

‘HĀPAI TE HAUORA’ – ‘IT’S LIKE BREATHING YOUR
ANCESTORS INTO LIFE.’

NAVIGATING JOURNEYS OF RANGATAHI WELLBEING.

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ABSTRACT

Rangatahi described ‘hāpai te hauora’ as ‘breathing your ancestors into life’. This paper explores the ways rangatahi Māori make sense of and live ‘hāpai te hauora’ through sharing their stories of navigating wellbeing.

Twenty rangatahi Māori (16–20 years) from diverse backgrounds living in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa (Auckland, New Zealand) were interviewed by Māori researchers. From the resulting rich and insightful data, short pūrākau (narratives) were analysed at a wānanga involving 34 rangatahi to further explore key findings and expressions of wellbeing through art, design and co-creation.

Findings indicate that rangatahi Māori know and experience hauora as living shared values. They search for safe spaces, both human and environmental, to grow, challenge and express who they are and who they want to be. Distinctions were consistently made between their own lived culture and the dominant colonial culture. Rangatahi Māori described a yearning to be seen, heard and sovereign just as they are.

Keywords: wellbeing, hauora, rangatahi, Māori, navigation, qualitative research, pūrākau.

INTRODUCTION

*Te Amorangi ki mua, te hāpai ō ki muri –
Explorations of breathing our ancestors into life*

Over a thousand years ago, tīpuna Māori navigated the largest ocean on earth – Te Moana Nui a Kiwa – to first arrive, and then return, to Aotearoa. They

were mostly rangatahi, healthy, strong, agile, intelligent and brave – you read that right: *rangatahi* (Barclay-Kerr, personal communication, March 16, 2021). Today, often the voice and experiences of rangatahi Māori are violently silenced, and, when they are included, they are pathologised in various ways, regarded as unworthy, and discriminated against – influencing how policies and practices for youth health and wellbeing are rationalised and developed (Gibson *et al.* 2019; Kidman 2018; Williams, Clark, and Lewycka 2018). This has dire consequences for Māori whānau and rangatahi Māori as they are more likely to live in poverty, experience abuse and social isolation, suffer from drug and alcohol-related problems, and endure mental distress.

Inequitable Māori health and wellbeing outcomes have been described by Te Puni Kōkiri and the New Zealand Treasury as ‘one of the most intractable public policy problems of the late 20th and early 21st centuries’ (2019, 1). Recent findings from the Waitangi Tribunal’s (2019) report *Hauora: Report on Stage One of the Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry* and the Ministry of Health’s (2020) *Health and Disability System Review* substantiate that the health system is inherently racist and structurally prejudicial to Māori wellbeing, producing persistent inequitable health outcomes for Māori. A ‘reset of the existing primary health care system’ was identified as critical to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori (Waitangi Tribunal 2019, 9).

The western conception of wellbeing, with its focus on illness and disease, has a limited, compartmentalised and insular view of rangatahi, whānau and wellbeing that does not address health needs for rangatahi Māori (Durie 2006; Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor 2019). This article aims to explore rangatahi Māori understandings of hauora with a particular focus on what can be learned to provide an up-to-date, youth-informed and transformative understanding of rangatahi Māori hauora, and to inform and improve new and existing health policy and primary prevention initiatives. The emphasis is on detailed qualitative accounts of experience, engagement and continuity.

How ‘wellbeing’ is defined, measured, analysed and reported on matters. The dominant foreground of western health and wellbeing considers people as dualist individuals in which mind or matter resides. This narrow, compartmentalised frame gives rise to processes and analyses that deny our own skin, flesh, powers and spirit (Liebert *et al.* 2021). What is left by the western world is only sub-human. Yet, despite this denial, te ao Māori endures as tangata whenua (people of the land) and atua (deities, gods, elements). This recognition asserts that we are in control, we are of this land/waters, and we belong. Indigenous (well)being thereby counters colonial powerhouses and challenges western

health and wellbeing constructs (Watego 2021).

Hauora (holistic health, wellbeing), oranga (sustenance, health, wellbeing), mauri (energy, essence, life force), wairua (spirit, consciousness), hā (breath, breathing), wai (water, stream, creek, river), whenua (land, placenta, nation, state), maunga (mountain, mount, peak) are not at home in western health and wellbeing constructs (Cajete 2000). White-streamed and normalised western constructs dehumanise, compartmentalise and remove wairua and hā from wellbeing. In my experience (first author), living within the colonial health and wellbeing domain takes hold and chokes (Carlson 2021).

Indigenous health and wellbeing have been trivialised with political/ongoing colonial agendas (Arabena 2019). For hundreds of years, generations of Māori trod lightly on this land and lived in harmony with the world (Durie 2006). It is only in the last 180 years, after colonisation arrived on our shores of Aotearoa, that the synergy with our whenua has become violently undone. While great technological advancements have been made in more recent history, it has been at the expense of Papatūānuku (atua of the earth, earth mother and partner of Ranginui – all living things originate from them), Ranginui (atua of the sky and partner of Papatūānuku), and all their tamariki (children, descendants, atua). There are very few western scientific traditions that allow us to think about health and wellbeing as hauora. This paper offers a corrective, exploring the ways rangatahi Māori make sense of and live hāpai te hauora through navigating journeys of wellbeing.

RESEARCH APPROACH

No matter what destructive processes we have gone through, eventually, the taniwha stirs in all of us, and we can only be who we are.
(Merata Mita, cited in Dennis and Bierenga 1996, 54).

This research is part of a broader project (Carlson, Calder-Dawe, and Lesatele 2022) exploring understandings of rangatahi hauora and youth wellbeing, and drawing from engagements with 56 rangatahi, and 34 rangatahi wānanga (knowledge sharing space) participants. This analysis draws chiefly on the rangatahi Māori cohort led by a Māori researcher (first author). Project recruitment took place in Tāmaki and sought 20 rangatahi Māori aged between 16 and 20 years old from diverse backgrounds. We used a snowballing method of recruitment with multiple starting points, and drew on research team contacts through whānau, organisations and kura (school, high school, education). Semi-structured interviews – kōrero – were conducted by a Māori researcher

with rangatahi, individually or in pairs. This was followed with preliminary thematic and pūrākau (narrative-based) analysis, and closed with a rangatahi wānanga to further explore findings and key patterns⁶.

Rangatahi Māori also identified as Cook Island Māori, English, New Zealand European/Pākehā, Samoan, Scottish and Tongan. Our kōrero included those who identified as cisgender (19) and transgender (1), varied sexual identities (including straight (11), unsure/don't know (4), bisexual (2), gay (2) and lesbian (1)). Rangatahi we spoke with were either in education (secondary school or tertiary), or were employed. Eight of 20 rangatahi noted that they were disabled and/or were living with an impairment that affected their regular activities in some way. The majority of rangatahi we interviewed disclosed facing substantial economic hardship (16), while others described their circumstances as materially comfortable (4).

Kōrero was held at a place of the participants' choosing and lasted between 1 and 3.5 hours. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview participants were offered koha (an offering)⁷ in recognition of their contribution to the research. At the time of the kōrero, permission was sought to re-contact interested participants to invite them to participate in subsequent wānanga. Participation in the wānanga was not presented as a condition of participation in the research/kōrero.

Pūrākau – More than story

*E tūtaki ana ngā kapua o te rangi, kei runga te Mangōroa e kōpae pū ana –
The clouds in the sky gather, but above them extends the Milky Way.*

In this research project, pūrākau was an important element of the methods, methodology and findings. Pūrākau is more than stories or storytelling: it can be described as a practice of being, an art of truth-telling; a recollection of moments of time from now through to the beginning of the cosmos. In te ao Māori, we experience the world around us as a projection of our stories, our pūrākau – a trillion stories are connected like synapses in the brain creating electric static; vibrating power to life all at once. As Friere (1970) states, 'To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic' (32). These pūrākau emanate rangatahi Māori current realities.

When we wetewete – break down the kupu pūrākau – pū can be understood as 'to originate' and rākau means 'tree, branch, stick'. Rā is the sun, the atua

Tamanuiterā, representing life and solar energy. *Kau* means ‘without hindrance, unreservedly, simply’. To *wetewete* is a process to understand; not exhaust meaning, but rather to unravel the depth of the *kupu*. Embedded in the praxis of *pūrākau* is power, creation, life and breath. *Pūrākau* means to see, imagine, (re)tell truth and live our histories. *Pūrākau* is our breath; the original tree of life, that takes our carbon dioxide of living and turns it into oxygen, filling our lungs, hearts, and minds with energy.

Pūrākau captured the nuance and context in which *rangatahi* spoke, in contrast to analyses where stories are fragmented and compartmentalised through fine-grained coding. Here, the narrative remains as spoken – strong, obvious and voiced. This method addresses the hierarchical relationship that can be inadvertently created between researcher and participant. Less interpretative authority is given to the researcher, and the authority lies with *rangatahi* and how they choose to share their experiences, as well as how they are understood.

Pūrākau were selected from the interview *kōrero* with *rangatahi*. A short extract was chosen from the verbatim transcription that held rich descriptions of value, experience and meaning-making (Crotty 2020) for *rangatahi*. Each *pūrākau* was crafted to provide a story narrative while maintaining the voice of the *rangatahi*. We hear in the voices of *rangatahi* their own experience, providing a more complete description of their experiences and change, embedded in processes and emotions. Aligning with *Kaupapa Māori* theory, *pūrākau* is a way for *rangatahi* to collectively construct a shared understanding of the values and outcomes they see as significant and meaningful.

Research stakeholders (research team, students⁸, *rangatahi* themselves) were invited to provide feedback on what the *pūrākau* meant to them, and in what ways it was seen as resonant or significant, ranking the *pūrākau* in order from most to least significant. The research team and selected students held discussions to hear and consider interpretations of the *pūrākau*, and together arrived at a group ranking of story significance. Three *pūrākau* are presented in the findings below. Through this recursive and collaborative analytic process, stakeholders arrived at a shared understanding of *rangatahi* Māori hauora.

Wānanga – More than gathering

He waka eke noa – We are all in this together

There is a growing body of research detailing *wānanga* as a research methodology (Mahuika and Mahuika 2020). Traditionally, *wānanga* was not limited

to a specific building or place; rather it was about a deep connection to the land and its lore with the aim of knowledge transmission and exploration. Wānanga is facilitated by kawa and tikanga in which protocols are upheld to provide spiritual, moral and physical protection and safety (Mead 2003). The intention of the rangatahi wānanga was to provide a safe, secure environment for rangatahi to connect, trust, debate, reflect, share and grow.

Facilitation of the wānanga was important: it was led by Māori as tangata whenua with the support of the kura and community. Wānanga processes drew on wayfinding and navigational philosophical frameworks and conceptual thinking, and reflected on the teachings of our tipuna. Rangatahi were introduced to the intelligence of navigation, recalling the technologies, skills and knowledge our tipuna used to traverse the largest and deepest ocean in the world. This acknowledgement connected all rangatahi island identities across the vast span of Te Moana Nui A Kiwa – a centring of whenua, wai, (tātai) whetū (constellations, stars, clusters of stars, comets), whakapapa (genealogy, lineage, descent, the matrix) and whanaungatanga (connection, relationship, kinship, belonging, sense of kin connection and/or shared experience(s)).

Due to pandemic restrictions and transport logistics, a Tāmaki high school was approached to support the recruitment and hosting of the wānanga. Kaiako (teacher, instructor) invited rangatahi who were students at the high school. Over 34 rangatahi attended⁹ the wānanga throughout the day, and were given koha in recognition of their time and knowledge¹⁰. Rangatahi were aged between 16 and 18 years old. They identified themselves as Chinese, Cook Island Māori, Fijian, Filipino, German, Māori, Niuean, Portuguese, Samoan and Tongan. Most rangatahi identified as cisgender, using the descriptions straight, sole, uce, darx and doxcc, with others (4) responding ‘unsure/don’t know’. Six rangatahi identified as being affected by an impairment of some kind.

Once the interviews were completed and preliminary analysis conducted, rangatahi were invited to attend the day-long wānanga held at a hall at the high school in Tāmaki. Plans for an overnight stay at a marae had to be changed due to COVID restrictions. The wānanga was facilitated by the research team (Māori (2), Samoan (1) and Pākehā (2)), youth workers (Māori (2) and a kaiako (Māori)). With the permission of all participants, parts of the wānanga were digitally/video recorded by Māori and Samoan videographers to inform potential case-study analysis regarding the effectiveness and outcomes of the wānanga. Wānanga began with whakatau (official welcome speech acknowledging those present at a gathering), and marae tikanga practices followed. We opened with whaikōrero (formal eloquent language using imagery, metaphor, proverbs, ge-

neology and history), karakia (incantation, ritual chant, prayer, state of being), waiata (to sing, chant) and kai.¹¹ Whanaungatanga was important to allow rangatahi to show themselves and represent their whānau and whenua in ways that were comfortable for them and their respective cultures.

At the wānanga, after whanaungatanga activities, rangatahi were introduced to a navigational framework grounded in spherical intelligence (Spiller, Barclay-Kerr, and Panoho 2015). As a roopū (group, collective), we built a navigational compass outside, utilising ropes, toka (stones, pounamu, volcanic rock), rakau (sticks, branches, carved sticks), hands, bodies and the environment. Then inside, we drew on rangatahi knowledge to explore whakapapa and shared values using resources, such as paper, post-it notes,¹² stickers, colouring pens and felts, as well as kōrero. Each rangatahi then designed their own navigational map with consideration for the past, present, near future, and the future of generations to come. After kai in the afternoon, rangatahi were placed in small roopū (7) with a facilitator to lead the co-creation session/station. Over 1.5 hours, each facilitator drew upon five pūrākau (extracts from the interview kōrero with rangatahi) to share and discuss. Each station used a different medium, which included either drawing materials, Play-Doh, an emoji-metre, and a waka hourua visual. The following link connects to the rangatahi hauora wānanga video (anonymised).¹³

ANALYSIS

The data analysis was based on a set of interpretive materials and practices that made the rangatahi contexts visible. These included representations of ideas, meanings and understandings, including whanaungatanga, kōrero, wayfinding, pūrākau, mahi toi (art, design, modelling) and videography. One of the complexities of qualitative data lies in its interpretive nature (Zisberg, *et al.* 2006). Developing a convincing account is not a straightforward process: it involves a patterned, systematic, reflective, cyclical process that aims to honour the wairua and mauri of the data.

Our approach to analysis is interdisciplinary and multimodal, bringing together a range of data and analytical strategies necessary for the needs of the specific research. Here, research is seen as a process involving problem solving and flexibility that is adjusted in response to emerging insights (Kincheloe 2005). Each pūrākau, creative piece and expression offered the opportunity for us to see/hear from rangatahi in a language that best expresses their knowing. It shifts the burden often created through thematic analysis that is solely reliant on verbatim quotes. By interweaving structuring pūrākau with images and

shorter observations, this analysis provides a more thorough and contextually accurate comprehension to the reader, allowing a fuller encounter with the voice of rangatahi Māori.

This approach allowed the researchers, students and rangatahi themselves to make sense of the participants' experiences and, in turn, the ways in which the broader social context impinges on those meanings. Using thematic analysis and pūrākau as a framework allowed us to draw on thematic, content, rhetorical, discursive and narrative analytical techniques as required (Braun and Clarke 2006; Lee 2009; Yanchar, Gantt, and Clay 2005).

FINDINGS

Horizons

*Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata; ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tīna –
Seek out the distant horizons and cherish those you attain.*

During the wānanga, as part of a broader navigational framework, horizons were identified as important markers of goal setting, movement, journeying, time and space. Pae tata was recognised as our reality now, at this very moment. Pae rangi is the horizon we see in the distance, where the sky meets the sea – the near future. Pae tawhito is the horizon that once was; the past or tipuna realm. Pae tawhiti is the horizon that is to come; our future generations or mokopuna realm. As important frames of navigation, we next draw on these horizons to present the findings and conclusion.

Pae Tata – The present

A Whare in balance

Within the discipline of clinical psychology, as in other areas of health, it is common to see reference to Te Whare Tapa Whā, where health and wellbeing are depicted using a four-walled house. This depiction has been used as a model for understanding various contributors to wellbeing, beyond reductionist conceptualisations premised on individualised and/or (solely) biological assumptions (Durie 1985, 2006). The domains of the model include te taha tinana (physical health and wellbeing): what we fuel and condition our bodies with. It also centres te taha hinengaro (cognitive processes, patterns of thought, mental wellbeing): the inseparability of body and mind; how our experiences take form in thought and make meaning of events around us. Te taha whānau

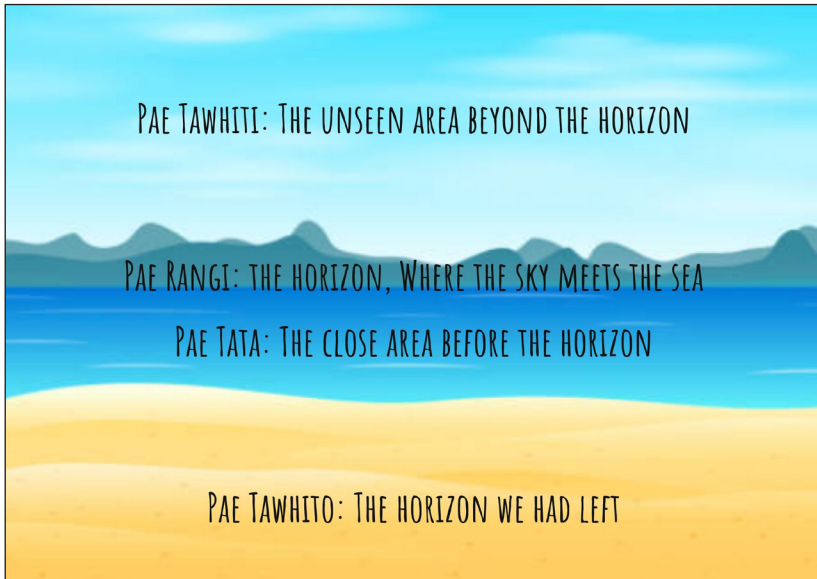


Figure 1. Names and meanings of the navigational horizons

(extended family, loved one) form the basis of the access we have to social systems, resources for belonging, and making contributions through sharing and caring. All domains are linked to *te taha wairua* (the spirituality threaded through relational interaction, aspiration and environment): a capacity for spiritual wellbeing elucidated through unseen and unspoken energies, faith and spiritual awareness.

Te Whare Tapa Whā has been a useful conceptual model, widely acknowledged and applied in different areas, organisations, approaches and movements (Rochford 2004), and continues to serve as an introductory guide for those seeking knowledge in this space. Its meaning and value have been felt and made real through commitments, actions and practices. Unfortunately, at the same time, its simplicity has encouraged some simplistic colonial interpretations that have led to inappropriate check-box practices.

When asked for other *kupu* (terms, words) to describe *hauora* and wellbeing, *rangatahi* would often respond with a shrug, a pause or hesitation: 'I guess if you could define wellbeing as [long pause] like happiness in a way' (Tama, 16), emphasising that the term was varied, complex and simple at the same time.

I just never really thought of it; I don't understand how I would define wellbeing. I guess define wellbeing as wellbeing. (Hukarere, 16)

Hauora was mostly described in relation to Te Whare Tapa Whā and its realms (Panelli and Tapa 2007):

I think a huge influence is Te Whare Tapa Whā model 'cos I feel like, when all the four pou are in balance, I don't have a worry in the world. Also, if I am focusing on one of them, it attributes to other ones. Like going to the gym, for example. Working on physical health: it will help with mental and emotional. (Hera, 19)

As described, the realms are pou – cornerstones of health and wellbeing. When they are strong and balanced, the structure of the house is sound, in balance, and you are content and 'don't have a worry in the world'.

Tinana was the realm most spoken about. Rangatahi were able to give examples of tinana, explaining, '*Simple: just eat properly [and] exercise*' (Te Ahurei, 16). As expressed by Katia in the following extract, defining wellbeing is a task requiring thinking capacity and space to consider, and not a straightforward tick-box answer. Wellbeing has nuance and contextuality that encompasses a holistic view.

Oh gosh: this requires brainpower [pause]. Um, I think I would break it down into those four aspects of wellbeing, 'cos I feel with the physical, I wouldn't like to do, like, a tick type thing. I mean, I know that would be faster. (Katia, 17)

Rangatahi spoke of learning about Te Whare Tapa Whā not only at kura, but also at home. Some rangatahi described learning about the term 'wellbeing' in health class – a compulsory mainstream public-school subject.

Wellbeing is taught in health: you just pick it up. I just adapted to it. It's like your physical health, social health; it's like interactions, relationships with people. (Te Ao Mihi, 17)

Here, Te Ao Mihi describes hauora as wellbeing, encompassing physical health, interactions and relationships – whanaungatanga. The inclusion of relationships in this definition of wellbeing suggests that to have or attain hauora, you must work at it, connect and be part of something bigger than yourself.



Figure 2

The realms of hauora have a special relationship to the parts of a whareniui. A whare is built in recognition and celebration of a tipuna of the hapū and/or Iwi: *‘Wellbeing starts at home and the marae’* (Tana, 16). The whare not only reflects human physiology – the front beams as the arms, the structural roof beam as a spine, and the supporting beams as the ribs – but also encompasses the elements attributed to an atua/tipuna, bringing te tai ao (the environment, lands, waters, forests, flora, fauna and food species) into our very being (Selby, Moore, and Mulholland 2010).

We call it the four walls of your mental wellbeing. So, it’s to do with being spiritually active, mentally aware, socially connected to people and physical, and, when one falls, everything else is likely to crumble. So, you gotta be consistent with each of them. So, you gotta be socially active as well as physically active, and then mentally and emotionally prepared. (Maia, 16)

Important descriptive words are used in this korero: spirituality is coupled with activity, honouring mental wellbeing requires awareness, and enacting the social aspect means connection. Just like te tai ao or the walls of a whare, everything has a place and a function in health and wellbeing. All the walls

must be in balance, otherwise the whare will not last against the elements and the environment.

Responses from rangatahi regarding hauora explored their connection to land and the health of the environment. When asked to describe her aspirations for hauora, Te Arai makes it clear that hauora is important for all humans regardless of race. The environment is connected to all of us and has positive physical benefits for wellbeing.

I want to study environmental health. I want to use those skills that I learn in university to help the land and waterways to repair our ecosystems. That would definitely help us in the future not only as a race [Māori], but as a whole people. As people, that's got a good physical benefit. (Te Arai, 19)

Love is love

The following pūrākau (text in box below) explores wellbeing in more depth, beyond definitions and terms. This pūrākau was chosen by the research roopū, students and rangatahi as it brings to light some of the complexities many takatāpui¹⁴ rangatahi Māori feel and face.

Tūāwhiorangi is a 17-year-old, emotionally intelligent takatāpui rangatahi living in South Auckland. They are of Māori, Samoan and Pākehā whakapapa, and come from an affluent whānau. They attended private school until recently moving to a public school. Growing up, they have faced the challenge of coming to understand gender and sexuality, and how religious values – which hold significant importance in their family – mesh with their sexuality.

Tūāwhiorangi has had to navigate a world bound with rules. Rules that come from overarching societal structures. Being of mixed ancestry, Tūāwhiorangi was fortunate enough to have parents who wanted to ensure they were culturally connected. However, Tūāwhiorangi is also connected to takatāpui culture now, which is perhaps not as familiar to their whānau. It was Tūāwhiorangi engagement with takatāpui culture and the way it intersected with religion that led to feelings of distress and disconnection, resulting in confusion around how to be in both worlds without feeling whakamā (ashamed, embarrassed, shy). It seems that slowly, Tūāwhiorangi is finding ways to make that amalgamation happen in a way that creates a sense of pride. Seeing others' pride in themselves has helped with this.

For me, wellbeing is being myself, as in feelings and thoughts and stuff. So, physically how do I feel? I've grown up with a religious family, but I know I am spiritual. People ask, 'Do you belong to a religion?' I say, 'yes,' but even though it's my faith and I do practice it sometimes, I'm not so much stuck in the values and rules. For me, since I am obviously gay, if I was ever to have intercourse with someone, you can't have sex with rubbers. I think that's because back in the day, it was a sin to not have a kid. But you know now that AIDS is such a big thing in the gay community, I have to think about my health. Like, I shouldn't risk my health because of that tradition.

Now I know that I'm gay, but back when I was younger, I wasn't sure that I was gay. I had attractions with girls, but they weren't so sexual. Like, whereas with boys, you know, they always talk about girls' parts and stuff, and I just didn't have an interest in that. That's how I started to think, 'Am I? Maybe I could be bi.' Then I had a girlfriend and thought, 'Yeah, nah, that's not for me.' I just never have the sexual attraction that I do with men. Back then, that used to play on my mind. I would always wonder, and it was really hard sometimes.

I never came out to my parents: my mum always knew. I always played with her make-up, and her heels, and her dresses. I also always played with my sister's doll. It would always bug me that my mum and dad would always say, 'Oh, he should play league'; 'Oh, do you have a girlfriend?'; 'Oh, do you have a girlfriend for your formal?' And I would look at them like, 'Are you for real?' That would always annoy me, and it meant that sometimes I wouldn't go to them first when I had problems.

In my school, there were not many boys who really came out. I only knew two. They were seniors and they were really proud to be gay. It's very positive in schools. It's good that people are more like saying love is love.

Rangatahi described the hulls of the waka hourua as being foundational to wellbeing – keeping them above the wai. Descriptions, however, were not always positive. Te Aranui said that judgements about their sexuality and gender often left them feeling isolated and alone, impacting negatively on their hauora.



Figure 3. Māori rangatahi – Te Aranui, 17 – coloured in the waka hourua template to illustrate the ways they viewed the pūrākau of Tūāwhiorangi

In their response to a question on whether they had any other terms they would like to use instead of hauora or wellbeing, Tūāwhiorangi brought to light the inherent power balances between researchers and research participants.

Doesn't matter what you call it, as long as we understand what you mean. If we don't, then it's gonna go over our heads and we're gonna miss the point or not wanna engage. And most times, adults and researchers can be the barrier in that happening. (Tūāwhiorangi, 17)

Tūāwhiorangi emphasises the importance of ensuring that efforts to enhance rangatahi hauora are not only appropriate and acceptable to rangatahi, but grounded in their experiences and realities. This is an important consideration expressing the need to be listened to and understood. Tūāwhiorangi also highlights the power of adults and researchers to set the agenda for rangatahi, and the need to shift that power back to rangatahi, emphasising that understandings of hauora and what constitutes knowledge have traditionally been 'constructed within a context of power and privilege with consequences attached to which version of knowledge is given privilege' (Mertens and Wilson 2012, 170).

Pae Rangi – The sun and moon horizon

Whanaungatanga – Realms of connection

Constructing an understanding of hauora was intimately intertwined and understood through whanaungatanga, as rangatahi shared accounts of the important people in their lives (living or dead) growing up, and relationships in the present day. Whānau relationships, both past and present, are critical to rangatahi hauora.

All my loved ones that have passed have influenced and shaped me just as much as those that are with me now. (Wiremu, 20)

There is a shared vulnerability when connecting through whanaungatanga, an honesty that is required; a letting go of control in order to connect. Wiremu speaks of this as wairua – a spiritual influence from his tipuna that have passed.

Wairua can be understood as a dense interconnection to the consciousness of the universe. Wairua is the acknowledgement of matter, energy form and force, the universe, and the ever-evolving change that is happening in our world. Wairua means to move away from holding onto the tangible, seen, material, human form, and move into the unseen; the felt vibrational energy that is out there and the end connection of all things.

Instead of just focusing on the physical treatment, like white people do, we need to focus more on wairua stuff. What's happening beyond what they see. (Hakawai, 20)

Hakawai's articulation of 'beyond what they see' is a reference to beyond the influence of the oppressor (Freire 1970). Wairua is freedom – from the societal constraints of human culture. It is about shifting our identity from the body and mind to how we are experiencing the world through body and mind. It is ultimately the intertwining relationship of everything and how we engage in that relationship – whether we have an awareness of it or not. We are affected by the things around us because we are a part of the cosmos, and it is part of us.

Mikaire eloquently describes wellbeing as hāpai te hauora: lifting your spirits. As she explains, this means reassurance, especially in times of uncertainty.

Hāpai te hauora: like I feel like help sometimes; all you need is for someone to just tell you you're doing ok. You could tell yourself it,

but it feels a lot better hearing it from someone else, other than them meaning it, not just knowing it's their job to tell you. So, it's someone you know and trust telling you what you need to hear. (Mikaire, 20)

Here Mikaire is referring to *hāpai te hauora* as the ongoing reassurance of her *tipuna* and loved ones. She turns to them in times of need, bound by trust and listening.

When relationships are understood as part of *hauora*, we begin to understand that *hauora* is not an individualised experience. While individual *rangatahi* experience the outcomes of such relationships with others, they are drawn into the shared meaning-making and effects.

Hauora is the good life. Having friends and your family; laughing lots; watching movies; being rich; and, most importantly, *whakawhanaungatanga*: getting to know people. I like getting to know new people. (Rā, 16)

Whakawhanaungatanga is the enactment of relationships, whether forming, maintaining or growing them. The functional basis of *whanaungatanga* is the ability of the *whānau* to *whakamana* (empower, strengthen) and encourage each other to reach their goals and contribute to the community. *Whanaungatanga* encourages *whānau* to guard and preserve *pupuri taonga* (assets, resources), such as *whenua*, *whakapapa* and *taonga* (goods, treasure, heirlooms) for future generations (Durie 2001). *Rangatahi Māori* described some relationships as providing a sense of responsibility; a generational grounding.

We all feel this responsibility to uphold the practices that our ancestors have passed down to us. I think it gives us a bit more mental stability. Yeah, it's good for mental stability knowing where you've come from and knowing what to do. (Hinerangi, 19)

Whanaungatanga is about the capacity to plan as it allows *whānau* to see past and present moments to help them prepare for future challenges they may face in order to revitalise, preserve and promote Māori culture, values and language (Durie 2001).

I experienced coming from a loving home and *whānau* that supported me out in the bigger, wider world. But then you still get a lot of peer pressure and social pressure out there. (Eru, 17)

How Māori assess their whānau wellbeing is intimately tied to positive relationships with whānau, regardless of age (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit 2017). For rangatahi Māori in this study, whānau, peer and wider societal relationships were pivotal and deeply felt.

It's like breathing your ancestors into life

The following pūrākau (text in block below) explores wellbeing as knowing who you are and where you come from, drawing on cultural identity, te reo Māori, whakapapa and tīpuna. This pūrākau is about voice and being witnessed as a rangatahi Māori; it is rangatahi being proud of their language, and being original and expressing themselves emotionally and spiritually.

Piki is 18 years old, with whakapapa to Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu, and lives in West Auckland with their whānau. Piki attended Kura Kaupapa Māori, a full immersion te reo Māori school, until her last two years of high school when she changed to mainstream as her whānau had moved into the city. Piki describes herself as a creative; she competes in spoken word competitions all over the country, and is now heading overseas for her debut. Piki speaks te reo Māori fluently and incorporates te reo Māori in her performances.

As a young wāhine, Piki tells us about her journey of reclamation, of a return to te reo Māori, te ao Māori, to herself; of *'clarity'*. Te reo Māori was very much part of her life when she was younger, and it is now through her spoken word poetry that she gets to share her language, her birth right – *'it's like breathing your ancestors into life'*. Piki guides us in understanding that hauora is much more than our seen biology – it extends energetically, spiritually and generationally; it *'transcends the physical'*. In Piki's kōrero, hauora takes shape as a safe space for our rangatahi. When Piki speaks, her eyes light up with pride that she can make connections with friends, community and strangers alike, connecting as emotional beings wanting to be listened to. Rangatahi Māori have so much to offer the world, and their strengths lie in their culture, creativity, connections and community.

'Living your values' was a core theme identified by the rangatahi at the wānanga. Rangatahi expressed ideals, values and meanings that were intimately tied to their understandings of hauora and what it means to be tangata whenua. Values identified ranged from feelings of home, descriptions of virtuous qualities, and relationship values, through to community aspirations.

I think hauora transcends the physical. It's all about a sense of belonging. It's a sense of identity. One of the major issues that rangatahi Māori deal with is cultural identity, and it's very hard saying, 'Oh, I come from this place, but I don't know much about it.' Knowing how to speak the language sort of brings a bit of clarity to all of that, and it's like breathing your ancestors into life.

How I do that is three years ago, I started with an organisation. At that time, it was actually me, one of my friends from my class who are all girls, and then one person from our school – he was a year thirteen at the time. We got through auditions, semi-finals and then finals, but before you go into semi-finals, there's like a noho marae, so it's like a three-day camp where your team starts working together and you learn more about how to write poems and group poems. And that year we got first in the finals. Before finals we realised, we all really liked to sing, but we wouldn't sing alone, so we decided to write a little bit of a song and put it into this poem and it just went from there. We started to do it more and created a bit of a trend in the competition. People started singing their poems and we're like, 'We started that!'

I started doing spoken word whenever I was feeling something that I didn't really want to feel. Or when I was upset, I wouldn't tell anyone, I just bottled it all up. It was just a way for me to talk about something and not feel like anyone was judging me 'cos everyone was listening, but they were also very open to what was being said. That was just a really crazy experience. I think that's what got me coming back for more. And to be more involved in the community, because everyone's so open-minded about everything that you say. They're very supportive of what you're going through. I've made heaps of friends just from people that were listening to me, or I was listening to them. At first, they'd be strangers, and then they'd be like, 'You know what? I really like what you said, and I support you,' and it just goes on from there. It's a safe space. It's a great way to express yourself.

We use karakia and waiata Māori in our poems. Sometimes I do individual poems, but we're a group, and we're actually outside of school now. We are travelling overseas soon to perform at the largest international youth forum in the world, and it's very crazy, but we've gotten here.

Growing up in a Māori world and relationships means love and grief and tangi and all of that stuff. They go hand in hand...and don't go into this mainstream model. (Te Arai, 19)

For rangatahi, hauora encompassed the full spectrum of life, and hard times were often considered times to grow and shape your future. Taa Moko – inked hauora – was seen by some rangatahi as a way to celebrate and represent that growth in a permanent way.

Hauora doesn't just consider the good things: we can also be shaped and strengthened by the hard times just as much as the good times, and that you can carry it with you. Like my (taa) moko: these kinds of characteristics will get you through, I guess, in the future. (Hinerangi, 19)

The permanency of taa moko reminds the wearer of hard times that were overcome; a constant reminder and commitment to its meaning. Rangatahi Māori recognised that hard times are part of hauora, making good times more special. Hard times become lessons learned, allowing rangatahi to become both resilient and resistant (Penehira *et al.* 2014).

Living conditions and access to societal resources and services, such as housing, money, education, employment, community, kai and healthcare, were highlighted as important determinants of hauora.

To help rangatahi Māori, rangatahi Pasifika look at social determinants 'cos there are so many students who get help with physical wellbeing, but the situation at home is not healthy. Heaps of my mates are going through shit. I've had to ask if they want to come and stay with me in the halls or something 'cos I know their house is just not good. (Hinemoana, 19)

Rangatahi have learned to awahi one another when times are tough. As experts in navigating a system that prioritises seen disability over the more covert impacts of systematic disadvantage, they fill that void in the system with their own limited resources. Hinemoana not only identifies and names the unhealthy situations she sees around her, but also acts on the situation. Hinemoana provides a safe space for her mates seeking respite from the pressures that are negatively affecting their hauora.

I just want to make sure that everyone knows that what they're feel-

ing, and there are places that can help, and I'd like those places to be more less numbery?? I guess so, not about putting people in boxes, but, like, more about acknowledging how you feel as a person, and not trying to numb those feelings and make it an easier journey for them and not (59.49). Yes, does that answer the question? (Te Arai, 19)

The need for information to be more accessible and services to be more relevant was expressed frequently by rangatahi Māori. Here, Te Arai emphasises that western health services with their clinical and statistical approaches often remove the heart and spiritual elements from discussions of hauora, which are central to rangatahi Māori understandings of hauora.

Rangatahi Māori have become accustomed to functioning in environments that exclude them. This was eloquently and comprehensively addressed throughout the pūrākau, and examples shared. These young people have learned that simply being Māori means being actively marginalised by parts of the colonised world and the social standards within it. Racism was often talked about when discussing hard times or low times of hauora or wellbeing, and rangatahi expressed their need and desire to feel safe and secure in their schools and communities.

Racism for rangatahi is really an important part of wellbeing, making sure that people are aware and accountable to change. You get so much judgement; so much standardisation profiling you should be this particular way because you're Māori. (Hakawai, 20)

Rangatahi Māori reported experiences of racism in their schools and communities, including racism from authority figures they were supposed to place their trust in. The impacts of these experiences were far reaching, invading places that should feel safe, such as home and within social networking sites. This kind of ongoing and pervasive experience of racism gives rangatahi no space to recuperate and process these incidents, which can have ongoing effects on self-efficacy, social functioning and fear responses (Bernard *et al.* 2021).

Rangatahi were clear, articulate and explicit about their experiences of racism and discrimination. They articulated awareness and insight into concepts such as racial profiling, casual racism and bias.

It's a completely different fragmented way of the world. Like, it's in parts. There's different standards for white people and Māori people. (Maia, 16)

The regularity with which racism was raised when exploring hard times with rangatahi demonstrates its prevalence and significant negative effects. Functioning in a system built upon western epistemologies that inherently favours Pākehā is overtly hurtful and challenging for rangatahi Māori. There was a definite sense from the interviews with rangatahi Māori that just by being as they are, at whatever level of cultural engagement they feel, their indigeneity is not acceptable within the wider society they inhabit. Being identifiably Māori, there is pressure to either express cultural connectedness in a performative way, or a need to hide that part of their identity to assimilate to dominant cultural norms. Failure to do so can result in less opportunity, less success, as Rata explores below:

To be successful as a Māori in that environment you have to be a certain type of Māori that's kind of kapa haka orientated ... [or] be a certain way ... where you have to try to be white. (Rata, 17)

I get judged for being a thief all the time

The following pūrākau (text in box below) explores the experiences of two sisters who were interviewed together; they share their stories of good times and not so good times. This pūrākau was chosen by the research roopū, students and rangatahi as it brings to light the violent impact of racism and discrimination on rangatahi Māori.

Hinemoana and Rata are sisters. Born only a few years apart, they have a strong bond of love and friendship. Hinemoana is 19 years old and the eldest of five tamariki. She just started her degree at university. Rata is 17 years old and the second eldest. She is finishing her last year at high school – Kura Kaupapa Māori – a full immersion te reo Māori school. All their siblings have attended Kura Kaupapa and are fluent in te reo Māori and English. Hinemoana describes herself as ‘the darker one,’ with long, dark, thick, curly hair. Rata says, ‘I’m the white; the lighter skin one,’ with brown, straight hair. Both have grown up in an urban environment and enjoy what city life has to offer.

The sisters recalled public social experiences together, and strangers treating them differently because of how they looked. Rata realised early in life that being lighter skinned, she was not subject to racial profiling like her siblings when she was on her own in public.

Rata: Yeah, I'm the white, lighter skin one, so I can experience both worlds with my whānau. I see what happens. I get lumped in with them, but, by myself, I'm treated normally. If I walk through a shop with my younger siblings, like last week I was buying kai, and I took all the kids to the shop and everyone was just staring at all of us. My younger brothers didn't really notice, they were pulling their bags off and going through their bags and I said, 'Can you put your bag on 'cos people are watching you, it looks like you're stealing stuff!' So, people follow us through the shops and make sure we're not doing anything. But, when I'm on my own, nobody really turns their head. But even just in uniform, they notice the Māori logo and they're like, 'Oh, watch that kid.' It doesn't matter who the person is, white or Indian people: everyone judges.

Hinemoana: Yeah, mostly white, and Asian. It's weird Asians do it 'cos they are brown too! Mum gets pretty mad 'cos they do it to her all the time and she looks scary and is dark [laughter].

Rata: Yeah, I get judged for being a thief all the time. Not just strangers, but at school too: Pākehā teachers being racist to my friends. But I don't really get affected by it because of my skin tone. I haven't been exposed to the Pākehā world properly: I've sort of been shut off, and in just the Māori world.

Hinemoana: So, when I first moved to this new mainstream high school last year, for a bit it was like hori, like the girls are hori, and there's only very few Pākehā people. And because I came from Kura Kaupapa Māori, you know, I was very academic, top of my class, so when I arrived, I was put into all the top streams, all the high classes, and there were only white people in these classes. All of them are fully white, like my maths class, English, literature and sciences. My first day I went into class, and the teacher was white, and the principal had taken me in, and everyone looked at me and 'cos I had my hair like this [natural thick curl], but in a ponytail, and I was wearing a pounamu. I just looked so hori. Oh my god, I was scruffy! And the teacher goes, 'Are you sure? Are you supposed to be in this class? I don't think you're supposed to be in this class.' And then the principal goes, 'No, she's in this class.' Then she goes, 'Oh wait, let me just check your grades,' and then she checked my grades. They were like, 'They were good,' and then she chucked me all the way back of the class by myself.

In this pūrākau, the sisters are grappling with how rampant racism is in their lives. They point out how they are judged based on their skin tone (with a giggle to lighten the load). They name, describe and create meaning about racism and express the hurt and disconnection it creates in social and public spaces. They come together as a whānau to push against the mainstream; protect each other as well as protect their siblings. What is also apparent is the racist taunts of adults in public and social settings – showing their unabashed attitudes of having no fear for potential societal repercussions, and thus highlighting the perpetual insidious nature of racism in our society against our most vulnerable: our tamariki and rangatahi.

Rangatahi Māori function and thrive every day in environments that can be disparaging and hostile. There is no doubt that these young people have shown great resilience, heart and strength of spirit in the face of hard times and adversity. However, it is vital that there is acknowledgement that these environments are still painful, still leave long-lasting negative social consequences, and are entirely unnecessary. As a society, we have a wealth

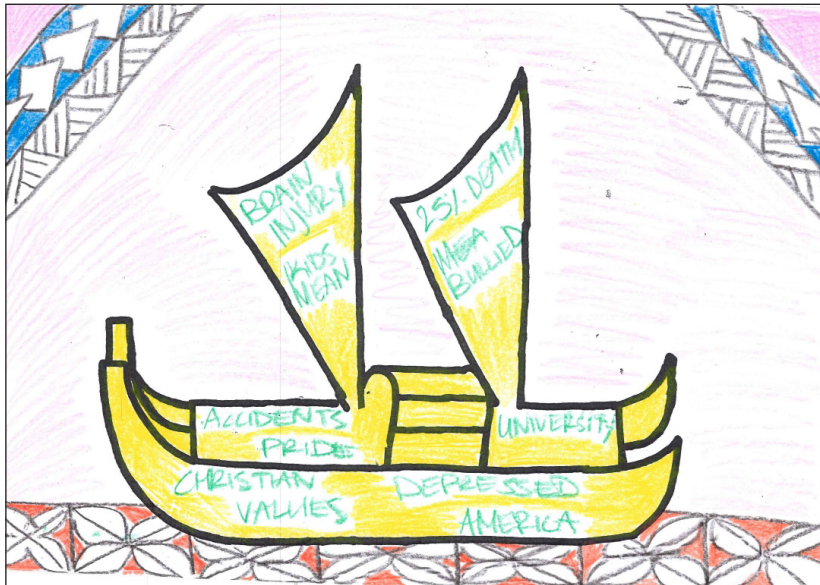


Figure 5. Cook Island Māori/Māori – Arana, 16 – rangatahi coloured in the waka hourua template to illustrate some of the challenges and protective factors faced by a participant who had an acquired brain

of knowledge and resources that could make a difference to these rangatahi, including the pūrākau and creativity they have shared here.

We know that cultural inclusion and connectedness can bolster hauora (Muriwai, Houkamau, and Sibley 2015). We know that if we better educate those in positions of authority, such as kaiako, there are trickle down effects that improve the environments rangatahi Māori function within (Bishop and Berryman 2010). We know that lessening adverse experiences in childhood and young adulthood results in better wellbeing outcomes (Bernard *et al.* 2021). Thankfully, many rangatahi Māori have shown *Tuwhiti te hopo* through whakapapa me taiao. Their strength and pride are an inspiration, and they freely offer their guidance on ways in which those with influence can lessen distress for those for whom the burden of constant fighting back has become too much.



Figure 6. Te Whānau Apanui rangatahi – digital design titled *Tuwhiti te Hopo*. 'I think *Tuwhiti te hopo* means, be bold, be fearless. I think of this whakataukī every day.' (Pita, 19)

CONCLUSION

Pae Tawhiti – The future

He moana pukupuke, e ekengia e te waka – A choppy sea can be navigated.

Public policy and western health approaches have not delivered wellbeing for rangatahi Māori. Māori are more likely to report experiences of psychological distress (Ministry of Health 2015), and are disproportionately subject to socio-cultural conditions known to negatively impact mental health and wellbeing, such as poverty, deprivation, physical illnesses and racism (Denny *et al.* 2016; Edwards, *et al.* 2003). The Child and Youth Strategy 2020 acknowledges that in order to build an effective wellbeing strategy, rangatahi must ‘have their voices, perspectives and opinions listened to and taken into account’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2020, 55).

Colonial systems (health, education, justice) force rangatahi Māori to assimilate, which remains an act of violence and purposefully ignores the truth that identity is a foundation of hauora (Kiddle *et al.* 2020; Smith 2012). Kōrero and wānanga experiences alongside rangatahi Māori gave insight into the depth and breadth of their lived realities. They shared their kōrero together, analysed their pūrākau collectively, and co-created together. The findings illustrate that there is such a poor mismatch between the soliciting and honouring of rangatahi Māori pūrākau that makes up the research process, and the colonial/systemic tendency to view storytelling as a way of ‘doing participation’ in ways that can be tokenistic and prescribed. And yet, pūrākau are not a way of extracting data about ‘the world’ – pūrākau make the world itself! These findings speak back to presumptions about rangatahi hauora and the rich, diverse weavings that uphold their inherent right to mana motuhake (self-determination, autonomy, self-government, independence) (Smith 2012).

Each rangatahi Māori had an experiential knowing beyond their years (an innocence taken) as they spoke about hard times, deprivation, assimilation and racism. Their insightful views and analysis of power differentials were sharp. They analysed the contexts of parents/caregivers, adult relationships, school, health and educational systems in relation to their reality, taking into account history, colonisation, racism, prejudice, values and culture.

The factors influencing the wellbeing of rangatahi and their whānau are deeply complex. Rangatahi have been largely alienated from their own cultural con-

texts of development, while also being subjugated and assimilated by western framings of health and wellbeing, specifically non-Māori youth experiences. In Aotearoa, wellbeing discourse and the experience of wellbeing is highly individualised, and policy responses to wellbeing are largely individualised because of this. The acknowledgement that rangatahi Māori have contextually different experiences from non-Māori is an important starting point for the development of a more equitable and culturally inclusive health system.

Through this research we have come to understand that rangatahi Māori know and experience hauora as living your shared values. When times are tough, they turn to their peers, trusted loved ones and community. They search for safe spaces, both human and environmental, to grow, challenge and express who they are and who they want to be. When relationships are understood as part of hauora, then we begin to move beyond misunderstandings of hauora as an individualised experience. Rangatahi Māori described a yearning to be seen, heard and sovereign just as they are. Through their accounts, each rangatahi told a story of hardship when asked to kōrero about wellbeing. Wellbeing encompasses a stream of experiences, emotions, spirit, connections and disconnections. Distinctions were consistently made between their own lived culture and the dominant colonial culture.

Hāpai te hauora calls rangatahi to breathe; to counter the breathlessness of an everyday that chokes. Hauora was expressed by rangatahi as both a living state and a state of belonging to the past and future as much as the present. Hāpai te hauora is an embodied state; an act of breathing your ancestors into life. Each pūrākau, expression and creative method gives insight into their world; contextual, rich – each breath giving truth, a truth that is now witnessed.

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NOTES

- 1 Mai i te toka-a-taiāu ki te-taumata-ō-Apanui. Dr Teah Carlson is a kaupapa Māori researcher and evaluator at SHORE and Whāriki Research Centre, Massey University. She has experience in qualitative methods, strategy and evaluation, specifically involving working with Māori communities where collaboration, partnership and participatory community action are key to rangahau processes and outcomes. Her strengths are in kaupapa Māori praxis, participatory action research, community psychology, co-design and co-creation.
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- 5 Kō Ngāti Tūwharetoa te iwi, Kō Ngāti Hineuru me Ngāti Hineure te hāpu. Danielle Squire is a community youth worker currently working with the Ministry of Education as an Education Advisor. She has experience in advocacy and

whānau support to help whānau navigate education spaces. Danielle works from a whānau / rangatahi-centred approach to ensure their voices and stories are heard where they are often dismissed. Danielle also has experience in mentoring, rangatahi programme coordination and facilitation in the community.

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- 6 Ethical approval was gained through the University Human Ethics Committee.
- 7 In this research, it was a gift in the form of a voucher.
- 8 Ngā Pae o te Maramatanga summer studentship 2021 recipient, Ngā Wai o te Tui summer studentship 2022 recipient, and selected students from an undergraduate health psychology paper at Victoria University of Wellington.
- 9 Over 34 rangatahi attended; all had signed and returned consent forms.
- 10 Rangatahi were offered koha and kai to take home.
- 11 Food, drinks, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and takeaway food packages.
- 12 Each rangatahi writes down on post-it notes the values that are important to them, their whanau, and then the wider community. Then, they group similar words to create collective themes.
- 13 The short video is a visual and auditory introduction to the research project, providing art, visuals and video of our wānanga. The theme, filter and music was suggested by the videographers who attended the wānanga, one of whom was also our summer studentship Masters student who later worked on the pūrākau analysis alongside our research team, students and rangatahi.
- 14 A traditional Māori term meaning ‘intimate companion of the same sex.’ The term embraces all Māori who identify with diverse genders, sexualities and sex characteristics (Rainbow Youth Inc & Tiwhanawhana Trust, 2017).

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