calling would help her become more brave. With the new call came a new whānau—not to replace the old one, but to add to it. And the new whānau brought new knowledge and new spaces, and new challenges. The girl with no voice drank up the knowledge, stepped into the new spaces, and took on the new challenges as if her life depended on it. She gathered harakeke and used it to fix her broken kete. She wondered why she hadn't thought to do that before… (Davies et al., 2010, p. 78)

This beautiful pūrākau, told in two parts over the two discussion points for Arotahi KA, resonates strongly with the kaupapa of 'Taonga Tuku Iho' and 'Resilience and Resourcefulness.' This first part serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring presence of 'old friends' within te ao Māori, especially in the context of today's modern world. It signposts the timeless nature of Indigenous knowledge, emphasising that not all knowledge is new and novel,

particularly for Indigenous peoples. Embedded within our ways of knowing, doing, and being is an unacknowledged wisdom passed down through the generations, (k)new knowledge that invites us to re-member, re-connect, and re-claim those taonga that are intrinsically Māori (Edwards, 2009; L. Fitzpatrick, 2016; Greensill et. al., 2022; Pohatu & Pohatu, 2007; Yates, 2024). Notions of success are woven throughout this pūrākau presented through the key tenets of resilience, resourcefulness, and the importance of knowledge and practices passed down.

Values, Beliefs, and Principles

Through their shared pūkōrero, kaituku emphasised the importance of living life according to their personal values, beliefs, and principles, likening them to an inner compass. This metaphorical compass served as a guide when navigating the many choices, challenges, and interactions in their daily lives. For several kaituku, manaakitanga and manaaki tangata featured strongly. Maria described manaakitanga as the ability to *"feed the people,"* and *"making sure that the visitors were well taken care of."* Georgie expanded on manaaki tangata as making sure that the people, especially visitors coming to the home or marae, felt safe and welcomed. Moreover, it was imperative to ensure that there was enough food to feed the people and that people were not mistreated in any way.

For Jacqui, taking care of others, especially elders and mokopuna was instilled in her at a young age and like Maria and Georgie, this valued practice became a motivating factor in their respective career choices of midwifery, counselling, and education. Similarly, for all three, whakapapa and whānau also featured in their pūkōrero as valued practices. In fact, valuing whakapapa and whānau was inherent to all of the kaituku; innate qualities fundamental to their ways of knowing, doing, and being as Māori. As such, being in the company of elders, tūpuna, or kaumātua while growing up was a very natural part of life for many of the kaituku.

Raised by her grandparents, JO gained love and appreciation for knowledge and learning, but more than that was the realisation that knowledge and learning were all about whakapapa and connections. This was reinforced with growing up at the pā, where the principles of manaakitanga, respect, and kotahitanga were also integral to everything and everyone. As such, it was only natural that JO imparted these same principles and values to her own children, along with the value of hard work.

Growing up in a low socio-economic community and coming from a large family, hard work was also a core value for Raumati, as was service to others, especially to her elders. Likewise,

taking care of younger siblings and cousins was an important responsibility that she carried with a strong sense of duty and care. As the eldest daughter of four sisters, the importance of valuing whānau was instilled in her from a young age, and it is these values of hard work, service to others, and whānau, as taught to her by her parents, that guided and grounded Raumati throughout her life.

The importance of making connections was deeply ingrained in Molly through her parents and grandparents—connections with whānau, whenua, and whakapapa. Underpinning these were guiding tikanga, principles, and values, such as manaakitanga, humility, treat people the way you want to be treated, and mahia te mahi (get the work done). Molly was also raised to believe that she had to always *"be an example for everyone else"*—this was an expectation placed on her from a young age and one that was non-negotiable. As such, it came with a lot of responsibility, regardless of age, gender, or position in the whānau. As an adult, Molly was able to realign the expectations of others with her own, which in turn influenced the expectations she placed on her own tamariki.

Maru shared that as the first born, he carried the responsibility of not only learning the ancestry and culture of his whānau but also ensuring that this knowledge was passed on. Thus, staying connected to whānau, whenua, and whakapapa was a priority for him and his whānau as well. He also grew up in an environment that fostered curiosity and exploration. Believing that the world was his to explore provided him with many opportunities to develop his own sense of self:

> *I try to live by my very own truths of reality, mana motuhake, tino rangatiratanga. I have gained the majority of my worldviews via reading and interacting with others, building powerful positive relationships. I have heroes who I think are models of human excellence that I learn from. I also draw inspiration from world mythology and Māori mythography via pakiwaitara and pūrākau.*

Similar to our previous kaituku, Maru upheld the foundational values instilled in him by his whānau during his formative years. However, navigating life's experiences and engaging with a variety of perspectives also gave him opportunities to refine and broaden his personal beliefs and value system.

Te Reo and Tikanga Māori

Mikaere spoke of *"being pulled under the wings of a lot of kaumātua."* As such, a passion for te reo and tikanga Māori was instilled in him from a very young age; a passion that later became his calling in life:

> *Some of those tikanga that were sown in me were things like respect. 'Ka whakapono koe kia koe anō,' listening to your own inner voice instead of seeking to be validated by external sources. That was instilled in me quite early by a lot of my kaumātua.*

In Jason's case, growing up overseas meant a physical disconnect from his marae and yet, through his father's teachings, he was still able to learn marae protocols, tikanga, and hear te reo being spoken, much of which stayed with him when his family returned home to Aotearoa New Zealand to live. Although te reo Māori was not present in his life for many years, once he became a parent, his children became his motivation to start learning te reo again, alongside of, and in support of, their learning.

With most of the kaituku, te reo and tikanga both had a distinct presence in their lives. Jacqui remembered introducing herself at the 2017 World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) with the words *"Kia ora, my name is Jacqui, and I come from the institution of my tūpuna."* Articulating her tūrangawaewae (place of belonging) through her whakapapa line reminded Jacqui that she was able to stand in this privileged space because of her tūpuna and the tamariki mokopuna entrusted to her care, personally and professionally.

Maria shared this kōrero, capturing the importance of experiencing tikanga firsthand at the marae:

> *The tikanga that I grew up with, that's what my girl learnt too. So, whenever I went to the marae, I took her to the marae too because I knew that no matter where she went, or what she'd do in her lifetime, she'd always come back to the marae. At the marae she's just awesome and my moko is the same too. Nowadays my girl doesn't come with me to coronation anymore, but I take my moko with me just so that she has that same connection to our marae and experiences that same sense of belonging.*
>
> *Whenever I'm doing anything at the marae, I try to take her along. This is how I learnt what was expected of me as a young girl, from seeing what my mother,*

> *my aunties, and kuia did whenever we went to the marae. So now, it's my turn to do the same, whether I'm a kaikaranga (caller of ceremonial call) standing on the pae (marae courtyard), a ringawera (worker) in the kitchen, or a whānau member cleaning the toilets or weeding the gardens, there is tikanga in everything that we do.*

Georgie too, understood the importance of tikanga and the roles and responsibilities that Māori carry on their marae and in the whānau. Through whakapapa, Georgie knew that she came from a line of strong wāhine Māori who were leaders of the people. Through this, she understood that:

> *The nature of wāhine and tāne Māori relationships in te ao Māori were complimentary—one didn't need to sit higher than the other because they each had something to offer, and they needed one another. It was only through the influence of a colonial system and Christianity that patriarchy made its way into te ao Māori.*

Georgie believed that this is how tikanga relevant to wāhine began to change, perhaps in turn influencing some of her mother's thinking around *"you made your bed you lie in it and you have these tikanga that you are his wife and you follow his life."* Acknowledging that her mother's whakaaro reflected the influences of a western belief system where the wife was subservient to the husband, Georgie was very clear about the tikanga that she follows in her life, with the constant reminder that just as she is a descendant of leaders, she too has a responsibility to lead and guide her whānau.

HEI TĀPIRI

From their earliest memories, each kaituku spoke of how their parents and/or grandparents were integral to the passing down of taonga tuku iho from one generation to the next, to guide and inform future generations. Taonga tuku iho in the form of values, beliefs, principles, te reo and tikanga provided a framework for understanding and engaging with the world. As a result, kaituku learnt what was expected of them through direct observation and oral instruction, learning by example and traditional teachings (Te Kanawa, 2022).

In keeping with Kaupapa Māori, Pihama et al. (2022) provided this explanation of taonga tuku iho, citing it as the principle of cultural aspirations:

> This principle refers directly to all ‘taonga’ or treasures, valued ways of being and practices, both tangible and intangible, that have been handed down through the generations by our ancestors and which we will hand to our descendants. It relates to te reo, tikanga, mātauranga and all cultural ways of being that are encompassed within te ao Māori. (p. 42)

This explanation resonates with the notion of ‘old friends in (k)new times’—of bringing these ‘taonga’ as hoa-haere through to each generation. While they might be ‘new’ when introduced to each generation, they are in fact ways of knowing, doing, and being that have been embedded in our Māori psyche mai i te timatanga (since the beginning)—in this way, the ‘new’ becomes ‘(k)new.’ Through whakapapa kōrero, taonga tuku iho are carried from one generation to the next; “expressed as art, as ritual, as animal sounds, as sounds of waves, as landscape, as dreams, as signs, as natural events, and as silence” (Edwards, 2009, p. 47).

Edwards (2009) goes on to articulate knowledge itself as “a taonga, a treasure, and the ability to think, to know and to be able to explain how we know is central to Māori self-determination and wellbeing into the future” (p. 220). For kaituku, knowledge was a core element of taonga passed down through the generations, continually providing content and context for its recipients. As such, taonga tuku iho in its many shapes and forms, will continue to inform, influence, and impact the wellbeing of Māori across time, space, and place (Kelly & Nicholson, 2022).

In referencing tikanga pertinent to the roles and responsibilities of wāhine Māori, Mikaere (as cited in Winiata & Luke, 2021) stated that based on iwi histories passed down through the generations, it was obvious that “Māori women occupied very important leadership positions in traditional society, positions of military, spiritual and political significance” (p. 330). However, the adverse impacts of colonisation on Māori, and especially on the mana of our wāhine Māori, have been well-documented (Gemmell, 2013; 2017; Jackson, 1998; Murphy, 2019; Pihama et al., 2016; Winiata & Luke, 2021).

The distortion of tikanga is not a new phenomenon, with Mikaere (2005) commenting that “[t]here has been so much harmful distortion concerning tapu and noa, particularly in the context of gender roles” (p. 137). A key message from this then, is to ensure, that in the intergenerational transmission of tikanga, we as Māori are not perpetuating harmful stereotypes or biases against ourselves. Taonga tuku iho represents continuity; therefore, as the kaitiaki of

these taonga, we have a duty to safeguard the essence of our tikanga and te reo Māori, our principles, values, and beliefs, our traditional knowledge and practices—from dilution, (mis)representation, (mis)interpretation, and (mis)appropriation (Cliffe-Tautari, 2020; Hutchings, 2013; Mikaere, 2005; 2013; Pitman, 2013).

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* is an opportunity to walk alongside our tūpuna, to feel their presence in an embrace, and to hear their voices in the interwoven threads of karanga. They call to me from across the awa, the moana, and the maunga, reminding me that I am not alone, guiding me home to my many homes. Just as they call to me, I can call upon them, knowing that their wisdom and guidance are always within my reach.

DISCUSSION: Resilience & Resourcefulness

> With the new knowledge came new kupu, which she rolled around her mouth and tasted. Some were salty and others were sweet, but they all made her hungry for more kupu, and she said so. She didn't even realise that she had spoken. She was so busy in the new spaces, jumping, stretching and running, that she didn't stop to think about the sound her voice made as it echoed in the spaces, getting louder with each utterance. The new challenges were daunting at first, but she loved the hīkoi and as she walked she picked things up off the ground: a story here, a waiata there, a whakataukī, a poem... As she took them in her hands they felt familiar, and she realised they had been in her kete long ago.
>
> With gratitude she collected them and put them back into her kete. She uttered karakia of thanks, and wondered aloud to herself who else might have a broken or empty kete. She went to find out. And as she walked, she sang. (Davies et al., 2010, p. 78)

The concluding portion of this pūrākau beautifully illustrates how resilience and resourcefulness can empower individuals to navigate challenges, embrace new opportunities, and cultivate meaningful connections with others on their journey of growth and potentiality. Depicted as 'old friends in (k)new times'—resilience and resourcefulness act as timeless companions, capable of guiding kaituku through the many complexities and uncertainties of today's world.

A Period of Adjustment

The initial period of transitioning to a single parent whānau requires time, care, and attention and each kaituku had their own ways of coping with this life-changing event. Georgie took time out for herself, away from her husband and children for a few days, to reassess her situation and put some temporary, but urgent measures in place. Maria physically moved towns to a community that she felt would be more conducive to raising her child on her own, while Maru made a conscious decision to be a model of excellence for his daughter. Mentally and emotionally, the transition to single parenting was a natural (and much needed) next step in the evolution of several of the kaituku and their whānau. For others, such as JO, it came as quite a shock and took some time to come to terms with.

During this period, many kaituku had to adjust their daily schedules, the ways in which their whānau units functioned, and find new forms of income and support. Jason spoke of establishing routines with his children and teaching them basic skills of cooking, cleaning, and planning. Transitioning to studying was also something new for their whānau, requiring him to step outside of his comfort zone in order to be open to learning and studying.

Although necessary, the transition from the familiar to the unknown can be a daunting undertaking. Finding closure on a past relationship involves processing emotions, reflecting on experiences, and perhaps even forgiving or letting go. As JO shared, *"closure is whatever you make it … it's not always about the other person explaining themselves."* Even so, this process can be emotionally taxing and time-consuming, requiring introspection and self-care. Meanwhile, simultaneously starting a new life requires courage, optimism, and a willingness to embrace change. It involves setting goals, making plans, and taking proactive steps towards personal growth and fulfilment.

Building Support Networks:

These featured strongly for all kaituku, much of which was captured in the Hoa-haere discussion of this chapter. As single parents, kaituku acknowledged that they drew on whānau, especially parents and grandparents, for practical assistance (ie: childcare, transport), emotional and moral support, wisdom, experience, and understanding, financial help and/or help with raising their tamariki. For many, like Raumati, their support networks also extended to friends, peers, mentors, and other like-minded people who could appreciate the complexities of their circumstances.

In that respect, whānau and community support networks helped kaituku to maintain a positive mindset while navigating the challenges of single parenthood and academic life. Moreover, whānau as units, developed their own collective ways of adapting, pivoting, and reclaiming what was rightfully theirs, so that the mana and wellbeing of their whānau would continue to flourish in times of hardship, need, and undue stress. This was evident in Jacqui's situation, where she and her father shared the roles of parenting and providing for the whānau, which enabled her to study and ensured that her daughter's needs were always taken care of.

Confronting Discrimination and Racism:

Several kaituku shared their experiences of discrimination and racism growing up, most of which took place in mainstream educational settings. Being the only Māori in the class, or part of a minority within a larger group exposed them to racist behaviours from other students, teachers, or parents of other students. These behaviours ranged from being excluded from activities that were intended for all students, being labeled as unclean or unhygenic, being ridiculed or made fun of, to being disciplined or ignored when they raised complaints.

While these were predominantly childhood/teenage experiences, this had a flow on effect whereby kaituku became more acutely aware of the pervasive nature of systemic discrimination and its impact on their lives. Maria expressed this during her pūkōrero and elaborated on how this knowlege became a determining factor in her decision to do a second degree, one more in keeping with her values and beliefs as a wahine Māori. Even if the experiences of racism and discrimination were not as overt, kaituku soon realised during their postgraduate studies that the education system was failing them, and not vice versa. As a result, kaituku made conscious decisions about where and what to study, most choosing a Wānanga setting for their postgraduate studies or a discipline closely associated with Māori/Indigenous peoples and communities.

Confidence in their Māori identity imbued kaituku with a strong sense of belonging and purpose, serving as a solid foundation from which to express themselves. Ultimately, their heritage as tāne and wāhine Māori provided a rich resource of cultural practices, beliefs, traditions, and tikanga, guiding their actions and decisions in alignment with principles and values passed down through the generations.

Challenging Single Parent Identity:

By choice or by circumstance has been a determining factor of becoming a single parent in this thesis. Because of that, we have Jacqui at one end of the continuum who saw single parenting

as a completely natural process, having been raised by her single father. The freedom she felt to carve out her own pathway in life was very much about self-determination and claiming her own mana motuhake. At the other end of the continuum, Molly and Jason both acknowledged that they did not see themselves or identify themselves as 'single' parents. Rather they were a mother or a father parenting their children and did not view their parental circumstances as deficit or lacking simply because they were no longer in a relationship with the other parent.

JO believed that the term 'single parent' was a label rather than her identity. Sometimes it was relevant to her life, such as when she applied for a benefit as a single parent in order to support her whānau. Other times it was not, such as when she applied for a student loan to support her studies, which required an indication of her marital status. Overall, there were varying attitudes from kaituku towards the single parent identity. Regardless, everyone had to dig deep at least once to weather the impact of their changed circumstances for themselves and their whānau.

HEI TĀPIRI

In a 2011 report on the resilience of sole-parent families in Aotearoa New Zealand, Waldegrave et al. (2011) stated the following:

> Overall the interviews with the Māori sole parents revealed the enduring power of whānau connections, and the persistence of values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour from one generation to the next. By far the majority of these were a source of strength for the parents, but some had needed to be re-evaluated in the light of changing circumstances. (p. 26)

Despite the passage of time, the findings of Waldegrave et al. from 2011 continue to resonate as discussed in this chapter, illustrating how the enduring significance of whānau connections and the intergenerational transmission of values and beliefs are still serving as pillars of resilience today, just as they did more than a decade ago for Māori single parents.

Not surprisingly, a "positive Māori identity and cultural efficacy are shown to be closely linked to resilience" (McFarlane et al., 2018, p. 13). Therefore, the importance of resilience and resourcefulness in the lives of each of the kaituku cannot be overstated, as these factors not only helped them to adjust to their new circumstances but also enabled them to thrive despite the many challenges and struggles they experienced. This was evident from their ability to remain aspirational and ambitious and from their journeys of personal growth and development

(Shaukat & Rashid, 2022). Edwards (2009) also advocated this when he wrote that having "a well-established sense of self … supports positive consequences and provides a depth of resilience for coping with adversity" (p. 317).

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* requires us to dig deep sometimes and draw on an inner strength that comes from a deep sense of knowing. As a single mother, I have done this many a time, often late at night when the children slept and the house was quiet. Throughout the ups and downs of raising tamariki mokopuna, working full-time, and completing a doctorate, there have been many moments when I asked myself (and the universe), 'why? Why? WHY?' And then I remember, my whānau are my why, and my ways of knowing, doing, and being as a wahine Māori and as a mother, are my 'how.'

AROTAHI Ū – NURTURANCE AND SUSTENANCE

The ways in which kaituku express and experience nurturance and sustenance are varied, yet both sit under the care of Ū, as sourced from the Māori term—ūkaipō. Therein we are reminded, "to turn to our ūkaipō—to our physical and spiritual mothers, to our motherlands, to Papatūānuku—for sustenance and guidance and for restoration of soul and body" (Gabel, 2013, p. 201). This leads to our first discussion point of *Home*—a space and place that we return to and for Indigenous peoples, it is where "the relationships, as opposed to the physical structures, are seen as the primary contributing factors to secure feelings of home" (Bowra & Mashford-Pringle, 2021, p. 1). Exploring notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level leads us to the final discussion in this chapter—*Fulfilment & Happiness.* These two qualities reflect (for the most part) the lived experiences and aspirations of kaituku, while highlighting that for Indigenous communities, self-actualisation and transcendence are also manifestations of fulfilment and happiness (Blackstock, 2009).

DISCUSSION: Home

> And just as the play *Te Raukura* says, 'the people returned home and saw again the mountain of their dreams and stood upon the earth they loved so well', then perhaps our mokopuna may be able to do the same. For young Māori, a pēpeha about our mountains or rivers and our iwi will become a living embodiment of what it means to be at home;

> and for those who have come here or are descended from those who came here because of the Treaty, they too will find their own way of being at home. (Jackson, 2022, p. 25)

There are several key messages in Jackson's excerpt, but the one that stands out most concerning this discussion is the notion of kaituku developing their own sense of 'what it means to be at home'—ā-tinana nei, ā-hinengaro nei, ā-wairua nei, ā-ngākau nei hoki (physically, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally). Moreover, as the quote above highlights, home can be much more than the house that a person lives in, or it can be exactly that—it really depends on the person.

By default, Aotearoa New Zealand is inherently home to Māori, and at the time that kaituku shared their pūkōrero, the majority had lived in Aotearoa New Zealand all their lives. While there were kaitiaki who had lived overseas for a time, eventually they returned 'home.' With each pūkōrero, kaituku introduced themselves through their pēpeha, bringing through with them their iwi, maunga, awa/moana/roto, marae, and tūpuna. Iwi affiliations across Aotearoa New Zealand were identified, including Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Raukawa, Waikato, Tauranga Moana, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Tahinga, Ngāti Mahuta, Patu Pō, Ngāti Waingaroto, Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Apa, Ngā Wairiki, Ngāti Kauwhata, Ngāti Paoa, Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri, Kāi Tahu, and Cook Island Māori.

Several 'homes' were identified by kaituku, indicative of their personal needs, upbringings, and cultural affiliations to places and people. For all kaituku, their childhood homes were spaces of learning, of things both Māori and non-Māori. Out of necessity, they learnt the ways of society, much of which was (and continues to be) governed by Western knowledge. Some of this knowledge was gained at home; however, the schooling system served as the main vehicle for knowledge of this nature. The love of learning, as expressed by JO and Maru, was nurtured early on in their lives with home serving as the original incubator of curiosity, exploration, and imagination.

Taonga tuku iho such as tikanga and te reo Māori, along with values and principles, were ingrained in the home and reinforced on the marae. Supporting this, many kaituku spoke of the seamless relationship between their homes and marae, as related here by Maria:

> *As well as working with my dad at Tūrangawaewae, I also grew up at my mum's marae and we'd be in the kitchen working and people would say our*

family was awesome and my thinking was 'don't we all do this?' I just thought it was the norm, but it wasn't.

Having spent a large portion of her life at the marae, JO referred to herself as a 'pā rat (used in this context as a term of endearment to describe children who grew up at the pā or on the marae) Because of that, she learnt from a young age how everyone has a role—from the paepae (orator's bench), to the wharekai (kitchen), to the whareiti (toilets). This included learning how these different roles impact and support each other. As a second home, the marae contributed to JO's sense of belonging, identity, and community; interconnected elements that helped to shape her understanding of 'self' and her place in te ao Māori. For Mikaere, Te Kōhanga Reo became an extension of home and marae, serving as a segue to te reo Māori for a community who, as a result of urbanisation, had moved away from their marae and pā.

Molly spoke of growing up at the base of her maunga, on the whenua where her parents and grandparents once lived; now, as a mother and grandmother herself, she lives there with her tamariki and mokopuna, close to the marae. Despite having lived in urban-based homes throughout her life, it is the homestead where she has felt most 'at home.' This extends to the idea of parents/grandparents being the personification of 'home,' such as Georgie and her tamariki going back to live with her parents after separating from her husband. In her parents' home she felt safe, comforted, and supported during an intensely emotional and unsettling time. After regaining a sense of stability, she was then able to take the next step of moving her whānau to their own home.

Becoming single parents caused kaituku to revisit the notion of home and all that it represented—for them, their whānau, and their altered circumstances. While several resided in homes that they or their whānau owned, the remainder lived in rental properties. Homeowners expressed a sense of satisfaction in knowing that they could provide a stable environment for their whānau. However, due to the impermanent nature of rental accommodation, those who rented understood the potential of frequent moves and financial strain due to ever-increasing rents. Homeownership was not their priority; however, it was at one point an aspiration that many had considered.

More than just a physical structure, kaituku all held the belief that home was synonymous with whānau, and as an extension to this, whakapapa. Kaituku homes held memories, whakapapa kōrero, and pūrākau, and for most served as safe havens during times of stress and upheaval.

Drawing on the principles of manaakitanga/manaaki tangata, kaituku homes were also nurturing environments, where friends and whānau whānui could visit, receive nourishment and care, and engage in healing conversations and practices. Extending on this further, Jacqui spoke of home as being a place of 'settling.' That outside of the home she carried multiple roles and responsibilities as a student, as a midwife, and as a lecturer; however, once she arrived home to her daughter, she was 'mum' first and foremost and could comfortably settle back into that space.

Several kaituku wāhine were also grandmothers; as such, it was not uncommon for three generations of whānau to be living together at different times in their lives. Kaituku spoke of how mokopuna brought a renewed sense of purpose and energy to their home, while providing parents and grandparents alike with time and space to navigate their lives with more certainty. Balancing the multiple responsibilities and demands of postgraduate studies, employment, parenting, and grandparenting in a multigenerational household came with its rewards, as well as its challenges. From sharing whānau stories and traditions to offering practical support in times of need, their homes became hubs of intergenerational learning and repositories of whānau knowledge and wisdom.

HEI TĀPIRI

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the notion of home for Māori is deeply interwoven with ancestral landscapes, whakapapa, and cultural identity. As highlighted by Cunningham et al. (2023) and Hakopa (2011), the importance of connections to, and relationships with whenua, is passed down through the generations. Through the recitation of pēpeha, a traditional expression of identity and belonging, Māori continually reaffirm their hononga (ties) to specific geographical locations, ancestral lineages, and cultural values, locating themselves geographically, culturally, and spiritually.

These ancestral landscapes hold immense significance, embodying not only physical spaces but also repositories of cultural knowledge, spiritual connections, and collective memories. Each waka, maunga, awa/moana, iwi, hapū, and marae shared through pēpeha carries whakapapa kōrero, narratives of migration, and the enduring presence of tikanga, āhuatanga, and te reo Māori. Consequently, the recitation of pēpeha honours the past, acknowledges the present, and affirms a Māori identity within Aotearoa New Zealand. Home for Māori thus begins with connections to whenua and whakapapa, where the essence of identity and belonging originates (Cram et al., 2022; Mead, 2016)

In today's contemporary context, the notion of 'home' and how it is experienced by Māori has been influenced by a number of factors, including the socio-political context of Aotearoa New Zealand (Boulton et al., 2020; Boulton et al., 2022; Jackson, 2022; Olin et al., 2022; Powrie, 2019). Socio-political contexts encompass a wide range of factors such as economic conditions, government policies, societal attitudes, legal frameworks, social inequalities, and considering the current climate in Aotearoa New Zealand—political regimes. Furthermore, while home ownership has historically been perceived as a sign of an individual's success in Aotearoa New Zealand, for many Māori, home ownership has been equated to a better quality of life and therefore an aspiration worthy of pursuing (Barrett, 2023; Flint-Hartle & Stangl, 2014; Joynt & Hoffman, 2021; Waldegrave et al., 2006).

While developing this discussion, Jackson (2022) reminds us that "there's a conflation between house and home" (p. 1) where a house typically refers to the physical building or structure where people reside as opposed to a home that refers to the place where people feel a sense of belonging, security, and comfort. This can result in the two terms being used interchangeably as seen in these next two examples from Stats NZ (2021) and Jackson (2022):

> For Māori, housing is about more than economic outcomes and material security. Housing cuts across many aspects of Māori wellbeing, such as whānau health, acquisition and use of te reo Māori, care of whenua and the environment, the ability to provide sustenance and hospitality for themselves and others, and many other aspects of wellbeing unique to Māori culture. (Stats NZ, 2021, para. 3)

"Whenever I hear about people sleeping in cars or under bridges and so on, it's always talked about as a housing crisis but it's never talked about as *houselessness.* It's always talked about as *homelessness"* (Jackson, 2022, p. 1). As such, capturing Māori perceptions of home is not only a significant contribution to the wider discussions of homes and housing in general, but also lends itself to exploring the relationship between home and its influence on the wellbeing of Māori.

Housing that is both affordable and suitable is deemed as essential to the sustained wellbeing of Māori single parent households. The mention of multigenerational living by several kaituku also highlights the role that homes play, not only in housing multiple generations but in also enabling whānau whānui to live communally (Firestone & Wilson, 2023). Living communally supports the practical sharing of financial expenses, caregiving responsibilities, resources, and

decision-making processes. More than that though, this living arrangement provides a framework for nurturing strong whānau relationships and preserving whānau ways of knowing, doing, and being that prioritise the collective wellbeing of the whānau.

Additionally, Boulton et al. (2022) focused their research on producing culturally responsive housing solutions for Māori, examining how Māori identity influences this space. As a result, they developed two identifiers to describe Māori. The first described Māori "who live in and around their traditional homelands and/or have strong connections to their marae" as 'tribally based' (p. 46). Conversely, the term 'urban Māori' was given for "Māori who no longer reside in or near their traditional whenua, and are less strongly connected to the marae" (p.46). Interestingly, considering kaituku in relation to this continuum of tribal-based and urban-based Māori highlighted that most still hold strong connections to their marae despite living away from their traditional whenua.

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* asks us where our heart feel nourished, then advocates that we go to those spaces and places to be nurtured and sustained in our daily lives. For me, it is in the comfort and solace of my home or on the shores of my moana; in the cuddles of my mokopuna and the karanga of our kuia. It is in the songs that I sing, the words that I write, and the stories that I share. In these spaces, I feel safe, and I know that I am home.

DISCUSSION: Fulfilment & Happiness

> My nanny taught me to examine and value my heritage. That we must remember and appreciate the past, yet have currency in the present, and plan for the future. Through her I saw that it is possible to adapt and thrive in a changing world without losing the essential core of your being; your principles, your values, and your dignity. She taught me my whakapapa and I began to realise that everything a person was, and everything they could be, was woven from the legacy of those who went before. (Dyet & Panapa, 2017, Back cover)

Initially conceived as a scholarly inquiry into the factors influencing success among Māori single parents pursuing postgraduate qualifications, this entire discussion chapter has consistently returned to the importance of personal narratives, lived experiences, and collective memories. Thus, when kaituku were invited to share their thoughts and experiences of success, several began by questioning the meaning of the word and its intent. Some chose to adhere to the conventional understanding of success in society and continued with their discussions with

that understanding in place. Others decided to reframe it to one aligning more closely to their personal values and beliefs, and from this the qualities of fulfilment and happiness emerged.

Therefore, in this final discussion, each kaituku has been accorded space to articulate their own understanding of success. As such, a wealth of perspectives and experiences have emerged, reflecting the diverse ways in which success can be interpreted and achieved. My role as the kairangahau is to weave together those elements that speak to the intent of this doctoral thesis, that is, to explore notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. At the same time though, a level of critique is applied to my weave, one that attempts to explore in more detail the nuances inherent in these personal narratives of success.

I am cognisant though that there have been references to notions of success throughout this entire chapter, and all of those understandings also contribute to this discussion.

GEORGIE: A Warm Heart

Georgie spoke of success as both an individual and collective achievement. As a kaiako, a mother, and a kaitiaki of the marae, there were a range of success indicators for her to gauge whether she was fulfilling her various roles and responsibilities effectively, contributing positively to her community, and making a meaningful impact on those around her:

> *Okay, so success for me is a warm heart—not a heartache, and I know if I have done it. With my job, I know I have succeeded if I can see a tauira light bulb come on. My whanau? If I can see them step up on the marae, help one another you know, in a positive direction, that's success for me. For my rangahau—if the stories are told, then that's it too.*
>
> *Back then, I thought that if I got a qualification then that was success. But actually, the qual. is just a piece of paper, isn't it? Success would be the work going on, the values you live by, and what's happening… what's changing, because of the work you've been doing. You want your pūrākau to be enduring, to be there when you are not, to be told and retold, and even if kids these days don't know the pūrākau, if they know how to find the information for themselves—wouldn't that be success?*
>
> *As a single mum, the key ingredient of success for me is love. The key to everything, ko te aroha and knowing that when I'm at my lowest point, I have*

to think of how much I love my kids and then that's when I go 'Come on Georgie. Pick yourself up and get back in there—concentrate!'

Georgie, with all her individual experiences, knowledge, and understanding recognised the importance of her hoa-haere—the community who supported her throughout her journey Likewise, the values that guided her actions, shaped her decisions, and ultimately helped to define what success looks like for her were also key:

But you know what else? My success isn't just mine, it belongs to everyone who helped me. It was possible because of aroha and whakapono—faith. I know that I wouldn't be where I am today without aroha and whakapono and my kids, and everyone else who helped us. So that's what I mean—it isn't an individual thing, it's an 'us' thing.

When I think of successful people, I think of the chief of our iwi or my great grandmother or my mother's successes in the community and the whānau. But then that makes me think of success in a different way—succession. So then, isn't the legacy that you leave behind a way of knowing if you've been successful and then isn't it the people who will say if you were successful or not?

Watching Georgie navigate this discussion on success saw moments of clarity and understanding emerge from the initial uncertainty of her inner dialogue. This became more evident once she was able to align her interpretation of success with her lived experiences, and see it come to fruition across the generations.

JACQUI: Whakapapa:

In Jacqui's pūkōrero, the themes of personal agency and autonomy were prominent. She acknowledged that being a single parent gave her the freedom to live life on her own terms. This role provided her with the freedom to make choices and decisions that she believed were in the best interest of her and her child. This sense of autonomy was closely tied to her understanding of success:

Success for me as a mum means knowing that my daughter lives on her terms in her spaces and that she raises my mokopuna with the same values that she

was raised with. Watching my child be the mum that she can be without me influencing her more than what's necessary. Allowing my child to always have independent thoughts, to make her mistakes and to know that if she needs my help I'm there, but she has to learn to ask for that help because it's all in those teaching methods—call me as you need me and do the best that you can do.

For Jacqui, there was no hesitation in defining what success meant to her. It was deeply rooted in her connections to her whānau, past, present, and future, and the notion of succession. Just as Georgie identified aroha and whakapono as key elements of success, Jacqui spoke of whakapapa and the celebration of success beyond the physical realm. Honouring her ancestors, nurturing her whānau relationships, and ensuring the wellbeing and prosperity of future generations all magnified the importance of whakapapa:

What else is success to me? It's having the right people around me. People who know you for yourself, people who I can trust and work well with to get the mahi done… Another thing I've been thinking about is how do we heal the generations, that to me is success in succession. Knowing that my whānau are okay and that they have the necessary tools to be strong and healthy in this world and that all of that knowledge is being passed down to my mokopuna.

When I really think about what success means to me though, beyond work and studies, I think of whakapapa. Looking into the eyes of my whakapapa before me and into the eyes of my whakapapa behind me. I can see my mokopuna, my daughter, my papa and I'll see my generations ahead of me—that to me is success and if I can see that, I want every other whakapapa throughout the world to see that in theirs too.

Jacqui reminds us that success is not measured by the heights we reach, but by the connections we make and the legacies we leave behind. By nurturing relationships, healing past wounds, and empowering future generations with the tools to thrive, there *"is success in succession."*

JO: The Journey, Not the Destination

The following excerpt from JO offers a unique perspective on success, one that transcends conventional benchmarks and instead, finds meaning in the nuances of everyday interactions and the fostering of mindful communication. This introspective journey explores success not as a destination, but as an ongoing process of growth, understanding, and connection:

Success isn't really a word that I would use much, except of course when we're talking about tauira success in the Wānanga, but I guess it's implied all the way through my talking. When my very hands-on boys are able to participate and communicate about a variety of topics on the news or in the community, then that's a success factor to me. Or when I hear the kids say 'Oh I hear what you're saying. Have you thought about this?' To me that's success too because that means not only did they have a view, they're being very mindful of the other person's view, as well as wanting to share their own.

There is a very no-nonsense quality about JO's understanding of success that acknowledges the practicality of having a master's qualification, but celebrates the journey of learning, growth, and development gained along the way:

I don't think having a tohu means I'm more successful than a person who doesn't have a master's, doesn't make the same money as me, or doesn't work for the Wānanga. Because sometimes success, to be honest, is waking up and you're not in a shitty mood. I mean, I think success is more about the little things. With my master's, getting the tohu wasn't important, but all the learning that took place—that's what really mattered. It's the journey, not the destination. That takes everything back to the love of learning and the journey of education—and honestly, that's where it all began for me.

As such, success is not always grand and life-changing. Most times it is the little things that go unnoticed simply because they are part of our everyday lives. As a parent, JO appreciates that success is reflected back to her through the words and actions of her children and mokopuna. Similarly, as an educator, success is seen through the achievements of the tauira, not so much in the tohu they gained, but more in the contributions they make back to their respective communities.

MARIA: Being Māori

In this reflective piece, Maria recalls success as a deeply personal and culturally grounded experience. Similar to the previous kaituku, she challenges traditional academic markers of achievement, choosing instead to emphasise whānau wellbeing, community contribution, and the practical application of knowledge:

What does success mean to me? It would probably be that my mokopuna is well and happy and that my whānau are well. I don't know if I see the doctorate as success, because no-body cares, I still have to do the dishes at the marae and clean the toilets. But I guess success will be from the findings and how I can share those back to the people. There has to be something that comes out of the doctorate that is going to be of benefit to and for our people. That, for me, would be success!

Maria also suggests that success entails the ability to navigate and thrive in both Māori and non-Māori worlds, while maintaining a strong sense of Māori identity:

Definitely about creating a safe environment for our tamariki mokopuna. Modeling and role-modeling aspirations and showing them that they can achieve those. Respecting their mana so that they grow up strong and independent. Independence was, and still is important for me, so not being dependent on government handouts, but having your own ability to earn. Also, maintaining and normalising our cultural practices, so that our tamariki/mokopuna are used to the marae and know the mahi that needs to be done on the marae.

So, a lot of the things that I've done is about creating this environment that is supportive of us being Māori, of being whānau, of being safe in our culture. I've worked hard to create that and maintain that, not just for myself, but for my whānau and extended whānau.

Success in the Pākehā world is different to success in our Māori world—aye. When I think of success in terms of being Māori, fulfilled and happy are things that I think about. What has made my doctorate a successful or fulfilled journey for me? It has been me being able to stand up and talk confidently about the kaupapa I've been doing and sharing my story. I really feel like I belong and like I can stand in my space, a Māori space, but I can also stand in a Pākehā space and not be concerned about what they might be thinking. Here, I have a presence as Māori and it's beautiful and I really think that I'm doing something that is going to be of benefit to our people.

Maria has been on a mana wāhine journey of reclamation, which is evidenced in her commentary of standing in her own mana in both te ao Māori and in the Pākehā world. It is clear to see that her doctorate has been a significant undertaking, not just in terms of academic pursuits, but also in terms of personal growth and healing. Successful in terms of the transformative aspect of her doctorate kaupapa, but also in terms of the potential to contribute positively to the many communities that she connects to. Ultimately though, success per se was experienced through the genuine sense of fulfilment and happiness that came from raising her daughter in a supportive and safe environment, grounded in tikanga and values.

RAUMATI: Self-Actualisation

Like the kaituku before her, Raumati also emphasised the importance of living a life that aligned with her personal values, having a supportive whānau, and continuously learning and growing:

> *Success to me is not monetary nor career aspirations but the comfort in knowing that I am living a life that aligns with my values e.g. service to others, being kind. The key ingredient for my success is my whānau, through bloodline and friendship. There are just so many people that I have been able to call on to support me in all of my ups and downs. I think one of the biggest reflections I have made is that success means to have options. I have been gifted the opportunity to work with so many awesome people, in Aotearoa and beyond, because I am grounded in who I am and I have a desire to keep learning.*

As such, Raumati's journey of personal growth has also been one of goal setting, exploring options, and embracing opportunities. While academic accomplishments have contributed to her growth and development, an aspirational mindset and hard work are testament to her resilience and determination:

> *If I could substitute the word successful though with something else, quite possibly it would be the word 'rewarding'—as in 'do the mahi, get the treats.' I don't think we should be rewarded for everything we do, but at the end of the day what are the fruits of our labour? On reflection, given everything that I have done to this point, what type of life am I experiencing. I think this comes down to my parents and grandparents being very clear that if you want something you can get it, as long as you put the hard work in.*

Prioritising personal values over monetary gains and career achievements reflects a transformation in Raumati's personal perspective of success. In this light, success is reinterpreted as living a fulfilling life abundant with possibilities and potential, rather than just acquiring external validation:

> *I failed School Certificate miserably. In the early edition of Ka Hikitia they talked about low expectations of Māori students and I always thought that related wholeheartedly to my own journey. No one expected me to do or be anything. Until someone did, then I almost got addicted to smashing expectations and exceeding my own expectations. Education has really opened up my horizons and given me the desire to dream more than I ever could. Currently, I am studying for my second Master of Education Leadership and plan to start my doctorate next year. There is so much stigma around Māori learners, and even more so if you are a Māori single parent. My mantra has always been though, 'this isn't the end of your story.'*

Raumati's journey, as evident throughout her pūkōrero, clearly shows that her success has been enhanced greatly through supportive friends and whānau and her own resilient spirit and determination. Her final words serve as a powerful reminder that we have the mana (the power, authority, and influence) to write our own stories and chase our dreams, regardless of the societal obstacles we may encounter along the way.

MOLLY: Whānau Achieving

While all kaituku have reinterpreted the notion of success in ways that resonate with their personal experiences and values, Molly's struggle with this concept was clearly evident during her pūkōrero. Struggling with the traditional, often competitive interpretation of success influenced her unease, as articulated here:

> *At first, when I thought about what success means to me, I straight away thought that the first thing about success is being a mum and a grandmother. Then I thought that success is about being able to support my kids, and whatever it is they want to do. So, rather than saying I want my children to be successful, I want them to be the best at what they can be. Because of that, I'm not sure if I would actually use the word 'success.' To me, that sits more closely with a western feel. It might be another English word, but I don't know what*

that would be either. Success is like saying there's a winner and a loser and I struggle with that. Actually, even thinking about the idea of measuring success. That word 'measure'—the idea that success is sort of aligned to a transaction and that to have success, certain things need to be done. Again, it doesn't sit right with me.

However, as she continued to reflect and delve deeper into her discomfort, when considering the notion of success in relation to her whānau, her viewpoint began to shift:

Plus, life doesn't work like that, not for me as a parent, or with my whānau. It doesn't work for us because 'success' is not a thing that I work for. It's hard to explain. You know what, we don't even use the word success in our home, I can't remember the last time we used it. When it came to achievements that the kids have had, we've talked about achieving, so achievement is probably a better word for success in our home. The kupu 'pae tawhiti' also means something to me, those goals that we work towards and once we reach them we can say we've achieved.

For me, success sounds like a one size fits all, a western one size fits all, and for us as Māori, it's not always a one size fits all, is it.

It is not surprising then that the notion of 'pae tawhiti' (distant horizon) resonated more with Molly, representative of the idea of embarking on a journey with the intention of achieving far-reaching aspirations or objectives. Thus, as a mother and grandmother, ensuring that her tamariki and mokopuna are supported to realise their potential is the ultimate achievement.

The notion of 'pae tawhiti' comes from the following whakataukī and serves as an eloquent reminder that in te ao Māori we have our own ways of knowing, doing, and being that add depth and richness to our understanding of the world:

Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata

Ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tīna

Seek the distant horizons and cherish those you attain

(nā Whakaari Te Rangitakuku Mete-Kingi)

JASON: Empowerment & Inspiration

Jason's approach to the notion of success is reflective, humble, and whānau-oriented. He expresses a deep sense of fulfilment and satisfaction in the ability of his children to make their own choices and set their own paths in life, indicating a strong focus on nurturing independence and autonomy within their whānau:

> *If I had to really think about that word success and what it looks like for me, then it would probably be my children. It's the ability for them to do the things they want to do; to set their own directions, because that's what I've taught them to do. Knowing that they can make their own choices, that they have options and that I'm not there to tell them what to do, but to support them. I've never really thought of myself as a success, but I can see how others might think of me like that because of my master's, or my job and the work I do with children, or how well my whānau is doing. I guess then that success could also be about inspiring others. Just like how my dad inspired me, I want to inspire my children too.*

While Jason downplays his own achievements, he highlights the importance of inspiring others, particularly his children and of leading by example. With clear direction and the right support in place, achieving one's goals is possible, and that is when success is experienced.

MARU: Abundance & Transformation

Maru's pūkōrero evokes feelings of inspiration and motivation, and similar to his kaituku counterparts, emphasises the importance of hard work, dedication, and a growth mindset in achieving success. Expanding on these attributes, he highlights the role of unconditional love, nurturing, and education in raising children to be successful and world-leading individuals.

> *The value I put on success is the growth mindset of abundance and transformation. If anyone puts in the work, gets great coaching and mentoring, they can achieve whatever anyone else has, and even create something new and world-changing for the rest of us. Things like persistence, grit, perseverance, commitment, dedication, and action are things I think of when thinking of success.*

Success looks like work to me, its stickability through difficult challenges, critical thinking and clear thinking to effectively communicate breakthroughs. If I overcome a challenge, it's not because I am smart, it's because I worked hard, and maybe long, to accomplish the successful outcome.

Unconditional love: physical (hug them and kiss them, get them into fun exercises), emotional (tell them how much you love them every day, and how lucky you are to have them in your life), mental (read to them, take them to playgrounds and museums, and challenge them), and spiritual (expose them to different world religious beliefs and practices, and show them your own beliefs). Nurture, care, protect, actively listen, and be real with them. Ability to promote your children above you, because they are geniuses, all kids are. Demonstrate excellence by being a great role-model. Have a focus that you are passionate about, and go for it. Get involved in your community on different levels. Develop strong positive relationships with whānau and friends. Constantly learn and upgrade your belief system and behaviour from your new knowledge.

Maru takes this discussion to the global stage (and beyond), suggesting that success should also be redefined in terms of our contributions to society and the wider world at large:

If I were to substitute the word success with something else it would be World Leader or World Leading. We are an innovative and creative people who can help transform the world for the better. All kids are the future, so parenting is super important because we are our kids' first teachers, and potentially their best teachers. They are born into a different social environment than our ancestors, same star system, but things like global warming, internet, social media, block chain, virtual and augmented reality etcetera. There are so many other indigenous cultures we can inspire and help as well as our own, so be adventurous and courageous at inventing new ways of parenting and living. We have Maui and Tāwhaki to keep us grounded and galactic.

My personal success story is still in the making.

Similar to Raumati, Maru proposed that his success story is a constant work-in-progress that informs and influences personal growth, whānau transformation, community engagement, and

global impact. Success is depicted as the result of hard work, clear communication, and overcoming challenges rather than innate intelligence. Moreover, having a clear understanding of success serves as a roadmap for Maru, outlining the specific steps needed to achieve his desired goals and aspirations.

MIKAERE: Congruent Happiness

Throughout his pūkōrero, Mikaere often revealed an introspective and philosophical nature, delving deep into the meaning of life, purpose, and personal growth. In this particular excerpt he expresses an acute understanding of the interconnectedness between his actions, the energy they emit (ihi), and the resulting consequences or responses (utu):

> *I think success comes back to being happy and how congruent I am being with my vision that I have for the future. I understand that my 'ihi' and every action I take contribute to what I put out into the world and that there's always a response—ka hoki mai. There's always an utu or consequence; what I give out comes back to me and the state of that is my 'wana.' My habits and choices eventually determine my 'mana' and that's pretty much what I live by every day. If I'm being congruent with who I need to be in order to create the tomorrow that I desire, that's what determines success for me and that's ultimately what makes me happy as well.*

Based on Mikaere's pūkōrero, self-mastery and living authentically are key components of his interpretation of success. Thus, achieving a state of congruent happiness, where one's actions and choices align perfectly with their vision for the future, can lead to a sense of fulfilment and joy.

HEI TĀPIRI

From our discussion on the notions of success, it became clear that kaituku held a variety of perceptions. Some perceived success as achieving personal growth, self-improvement, or overcoming challenges, while others considered contributing to, or making a difference in their communities, as a sign of success. Despite a range of views, some common threads emerged from those many conversations: a shared recognition of resilience (both individual and collective), fulfilment, and happiness (Duckworth et al., 2021; Hewlett, 2018; Reid, 2006; Watson, 2020). These qualities played an important role in shaping their perceptions of success and overall wellbeing. When kaituku felt fulfilled and happy in their lives, they were more

likely to perceive themselves as successful, regardless of external markers such as wealth or status.

Researchers Kingi et al. (2014), and more recently, Rolleston et al. (2022) explored the notion of flourishing whānau Māori, identifying key contributing factors to whānau wellness. While this rangahau did not focus explicitly on whānau wellness, kaituku naturally considered the wellbeing of themselves and their whānau in terms of fulfilment and happiness. As such, the term 'flourishing,' seems to be more encompassing as opposed to the narrower connotations of the word 'success.'

In an earlier section of this chapter, the pursuit of mauri ora was explored in relation to sources of educational aspirations. Beverland (2023) shares that mauri ora is "related to human happiness, positivity, flourishing, being balanced, having good relationships with the living and the spirit world, feeling exploratory, and generally feeling strength" (p. 155-156). Similarly, fulfilment and happiness are intrinsic elements of mauri ora, encapsulating a holistic sense of wellbeing that extends beyond conventional notions of achievement and accomplishment. All of these elements are important contributors to the quality of life. Indigenous parents, including Māori single parents, continually strive to secure prosperous futures for their tamariki while safeguarding cultural identity and integrity—a conviction that necessitates going beyond the norms and expectations of colonial society.

Also key to this discussion is the notion of rangatiratanga (Jackson, 2020; Smith et al., 2021a; Takitimu, 2024) and the importance of ensuring that Māori single parents are able to determine for themselves what success looks like. From the words they used, to the meanings they derived from those words, to the ways in which success was both enacted and exemplified—all of this was at the discretion of the kaituku. This is what rangatiratanga affords us as Māori—the right to determine for ourselves, according to our ways of knowing, doing, and being:

> We sometimes talk about it as a destination we want to reach, without realising that it sits within us…. rangatiratanga is a verb. I think it's a way of being. It's a state of mind. It is not a destination. (Takitimu, 2024, para. 4)

Personal Insights: *Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura* is transcendental, When I look back on my life, I realise that I stayed in all of my broken and toxic relationships because I thought that it was my job to make others happy. Not realising that I was compromising my own happiness in the process, but also not believing that I had a right to my own happiness. Instead I felt I had

to be accepting, forgiving, and understanding, and so I settled. Then one day I hit a milestone event in my life and I realised that something had to change, otherwise I would remain like this forever—and so I did.

Hei Whakakapi

In this chapter, Arotahi served as lenses through which notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level were explored and unpacked. Much like rummaging through a thrift shop, there were times when the discussions flowed freely, uncovering unexpected treasures and opening up new possibilities. However, the discussions sometimes struggled to find clarity, at times revealing an overabundance of 'sameness' where valuable insights were overlooked or missed entirely. In those instances a subtle repositioning helped to open up the stilted discussions, while other times a quick aro or refocus on 'how does this relate to notions of success for Māori single parents' was enough to get back on track.

Through these multiple discussions, insights shared by kaituku indicated that maintaining their Māori identity and living according to their principles, values, and tikanga underpinned their sense of success (Durie, 2003; Macfarlane et al., 2014; Webber, 2018;). This reaffirms the importance of identity for Māori single parents and its integral role in defining success from within their respective contexts.

Furthermore, the capacity to *be* Māori and live *as* Māori, impacts all aspects of one's life. In turn, those aspects inherently become the footstool of both personal and collective Māori identities. Borell (2005) and Penetito (2010) both noted that Māori self-identification has often been a site of contention due to what Houkamau and Sibley (2010) have described as "negative personal experiences (racism and discrimination) and negative media representations" (p. 23). Additionally, "the concept of self for many Māori may be inherently linked or embedded in a collectivist identity network in a way which the self-concept of many Westerners is not" (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010, p. 13), highlighting that whakapapa, whānau, and culture are woven into the fabric of a Māori identity.

Research has shown though that Māori identity is not static (Ahuriri-Driscoll & Blake, 2024; Hauraki, 2019; Houkamau & Sibley, 2010; Stewart & Stewart-Harawira, 2020; Wereta, 2007); it continually adapts and responds to the enduring impacts of colonisation, including the loss

of Māori land, culture, language, and sense of belonging. Urbanisation has exacerbated these challenges, leading to disparities in various aspects of life for Māori, such as health, education, employment, housing, and the economy (Borell, 2005; McIntosh, 2005).

In light of these challenges, Houkamau and Sibley (2010) remind us that there are multiple "ways of "being" Māori" (p. 8), and consequently, many ways to define success. In celebrating the richness of Māori identity, we recognise that for the community of Māori single parents contributing to this rangahau, there are numerous paths to fulfilment, achievement, happiness, and success.

As we move into Chapter Six, the concluding chapter of this thesis, we will bring together all the elements gained from this rangahau and reflect on the broader implications for Māori single parents pursuing postgraduate education. This chapter will also offer recommendations for future rangahau and practical strategies to support the success and wellbeing of Māori single parents in academia and beyond.

CHAPTER SIX:
TUKUA KIA RERE KI TŌNA TAUMATA

CONCLUSION

Hei Whakatau

> Research and the simple act of wanting to know more about the world should always be cause for celebration. As Indigenous Peoples it is part of the necessary joy of being able to celebrate our survival and our uniqueness. Perhaps most of all it is to celebrate the journeys that still lie ahead of us, to look at our mokopuna and celebrate the future that they hopefully will inherit. (Jackson, 2015, p. 63)

This quote is a poignant reminder that the pursuit of knowledge and understanding is not merely an academic exercise, but for Indigenous peoples it is a celebration of our collective resilience, identity, and hopes for the future. As highlighted throughout this doctoral thesis, my experiences as a Māori single mother have played an important role in shaping and informing the direction of this inquiry. However, the kaituku have ultimately enriched this journey through the sharing of their diverse perspectives, insights, and experiences; contributing to a greater understanding of what success looks like for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level.

The title of this chapter, 'Tukua Kia Rere ki Tōna Taumata' marks the culmination of this rangahau journey. However, for this kaupapa to truly 'ascend to its highest point,' (as the title suggests), it must add value to the participating community and the associated bodies of knowledge. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to celebrate the journey taken to arrive at this point, highlighting the practical elements, lessons learned, and actionable insights that have emerged, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to the ongoing success and wellbeing of Māori single parents and their whānau.

Overall Findings

As part of my positionality, I chose to navigate this doctoral journey from a space of affirmation; one that acknowledged the limitless potential of Māori single parents. By recognising their strengths and capabilities from the outset, kaituku were able to engage in this rangahau from their own spaces of strength, empowerment, and knowing. In turn, this facilitated a more positive and supportive environment for this rangahau and the kaituku who shared this journey with me.

Throughout this rangahau I asked, 'What does success look like for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level'. In response, the concept of rangatiratanga kept carving out space, making itself known through the shared pūkōrero of the kaituku, the literature of other Indigenous researchers (Jackson, 2020; Smith et al., 2021a; Takitimu, 2024), and my own understandings and lived experiences as the kairangahau.

For Māori single parents, rangatiratanga involves actively exercising leadership of whānau and kaupapa, in ways that are mana-enhancing and self-determined. Rangatiratanga disrupts dominant narratives—those that have been placed upon us by society, and those that we have internalised through our own inner dialogues. By challenging harmful patterns of abuse, trauma, and disempowerment, we can effect change that is both transformative and healing. Furthermore, rangatiratanga is aspirational, looking beyond present circumstances to envision a future where Māori single parents and their whānau can thrive, as Māori and as whānau Māori.

Naming and Claiming

In the context of success for Māori single parents, many of the discussions that took place within this rangahau still tried to locate our definitions and understandings of success within the limited parameters of a Western paradigm and/or Colonialism. Even as we challenged those inappropriate benchmarks and standards, at times our thinking and our words were often drawn back to these ingrained frameworks and measures. This highlights the pervasive influence of Western paradigms, making it difficult at times to fully embrace and articulate success through a purely Māori/Indigenous lens.

Despite that, each of the kaituku responded in ways most appropriate for them, choosing the definitions that resonated most with them. Even I, as the kairangahau, had difficulty with this

and now appreciate more fully that, had I been aware of this from the outset, I could have prepared myself more. I realise that while I am on a journey of resistance and reclamation, all of my earliest teachings were tainted by a Western worldview. In fact, having spent a large part of my childhood and youth trying 'not' to be Māori, and only reconnecting with my Māoritanga in my late 20s, I am in a more informed space now as a wahine Māori and a Māori single mother, while at the same time finding my own voice in my writing.

Contributions of New Knowledge

Privileging the voices of Māori single parents is not new, however bringing the voices, views, and lived experiences of Māori single mothers and fathers together to engage in an aspirational rangahau project is a significant contribution, especially with a kaupapa that is most often presented in the deficit. The shared pūkōrero of each of the kaituku will resonate with many readers and in turn, may inspire others in their own journeys.

Table 1 (Alignment of Principles, Concepts, and Practices), which lists a variety of data gathering methods conducive to a Kaupapa Māori methodological approach is my koha to degree tauira within Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (and perhaps beyond) as they embark on their own rangahau journeys within their studies. As a living document, this resource can be updated continuously to incorporate new methods and insights. My aim is that this resource can continue to support tauira in grounding their rangahau in practices that align to Māori values, principles, and perspectives.

'Mā te Arotahi' (Figure 6) is a visual representation of the PŪ-RĀ-KA-Ū framework that I created, based on my adaptation of the original work by Rebecca Wirihana (2012). This framework enhances the body of knowledge associated with Pūrākau by providing a structured approach to understanding and applying traditional Māori narratives in contemporary rangahau spaces.

Aim and Objectives

The purpose of this rangahau was to explore notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. To achieve this, four key objectives were established, with all serving as integral components in my journey to both honour and understand the lived experiences of each participating kaituku.

To privilege Māori single parents' voices and lived experiences

Inviting each parent to participate, situating them at the heart of this rangahau, and honouring them by prioritising their shared pūkōrero laid the foundation of reciprocity and respect in our relationships as kairangahau and kaituku, but moreso, as parents all striving to do the best for our respective whānau. It is important to note, that while Māori single parents can often find themselves relegated to the periphery of society, this does not mean that their voices should be overlooked or their contributions undervalued. The mere fact that this group of parents studied at postgraduate level while also caring for their whānau and working to provide for the them demonstrates their resilience, strength, and determination, and it these attributes (and more), that this rangahau acknowledges and celebrates.

To identify key determinants of success for Māori single parents engaged in postgraduate qualifications

When Māori single parents pursue a postgraduate qualification, it is a journey inspired by personal aspirations of wellbeing, growth, and development, both for themselves and their whānau. Once attained, a postgraduate qualification can open doors to higher employment opportunities, providing increased financial stability. It is evident though, that the sense of belonging, connectedness, and inclusivity kaituku experienced within their programmes of learning and the institutions that they studied with, were integral to the success of their academic pursuits.

It is also important to acknowledge that for some kaituku, these factors (belonging, connectedness, and inclusion) were not present during the earlier years when they studied at bachelor level and although kaituku went on to achieve those qualifications, their experiences were impacted greatly by feelings of disconnection, isolation, or exclusion. A strong sense of identity, clear sense of purpose, and supportive hoa-haere were also integral to their decisions of continuing with their learning or, in some instances, choosing not to continue and pursuing an educational pathway more conducive to their needs as Māori single parents. As a result, they were much more cognisant of the type of learning environments that would enhance their opportunities to achieve, and what would not.

In relation to the bigger discussion surrounding notions of success, the concept of flourishing whānau emerged as an indicator in determining what this looked like for kaituku and how this was experienced. Within the context of achievement and accomplishment, the role of whānau

extended far beyond the parameters of familial support. Rather, whānau served as the cornerstone of identity, replete with Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being that greatly influenced their aspirations and sense of purpose. Moreover, whānau embodied a spirit of collectivity, where success was not viewed solely through an individualistic lens, but instead celebrated as a collective journey.

The pursuit of mauri ora (enhanced wellbeing) also emerged as a key factor for kaituku success. Encapsulated within this determinant was a holistic sense of wellbeing that encompassed physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, familial, social, and cultural aspects of life. Most importantly though, the pursuit of mauri ora transcends conventional metrics of success, emphasising the intrinsic connection between mauri ora and rangatiratanga—wellbeing and self-determination. Additionally, it was recognised that the pursuit of mauri ora, like the concept of flourishing whānau, was also a collective pursuit rather than an individual endeavour. Notably, the accomplishments of individual kaituku directly contributed to the wellbeing and prosperity of their whānau, with those benefits also serving the wider collectives.

Both the pursuit of mauri ora and the pursuit of postgraduate studies are aspirational endeavours, indicative of a broader growth mindset within this group of Māori single parents. As the third determinant of success, possessing an aspirational mindset signified a forward-thinking approach, marked by an ongoing commitment to personal development. By aspiring to achieve ambitious goals and seeking out new horizons, kaituku created opportunities for growth, innovation, and transformative change.

As a result of this exploration into notions of success for Māori single parents, the recognition and affirmation of identity emerged as the fourth and final determinant of success for kaituku. Possessing a strong sense of identity permeated every aspect of their lives, enabling kaituku to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as wāhine, as tāne, as mātua, and as descendents of their tūpuna. Identity was shown to be multi-faceted, including such things as cultural adeptness; attributes and characteristics that are unique to an individual's disposition; professional identity that involves one's occupation, career goals, and professional affiliations. It also includes the spiritual beliefs and practices of kaituku, and their social identity that reflects the groups and communities they affiliate to.

As Māori single parents pursuing postgraduate qualifications, the four most prevalent factors contributing to their experiences of success were whānau, the pursuit of mauri ora, an

aspirational mindset, and a clear sense of identity. Success in terms of self, whānau, parenting, employment, and educational journeys; success also in terms of personal and professional fulfilment and happiness.

To gain an understanding of the types of challenges experienced

Challenges varied from one kaituku to another resulting in some experiences being common to all, such as everyone going through a transitioning period when first becoming a single parent or the importance that kaituku placed on lifelong learning and education. Similarly, there were also distinct differences noted between them, such as work-life-study balance, experiences of education, or discrimination and stigma experienced as a result of being a Māori single parent.

While balancing work-life-study commitments is a universal challenge that impacts all people, regardless of culture, gender, or age boundaries, this presented as a distinct challenge for all of the kaituku. As single parents, this can be particularly demanding given the rigorous nature of postgraduate studies, especially at doctorate level. It requires a significant investment of time, energy, and intellectual focus that can be particularly taxing for single parents who must also attend to their parental duties and obligations, often with limited support, all the while continuing to work.

Along with managing their time more efficiently, almost all of the kaituku travelled away from home to study with their host tertiary providers. In those cases, learning took place via the noho delivery model which typically involved being away from home for four days (or more), at least three times per year. Although necessary, this absence from their homes and whānau could often lead to feelings of guilt and inadequacy, notwithstanding the additional financial burdens that kaituku experienced as a result of their academic pursuits. Not wanting to sacrifice precious time with whānau meant that kaituku were often left juggling multiple tasks simultaneously, resulting in additional challenges. However, by employing strategies such as prioritising activities, kaituku could prepare themselves and their whānau ahead of time. In turn, they were able to dedicate time, energy, and resources more effectively to their many responsibilities.

Whether by choice or circumstance, becoming a single parent came with many challenges for all kaituku. Some challenges faced by kaituku were deeply personal, including experiences of violence or infidelity in their relationships. The transition to becoming single parents, while also carrying trauma, had longterm effects that kaituku then had to navigate as part of their own

personal healing journeys. For others, it was a choice made with the wellbeing of themselves and their whānau at the core, and for that reason alone, it was the right decision.

To consider how Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being contribute to Māori single parents' experiences of success.

The concept of whānau, both immediate and extended, is central to te ao Māori and while the impacts of colonisation have had a devastating effect on Māori in general, the significance of whānau in providing support, maintaining the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and practices, and fostering a sense of belonging has not been lost to kaituku. Extending on this, the practice of whānau parenting and subsequently, the mātauranga, skills, and values embedded within, contributed to the enhanced wellbeing of kaituku and their whānau.

Thus, while single parenting is a western construct often viewed as a deficit in today's society, pūrākau and pūkōrero explored in this rangahau have shown that whānau parenting was an established practice prior to the arrival of tauiwi. Therefore, whānau parenting was practiced in a variety of ways, providing much-needed relief for kaituku and offering valuable support in the process. As such, whānau can be a concept, a notion, and a living, evolving practice that reflects the interconnectedness of Māori communities (such as the participating kaituku) and their commitment to wellbeing for the individual and the collective.

As a success factor, whānau wellbeing featured strongly as did notions of happiness and fulfilment. I thought it was noteworthy that their experiences of studying at postgraduate level were not the primary indicator of success, but rather being able to study in an environment where they felt supported in their learning and safe in their identities as Māori and as single parents featured more prominently. Other features of success to emerge were a sense of belonging, with whakawhanaungatanga taking on a key role in that space and the ability to be unapologetically Māori in academia.

The ability to feel connected to their moana and awa, maunga and marae, tūpuna and whakapapa kōrero—all of these contributed to how kaituku experienced success in their respective lives—moreso than status, grades, income levels, or material possessions. This was evident in the fact that every introduction began with kaituku sharing their connections with people and places through pēpeha. In doing so, they also demonstrated that te ao Māori is not constrained by western notions of time—rather we have the ability to move effortlessly

between the past, present, and future, our ability to do so premised upon the natural rhythms of te taiao.

Practical Implications

Single parenting is not a calling or a pre-determined path, nor is it a punishment or an illness, despite the dis-ease that many parents will experience when they encounter this reality for themselves. It is however unsettling, often filled with moments of self-doubt and concern. It can be a journey of constant adjustment and adaptation, especially as parents navigate the unique challenges that come with single parenting. Yet, it can also be a time of profound personal growth, where resilience strengthens resolve, and the sense of fulfilment in nurturing whānau leads to a deeper sense of purpose and satisfaction.

For Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level while also parenting and working, the practical implications can be quite significant and multifaceted. Here are some key points based on the results of this rangahau:

Whānau:

Support *for* and *from* the whānau is a crucial factor in qualification completion and whānau wellbeing. Inclusive of the wider extended whānau, this informal network can provide a robust support system for Māori single parents, manifesting in multiple forms, such as help with time management and work-life-study balance, financial stability, emotional wellbeing, cultural obligations, academic support, and building a strong network within the academic community.

Building on this, whānau, as in tamariki mokopuna, are usually the primary motivation for Māori single parents when considering postgraduate qualificiations. Encompassed within the notion of whānau, is also the growth and development of the parents themselves. Because of this, educational aspirations and pursuits are not only viewed as a means with which to uplift whānau, but also as a personal journey of transformation, which in turn benefits whānau as well.

The introduction of initiatives tailored expressly to the needs and aspirations of Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level would have a beneficial impact. For example, establishing community-based study hubs (perhaps in conjunction with local libraries), that offer a safe and supportive environment equipped with childcare services, spaces to study, and

access to resources. The key though, would be to co-design these hubs in conjunction with Māori single parents and their whānau, thus ensuring that their views and voices are captured throughout the process.

Tuakana/Teina:

An effective mentorship model that understands the realities of Māori single parents could greatly enhance their learning experiences and support their academic achievement. It could also act as a scaffolding mechanism to both inspire and support more degree graduates to continue on to postgraduate level. A tuakana/teina mentoring plan would be co-designed ensuring that it is responsive to the specific needs and aspirations of teina (Māori single parents). Additionally, it could also contribute to a more holistic and responsive tertiary environment that challenges prevailing notions of success in academia, while ultimately increasing the representation and success of Māori single parents at postgraduate level.

Leadership:

As experienced by the majority of kaituku, being the first in their whānau to achieve a postgraduate qualification reinforced their role and responsibilities as leaders within their respective whānau, both immediate and extended. This was magnified by their role as single parents, responsible also for the overall wellbeing of their tamariki. Additionally, through the achievement of postgraduate qualifications, they gained the opportunity to become leaders in their respective fields and disciplines, contributing to the mātauranga Māori and knowledge continua. When connected to marae, hapū, iwi, and extended communities, additional leadership opportunities arise and all of these spaces and places of leadership weave together a powerful counter-narrative to the marginalisation and stigmatisation that Māori single parents face. It also highlights the potential and capabilities of Māori single parents, while acknowledging the transformative power of education.

Tertiary Practices & Curricula:

Māori single parents require tertiary providers to fully integrate Māori knowledge, practices, and identities into their educational provision. By embracing Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being tertiary providers can create whānau-friendly learning spaces; welcoming environments that prioritise whānau wellbeing above individual achievement. Additionally, flexible delivery options acknowledge the lived realities of Māori single parents who

simulataneoulsy parent, study, and work. Communities of learning, grounded in collective kaupapa and nurtured through whanaungatanga offer supportive environments where Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level can connect with others who share an understanding of their cultural and familial contexts, challenges, and aspirations. Ultimately, implementing these intiatives can enhance the learning experiences of Māori single parents and their potential for success and whānau wellbeing.

Hei Tauira:

Māori single parents who are aspirational and value education not only inspire their own tamariki mokopuna, but also have the potential to influence the wider Māori community and society as a whole. Their journeys of resilience, determination, and success despite the challenges faced can provide valuable insights and lessons for others navigating similar paths. Furthermore, their experiences affirm how a strong sense of identity can be a source of strength and inspiration in all facets of their lives. Therefore, it is important that providers of tertiary education create spaces and opportunities for these parents to share their personal narratives. Not only would it provide platforms for them to share their experiences and insights, but it would also validate their journeys and the challenges that they have overcome.

Limitations and Challenges

Methodological – Am I still being tika and pono?

Kanohi kitea and kanohi ki te kanohi were two important aspects of the proposed methodology for this rangahau, however, there were two kaituku that I was not able to hui with ā-kanohi nei when it came time to sharing their pūkōrero with me. While they both sent me their written responses, it was clear during the analytical process of Mā te Arotahi that an important aspect of our relationship was missing. To this day, there is still one kaituku that I have not had the privilege of engaging with kanohi ki te kanohi due to geographic constraints, however I am confident that this may still be possible in the future.

Methodological – Was my scope too narrow?

Initially, my criteria for recruiting potential kaituku were set at Māori single parents who studied at postgraduate level, whether in the past or present. My rationale for anchoring this rangahau in postgraduate level studies acknowledged that the number of Māori individuals

studying at this level in Aotearoa New Zealand was considerably fewer than the number studying at undergraduate level.

After sharing my kaupapa with a hoa-mahi (colleague), they were motivated to be one of my kaituku, however it was not until several months later that I realised that the criterion of studying at postgraduate level *while* single parenting was not met. As a result, I decided not to include the pūkōrero of this particular kaituku in the analysis stage. In retrospect though, I wonder if I did my kaupapa a disservice by not opening up the criteria to Māori single parents studying at degree level (level 7 and above)? Especially when the data from Te Wāhanga 3 clearly illustrated reduced numbers continuing on to postgraduate studies, despite the high number of Māori individuals successfully completing bachelor qualifications.

My purpose in undertaking this rangahau was to be inclusive, enhance representation, privilege Māori single parent voices, and provide valuable insights into notions of success. As such, I realise now that expanding my focus would have further enriched this rangahau, rather than compromising its quality. Additionally, I realised that engaging with Māori single parents in academia before setting my parameters would have been a better approach.

Personal – Navigating tension

While my intentions were honourable in wanting to include whatukura alongside māreikura in this rangahau, I still remember the anxiety I experienced when I realised that I was not confident in approaching Māori single fathers with whom I had no prior relationship with. For a long time, I sat alone in my struggle, worried that this would reflect badly on my ability as a kairangahau. I am grateful to my supervisor, who acknowledged my struggle and then offered suggestions on how I might approach this tension from a different angle.

As a result (and as already mentioned in Chapter Four), whakawhanaungatanga became the segue between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Two hoa-haere, in the form of colleagues, shared my doctoral kaupapa with tāne that they knew and as a result, three Māori single fathers agreed to be kaituku. Knowing that my hoa-haere had paved the way for me meant that I was then able to continue the process, knowing that the three tāne were already on board, so to speak, with my kaupapa.

Personal – Who nurtures the nurturer?

From 2020-2022, several life events occurred during my doctoral journey, all of which impacted me as a single mother and subsequently, my progress with this rangahau. The first of these events was Covid-19, a global pandemic that resulted in Aotearoa New Zealand's level four lockdown in March 2020. Auckland was hit the hardest during this time and for my daughter, a single mother of five children under the age of eight, it became too much. As a result, I inherited my mokopuna for several months and while it was one of the most rewarding times of my life, it also required a lot of my time and energy. Especially knowing that our home already had eight people living it and that the youngest of these mokopuna were my twin grandsons who were only toddlers at that time.

In addition to these challenges, I experienced breast cancer, my mother's stroke, and my youngest daughter's two-year struggle with depression and severe anxiety—all within the same timeframe. Understandably, I lost my way and my passion. The financial debt resulting from my inability to pay enrollment fees for continued study further impacted my wellbeing and prompted me to question whether pursuing my doctorate was worth placing such a burden on my whānau.

Fortunately, with their support, the generosity of close friends, and an understanding supervisor I was able to find a way through all of the chaos, my whānau circumstances improved, and finally I was able to resume thesis writing. 2023 arrived, I re-enrolled, and slowly (but surely) I was able to find my way back to a space of renewed hope.

Suggestions for Future Work

Built on the notion that rangahau is a journey—a continuous weave of past, present, and future heightens the potential for further rangahau to emerge from this doctoral thesis. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Facilitate a collaborative research project that explores the experiences of Indigenous single mothers engaged in postgraduate qualifications.
- Investigate the relationship between maternal education for Indigenous mothers, children's educational outcomes and the transformation of families through education.

- Explore the notion of healing homes and Māori single parents' aspirations for whānau wellbeing

Personal Reflections

When I reflect on my doctoral journey, these critical pātai come to mind:

- **Why was this journey significant?**
  Since embarking on this journey in 2015, each step, whether through academic rigour, personal growth and development, or ongoing engagement with Māori single parents, has shaped the path taken, providing valuable insights into the lived realities of Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level. Despite the challenges experienced, my resolve, resilience, and wisdom grew exponentially. I was able to create a network of shared experiences with other Māori single parents, contribute to a collective narrative, and reframe success in terms of rangatiratanga.

- **What compelled me to share this kaupapa with the world?**
  My worlds are varied. The most public of these worlds, is the one where my whānau and I exist and the world of the wānanga where I have worked for the past two decades, and studied for the past seventeen years. Despite my limited reach, privileging the voices of wāhine Māori, contributing to the mātauranga Māori continuum, and fostering understanding for marginalised communities have been common threads throughout this rangahau. Thus, demonstrating that my contribution, though small, still has the potential to transform ways of knowing, doing, and being.

- **Have I achieved my goal?**
  The answer for this lies in self-reflection, feedback from my peers, and the impact on my community. As such, success is not just measured by milestones; it resides also in the woven influence of my contributions, relationships, words, and actions. Above all, it is in the wellbeing of my whānau, that I will know if I have achieved my goal or not.

Hei Whakakapi

Kia Tau ō Mata ki ngā Atakura has been a journey characterised by personal and professional growth, scholarly inquiry, and enduring lessons along the way. Exploring notions of success for Māori single parents studying at postgraduate level revealed a continuum of understanding amongst this small community of kaituku who participated in this rangahau. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to this kaupapa and nor should there be. Success is relative, varying from one person to the next, shaped by individual goals, cultural context, and personal values. Rangatiratanga goes beyond this, inviting transformation grounded in Māori ways of knowing, doing, and being.

The ability for Māori single parents to live *as* Māori, to engage in education *as* Māori, to parent *as* Māori, to lead *as* Māori, and to aspire to rangatiratanga for their whānau, means asserting their identity as Māori, reclaiming spaces of engagement, and pushing back against the day to day influences and impacts of colonisation. Whether they are securely established within their tūrangawaewae, or seeking reconnection, rangatiratanga ensures that parents along with their whānau can weave their futures in ways that serve them best. In that respect, education is an important vehicle for whānau transformation.

Most of all, this has been my journey of reclamation, for my tamariki mokopuna, for my tūpuna, and for me as a wāhine Māori, as a Māori single mother, as an educator and a healer, a lover and a learner, a daughter and a granddaughter.

HE WĀHINGA

EPILOGUE: MY WORLDS WITH YOU I SHARE

Almost two decades ago, two of my young daughters dreamed of growing up, having babies, going to parties, and playing netball with their childhood friends.

Over a decade ago they dreamed of going to university.

Now, as I prepare this thesis for submission, the teina (Jasmine) is a mother of two beautiful boys-Te Itinga (7) and Kainoa (5 mths), has completed a Bachelor of Primary Teaching, is fully registered, and has been teaching in the industry for six years. The tuakana (Rebecca) is also a mother of two – Leihton (10) and Nataleia (9). She has completed a Bachelor of Applied Management and is now employed in a women-led accounting firm, with aspirations of becoming a chartered accountant. The youngest daughter, who was unwell for two years, has completed the first year of her Bachelor of Registered Nursing.

None of them went to university, choosing instead to study locally within a wānanga and a local institute of technology. All of them are very capable and competent young wāhine, in varying stages of reconnecting with their cultural identity as Māori. They all possess aspirations for their futures and education is part of that journey. More importantly though, they are now role modelling to their tamariki/nieces and nephews, the transformative power of education, the beauty of being wāhine Māori, and the strength of embracing their cultural heritage.

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APPENDIX 1: Ethics Approval Letter

Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi

EC2017/01/019
ECR2017/01/019

05.09.2017

Shelley Hoani
290 Cambridge Road
Hillcrest
HAMILTON

Tēna koe,

Re: Ethics Research Application EC2017.01.019

The Ethics Research Comittee Chairman of Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi re-considered your application. I am pleased to advise that your submission has been approved.

You are advised to contact your supervisor. The Ethics Research Committee wishes you well in your research.

Ngā mihi nui

Professor Nathan Matthews
Chairman
Ethics Committee
Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi

Private Bag 1006
Francis st
Whakatane 3158
Aotearoa

Waea / Telephone :(07) 307-1467
Waea Whakaahua / Fax :(07) 307-1475
Ipurangi / Email :ssc@wananga.ac.nz
PaeTukutuku/Website : www.wananga.ac.nz

APPENDIX 2: Hui Pātai

NGĀ PĀTAI

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my rangahau by answering these questions and sharing your pūkōrero (personal narrative) with me.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

- Tell me about yourself - your name / age / where are you from
- Tell me about your whānau
- What tikanga / values / beliefs guide you in your daily life
- How did you become a single-parent?

EDUCATION

- What have your experiences of education been like?
  - As a child?
  - As a rangatahi?
  - As an adult?
  - As a single-parent?
  - What support systems did you have / need while studying?
- Why did you choose to pursue a post-graduate qualification?
- Why did you choose to study in a Wānanga context?

SINGLE-PARENTHOOD

- What challenges have you experienced as a single-parent and how did you respond to those challenges?
- What joys/highlights have you experienced?
- What expectations do you have of yourself?
- What are your aspirations for the future? For yourself? For your whānau?
- Where has/does your support and guidance come from?
- What roles/responsibilities do you carry within the whānau?
- Besides your whānau, what other roles/responsibilities do you carry?

NOTIONS OF SUCCESS

- What value do you place on the notion of success?
- How do you evaluate success? (What does 'success' look like / feel like for you)
- What do you think are the key ingredients for a 'successful' life as a Māori single-parent?
- In the sentence above, if you could substitute the word 'successful' for something else, what word would you prefer to use? Please explain your answer.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

- Do you have a personal 'success story' that you'd like to share with me? If so, I'd love to hear it.

APPENDIX 3: Consent Form

Name and Address of School
School of Indigenous Graduate Studies
Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi
Rongo-o-Awa
Domain Rd
Whakatāne

TITLE: KIA TAU Ō MATA KI NGĀ ATAKURA
Exploring Notions of Success for Māori Single-Parents
Studying at Post-Graduate Level Within a Wānanga Context

CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

☐ **I agree to my real name being used in this study.**

☐ **I do not agree to my real name being used in this study. Instead, I would like a pseudonym of my own choosing to be used.**

I agree to participate in this study under conditions set out in the Information Sheet , but understand that I may withdraw my consent at any given time.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full name – printed: _____

APPENDIX 4: Confidentiality Form

Name and Address of School
School of Indigenous Graduate Studies
Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi
Rongo-o-Awa
Domain Rd
Whakatāne

TITLE: KIA TAU Ō MATA KI NGĀ ATAKURA
Exploring Notions of Success for Māori Single-Parents
Studying at Post-Graduate Level Within a Wānanga Context

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

THIS CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS

I _____(Full Name – printed)

agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full name – printed: _____