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Whatuora - Whatu kākahu and living as Māori women

Hinekura Lisa Smith

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, The University of Auckland, 2017
Karakia

Na Te Mete Lowman i tito mo te rōpū rangahau whatu kākahu

Tēnei au, tēnei au
Here I am here I am
Ko te rangi ki runga
The sky is above
Ko te papa ki raro
The land is below
Ko ngā āhuatanga o te ao kikokiko
There are the physical elements
Ko ngā āhuatanga o te ao wairua
There are the spiritual elements
E kōtuitui ana i te muka tangata
Which weave together the fibres of people
I raro i te korowai atawhai
Under the safety of the protective cloak
E mau nei ki ngā wawata
That bares all the aspirations
Me ngā moemoeā o ngā tūpuna
And all the dreams of the ancestors
Kimihia, rangahaua
Search forth and pursue
Kia mau, kia ita
To obtain and hold tightly
Kia puta ki te whaiao
So you may stand in the world of light
Ki te ao mārama
The world of understanding
Tēnei whenu i here
This strand that binds
Taku mana
My mana
He mana tuku iho
The mana that was given to me
Nō tuawhakarere
From those before my time
Kōkiri
Forward we go
Abstract

Māori women play a vital role in enabling our children and grandchildren to live secure, positive cultural identities ‘as Māori’. In utero we surround our children in a protective kahu (meaning cloak and also amniotic sac) and after they enter the world we continue to ‘cloak’ them in tangible and abstract ways with our values, beliefs and aspirations. Of the multiple aspirations that Māori women hold for ourselves and our whānau to be healthy, happy and ‘whole’, this research concerns itself with Māori women’s aspirations to ‘live as Māori’ – understood as living a full and holistically well life, connected to people and places, and able to participate confidently in both te ao Māori and the global world.

A qualitative project grounded in Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine theory, this study explores the stories of eight Māori women – including myself as researcher. As I taught the women to weave traditionally-made Māori cloaks, they told stories of reclaiming, restoring and re- visioning ‘living as Māori’ for themselves and their whānau. A ‘new’ Kaupapa Māori methodology emerged from the ‘old’ practice of whatu as a theorised decolonising methodology for this project – a research approach I name Whatuora.

The methods and methodology developed here offer a way to think about the transforming changes Māori women create through our deliberate and conscious actions to live ‘as Māori’. Collectively our stories give voice to Māori women’s work to reclaim and revision Māori ways of being, while Whatuora methodology forwards a unique approach to research that intertwines Mana Wāhine theory, Māori creative practice and Māori and Indigenous methodologies into an interwoven set of ideas and theory.
He Mihi

Ko Tinana te waka
Ko Tumoana te tangata
Ko Whangatauātia te maunga
Ko Roma te marae
Ko Te Rarawa te iwi
Whatuora e!

Na ngā ringa maha tēnei kākahu i whatu

Many hands have woven this kākahu

Whatu kākahu are often admired from afar for their feathers, fine taniko work or intricate patterns. When a weaver admires a whatu kākahu, her first instinct is to turn it over and inspect the stitches from the back, examine the materials used and admire the workwomanship. She recognises that much of the work that has gone into creating the tangible garment is unseen and requires the skill and patience of many hands – in both direct and indirect ways - to complete the garment.

Completing a doctorate is no different. While I am responsible for the final ‘product’, the hands of innumerable whānau, friends and allies have supported me in both seen and unseen ways along this journey. To all of you, thank you for your advice and stories, words of wisdom and encouragement, constructive feedback and most importantly aroha and belief in me that I could see this through. You have each added your rich and vibrant feathers to the kākahu that I wear.

To the Mana Wāhine who participated in this research: Kim, Luana, Esther, Arndrea, Jo-Ann and especially my soul sister - both in and outside of the doctorate - Tia, thank you for giving so freely of your time to share your stories as we wove and ate, laughed and cried, talked and debated. Thank you also to each of your whānau who supported you to attend our whatu wānanga. Your support and stories are deeply embedded within the fibres of this thesis. E kore e mutu taku mihi aroha ki a koutou.
Juggling work, study and whānau commitments has been made easier by the support I have received from various educational scholarships. I am grateful to The Ministry of Education, The University of Auckland, Te Runanga ā iwi o Ngā Puhi, Te Runanga o Te Rarawa and the Taitokerau Māori Trust Board for their investment in Māori educational research through the financial support they provided.

The doctoral journey, for some, can be a lonely and isolating exercise. This was not my experience thanks to the Mana Wāhine within the MAI (Māori and Indigenous) ki Tamaki doctoral network. I am deeply grateful for the support, encouragement, whakawhanaungatanga and leadership extended from those in MAI who had completed their doctoral journey - and those in the throes of it. The support from my MAI whānau whanui was an invaluable and determining factor in my completion.

I am endlessly grateful to my two fabulous supervisors Alison Jones and Jenny Lee-Morgan. Your years of experience in supporting emerging academics shone through in the care and patience that you showed as you helped me to weave this thesis together. Jenny, you encouraged me into teaching and then years later coaxed me out of the classroom and into the world of research. You have mentored me through most of my career in Māori education and have been a pivotal role model – tēnā rawa atu koe e te tuakana. Alison, you have stuck by me through a Masters and a Doctorate, always providing thorough and timely feedback that – whether I was ready to hear it or not – provoked me to think about ideas in different and deeper ways. Thank you for your perseverance and endless encouragement but, most of all, believing in me. I thank you both for your wise counsel, your aroha and your considerable investment of time and energy to help me see this to completion.

To my partner Michael, thank you for the strong, silent way you continue to support me to do what I do – even when you are not entirely sure what that is! I love that you encourage our whānau to live as Māori and in doing so re-claim and re-vision living as Māori for yourself.

To my beautiful daughters Maioha and Kahukura. This thesis is you. You are woven into its fabric, in its stories, in the aspirations I hold for you to take up some of the threads that I will pass to you, and weave them in unique and creative ways into your lives as Māori women. I want you to know these stories from your Māmā and Nana and why we choose to ‘live as Māori women’. Importantly, I want you to know that you are always wrapped in a cloak that is adorned...
with feathers that keep you warm, safe and connected. You can do anything my darlings - you come from mana wāhine, you are mana wāhine.

And finally Mum. We descend from a matrilineal line of strong tūpuna wāhine – both Māori and non-Māori. Their collective wisdom and strength continues as an unbroken aho matua (thread) handed to me, by you, who has fought to re-claim, restore and re-vision living as Māori in our whānau. E te ukaipo, this thesis began with you. How I understand myself as a Māori woman, I owe to you. You cloaked me in your aspirations to ‘live as Māori’ as I now cloak my daughters in mine. Those aho matua of strength, activism, pono, tika, commitment and contribution that you have handed to me exist in them. Tōku mana wāhine no tuawhakarere, no oku tūpuna, no tōku whakapapa, no mua ra anō e!
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Awakening ‘new’ knowledge from the ‘old’

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Whatuora – a Kaupapa Māori research methodology

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Moe – creative potential

Ohō – a conscious awakening

Ora – living well and connected lives

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Summary

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Jo-Ann

Kim

Esther

Arndrea

Tia

Luana

Carol

Hinekura

Being Māori

Living as Māori

Connected to whenua

Connected to whānau and whakapapa

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## Glossary

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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>Aho</td>
<td>line, cord, thread, medium for divination, line of descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapū</td>
<td>sub-tribe, pregnant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harakeke</td>
<td>formium tenax or commonly known as flax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>gathering, meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipu whenua</td>
<td>a vessel often formed from clay in which the placenta is placed and then buried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahu</td>
<td>amniotic sack, clothing, cloak,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiwhatu</td>
<td>finger twining weaver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapahaka</td>
<td>Māori cultural performing group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kete</td>
<td>a traditionally woven bag often made of harakeke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korowai</td>
<td>a particular type of whatu kākahu with hukahuka/tassles and few, if any, feathers or tāniko embellishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māmā</td>
<td>transliterated Māori term for mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marae</td>
<td>the courtyard in front of a Māori meeting house often used to describe the complex of buildings around the marae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mau taiaha</td>
<td>traditional Māori weaponry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mokopuna</td>
<td>grandchild/ren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muka</td>
<td>strong silky white fibres within the harakeke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>a person of English or European descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rāranga</td>
<td>to weave or plait harakeke</td>
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<td><strong>Tamariki</strong></td>
<td>children</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tangihanga</strong></td>
<td>traditional Māori funerary process</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Taonga tuku iho</strong></td>
<td>precious heirloom, something handed down</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Te reo Māori</strong></td>
<td>Māori language</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tikanga</strong></td>
<td>correct procedure, custom, method or practice</td>
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<td><strong>Tino rangatiratanga</strong></td>
<td>self-determination, autonomy, control power</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Waka ama</strong></td>
<td>outrigger canoe paddling</td>
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<td><strong>Whakapapa</strong></td>
<td>genealogical layers, to lay one on top of the next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whakawhangaungatanga</strong></td>
<td>process of establishing relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Whānau</strong></td>
<td>extended family or family group</td>
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Chapter one:  
Introduction  
Whakātūria ngā Turuturu o Hine-te-iwaiwa

I am a Māori woman and daughter; I am teacher, mother and weaver.

A desire to weave together ideas about living as Māori women and the practices of whatu kākahu (traditionally woven Māori cloaks) emerges from my own intertwined experiences as teacher, weaver, Māori woman, mother and daughter. My experiences frame this work, which is both a theoretical and personal exploration of the complex and multiply understood ways that Māori women reflect on, reclaim and self-determine ‘living as Māori’ – for themselves and for their tamariki (children) and mokopuna (grandchildren).

I am the daughter of a Māori mother who sought to actively reclaim and restore ways of living as Māori for her whānau so that her tamariki, and now mokopuna, may experience a positive identity as Māori. As a mother of two young daughters, I deliberately articulate my desire for them to live as Māori through the choices I make for them, the first language they spoke, the Māori immersion education they experience and the activities I engage them in. In a sense, as I continue to claim and reclaim my own sense of living as a Māori woman, I am articulating my aspirations for my daughters to continue a legacy handed down to them through matrilineal lines.

This research is a convergence of ideas and experiences – multiple threads handed to me over time through a number of different relationships and experiences – that I now take up and weave together. One influential set of relationships emerged from a community based arts group that I established in 2012, and continues to meet regularly, called Whatu Kākahu Auaha (loosely translated as ‘Creative Cloaks’). This is a space where (mainly) women meet and learn to weave whatu kākahu using contemporary materials. Some of the women are drawn to the group to create whatu kākahu that celebrate significant family events such as a graduation or a christening. Others are looking to create a whatu kākahu as a tangible legacy or taonga tuku iho (storied heirloom) that will be passed on to their tamariki and mokopuna. Some women just like the idea of spending time with other Māori women and being together in the creative act of making.
As we weave, we talk. Our conversations often centre on our families, being Māori women, the professional and personal pressures of our busy urban lives and our aspirations for our children. I became keenly interested in the stories, both similar and different to my own, that drew the women together with a desire to create a whatu kākahu. I would often ask questions of the women and share my own memories and reflections about growing up and being Māori. One day one of the women said to me, ‘You really need to write these stories down. Give them to your children with the cloak so they understand how your journey of being Māori is part of their journey too’. My thesis topic had been handed to me and with it the challenge of writing – in the linear and logical written form required of a thesis – about a relationship between the embodied and necessarily experiential practice of whatu and the complex nature of being a Māori woman.

In terms of Western research, a thesis is essentially an argument: the presentation of a ‘problem’ that can be addressed in a number of ways. While Western research methods favour a clear, linear and abstract logic that seeks to identify a problem and offer solutions, and compare and contrast sets of collected ideas or data, Māori and Indigenous research methods in general prefer a more relational than abstract approach. Known in Hawai‘i as kūkākūkā (Goodyear-Ka'opua, Ka'opua 2007), in Aotearoa such relationality is called kanohi ki te kanohi, or ‘face to face’ interaction, which foregrounds relationships and experiences, and allows engagement between researcher, researched, and knowledge to happen more organically and implicitly, rather than being spelt out in explicit, pre-determined terms.

This research does not set out to problematise, seek solutions or define what living as Māori women might mean. When our Whatu Kākahu Auaha women talked and wove I did not see a ‘problem’ to be addressed in my research. I saw Māori women weaving relationships, connecting to each other and Māori knowledge, weaving physical and spiritual threads that connected them to their ancestors and creating taonga tuku iho (treasured storied heirlooms) to be handed down to their tamariki and mokopuna. As a fledgling researcher I saw an opportunity to learn from these women what it means to them to reclaim, restore and self-determine living as Māori, and, in doing so, learn more about my own journey as a Māori woman, mother and daughter. What I learnt from these eight Māori women contributes to how we understand diverse and complex ways to ‘live as Māori’. Their views tell us about the complexities, richness and contradictions of ‘being Māori’ when that phrase can sometimes become homogenised, or idealised, in policy and public discourse. The eight Māori women in this research offer a way to think about how Māori women reclaim and restore positive ways of living as Māori for themselves and their whānau.
If a ‘problem’ exists, it is that how Māori women reclaim, restore and live as Māori for themselves and their tamariki has not been widely written about. This research is an original contribution that forwards whatu (the Māori creative practice of finger twining) as a unique research site to explore living as Māori women. Whatu, a rich source of Māori knowledge and language, provides the concepts for this practice-based research. The methods of whatu wānanga and a theorised Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine research approach I call Whatuora, brought the women together, enabled them to talk openly about themselves, focused their discussions, and created Kaupapa Māori space where rich stories were shared and enduring relationships forged.

Chapter One frames this thesis through my stories of living as a Māori woman – experiences that have led to a desire to theorise a relationship between Māori women and whatu kākahu. I discuss how I encountered the sometimes-problematic nature of an ‘as Māori’ discourse through my professional teaching career and why I choose to engage with this set of ideas. By telling my stories I locate myself subjectively within the research, as I interweave personal politics and experience with theory and literature. Rather than viewing researcher subjectivity as problematic, I embrace my relationship to the research, its participants and subject matter as an integral part of researching ‘as Māori’.

Conceptually this chapter erects the frame that holds the whatu kākahu as it is being woven. Traditionally, two sturdy wooden props, or turuturu, were used to hold the whatu kākahu as it was created. These posts were named after Hine-te-iwaiwa the female deity of childbirth and weaving and were also used as supporting props by women during labour (Murphy, 2013; Simmonds, 2014). Sometimes ornately carved, the pair of turuturu tapered to a sharp point and were driven into the earth to hold the weaving firmly in place. Between these pegs the kaiwhatu (weaver) would slowly and methodically twine together each strand of muka (prepared flax fibre) one by one using the ancient technique of whatu (finger twining) to create a garment.
By telling my stories in this chapter, I reveal my theoretical and personal connections to the research. In a metaphorical sense I am erecting my own research framework – ngā turuturu a Hine-te-iwaiwa – and in doing so, demarcating the research space by framing how this research is undertaken, by whom and for what purpose. While the turuturu demarcate and frame the research paradigm, these turuturu are grounded methodologically and conceptually in Kaupapa Māori theory.

**Locating myself in the research – establishing my turuturu**

An element of living as Māori is to locate oneself in relationship to people and place. Often the first question asked in a Māori language exchange is not WHO are you but more importantly WHERE are you from or, more correctly, where do you belong to? The response is often articulated through the recitation of pepeha which names significant geographical landmarks, eponymous ancestors and tribal canoes for example, placing the speaker in relationship to the land and its people.

When I claim a connection – as I did in the introduction - to Whangatauatia as my mountain, to Karirikura as my sea and Te Rarawa as my tribal grouping, I connect, not only to the land, but also to its history and its people. When I claim this relationship there is, in my view, a simultaneous commitment to contribute to and to enhance those relationships that I am claiming. Similarly, when I draw together a research relationship between Māori women and whatu kākahu I am confirming my commitment to contribute to knowledge of Māori women, Kaupapa Māori research and whatu kākahu in new and positive ways.
While personal location is a cultural necessity in the Māori world, it is less so in a traditional Western scientific context. Described in Western research paradigms as reflexivity, critical reflexivity or critical subjectivity (Arvay, 2003; Etherington, 2004), these approaches resist notions of objectivity posited by traditional science and instead seek to make transparent the values, beliefs and politics of the researcher as fundamental to the research practice, how the research is framed, interpreted and analysed.

A reflexive location of self is at odds with an objective scientific research paradigm that views an Indigenous research perspective as indulgent rather than “a methodological necessity flowing from a tribal epistemology” (Kovach, 2009, p. 84). Don Trent Jacobs, also known as Four Arrows, is a professor, writer and Native American activist. He encourages Indigenous researchers to employ culturally appropriate research reflexivity but cautions against using reflexivity to “navel gaze” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 8) or become overly self-centred. Instead, the challenge for Indigenous researchers is to use personal revelation and reflexivity, not as an end in itself, but as a “springboard for interpretations” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 8) in order to gain deeper insight and positive change for Indigenous peoples.

If, as this thesis argues, an element of ‘living as Māori’ is to locate oneself necessarily in relationship to others then ‘researching as Māori’ is also to locate oneself as Māori in relationship to the research. Professor Bagele Chilisa (2012) is an Indigenous researcher at the University of Botswana who talks about the importance of researcher location. She says that researchers are “inventors of some questions and repressors of others, shapers of the very contexts we study, co-participants in our interviews, interpreters of other’s stories and narrators of our own” (p. 14). What or who should be included or excluded, how data are interpreted, analysed and presented, and for what purpose, renders openness about researcher location as methodologically vital to ‘researching as Māori’.

Māori and Indigenous research paradigms, as discussed further in chapter six, argue that researchers are culturally bound to articulate themselves via the ‘eyes’ through which they view their research. Elizabeth Grierson (2007), a professor of art and philosophy at RMIT University Australia, says explicitly articulating researcher location “declares as it discloses” (Grierson, 2007, p. 5). When I listen to people talk about their research I am often equally, if not more, interested in WHY they are doing the research; what experiences led them to that topic and through which eyes do they view the world? The following section discusses the experiences and
influences that have led me to this research, revealing a personal and theoretical relationship to its subject – living as Māori women and whatu kākahu.

My story of being Māori and living as Māori
On my mother’s side I am a Māori woman of the Te Rarawa tribe located in the Far North of Aotearoa New Zealand. On my father’s side I am English from South Hampton on the south coast of England. I was born and raised in Auckland (the largest metropolitan centre in Aotearoa New Zealand), which is approximately a four-and-a-half hour drive from my tribal lands. I describe myself as tribally connected and urban located.

My mother, who is also a participant in this research, is the eldest of six children from a Māori father and Pākehā mother. My grandfather was born and raised in the Far North surrounded by Māori language and culture at a time in the early part of last century when the impacts of assimilation and urbanisation had begun to take hold and were having profound, negative effects on the intergenerational transmission of language, culture and identity.

My whānau is one of many who continue to experience the effects of disrupted knowledge transmission. My Māori grandfather, so I am told, spoke little English before entering the school system where he was ‘actively encouraged’ to leave his native language and culture at the school gate each day. Upon entering school he was strapped if he spoke Māori on the school grounds and at home he was told by his parents – who I expect only wanted what was ‘best’ for him – that Māori language would not get him a job or help him to succeed in the Pākehā world. My grandfather passed away when I was 14 so I am left to theorise how his childhood experiences affected his personal identity as Māori and the aspirations he held for his children. What is clear

My grandfather, Tana Kingi Arano, and my mother

My grandparents

My grandparents
is that his decision to not speak Māori nor pass on the knowledge and history of his people to his children, including my mother, was perhaps his way of helping them to assimilate to what he believed was an inevitable Western norm. Echoes of my grandfather’s story can be heard in many Māori households throughout Aotearoa New Zealand as subsequent generations of Māori express a renewed desire to reclaim and restore this disrupted knowledge. The impact of my grandfather’s experience and his ‘choices’ continue to be felt deeply in our family.

Growing up I knew I was Māori because I had Māori whakapapa despite constant challenges that questioned my Māori identity because of my appearance. For as long as I can remember, my ‘non-Māori’ phenotype has presented challenges to claiming and asserting a Māori identity. I can recall being six or seven years old and playing with my cousins at my grandparents’ house in Moerewa (a small town with a large, working-class Māori population in the north of Aotearoa New Zealand) when I realised for the first time that I looked different to them. My mother had come outside and put sunscreen on me. I wondered, “Why she is not putting it on anyone else?” I looked at my skin and looked at theirs and realised that I was different; I was white and had freckles. I thought to myself, “I am the only one with freckles and I look different.” At that moment I wished that I was brown like my cousins. Although my mother assured me that my Māori whakapapa meant I was ‘Māori on the inside’, my fair skin, red hair and green eyes meant that I desired a more discernable set of identity markers to support my growing sense of my Māori cultural self.

As a child of the 80s, raised in suburban West Auckland with a number of Māori and Pacific Island friends, there were limited opportunities to engage in Māori culture and language. Ironically, it was within the education system – the very institution that served to assimilate my grandfather – that I began to engage with Māori language and culture as a secondary school
student, awakening within me a desire to reclaim and strengthen what my teenage self described as my ‘Māori-ness’. Whilst at secondary school, my mother, who had actively sought out places and spaces for me to be Māori despite resistance from within my family, insisted that I learn te reo Māori (Māori language), participate at the school’s marae and join kapahaka (Māori cultural performance group). The school-based marae and kapahaka provided pivotal sites of engagement for me to learn about being Māori.

Standing at the school marae with Mum and my brother

School marae, or marae-ā-kura, are Kaupapa Māori or Māori-centric spaces predominantly located within mainstream, English-medium schools. Jenny Lee, a leading Māori academic in Kaupapa Māori research and pūrākau pedagogy (Lee, 2005, 2008, 2009; Lee, Pihama, & L. Smith, 2012), forwarded marae-ā-kura as radical Kaupapa Māori spaces that provide for Māori aspirations to ‘be Māori’ in English-medium state secondary schools. Her research on marae-ā-kura highlighted the lack of critical attention that these cultural spaces receive as ‘authentic contexts’ that provide opportunities for “Māori staff, students and whānau to ‘live as Māori’ within a mainstream schooling context” (Lee et al., 2012, p. 2). While the teaching and learning of te reo was a central intention of the marae-ā-kura at my secondary school, it was being connected to Kaupapa Māori space where Māori values, language and protocols were enacted that best supported my developing Māori identity.

A key cultural activity enacted at our marae-ā-kura was kapahaka. A year after I started secondary school a dynamic Māori teacher, Awanuiārangi Black, joined the staff and established a kapahaka named Taiohi Tātaki that translated as ‘young leaders’. For my Māori friends and I this was a thrilling opportunity to be part of something that was a visible and positive expression of being Māori as well as a site to further develop our knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori. I
can recall a strong sense of being part of a whānau (family) as we supported and learnt alongside each other.

As a young person still forming and negotiating my identity as Māori, both Māori and non-Māori questioned my whakapapa. On one occasion, after leading Taiohi Tātaki at a regional kapahaka competition, I was interviewed on national radio by a Māori radio announcer. He told his audience that sitting in front of him was the whitest red-haired Māori he had ever seen. He asked me if I was really Māori to which I responded in less than fluent te reo Māori that yes I was. I said that rather than being a ‘potato’ – a disparaging description of Māori who are deemed ‘brown’ on the outside and ‘white’ on the inside I, in fact, was a Jaffa in reference to an iconic New Zealand confectionery that is red on the outside and chocolate brown on the inside. This encounter reminded me that, while I might have Māori whakapapa, I needed to develop and assert a confidence in other multiple markers of identity such as Māori language.

When I started secondary school I was initially placed in the ‘top’ academic class. After one week I was miserable. I felt I didn’t belong. Following some robust discussions with senior management at the school, my mother made a conscious decision to move me to the whānau class – a class established on Māori values and beliefs to support ‘underachieving’ Māori students – effectively taking me from the top stream academic class to one of the lowest. My mother shared this story with me:

*When we moved you to the whānau class it was suggested to me by some of the teachers that you were ‘too bright’ for that class. Being in the whānau class was seen as a negative move. I saw you becoming a social worker because you were someone who would awhi and tautoko [support] your friends. I liked that because I thought that was an important disposition for my daughter to have. I think you had to work harder because many of those tamariki came from whānau who could not support them like we could support you. I think you learnt that the comfortable middle class whānau that we lived in was not the only reality out there. It was important to me that you learnt that you have a responsibility to yourself to succeed but you also have a responsibility to help others. It is not a success at all costs scenario.*

At that time my mother faced an appalling, yet still common dilemma for many Māori parents: a choice between publicly recognised academic achievement OR developing a positive Māori identity and access to te ao Māori. Every day I am grateful that she chose the latter. Her
comments reflect her aspiration that I develop a political consciousness about privilege and collective responsibility, and a stronger understanding of myself as a young Māori woman.

During my five years at secondary school, I was awakened to the deficit state of education for Māori. The challenges I experienced to learn my own language and culture in a state school prompted me to train as a secondary school te reo Māori teacher in mainstream schools where more than 90% of Māori children continue to be educated. Following university, where I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Māori education and a graduate diploma of teaching, I entered the education sector as a passionate young Māori language teacher intent on supporting Māori students to develop strong and positive identities ‘as Māori’ through learning te reo and tikanga.

After seven years teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in England, I returned to my former secondary school and marae-a-kura as a Māori language teacher in 2004 and taught there for six years. During this time, and alongside other Māori colleagues, we established a Māori bi-lingual unit, revived kapahaka in the school and reinvigorated the marae-a-kura as a Māori-centric space for Māori staff, students and whānau.

As the Māori teacher in the school, a time I dreaded was the end of each school year when senior Māori students would ask me to endorse Māori scholarship applications (a process where a signature from a Māori teacher or elder was required as proof of the student applicant’s Māori ancestry). I may not have met the student in their five years at secondary school either learning te reo or kapahaka, participating at the school marae or attending Māori student events. I would ask them “No hea koe? Where do you come from?” The answers varied: “I don't know somewhere up north; don't know Miss, I don't really do Maari [mispronunciation of Māori] stuff; my Mum said I should apply.” Hearing these responses, I often felt torn. I recognised that their cultural disconnection was not the student’s fault but a result of wider whānau experiences of assimilation. I wondered about the stories within their family that had led to their cultural disassociation and I began to think more deeply about ‘being Māori’ as having whakapapa, and ‘living as Māori’ as the active and positive expression of that whakapapa.

After 12 years of classroom teaching, and pregnant with my second child, I was encouraged into postgraduate study. Returning to study educational theory after years of practice, I encountered critical education studies and, most significantly, Kaupapa Māori theory that provided a set of language and ideas to challenge my educational practice. I finally had a theory that gave voice to
the cultural and political struggles I was experiencing in school. After years of teaching, I began to intertwine my practice with emancipatory educational theories, in a sense theorising my practice. I experienced moments of oho or awakening to the power of theory and its role as a transforming change agent for Māori and education.

In 2012, I completed a Master of Education research thesis about the role of a marae-a-kura and Māori success as Māori (L. J. Smith, 2012). This qualitative work examined the experiences of Māori students and their whānau who engaged in the same marae-a-kura that I had enjoyed as a student and where I was teaching at the time. Having experienced the benefits of being involved in the marae-a-kura I was interested in how current and recently graduated students, as well as their parents and whānau, understood their participation at the marae as contributing to their ‘success as Māori’ – a strategic objective of the Ministry of Education and a pervasive educational discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand.

My Masters’ research revealed my participants’ strong critique of the idea of ‘success as Māori’. While the school students in my study struggled to articulate what ‘success as Māori’ meant to them, a number of the adult parent participants argued that the ideology, while aspirational, was poorly understood in mainstream education. Some of the parents, reflecting on their own experience of education, asserted that mainstream education largely sought to produce Māori who were successful according to Pākehā defined and measured standards. It was predominantly through learning te reo, engaging in Māori activities such as kapahaka and participating at the marae-a-kura that their children were supported to not only assert and express being Māori but were better able to live as Māori. One mother in my interview study said:

At first I thought success was just about getting an education. It is nice to have the grades, but success is more than that. I have told my son that success is not just the grades it is about the person as well. If you are not 100% in yourself, like knowing who you are as a Māori and where you come from, then the rest doesn’t matter. (L. J. Smith, 2012, p. 116)

Some of the adult parent participants questioned why the school had not consulted with them, as parents and whānau, about what ‘success as Māori’ meant – after all, weren’t their aspirations for success according to them an integral part of their children’s educational experience? As a mother of two young children, I am very interested in how Māori aspirations to live as Maori are formed, realised and supported in education. As a Māori parent I want to be asked what living
and succeeding as Māori might mean for my children as my aspirations for them emerge from experiences that are intimately intertwined with the socio-political history of this country. I began to think more deeply about whānau aspirations to live as Māori and how, as a parent, my experiences distinctly inform the aspirations I have, and decisions I make, for my children.

While my mother provided the desire to want to be Māori, it was, ironically, my experiences within secondary school and tertiary education that politicised me and provided sites of reclamation to learn te reo, participate in kapahaka and marae-a-kura as well as engage in postgraduate study. Meanwhile, outside of formal education, I had begun to engage in another site of reclamation that expressed my desire to live as Māori – or, more specifically, to live as a Māori woman – I learnt how to rāranga (weave harakeke or flax). My journey towards becoming a kaiwhatu (weaver) had begun.

**Weaving my way home**

As a child I enjoyed the creative act of making. Whether it was sewing, cooking or crafting, I recall a sense of fulfilment in making something ‘new’ from something ‘old’, the quiet reflective space that making creates and the joy of gifting what I had made to others. It was no surprise to my mother that, as a teenager, I expressed an interest in learning rāranga. She actively sought out an opportunity for us both to attend a weekend rāranga workshop. I was immediately drawn to rāranga and picked up the creative practice very quickly. Rāranga was the space where my creativity and desire to make could be located within Māori practices, language and knowledge. Through rāranga I felt connected to an old set of knowledge that enabled me to create and gift hand-woven kete (bags), tangible products that expressed being Māori.

In 2004, after four years of living and teaching in the United Kingdom, I heeded a strong desire to return home – home to Aotearoa New Zealand and home to my tribal lands in Ahipara. Although my family lineage can be traced back to Ahipara, as the place where my ancestors are buried and where my marae (tribal meeting place) stands, years of physical dislocation and familial disconnection meant that many in my generation felt distanced from our marae and its people. Despite returning to Ahipara occasionally to attend formal events such as tangihanga (funerary rites), I was looking for a way to re-connect with, and contribute to, my tribal base. In 2011 an opportunity arose.

I heard from a relation that a weaving space and art gallery had been established at our marae and that monthly rāranga workshops were being run by a small group of local women. I packed
up my children, my mother and my rāranga tools and headed north for the weekend – as I have almost every month for the last six years, although not always with mother and children in tow.

Attending the monthly workshops was less about learning rāranga and more learning about myself. Familial connections that, over time, had become loose and weakened were slowly re-woven as I sat amongst other women weavers from my tribal area. As we wove we talked and laughed, I listened and asked questions. They interrogated my whakapapa (genealogy) and proffered stories that served to fill gaps in my knowledge. This re-weaving of relationships was long and slow. Made possible in the first instance by whakapapa, new connections were re-woven that required trust and a commitment to contribute back to both the marae and the rāranga space. Rāranga offered an opportunity to re-connect to my marae and its people in a sense allowing me to weave my way home.

My experience of rāranga as a way to make and connect, to create and contribute, led me to the related, but altogether different, creative Māori practice of whatu and the traditionally made cloaks, or whatu kākahu, it produces.

From cloak, to korowai, to whatu kākahu
My relationship with traditionally woven Māori cloaks, or whatu kākahu, can be traced back to a machine-sewn material ‘cloak’ that I made in 1994. When I graduated from secondary school, I received the one and only ‘Māori prize’ at senior prize-giving for the top Māori student – a small carved trophy named in honour of a distinguished Māori educationalist John Tapiata. I recall feeling out of place and uncomfortable in the formal space of the academic prize-giving and wondered why I was the only Māori student to receive an ‘academic’ prize when I felt that many of my Māori friends were just as deserving in other ‘non-academic’ areas. As an 18 year old in my first year at university, I resolved to create an award for Māori students that moved beyond a school-defined notion of ‘success’ according to academic achievement to also acknowledge the contribution that students made ‘as Māori’ to the school. The award was intended to encompass those intangible, unmeasurable acts and attitudes that express and embody living as Māori such as manaakitanga (caring for others), aroha (care and compassion), whanaungatanga (relatedness), and te reo.

I made what I incorrectly called at the time a ‘korowai’ or cloak (a differentiation explained in chapter five) out of cotton fabric and sewn-on kereru feathers (procured by my mother from the Department of Conservation) with wool-embroidered borders. The cloak was named Te Aka ki
Kahurangi which means ‘a vine or pathway to greatness’. It is awarded at senior prize-giving each year to the Māori student who has contributed to the ‘Māori world’ of the school as decided by Māori staff and whānau. Te Aka ki Kahurangi was presented for the first time in 1994 and was awarded to my brother [see Appendix one]. Each year the kākahu is returned and awarded again the next year. When I returned to my former high school as a te reo Māori teacher in 2004, I created a second kākahu – Whaia te Iti Kahurangi – a reflection of the school’s motto ‘seek the heights’. This kākahu was an evolution of its predecessor in that it was machine-sewn strips of feathers on material and was awarded alongside Te Aka ki Kahurangi at the annual senior academic prize-giving. Both kākahu continue to be presented, by me, at the school’s senior academic prize-giving each year to two senior Māori students who demonstrate attributes of living as Māori.

I had clear intentions for the two kākahu that I had created. One intention was to claim space for Māori students within the formal academic context of the school prize-giving by creating a visibly Māori taonga that students could aspire to receive. A further intention was to promote discussion about what being Māori and succeeding as Māori in that school might mean, as well as promoting success as inclusive of cultural connection and contribution. In this sense, the two cloaks continue to serve as sites of resistance by questioning assumptions about Māori student success and encouraging dialogue about what it means to exist ‘as Māori’ within a large, urban, multi-cultural secondary school. By presenting these kākahu every year for over 20 years I maintain a connection to the school and a long-standing commitment to maintain Māori space within that school.

From these early iterations, I became increasingly interested in kākahu as an expression of ‘being Māori’. I continued to learn about whatu kākahu and eventually how to whatu using traditional...
techniques and contemporary materials such as cotton and wool. I have created eight whatu kākahu made with contemporary materials and I am concurrently preparing the traditional fibres for my first muka whatu kākahu (the nature of which will be explained further in chapter five) as I ‘weave’ this thesis.

The interweaving of my experiences with rāranga and whatu as visible expressions of being Māori and sites of reclamation, as well as the professional and academic journey that I was on, fed a growing curiosity to explore a relationship between whatu and living as Māori women. The inspiration for this doctoral research arrived to me, in its final form, by way of a pūrākau told to me by my mother.

**An idea is awoken**

Mum wearing the first full length whatu kākahu that I made and gifted to her

My mother has told me the following pūrākau on a number of occasions often, as is common with pūrākau, modified to suit the particular lesson she wants to convey. In a recent version, she explains her perspective of cloaking me in aspirations to live as Māori:

*In a ‘western’ sense, we are born ‘naked’ – naked as the day you were born, I once heard someone say. But within a Māori way of thinking we are born cloaked in a kākahu that speaks of the aspirations of our whānau. On this kākahu are the feathers of our parents, our grandparents, our tipuna. These feathers tell us who we are, where we are from, where we belong all of which help us to be well and live well in this world. These storied feathers connect us to our past and project aspirations of our future. They have form. They have pattern. Each feather is carefully and consciously woven into the kākahu.*
Each kākahu has been carefully crafted and is imbued with story. It speaks of those things – good and bad – that surround us, and form and inform who we are and how we ‘see’ the world we live in.

The feathers on the kākahu can be understood as teachings and learning’s, experiences, desires and whakapapa. When we are young, those who raise us inform the pattern of our feathers, for a multitude of reasons, adding and removing feathers that they deem ‘important’ or ‘useful’ within the context of that time. As we mature, we assume the responsibility of weaving our own cloak, adding our own feathers to our kākahu, rejecting or accepting the feathers woven early on by those who have gone before.

Within an education system that does not clearly understand Māori aspirations or Māori notions of wellness, our kākahu are vulnerable. Feathers may be forcibly removed as Māori children are told that they do not need particular feathers – like those that tell us that reo is part of a Māori identity. More covertly, some Māori children are told to leave their kākahu at the gate – that being Māori will not benefit them here. Māori students’ kākahu may be invisible within the school, the knowledge, whakapapa and aspirations that are carefully woven into its fabric, are simply not seen. Some learn that to be Māori is not an advantage. If you had the eyes to read my kākahu, what would my kākahu tell you about me?

I have cloaked you my daughter in a kākahu that is adorned with feathers that speak of reclaiming and restoring being Māori. You will choose which feathers from my experiences are useful in your own desire to (re)claim what being a Māori woman means to you. My desire is that I have woven into your kākahu feathers that keep you safe and well in your identity to give you the strength to always contribute, to give back in positive ways that enhance mana – yours and those around you. When you wear this kākahu my daughter you are never alone.

It is the wisdom contained within my mother’s pūrākau of ‘cloaking’ me in her aspirations, woven together with my own engagement with whatu kākahu, education and research that provided the intersection of ideas for this research – an exploration of living as Māori women and whatu kākahu – arriving at this research question:

How do Māori women reclaim ‘living as Māori’ through the creation of storied whatu kākahu?
This research is a theoretical articulation of a long-held occupation to interrupt, provoke and interrogate that it means to ‘be Māori’ – a legacy passed to me from my mother. Her work to create a wellness of identity by reclaiming, restoring and re-visioning what it means to be Māori for herself and her family has been a persistent and often challenging journey for her which has informed much of the metaphorical kākahu that she has created and cloaked me in. The idea of creating wellness – or ora - by intertwining the theory of whatu with its practice is explored below as whatu praxis.

**Whatu as praxis**

Transformative praxis became a popular idea in Māori and Indigenous scholarship when critical resistance theories of the 1970s were enthusiastically taken up as decolonising tools. Critical theorist and educator Paulo Freire, in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), discusses oppression in the context of teaching literacy and subsequently political consciousness to oppressed citizens in his homeland of Brazil. Freire (1972) says that:

> [O]ppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only be by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (Freire, 1972, p. 33)

In another of his books, a collection of interviews conducted with Freire, he writes about the important interaction of theory and practice – thinking and doing – to create change. Freire (1993) says:

> [W]e learn things about the world by acting and changing the world around us. It is this process of change, of transforming the material world from which we emerged, where the creation of the cultural and historical world takes place. This transformation of the world [is] done by us while it makes and remakes us. (Freire, 1993, p. 108)

Freire’s idea of transformative praxis brought about a radical shift in consciousness and power to the oppressed underclass of Brazil and subsequently developed into an influential set of educational theories that continue to inspire educators around the world today.

Antonia Darder, a Professor Emerita at the University of Illinois, describes herself as a “working class, educator of color” (Darder, 2015, p. x), who has actively struggled to overcome the impact of colonisation and disempowerment, as a Puerto Rican born woman raised in the United States. Darder offers a contemporary decolonising discourse to Freire’s ideas of transformative praxis –
ideas that have richly influenced her own decolonising theories of education. According to Darder (2015), it is vital that critical educators, activists and leaders understand the political and contextual nature of knowledge and seek innovative ways to decolonise education. She says that to decolonise self and become truly human:

requires moving beyond the internalization of our oppression, the ejection of colonizing ideologies of domination, toward the establishment of solidarity with others, the recognition of ourselves as subjects of history, the courage to speak out when necessary, and a well-developed sense of empowerment, in order that we might name, critique, decolonize, and reinvent our world anew, in the interest of a truly just and democratic future. (Darder, 2015, p. 41)

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Freire’s ideas of transformative praxis and the goal of freedom from oppression resonated with Māori aspirations of self-determination, particularly in education (G. H. Smith, 2003b). Eminent Kaupapa Māori scholar Graham Smith advanced Freire’s theory of transformative praxis as a theoretical tool to address the continued subjugation of Māori educational aspirations (G. H. Smith, 1997, 2003c, 2003d). Smith’s Kaupapa Māori re-visioning of Freire’s theory suggests that praxis does not necessarily begin with conscientisation and end with transformative action, but rather that engagement can happen at any point, is cyclic and continuous, and has transformational or emancipatory aspirations at its centre (G. H. Smith, 2003d). Such a model serves as a reminder that change is constant and requires continual engagement to maintain and to progress the gains made.

A Kaupapa Māori model of transformative praxis proposes that conscientisation, resistance and transforming action are all important, are held simultaneously and stand in equal relation to each other (G. H. Smith, 1997). Both Darder and Smith point out that Freire’s theory of conscientisation is not a linear process that moves towards some full and final transformation or
“utopian future” (Darder, 2015, p. 120). Instead Darder (2015) describes transformation as a spiralling epistemological process where:

[C]onsciousness moves through interweaving layers of awareness, in order to emerge, time and again – according to social circumstances and human conditions – as a dynamic historical force and emancipatory expression of our humanity, which can both transform and be transformed by our organic participation in the world. (p. 120)

My creating kākahu for the school, for example, can be viewed as both an act of resistance and reclamation that, in turn, allowed for further conscientisation and resistance amongst the Māori community of the school. Furthermore, a transforming praxis is not ‘complete’ once change is realised, instead the states of conscientisation, resistance, and transforming action need to be continually re-engaged in any order, or indeed, simultaneously. The cyclic nature of praxis is how Graham Smith explains his use of the term transforming, as opposed to transformative, praxis in his adaptation of Freire’s ideas. I take up the idea of transforming praxis in relation to whatu to denote a continuously engaged intertwining of theory with practice – a whatu praxis.

Theorising whatu praxis
In this research, whatu is understood in the literal sense as the binding of threads to form a garment and conceptually as the binding or twining together of ideas. Both sets of ideas involve the interaction and intertwining of continuous threads called aho. Whatu as praxis is theorised here as an interacting relationship between multiple aho, the key binding threads that run from left to right on a whatu kākahu (a concept explained further in chapter five).

The concept of aho is a familiar one in Kura Kaupapa Māori or Māori-medium education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Te Aho Matua is the foundation document and guiding philosophy for Kura Kaupapa made up of six key principles that provide a holistic Māori worldview of teaching and learning. A report that looked at the key attributes of successful Kura Kaupapa says that Te Aho Matua draws whānau together with a collective of what it means “to learn and succeed ‘as Māori’ as expressed through Te Aho Matua” (Tākao, Grennell, McKegg, & Wehipeihana, 2010, p. 8). In similar ways that the Te Aho Matua document draws together key principles in Kura Kaupapa Māori, the aho in this research draw together key ideas and literature to create its own unique garment.

Three sets of ideas in a whatu praxis, introduced here then discussed in depth in later chapters, provide some key conceptual ideas and language – aho – that bind this research together.
The first pair of aho in a whatu praxis are the literal tangible threads of whatu that bind the whenu or strands of a kākahu together. Introduced here to provide some conceptual ideas and then explained further in chapters four and five, the process of whatu or finger twining requires the interaction of two sets of threads that are twined together to enclose several hundred warp threads. Through the slow and deliberate process of twining each thread, the fabric is formed, twist by twist, to create a garment. Each aho interlocks and engages with the other. As one aho comes to the fore at the front of the garment its pair at the back – unseen yet still vitally important – secures it in place. One cannot whatu with a single aho: that is, a single strand cannot exist without interlocking with another or the fabric would not hold its form. Both sets of aho are vital and interdependent, one relying on interacting with the other to create and transform hundreds of threads into one complete and coherent garment creating something new and ordered from an apparent entanglement of strands.

The second pair of intertwining threads – Kaupapa Māori theory and Mātauranga Māori – are conceptual. Mātauranga Māori is a modern term for a body of knowledge with Polynesian origins (Royal, 2011). Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal is a Māori scholar who contributes to scholarship on wānanga and Mātauranga Māori. He says that Mātauranga Māori exists, albeit in fragmentary form, within stories, tribal histories, traditional songs and creative arts, to name a few, that have been passed down through the generations. According to Royal (2011), Māori traditionally did not view knowledge as a discrete phenomenon, but instead as ‘know how’ or an external expression of internalised knowing. Wiremu Doherty (2009), a Kaupapa Māori contributor to scholarship on Mātauranga Māori, describes the term as a Māori way of thinking, doing, and acting that places importance on Māori histories, knowledge and language.

The term Kaupapa Māori has long been used to describe Māori-centred activities of self-determination, language and cultural revitalisation and positive identity development. Kaupapa Māori theory however, is a more recent academic development that emerged from a group of Māori students and their supervisors at the University of Auckland in the 1990s. While theorising is not new to Māori, that is, Māori have always thought, explained and described their world, the challenge at that time was to convince an academic field dominated by Western scientific research principles that a Māori approach to research was academically valid and robust.

If, in its broadest sense, Mātauranga Māori is a set of knowledge and Kaupapa Māori is a political activating action or practice, it is when both elements are intertwined that a
transforming praxis is potentialised. Taina Pohatu, a Māori scholar of Māori knowledge and wellness, describes the transforming potential that exists when Mātauranga Māori is activated. He says transforming praxis is enabled through “reflecting on possibilities within Māori thinking and the energies expended by earlier generations, then locating courage to adjust these options for use in each new time” (Pohatu, 2003, p. 3). His description is a reminder that Mātauranga Māori is ‘simply’ knowledge and that this knowledge requires theoretical activation to create transforming and positive change for our contemporary lived realities.

The key to actualising the inherent potential of Mātauranga Māori, such as the knowledge contained within whatu, exists in theorising Mātauranga Māori in ‘new’ forms to address our current lived realities and the contemporary issues that Māori face. An important element of Kaupapa Māori research is the practical implementation of theory that is, not only theorising the practice but also practising the theory. In Kaupapa Māori research, theory and practice – the thinking and the doing – interact and support each other in order to create change that is meaningful and positive, and has emancipatory aspirations for Māori at its centre.

The third pair of intertwining concepts that I discuss here draws together the theory and practice of whatu – ideas explored in depth in chapter four. It is possible to learn to make what some might call ‘a Māori cloak’ absent of its theory and language. One could conceivably attend a workshop to learn how to make ‘a cloak’ by binding threads with twine yet have little engagement with the theory, history or language embodied in the practice. Similarly, one could read or listen to in-depth theory about the history and language of whatu disassociated from its embodied practice. While the practice of whatu can be learnt and the theory of whatu can be read almost independent of each other, I suggest that it is through the conscious and deliberate intertwining of both elements – the theory and practice, the thinking and doing – that the power of whatu as a transforming praxis may be fully realised.

An intention of this research is to contribute to the reclamation and revival of both the practice and theory of whatu through a conscious and deliberate engagement with whatu language, terminology and practices. As whatu kākahu become increasingly popular as a symbol of a Māori or, in some cases, a New Zealand identity, the demand for ‘Māori cloaks’ has increased dramatically creating a market for these taonga. While I celebrate the increased interest in whatu kākahu, I am critical about how some of these ‘cloaks’ are being mass-produced and incorrectly given the name ‘korowai’ effectively reducing an embodied and storied taonga Māori to a
generic, machine-made ‘feathered cloak’. The tensions that exist in reclaiming and revitalising whatu are complex and are explored further in chapter five.

**Practicing whatu praxis**

As my practice as a kaiwhatu increased, so did my interest in theorising this knowledge at a deeper level. I began to think about the embodied nature of whatu, how it made me feel about myself as a Māori woman and the maternal language associated with the practice. Several years ago I was asked by a few friends to teach them how to make whatu kākahu and pass on what I was learning which led to the establishment of our monthly Whatu Kākahu Auaha workshops.

During these workshops I noticed similarities in the experiences of the women who attended. As we sat and engaged in our whatu practice we would talk, tell stories, laugh and cry as we reflected on knowledge lost and gained, memories of growing up and being Māori, being woman, being mother, grandmother and aunty. I could see the transforming and healing power of whatu at work. As well as creating beautiful, tangible garments, the women were telling stories and reflecting on their lives as Māori women. Our conversations and my observations of the workshops, intertwined with a developing interest in research and an ever-present desire to live as Māori, prompted me think about whatu – both its practice and its theory – as a site to reclaim and self-determine how we understand ourselves living as Māori women.

**Summary**

This research argues that a vital element of ‘living as Māori’ is about locating oneself in relationship to others, to the land and to an Indigenous history in Aotearoa New Zealand. Similarly, ‘researching as Māori’ from a Kaupapa Māori positioning requires the researcher to position themselves in a theoretical and methodological relationship to the work, its topic and its outcomes. My experiences of being a Māori woman, a mother, a daughter, an educationalist and emerging Kaupapa Māori researcher led me to this research. Conceptually this chapter sets out to erect Ngā Turuturu o Hine-te-iwaiwa, the supporting poles that frame and hold this research in place by introducing myself through my stories and in doing so I locate myself in this project and demarcate its parameters.

Intertwining my teaching experience with Kaupapa Māori scholarship, and the transforming potential I observed amongst Māori women who were creating whatu kākahu, led me to theorise whatu as a methodological research engagement – an approach that I name Whatuora.
Chapter Two:
Theorising whatu as methodology

Having demarcated the scope of this research – Ngā Turuturu o Hine-te-iwaiwa – through my stories in chapter one, chapter two explains the foundations upon which this work is grounded. Conceptually, this chapter lays out the ground upon which the turuturu are driven into to hold the framework firmly in place while the work is being woven – that grounding is Kaupapa Māori theory.

I begin by discussing how te reo Māori is used in this thesis before discussing Kaupapa Māori theory and the fundamental role that this set of ideas plays in creating space for me to theorise whatu as methodology. Next I introduce my theorisation – Whatuora – in order to provide some language and ideas before Whatuora methodology is explained in more detail in chapter seven. The question that guides this research, introduced in chapter one, is revisited before the eight Māori women participants are introduced using their first names and tribal affiliations along with how they came to participate in this work. Finally wānanga and journaling are explained as the methods I chose to gather the ‘data’ for this project in the form of written stories and transcribed discussions which are analysed thematically in Part three.

Te reo Māori in this thesis

As a second language learner of te reo Māori working with research participants who are also second language learners, I elected to write this thesis in English as the language of communication most accessible for those involved. At various times during our wānanga some wāhine chose to speak in Māori while others frequently used Māori terminology as the best way to express their ideas.

Although English is the predominant language of this thesis, notions of reclaiming and re-complexifying te reo Māori remain an important intention. As such, Māori terminology and ideas feature widely throughout this thesis. Where possible I use Māori terms to describe key Māori ideas many of which are commonly understood words for readers with some Māori language knowledge. The first time a Māori term appears in the text a translation will be provided in brackets. Māori terminology is listed in a glossary that sits at the front of this thesis to foreground the important Māori terms and ideas that are woven through this work. I choose not to continually highlight or translate Māori terms in an attempt to normalise Māori language as an
important and accepted element of reading this Kaupapa Māori work. It is my hope that each term is sufficiently explained so that the reader, whether they have knowledge of te reo Māori or not, is able to understand and absorb each term to facilitate the reading flow.

The challenge and choice to use Indigenous terms in academic writing is not new. Hawaiian writer Natalee Kēhaulani Bauer (2015) says non-Hawaiian speakers must take a “leap of faith” (p. 110) in order to understand the multilayered and nuanced meanings of Hawaiian terms such as ea (simplistically translated as sovereignty):

[J]ust when you think you understand ea, you discover it holds another facet, a more nuanced meaning for which the English language can offer no easy translation. (p. 110)

In a similar way to how whatu is theorised here beyond its simplified translatable meaning, Bauer says that “ea is not merely a word or a concept, but a decolonial methodology which allows Kanaka Maoli to bring (and write) ourselves into existence on our own terms” (2015, p. 110). Despite the risk of being lost in translation, the use of Māori terms contributes to reclaiming and re-complexifying te reo Māori in academic writing.

How I choose to twine together Māori words and concepts is intentional. ‘Whatuora’, for example, brings together two discernible Māori terms ‘whatu’ and ‘ora’. Grammatically, whatu ora as two separate words and whatuora could be understood as one in the same. By bringing these two words together I am attempting to embody the intertwined nature of whatu practice by twining two distinct ideas into one ‘new’ concept. It was interesting to note that, as our research wānanga progressed, some of the wāhine began to use ‘Whatuora’ to sign off email communications, for example ‘Whatuora ki a tātou’, in a similar way that one might use Mauriora as a way of saying ‘be well’, signalling perhaps that the wāhine had claimed the concept as having meaning beyond the constructs of our research wānanga.

I choose to capitalise Whatuora to make clear that I am naming Whatuora as a distinct and encompassing concept that, like a personal pronoun, has whakapapa and meaning. For similar reasons I also choose to capitalise the terms Kaupapa Māori, Mātauranga Māori and Mana Wāhine. Māori scholars have chosen to approach the capitalisation, or not, of these terms for different reasons. I decided that, like the terms Whatuora and Māori for example, Mana Wāhine and Kaupapa Māori both have whakapapa and have been named and claimed as powerful terms in Māori scholarship. Finally, I use the words wahine (the Māori term for woman in the singular), wāhine (women plural) and women interchangeably throughout the thesis.
The terms pūrākau and story appear regularly throughout this thesis. Theorised by Jenny Lee (2008) as a culturally defined narrative, pūrākau are a Māori pedagogical approach to telling stories, sharing knowledge and, I suggest, a meaningful and embodied way to articulate aspirations. The terms pūrākau and story are not used interchangeably in this thesis. While the wāhine utilise the term ‘story’ in their own pūrākau, I consciously consider when the pedagogy of pūrākau is at play and when to use ‘story’ as an active verb.

The phrase ‘living as Māori women’, the topic of this thesis, unsurprisingly occurs many times throughout the writing. For emphasis, or to make a clear comparison between two ideas, I sometimes choose to italicise the phrase for example: the wāhine discussed the difference between being Māori and living as Māori. On other occasions I choose to apostrophise ‘living as Māori’ to make its function clear that the phrase is being used as a complete idea. Claiming and determining how te reo Māori is used in this research is informed by the Kaupapa Māori foundations upon which the turuturu for this work are grounded.

**Kaupapa Māori theory and research**

The term kaupapa Māori is now in common use. As a descriptor, the word ‘kaupapa’ can be heard in a number of everyday Māori language settings, such as describing a classroom as ‘kaupapa Māori space’ to denote that te reo and tikanga Māori are observed in that space or, as Pihama (2001) says, describing someone as “being on the kaupapa” (p. 81) as an indication of a person’s Māori-centric political philosophy. One dictionary (Ryan, 1995) defines kaupapa as a strategy or philosophy, and another interestingly says that kaupapa, amongst other things, is the “groundwork to which feathers were attached to make a cloak” (Williams, 1997, p. 107). While the term kaupapa Māori is common, Kaupapa Māori theory is a more recent set of theoretical ideas.

Kaupapa Māori theory emerged as a radical response from Māori academics in the 1990s to create space for Māori-centric thinking and research in the academy or what Pihama calls “culturally defined theoretical space” (Pihama, 2001, p. 77). Although it has been described by a number of prominent Māori academics (Henry & Pene, 2001; Irwin, 1994; Lee, 2008; Pihama, 2001; G. H. Smith, 2003b; L. T. Smith, 1999), I like Te Arani Barrett’s (2013) description of Kaupapa Māori theory:

[T]he space where Māori epistemologies and ontologies meet the Western academy. It is the space where Māori have resisted the colonially imposed deconstructions of
knowledge acquisition and where Māori have been determined and inspired to re-assert their own range of literacies in the modern world as the basis for fulfilling Māori aspirations to live as culturally located citizens of the world. This aspiration stems from a history of the colonization of Māori people to reclaim the legitimacy of their own traditional spaces. (2013, p. 224)

Kaupapa Māori theory created space in the academy for Māori-centric research methodologies to emerge. Linda Smith, an influential writer on Kaupapa Māori theory and research, says that researchers engaged in Kaupapa Māori research must take a critical Indigenous view of their work through what she calls a “moral indigenous lens” (2000, p. 239). To do this, the ‘researched’ must be allowed to inform the research process and have some autonomy over what, how and why the research will be conducted. Kathy Irwin’s description of Kaupapa Māori research, while written over twenty years ago remains relevant today. She says that Kaupapa Māori research is that which is:

[C]ulturally safe, that involves the mentorship of kaumātua, that is culturally relevant and appropriate while satisfying the rigours of research, and that is undertaken by a Māori researcher, not a researcher who happens to be Māori. (Irwin, 1994, p. 225)

Irwin’s distinction between a researcher who is Māori and researching as Māori supports the thesis forwarded in this work, that both researching ‘as Māori’ and ‘living as Māori’ requires a conscious and political engagement that seeks to create positive transformational change with and for Māori.

Another key proponent of Kaupapa Māori theory and research, Graham Smith (2003b) describes four fundamental questions intended to guide Kaupapa Māori research: What difference is this research going to make to Māori? What meaningful interventions will result? How does this research support our cultural and language aspirations? Are you merely telling Māori what they already know? When creating a whatu kākahu I engage in a similar inquiry process. I think carefully about WHY I am creating the kākahu, WHO is it for, WHAT purpose will it serve, WHAT ideas and theories are informing my choices – for example the necessary time and energy, available materials and the final product.

Kaupapa Māori, in my view, is a way of being in the world – a personal methodology as well as a research approach. I understand Kaupapa Māori research as that which is undertaken by Māori and with Māori, has positive outcomes for Māori and has Māori ways of knowing, being and
doing at its centre. As a Māori woman and mother I continually reflect on how I apply a Kaupapa Māori way of being’ to my professional, academic and personal lives. It is a continuous and critically reflexive journey. I suggest that one cannot come to understand Kaupapa Māori theory, through theory alone. Instead, Māori researchers attempting to apply Kaupapa Māori theory through a research methodology should, in my view, also engage to some degree in Māori practices, language, beliefs and relationships.

Kaupapa Māori theory places Māori language and beliefs at its centre, encouraging Māori researchers to look to our own sets of knowledge to develop approaches to research. Education researcher, Mere Berryman (Berryman, Soohoo, & Nevin, 2013), states Māori must maintain “control over research by utilising practices and methodologies from their own world view and taking from a Western world view only what will best contribute to their own agenda” (p. 269). By theorising whatu as methodology I seek to centralise the knowledge and practices of whatu and then explore outwards to other theories that may contribute to my theorisation. In this way I am drawing those theories into the centre as opposed to searching for theories and methodologies outside of te ao Māori to describe and explain our own knowledge and experiences. This research places the Māori knowledge of whatu as central to this project, supported and encouraged by Kaupapa Māori theoretical space, to theorise whatu as methodology.

A further integral aho that is bound together with Kaupapa Māori theory to form the methodological foundation of this research comes from Mana Wāhine theory.

**Mana Wāhine theory**

The Māori renaissance of the 1970s and 80s saw a range of wāhine-led projects unfolding on marae and in urban and rural communities across the country. Activist movements such as the 1975 Land March and the 1986 Māori Language petition, as well as initiatives to revitalise Māori arts, were driven by determined Māori women, such as Dame Whina Cooper, Hilda Harawira, Eva Rickard and Tariana Turia to name just a few. These wāhine were intent on decolonising their lived realities and creating transformational change for their tamariki, mokopuna and the wider Māori world. At the same time, Mana Wāhine proponents such as Linda Smith, Leonie Pihama, Kathie Irwin, Ngāhuia Te Awekotuku and Huia Jahnke among others, wove the foundations for Mana Wāhine as theoretical discourse in the academy.

As a set of theories, Mana Wāhine emerged in the 1990s as Kaupapa Māori theory gained traction in the academy. Mana Wāhine is described by Leonie Pihama (2001) as “a Kaupapa
Māori theoretical framework that attends to the multiple issues that are faced by Māori women” (p. 258) and by Ngāhuia Te Awekotuku (1991b) as “woman-initiated political action at its ripest most elemental” (pp. 11-12). Linda Smith described Mana Wāhine Māori as a term used by Māori women to explain what it means to be Māori women in both Pākehā and Māori society. She explains that:

Wāhine means women. Mana is a concept related to notions of power, strength, status and collective acknowledgment of merit. The Mana Wāhine Māori term is broad enough to embrace a wide range of women’s activities and perspectives. It is a strong cultural concept, which situates Māori women in relation to each other and upholds their mana as women or particular genealogical groupings. It also situates women in relation to the outside world and reaffirms their mana as Māori, indigenous women. Mana Wāhine Māori is the preferred Māori label for what counts as Māori feminism. It is a term which addresses both the issues of gender as well as locates the struggles for Māori women within two distinct societies. (L. Smith, 1993, p. 38)

Mana Wāhine theory places Māori women’s experiences and views at the centre, not juxtaposed in relation to a dominant other, but as valid in their own right. Naomi Simmonds’ (Ngāti Raukawa), award-winning doctorate Tū te Turuturu nō Hineteiwaiwa: Mana Wāhine Geographies of Birth in Aotearoa New Zealand (2014) explored the spatial, spiritual and embodied experiences of childbirth and maternity for Māori women. She says that Mana Wāhine, in its many forms such as art, theory and practice, enables the exploration of lived Māori realities from a centralised position of power as opposed to having to talk or write back (Simmonds, 2011). Mana Wāhine theory centralises Māori women’s stories and experiences and validates Mātauranga Wāhine (Māori women’s knowledge) as theoretically valid and important ways of being heard.

Mana Wāhine theory claims space for Māori women’s stories, values, beliefs, practices and knowledge’s – voices that had for many years been disregarded by patriarchal colonial powers (Pihama, 2001; Te Awekotuku 1991b). Celebrated weaver and Māori academic Ngāhuia Te Awekotuku describes Mana Wāhine Māori as:

[R]eclaiming and celebrating what we have been, and what we will become … it is a pro-action, a determining of ourselves as Māori women, with authenticity and grace … its
ultimate aim is a rediscovery and renaming of that essential strength and harmony. (1991b, p. 10)

Another recent contributor to Mana Wāhine scholarship is Ngāhuia Murphy who is progressing Mana Wāhine theory both in and outside the academy. Murphy (Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Ruapani) self-published a book entitled *Te Awa Atua: Menstruation in the Pre-colonial Māori World* (2013) that brings together Mana Wāhine and Kaupapa Māori theory in her exploration of Māori understandings of menstruation. She says that, for well over one hundred years, “Māori women have been spoken for and about by (often hostile) others” (p. 26). Murphy’s work embodies Mana Wāhine theory as a way to reclaim and re-image Māori women’s knowledge and stories about menstruation that have up until now been viewed through a patriarchal and colonial lens.

According to Simmonds (2011), Mana Wāhine discourse transcends the constructed binaries of urban/rural and traditional/contemporary. She describes Mana Wāhine as theoretical space where:

Māori women can, on our own terms and in our own way, (re)define and (re)present the multifarious stories and experiences of what it means, and what it meant in the past, to be a Māori woman in Aotearoa New Zealand. (Simmonds, 2011, pp. 11-12).

I am inspired by both Simmonds and Murphy who write in powerful and critical ways, speaking back to colonially influenced ‘norms’ which seek to position Māori women at the bottom of what some Māori women academics have described as a socially constructed cultural hierarchy (Pihama, 2001; L. T. Smith, 1993; Te Awekotuku, 1991b). Alternatively, Murphy and Simmonds’ work centralises Māori women’s stories and experiences within a Mana Wāhine theoretical framework, creating space for Māori women to self-determine what being Māori – and being women – means to them.

Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua, a wāhine Ōiwi Hawai‘i (Native Hawaiian woman) of Ōiwi Maoli and Chinese heritage, is an Indigenous activist in Hawaiian social movements, Indigenous education, land restitution, and reclaiming cultural knowledge. Of particular interest to this thesis is her scholarship around Wāhine Maoli identity. Goodyear-Ka’ōpua (2007) says that claiming a Wāhine Maoli identity means cultivating a deep spiritual connection and political commitment to the land and its people says that, on her journey to ‘become’ Wāhine Maoli, she is:
Surrounded by the power of the women who have lived before and will live after us. I try to live my Ōiwi Hawaii [native Hawaiian] identity out of the fullness of my genealogy. I try to nurture confidence that I have a place and a people and a history from which to begin speaking and acting in the world. (2007, p. 57)

In an active written exchange of letters between herself and her mother, Lana Sue Goodyear-Ka’ōpua, Noelani articulates the aspirations she holds for her then 11-month-old daughter to live a strong and positive identity as Wāhine Maoli:

I want her to grow up knowing that she can occupy a political and academic space if she wants. She has a kuleana [responsibility, privilege, right] to uphold for her people, for Kanaka Maoli Hawai’i, just as we do. I want to help her cultivate a Wāhine Maoli consciousness, guided by our ancestors and our family stories, connecting to the kulāiwi, committed to our people. (2007, p. 62)

Goodyear-Ka’ōpua’s writing about Wāhine Maoli identities as matrilineal treasures to be passed down through story and experience echoes the work of Mana Wāhine activists, scholars, artists and writers here in Aotearoa New Zealand and resonates deeply with this research that seeks similar outcomes.

Māori women were, and continue to be, at the forefront of movements to reclaim and self-determine living as Māori. As a movement, tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) emerged as a decolonising consciousness and became a catch-cry for Māori during the Māori renaissance period in the 1970s. This pivotal time for Māori identity politics saw a rise in activist Mana Wāhine leadership that was determined to reclaim a positive and strong Māori female identity through the reclamation of language and culture. The Kōhanga Reo movement, for example, was driven by Māori mothers and grandmothers who set up ‘language nests’ in homes and garages to support other Māori mothers to reclaim Māori language as an aspect of a Māori identity. Māori women embraced the idea of tino rangatiratanga, not only to self-determine their current realities but, importantly, to reclaim and revision a positive and secure cultural identity for future generations. In doing so Māori women struggled, and continue to struggle, to reclaim what constitutes living as Māori, that includes being well, fulfilled, connected and culturally intact.

Māori women have always been at the leading edge of theory and practice in Māori political, educational and social resistance movements. Their writing and practice has illustrated the struggle to reclaim, restore and represent what ‘living as Māori women’ might mean. Mana
Wāhine theory offers both ideas and actions that support the work of the women in this thesis, myself included, to reclaim, restore and represent living as Māori women. My contribution forwards the theory and practice of whatu as a site for Mana Wāhine theory to be explored and developed.

Forty years on from the Māori renaissance of the 1970s, Māori women, mothers and grandmothers continue to lead their whānau in determining and reclaiming a secure and positive Māori identity. Māori women constantly make conscious and sub-conscious decisions for their whānau informed by their own experiences, histories, societal pressures and influences. Of the multitude of aspirations that Māori mothers hold for their children to be healthy, active, educated, holistically well, contributing, critically conscious members of society and so on, this research is keenly focused on one set of aspirations – those that we hold for our tamariki and mokopuna to live as Māori. If the idea to ‘live as Māori’ can be understood as those values, beliefs, ideas, experiences, influences and perceptions that are handed down to us, how then do our own experiences of living as Māori inform our aspirations for our children? How and why do we select and deselect stories and experiences from our lives to whatu them into the kākahu that we create for our children to wear?

**Introducing Whatuora methodology**

A Whatuora methodology takes whatu, a traditional set of Mātauranga Māori and twines it together with Kaupapa Māori theory. Through this intertwining, whatu is politically activated, transforming a creative practice into a critical Indigenous and decolonising methodology. I recognised that the most appropriate methodology for this research existed within its own practice and body of knowledge. The language of whatu, for example, resonates with feminine knowledge that connects us to the whenua and to whakapapa (ideas explored further in chapter five) while the practice of whatu draws women together to weave, share and reflect. My idea of Whatuora is a contribution to Kaupapa Māori, Mana Wāhine research and Māori and Indigenous methodologies that seek transformative change and wellbeing with, and for, Māori.

The term Whatuora twines together two not commonly associated ideas: whatu and ora. Whatu, which I introduce here and theorise further in chapter five, is the term for traditional Māori finger twining, an ancient practice developed over centuries and used to create traditional clothing ranging from everyday rough rain capes through to ornately woven and highly prized feathered cloaks considered valuable heirlooms. Whatu is also the Māori word for ‘eyes’ – the lenses
through which we view the world. The concept of whātu as sight, vision and lens provides some interesting metaphorical language to think about how the women in this research ‘see’ themselves, how they believe they are seen, to be living as Māori women and how they consciously and deliberately seek to ‘re-vision’ living as Māori for their tamariki and mokopuna.

Ora is a common word in the Māori language that means to be well, to survive, to be healthy, fit and vital (Williams, 1997). Commonly heard in Aotearoa New Zealand, the ubiquitous greeting ‘kia ora’ literally means ‘be well’. Of particular relevance to a Whatuora methodology is ora as a stative: to be safe, cured, recovered and healed (Williams, 1997). Ora in this research is understood as a journey to wellness and recovery from the impacts of colonisation by reclaiming, restoring and self-determining notions of living as Māori women. Whatuora binds together the ideas of whātu and ora into a theorised methodology that encapsulates the enactment of holistic wellness.

Ora, as holistic wellness, is a fundamental aspect of a living as Māori ideology. It is argued here that to ‘live as Māori’ whether as an individual or as a collective, is to experience a healthy cultural identity that is positive and secure, connects to land and language, cultural values and relationships. I add cultural continuity to the notion of ora as being collectively well, healed and recovered and therefore willing and able to transmit those cultural elements deemed important to preserve cultural vitality and to pass this on to future generations.

Two previously theorised models of ora have inspired my theorisation of Whatuora methodology. The first is Te Whare Tapa Whā – the four-sided house – developed by Māori scholar Mason Durie as a Māori-centric framework for wellness (Durie, 2004, 2006). His easily discernible model was taken up by Māori and non-Māori to explore ideas of holistic Māori wellbeing. Durie utilises the metaphor of a Māori meeting house to describe the four essential and interdependent elements of wellbeing: te taha wairua (spiritual), te taha hinengaro (psychological), te taha whānau (relational) and te taha tinana (physical). In a whare and, similarly within a person, each of the four elements is interdependent on the strength and support of the other. When one element or side of the building is weakened the structural integrity of the whole will suffer, causing instability or, in the case of a person, ill-health.
In another model, Māori academic Mera Penehira (2011) reclaims Taranaki tribal dialect to explain mouri (as opposed to the more common spelling - mauri) in her doctoral research that explored moko (traditional Māori tattooing) as a Māori wellness intervention. Penehira theorises mouri beyond its simplified interpretation as ‘life essence’ to include ‘being’, ‘wellbeing’ and intergenerational wellness. Twining mouri with ora, Penehira discusses the idea of ‘mouri ora’ as:

[T]he innate life force within each of us. In terms of our wellbeing it asks us to give consideration to the wellness of our energy, of the force/s that activate us to do things and to operate and interact with our world. (2011, p. 43)

In similar ways to Penehira, Taina Pohatu discusses a relationship between wellness and being in his theorisation of mauri. A lecturer at a Kaupapa Māori tertiary institution Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Pohatu offers some insight into wellness energy in his paper Mauri – rethinking human wellbeing (2011). His explanations twine together mauri as a wellness of spirit with the concepts of moe (dormant potential), oho (conscious awakening) and ora (wellness of being). Pohatu’s model is a way of understanding how energies between and within everything – including people and objects – interact, build, contribute and interrelate. Discussing mauri, Pohatu (2011) says:

[Every]thing has a unique, yet unifying mauri … however it [mauri] requires the constant expenditure of energy sculpted by kaupapa, purpose, time, place and the sets of relationships involved. (Pohatu, 2011, p. 4)
Ora, as a descriptor for wellbeing, has been used by government departments and Māori community groups to promote wellness initiatives. ‘Whānau Ora’, for example, refers to a government-supported, Māori-focused health initiative established to address broad Māori health issues with a holistic and collective philosophy of wellbeing. Meaning ‘healthy families’, Whānau Ora emerges from traditional, interrelated Māori ways of viewing wellbeing such as a connection to the land and ancestors, language, culture and identity as well as physical and psychological health. A Māori critique of Whānau Ora (Kara et al., 2011) questions whether the government uptake of this health strategy fully encompasses a Māori worldview – an example perhaps of both the potential for transformation, and the inherent challenges, of using complex Māori ideas in necessarily simplified forms to meet non-Māori understanding.

I explain Pohatu’s useful ideas of moe, oho and ora further in chapter six, and take these ideas up in Part Three to frame and discuss the states of transformation that the eight women participants move between as they reflect on growing up and being Māori, and living as Māori women. The language and ideas of moe, oho and ora are woven throughout the thesis and are used in the thematic analysis of the women’s experiences.

If mauri ora is about wellness of spirit (Pohatu, 2011), and mouri orā is about the intergenerational wellness of being (Penehira, 2011) then an element of Whatuora encompasses a wellness of ‘sight’ perspective, orientation or point of view. How, as Māori women, do we create positive healing change, for future generations and ourselves, by critically ‘viewing’ our experiences of being Māori, and re-visioning a secure, positive and well life living as Māori? Royal (2011) suggests that being and becoming well requires a critical decolonising (in)sight and is not necessarily about the accumulation of knowledge:

The goal of the knowledge journey is not so much the gathering of discrete pieces of humanly created knowledge but rather the ‘cleansing of the lens of perception’ whereby the world itself seems to speak (kōrero) to those who have the commitment and willingness to hear. (Royal, 2011, p. 5)

I take up Royal’s statement as a continuing challenge to decolonise our vision – to create Whatuora or a well vision – so that Māori women may see more clearly how their experiences of being Māori impact the choices to live as Māori and subsequently the choices they make for their tamariki and mokopuna.
The first half of this chapter has been an introduction to Whatuora methodology, grounded in Kaupapa Māori theoretical space. The following section introduces the wāhine participants before turning to the empirical aspects of this project.

**Introducing the wāhine**

The storied experiences of eight Māori women, including myself, provide the data for this research to address the question of how Māori women ‘live as Māori’ through the creation of whatu kākahu. The women are introduced briefly here, locating them tribally and in relationship to the research, before being introduced fully in chapter seven. I have an existing relationship with all seven wāhine who agreed to be identified tribally and by their first names. All of the women live in Auckland but connect back to a wide range of tribal areas. Some of the wāhine attended the previously mentioned monthly Whatu Kākahu Auaha workshops. Each of the seven wāhine were invited by me to participate in, and contribute their stories to, this research. Each wāhine had expressed an interest in learning to whatu in order to create a whatu kākahu for their whānau – a necessary element that motivated the women to commit the time and energy required to learn the practice of whatu and complete a garment.

Jo-Ann (Ngā Rauru, Kai Tahu, Te Rarawa and Te Aupouri) and Arndrea (Ngāti Kahu, Te Whānau Moana, Te Rorohuri) are close friends and have children of similar ages who attended the same school. I met them in 2012 when they joined the Whatu Kākahu Auaha community. Both wāhine had a long-held desire to learn the practice of whatu and eagerly took up the opportunity to join the group. Both women are heavily involved in their children’s education and commit a significant amount of time to activities such as kapahaka and fundraising to support their children to live and enjoy life as Māori.

Esther (Ngā Puhi, Ngāti Hine), one of three grandmothers in the group, has worked in Māori education for many years. She engages with a ‘living as Māori’ discourse in her professional and personal life and is committed to advancing Māori issues in education. I invited Esther to be a participant in this research because she and her sister had expressed an interest in learning to whatu and collectively create a whatu kākahu for their whānau.

Kim (Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Tamaterā, Ngāti Kotimana) was raised in a family of educators and immersed in the Māori world. As a mother and grandmother she has educated her children in Māori-medium schooling and is closely involved in raising her mokopuna. Professionally, Kim works in tertiary education where she brings a strong Kaupapa Māori approach to her work.
Luana (Whakatohea, Ngāti Patumoana), a mother to two young children, actively seeks places and spaces to reclaim living as Māori. Luana had begun to attend the monthly Whatu Kākahu Auaha workshops as she was interested in learning to make a whatu kākahu for herself and her children as a way for her to connect with other Māori women and to an artistic practice that she had long desired to engage in.

Tia (Ngāti Hine) is mother to a young son, and her husband’s children and mokopuna. She is an articulate writer and gifted performer with many years’ experience as a professional dancer. Her holistic way of being in the world means Tia offers deeply philosophical and enlightened contributions to conversations about living as Māori. How Tia understands herself living as a Ngāti Hine woman despite spending her early formative years and much of her adult life overseas contributes another perspective to how living as a Māori woman can be understood.

Carol (Te Rarawa, Ngāti Pakahi) is my mother. She provides not only the spiritual and experiential threads of this research, she is also a significant contributor to its theory through her stories. By cloaking me in her aspirations to reclaim and restore living as Māori, she has handed on to me those hard-fought-for threads that she has worked to reclaim with explicit instructions that it is now my responsibility to take up this legacy and create a ‘living as Māori’ kākahu for my tamariki and future mokopuna. Carol is not a weaver – in her words, “Why would I need to weave when I have you?!?” – however, she actively supports me in all my artistic and academic endeavours. To call my mother Carol suggests some sort of objective distance between us and does not sit comfortably for me. She is an integral part of this research and my life and because of our close relationship I choose to name her Mum throughout this thesis.

**The research question**

Introduced in chapter one, the question that guides this research is reiterated here:

*How do Māori women express and make meaning of ‘living as Māori’ through the creation of storied whatu kākahu? And how does whatu as a theorised Kaupapa Māori methodology enable the exploration of Māori women’s lives?*
Methods

Selecting the participants
My initial selection method involved contacting Māori women who had expressed a desire to make a kākahu and who recognised themselves as working in broadly understood ways to live as Māori. These women and their whānau were invited to a hui whakarewa (introduction meeting) where engaging in whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building) began the process of bringing the research whānau together. Following the cultural process of mihimihi (an introduction process where relational and tribal connections are made) the research question above was explained and duly debated.

While Māori women’s voices take centre stage in this research, it is important to acknowledge the Māori male voices that exist alongside and in relationship to the women. At the beginning of this project, the initial research question was not gender specific. During our first wānanga, two Māori men joined their partners at various times. Both contributed thoughtful and heartfelt words to their partner’s journals and one created a beautiful karakia for our research whānau. As the research continued it became clear that the focus of the wānanga centred on our experiences as Māori women, mothers and grandmothers and therefore required me to have a conversation with our two Māori male supporters to explain that our wānanga had evolved into ‘women only’ space. Both men were very supportive and agreed that their roles would shift to supporting their partners to attend and participate in the wānanga. I am very grateful for their contributions and what they added to the research as Māori men and fathers. Thinking about tane Māori and whānau Māori provides an interesting site to extend Whatuora methods and methodology beyond the scope of this study.

Next, the research process was explained, as were the expectations of those who chose to participate. This included a commitment to attend eight monthly wānanga over a year (which would be audio-recorded) and to write a journal which I could read and use as ‘data’ for my thematic analysis. In exchange, each wāhine would learn how to create a whatu kākahu from contemporary materials such as mop string and feathers. Each wāhine was offered $100 towards materials to create their whatu kākahu and given the opportunity to have any questions answered about their commitment or the research process.

Following the hui, I met individually with those wāhine who had agreed to participate and went through the participant information sheet and consent forms as required by the University of
Auckland ethics committee (see Appendix Two). Before the first wānanga, each wāhine received a kete (hand-woven bag) made by me, which contained weaving materials, a journal and an initial question which asked them to write about themselves and their whānau, where they are from, where they grew up, and why they had agreed to participate in this research. A week prior to each wānanga, a question or statement was emailed to provoke a thought and encourage the women to add to their journals.

The data for this qualitative research was collected from eight months of participant journaling and from eight, one-day monthly wānanga. While journaling is a better understood method for gathering qualitative data, wānanga as a research method is less well understood and therefore is given some attention here.

**Wānanga**

Wānanga is a common, yet complex, term in te ao Maori. As a noun it means seminar or conference, tribal lore, genealogical, historical and philosophical knowledge. As a verb it means to meet, discuss, debate and deliberate (Williams, 1997). Royal writes in depth about wānanga in his monographs where he describes wānanga as both:

> [T]he internal process of considering, debating, thinking, exploring … and the external exchange between individuals. Hence the term can be used for an individual undergoing a process of wānanga as well as a group doing the same thing, exchanging views, debating and so on. (Royal, 2011, p. 19)

The idea of wānanga has traditional and contemporary interpretations. In pre-colonial times, wānanga referred to a gifted person or expert, a particular quality or ethos or a set of processes or methods (Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2003; Royal, 2011). A whare wānanga was, in some cases, a physical structure where learning took place, but is also referred to as entering a psychological and spiritual meditative space seen vital to create new knowledge – the ultimate purpose of learning.

While the idea of wānanga has the previously-accepted meanings in te ao Māori, its use as a research method is less well understood. Simmonds (2014) furthered wānanga as method in her doctoral research where she created a one-day wānanga for Māori women to come together to talk and create new knowledge collectively around Māori maternities. Some of the participants were hapū (pregnant), others were mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters who expressed an interest in the kaupapa of the research. While the women talked they learnt how to make ipu
whenua (pots used to bury placental afterbirth) from clay and mahi rāranga (flax weaving) a good example of practising theory through thinking and doing.

According to Simmonds, wānanga is a Kaupapa Māori method, not a Western focus group or semi-structured interview with another name. Wānanga are framed by Māori cultural practices, with karakia, te reo Māori, Māori values, beliefs and protocols at their centre (Simmonds, 2014). Simmonds (2014) says there are no methodological guides about how to conduct wānanga; instead wānanga as method “falls into a space between” (p. 86) a conventional focus group approach and participatory group method and, while Māori-centric, have different and similar outcomes and processes to a hui.

The term *hui* has several meanings including to congregate, meet or assemble. According to Pere (1991), in a hui:

> Participants sit in a circle so that the faces of people, particularly those who stand to speak, can be seen. The key qualities in regards to hui are respect, consideration, patience, and cooperation. People need to feel they have the right and the time to express their point of view. You may not always agree with the speakers, but it is considered bad form to interrupt their flow of speech while they are standing on their feet. (p. 44)

While hui and wānanga have some similarities they serve different purposes. Pere (1991) suggests hui are often utilised to discuss an issue and come to some agreement that is “once everything has been fully discussed and the members come to some consensus, the hui concludes with a prayer and the partaking of food” (p. 44). As a Kaupapa Maori method, wānanga also involve Māori rituals such as karakia (prayer), mihimihi (greetings and introductions) and kai but wānanga often extend to creating time and space to create new knowledge – either individually or collectively.

The overall purpose of wānanga, both as an individual or collective activity, is to develop understanding, fashion a new view, produce an answer, or more questions, and to create new knowledge (Royal, 2011). Ruth Herd (2012), an emerging academic who writes in a Mana Wāhine and Kaupapa Māori space, says a key element of wānanga in contemporary times is as a site of resistance and an important space for the reclamation of Māori language, knowledge and traditions. Wānanga is utilised in this research as a critically reflective space, a creative process for ourselves as wāhine to explore and embody how we live as Māori women through discussion
and sharing ideas, both in spoken and written forms, and in a shared creative practice as we create new knowledge.

Whatu wānanga as method
Eight one-day wānanga led by me were held at Te Aka Matua o te Pou Hawaiki, a University-based marae in urban Auckland. All of the wāhine had previous experience of being on a marae and felt comfortable and confident in that environment. The marae provided the physical and cultural space to have our children with us, which was at times both a convenience and a challenge as the needs of our children came first – over the needs of the wānanga.

All wānanga were recorded and transcribed by me. Audio recordings of the wānanga were often punctuated with hungry cries, bumped heads or babies needing to be fed. Wānanga space in this sense, whilst not the easiest method to gather research data, ultimately proved the most appropriate space to meet the needs of the wāhine involved and their tamariki and mokopuna. The transcripts of the meetings were sent to the wāhine for editing and returned to me. One person chose to withdraw one pūrākau that she had shared during the wānanga.

Luana and her daughter
Two of our babies writing in their ‘journals’ during our wananga
Tia and her newborn son

Our wānanga discussions provided some rich and deeply personal stories that, alongside the reflective journals, form the ‘data’ that are thematically analysed in Part Three. Once the women’s journals and transcribed stories were analysed and compiled, they were sent back to the wāhine for editing. An important methodological step, this final checkpoint enabled the wāhine to see their stories in context and in relation to the other stories, and comment on how I had arranged and analysed the emergent themes. At a final wānanga, we discussed how the stories
had been compiled, which allowed a further opportunity for the women to provide feedback on my interpretation and analysis.

Each wānanga began with the karakia that opens this thesis, a karakia written specifically for the research group. Following karakia I would begin with a mihi (greeting) to those present, acknowledge the departed and those of our research whānau who could not attend. I would then open the space to anyone who wanted to share a story or reflection they may have had since our last wānanga. Occasionally one of the wāhine would bring in a photo or artefact and speak to it in relation to a story of reflection that she had written. On other occasions wāhine might share a story or read from their journal. Following our designated wānanga time, which spanned anywhere from two to four hours, we would move to the dining hall to share food before taking up our whatu practice and continuing with our discussion.

Attending the whatu wānanga highlighted the pressures of time in our busy urban-located lives. I was acutely aware of the multiple and overlapping commitments that the wāhine felt compelled to meet in their personal and professional lives. As wāhine, we frequently shared the relentless pull we felt between attending the research wānanga and weaving our kākahu, and the commitments that we had to our families and work. Although we unanimously agreed that creating time for ourselves to wānanga, talk and whatu was vital for our wellbeing, it would often slip down a list of competing work and family priorities. Creating time to be Māori women, with Māori women was agreed as vital for our oranga or wellbeing.

Our whatu wānanga created a space to explore living as Māori women in a way that connected to the embodied nature of the practice. Activities such as mau tauaiaha (Māori weaponry) waka ama (Māori paddling), kapahaka (traditional Māori performance) and learning te reo Māori to name a
few, could provide equally interesting sites to explore how Māori women reclaim and live as Māori – what Royal (2011) might describe as “cultural restoration activities” (p. 53). Whatu practice however, is imbued with rich maternal language and ideas that resonate with the intention of this research and its subject – living as Māori women.

As the wāhine became confident in their whatu practice, the whatu wānanga allowed them to slow down and centre themselves. The practice of whatu provides a focus that engages the body, mind and spirit creating a reflective or meditative state that Royal (2011) might describe as a “quietening of the mind” (p. 14). Some of the wāhine describe moments of losing themselves in their whatu practice – those reflective periods of quiet contemplation when it was just them working on their kākahu. In Part Three, Arndrea tells us about a time when she was doing whatu until the early hours of the morning for consecutive nights as she channelled her love and respect for the person for whom she was creating the whatu kākahu.

Kim wrote in her journal that the whatu wānanga are a time for her to be still and focus as well as connect with other wāhine.

And then whatu comes along ... and I am able to breathe, relax, kōrero, share, reflect, test ideas, listen, laugh, experiment, seek direction, clear my head, focus, eat good kai, make new friends, catch up with old friends, bring other wāhine, work my hands.

As method, whatu wānanga provides space to think and do, talk and whatu and to have our children and mokopuna present with us. Our whatu wānanga have continued beyond the research period with the same intentions of creating space to be, and be with, Māori women, to connect to and reclaim the Mātauranga Māori of whatu and engage in its embodied practice. The whatu wānanga did not begin or end with the research nor does whatu wānanga belong solely to the research realm. Instead the tikanga or fundamental threads of wānanga and whatu were twined together here to enable new knowledge to be created.

Journaling as method

Following each wānanga, the wāhine were asked to reflect on our discussion and spend some time responding to questions or ideas posed in the wānanga by writing in their journals. Some of the wāhine described themselves as ‘time poor’ and commented, initially, on how difficult it was to commit to journaling – a condition of participation in this project. Overall, the wāhine commented that once they began to write they appreciated the quiet, private, reflective space and
acknowledged that the journal, alongside the whatu kākahu they created, were both taonga to be passed down to their children and mokopuna.

In their journals the wāhine wrote stories, recalled memories, drew pictures, added photos and wrote about the relevance of these images. Three journals were addressed to a child or mokopuna, each of the stories being told directly to that child – one of whom had yet to be born. One mother’s journal had entries from her daughters. After I collected the journals, three wāhine asked at different times for their journal to be returned to them (which I did) so that they could add to it. At the end of the research, the journals were handed back to the wāhine through ceremony, acknowledging the taonga contained within.

**Thesis structure**

This thesis is presented in three parts each containing three chapters. The rhythmic pattern of 3-3-3 appeals to me as a weaver and follows three broad stages of creating a whatu kākahu that is conceptualisation, preparation and creation. The concluding part of the creative process involves a critical examination of the garment before it is named and gifted so that the kaiwhatu can take her new learning and thinking on to her next project.

**Part One.** Whakatūria ngā Turuturu o Hine-te-iwaiwa – is the conceptualisation stage of the thesis. Like a research project, creating a whatu kākahu begins well before the first strand is prepared or, in research, the first chapter is written. Chapters one to three establish the conceptual frame for the research by erecting Ngā Turuturu a Hine-te-iwaiwa. Chapter one began by locating my self in the work through my experiences as a Māori woman, mother, teacher and weaver. This chapter, chapter two, introduces Whatuora as the theorised research approach developed concurrently to address my research question, to guide this project and explains the research methods of journaling and wānanga used to gather data.

The literature field on Māori identity is broad and has been explored from different angles by a number of Māori and non-Māori writers over a number of years. Drawing on the literature, chapter three provides an historical overview of how the identity ‘Māori’ came into being. From here I narrow my focus to discuss two sets of contemporary ideas about Māori identity – being Māori – that offer some useful language and ideas to then discuss what it might mean to live as Māori women from a Mana Wāhine perspective that seeks to centralise Māori women’s stories and experiences through a decolonising lens.
**Part Two.** Whakaritea ngā whenu – prepares the many hundreds of strands, understood as ideas and literature, which make up this research kākahu. The preparation stage of creating a whatu kākahu is a critical, often laborious and time-consuming process that requires the kaiwhatu to gather and prepare the whenu and aho necessary to construct the garment. Harakeke is harvested and many hundreds of muka fibres extracted for the strands. Other adornments, such as feathers, are sourced. Each element is closely examined then selected and/or de-selected based on its quality and relevance to the overall vision for the garment. As the kaiwhatu prepares her materials she is constantly thinking about and visualising the kākahu that she is about to begin: who is it for, how will it be made, what stories will it tell? Part Two builds on the theoretical framing begun in Part One to add a further theoretical section to this thesis. Here I gather and prepare the ideas and literature that, when woven together, form the theoretical and methodological fabric of this work.

Chapter four, the first chapter in Part Two, traces the feminine origins of whatu through its maternal language and the ancient threads that continue – entangled by colonisation yet remain unbroken – back to powerful cosmological female deities. Whatu kākahu are explored both in terms of their practical purpose as clothing but also as a means to protect and cloak our children, mediate relationships through the process of exchange and, in modern times, have become an outward symbol of a Māori identity.

I begin chapter five with a pūrākau inspired by my then five-year-old daughter whose insight prompted me to think about whatu in complex and intersecting ways as an approach to research. This chapter provides some language and technical knowledge about whatu necessary to understand how the practice of whatu is then theorised as an embodied decolonising Kaupapa Māori methodology – a research approach I name Whatuora.

Chapter six explains Whatuora in detail as the methodological framework for this thesis. I begin by locating Whatuora in the field of Māori and Indigenous methodology and research. Introduced in chapter one, Whatuora is forwarded as a ‘new’ methodology theorised from ‘old’ Mātauranga Māori knowledge and activated by Kaupapa Māori theory. Ideas of moe oho and ora as states of being are explored as useful concepts which are later taken up to frame and analyse the women’s stories in Part Three.

**Part Three.** Entitled ‘Whatu kōrero, Whatuora’ – weaving words weaving wellbeing – is a thematic analysis of the women’s stories gathered through the wānanga and journaling process.
Conceptually this is the active creation stage of the kākahu. Having thought deeply about its purpose, gathered and prepared the necessary strands and resources, the kaiwhatu engages in a praxis of thinking and doing, theory and practice as she transforms many hundreds of strands, whatu by whatu, into one coherent garment. My role as the kaiwhatu/researcher is to consciously and carefully take up the methodological aho prepared and developed in Parts One and Two to bind the women’s stories together into a coherent garment.

The first chapter in Part Three, chapter seven, draws on the idea of moe or reflection as the women talk about being Māori and growing up Māori. As they looked back through conscientised adult eyes on their parents’ aspirations for them as Māori children they shared often-emotional stories that reflect the socio-political context of their childhoods. They talk about the Māori identity ‘choices’ their parents made for them and the impact that those choices have had in their decisions to reclaim and re-vision how they now choose to live as Māori women.

The theme of chapter eight is reclaiming. Here the women’s stories of oho, or awakening are bound together as they discuss how they actively engage in sites of reclamation, such as language revitalisation initiatives and learning how to whātu, as expressions of living culturally well and fulfilled lives.

Chapter nine, the final data chapter, is about re-visioning. Here the concept of ora and living as Māori women is explored, not only through the aspirations the wāhine hold for themselves to live well and fulfilled lives as Māori but, importantly, the aspirations they hand down to their children and mokopuna so that they may live secure and positive Māori identities. In this final data chapter the wāhine talk and write in aspirational ways about their hopes and dreams that future generations of Māori will take up the aho of ‘living as Māori’ and weave them in creative and transforming ways.

The final phase of creating a kākahu sees the kaiwhatu cast a final critical eye over the finished garment before it is worn or gifted. Loose threads are snipped and stitch tension is analysed. Consideration is given to what went well, what would be done differently next time and what overall story does this kākahu tell. Most importantly the kaiwhatu considers what new ideas have been inspired for the next kākahu that, inevitably, has already begun to form as a concept in her thoughts.
Chapter ten, the conclusion chapter of this thesis, therefore is an opportunity to reflect on what was learnt during this research. This thesis does not set out to define or simplify ideas about living as Māori women and whatu kākahu. Instead, I offer a way of thinking about how living as Māori women might be developed through the practice and theory of whatu. Importantly, this final chapter considers where and how this research might be useful for future projects and in other sites of engagement both within education and beyond.

**Summary**

The boundaries and intentions of this research continue to be fashioned and demarcated here. This chapter is concerned with the methods and methodological foundations that ground this research, marking out from the beginning the inherent role that Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine approaches play in both my personal life and my academic approach to this research. Encouraged by Kaupapa Māori theory and previously theorised models of ora, I choose to introduce Whatuora early on as the methodology that guides this project in order to provide some language and conceptual ideas around whatu and ora that are explained later in more depth.

The methods of journaling and wānanga used to gather the stories and experiences of the eight Māori women participants are informed by Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine theory as agreed-on methods that would suit both my desire for the research and the hectic, time-poor realities of the women participants. While not the easiest, the complementary methods of wānanga space and reflective journaling provided two different but appropriate ways for the women to think and share, reflect and exchange stories about being Māori and living as Māori women – complex ideas that are explored in the following chapter.
Chapter Three:
‘Being’ Māori and ‘living as’ Māori women

In Aotearoa New Zealand, where living as Māori should be most easily realised, the opportunities to reclaim and assert a positive secure Māori identity are variable. Some Māori have only limited meaningful contact with their own language and culture and, as Durie (2001a) said 16 years ago in a comment that is still applicable today “too few institutions in New Zealand are geared towards the expression of Māori values, let alone language” (2001a, p. 51). On the surface it may seem that, if Māori want to assert a Māori identity or learn their language and culture, then it is simply a case of ‘go out and get it’. This is not the reality as omnipresent negative and racist views about what it means to be Māori persist.

To explore what it might mean to live as Māori – and in particular as Māori women – is to enter the broad field of Māori identity. Māori and non-Māori researchers interested in how Māori identity is developed, negotiated and sustained have explored the issue from a number of angles such as urban Māori identity (Gangé, 2013), Māori–Pākehā hybridity (Webber, 2008), Māori youth and identity (Borrell, 2005) and Māori secondary school student’s identity (Bishop, 1999; Bishop, Berryman, & K. T. Smith, 2003; Johnson, 2008) to name just a few Māori identity projects.

It is not my intention to review all the literature on Māori identity; instead I discuss that literature where it is useful to this project. First I look at the sociohistorical context from whence the identity ‘Māori’ emerged. I then introduce some contemporary theories about Māori identity that provide a language to complement the notion of ora that runs through this thesis. Importantly, the purpose of this chapter is to sharpen the focus from the broad field of defining and contesting what constitutes being Māori to instead explore living as Māori as a conscious set of choices to engage in a complex, politically radical and active way of being in the world. Although semantically subtle, a shift from being Māori to living as Māori in this research is discussed as a radical and cognizant activation of one’s Māori whakapapa.

To ‘live as Māori’ is a contested and intrinsically slippery concept. Linda Smith (2005) reminds us against reifying imagined ideals or recolonising what it might mean to be Māori or live as Maori through definitions of what Māori should look, act and speak like, for example. She says that Māori:
[A]re not homogeneous, do not agree on the same issues and do not live in splendid isolation from the world. There are internal relations of power, as in any society, that exclude, marginalize, and silence some while empowering others. Issues of gender, economic class, age, language, and religion are also struggled over in contemporary indigenous communities. (p. 87)

This includes Māori society and communities of wāhine. It is not the intention of this research to define or delineate living as Māori. Rather than seek a definition, I engage with the inherent complexity of a ‘living as Māori’ discourse and the role that the eight Māori women in this research take up in different and similar ways to reclaim, restore and represent what living as Māori women means for them and their whānau.

**Māori identity formation – an historical overview**

To understand the notions of **being Māori** and **living as Māori** it is useful to first consider how and why a Māori identity emerged. The term initially used by Pākehā (European) to name Māori people was ‘New Zealanders’; Māori identified themselves through hapū (Durie, 1997; Mead, 2003; Walker, 1990). Once Pākehā began to be born in Aotearoa New Zealand, and as the Indigenous people strategically required a collective identity to deal with increasing numbers of Pākehā, the term ‘Māori’ came into use.

From the mid 19th century, a rapid increase in intermarriage between Māori and Pākehā saw Māori identity claims questioned (Harre, 1968). Discourse about blood quantum (Graham, 2005; McIntosh, 2005; Walker, 1990; Webber, 2008) utilised empirical tools such as the national census that required Māori to fractionise their identity as either full, half, quarter or one-eighth Māori. In a consultation paper on the place of ethnicity in census data collection, Robson and Reid (2001) state that those who name the world hold the power to shape and define others’ realities – so for example a person with less than one-eighth Māori ancestry was not recorded as Māori according to official census records. The ability to determine what it meant to be Māori did not rest in Māori control.

In 1951 there was a change in how census data in Aotearoa New Zealand was collected. According to the Statistics New Zealand website (2013):

> For the first time in New Zealand census history, no separate Māori census is held. Instead, the same set of questions is asked of both the Māori and European populations.
Everyone in New Zealand on census night is provided the same form in English, and a limited number of forms in te reo Māori are provided to Māori living in the North Island upon request.

Empirical data such as those gathered in the census worked to preserve particular dominant views. According to Robson and Reid (2001) census data were utilised to examine the differences between Māori and Pākehā and reinforced the idea that there were no ‘full-blooded’ or ‘real Māori’ left in Aotearoa New Zealand. Such a position fuelled a commonly held opinion of the time that efforts to realise full and final assimilation be accelerated, and that “Māori should adapt to Pākehā norms” (Robson and Reid 2001, p. 18). A now infamous statement from the government of the 1950s suggests an almost helpless benevolence where the best the majority population could do was to “smooth the pillow of a dying race” (Miller, 1958, p. 104). Attempts at assimilation of Māori identity failed. Māori as an identity remains intact today as a fluid and heterogeneous identity due in no small part to Māori resilience, survivance and resistance.

According to Durie (1998), the notion of a collective Māori identity was first formally documented at a meeting on October 28th 1835 when a Declaration of Independence was agreed upon between the ‘Māori’ people of New Zealand and Pākehā governance. Initially signed by 34 Northern Māori chiefs with a total number of 52 signatures gathered by 1839, the Declaration proposed establishing a “Parliament made up of chiefs, to make laws and pass regulations” (p. 3) and was a formal recognition by British government of “a Māori nation” (p. 3). Durie (1998) explains that an intention of the Declaration, from a Māori perspective remained about self-determination and collective sovereignty:

In 1835 Māori were themselves to form the government. Not only would the new nation join the international community as an independent state, but Nu Tirene (as New Zealand was described in the Declaration), was to be a state where Māori values, practices and aspirations would determine future directions. Māori self-determination was securely bound to collective Māori sovereignty. (p. 3)

Following the Declaration, the term ‘Māori’ emerged as a collective descriptor for the Indigenous people of Aotearoa. Previously, the word māori – with a lower case ‘m’ – simply meant normal or in its natural state: ‘he tangata māori’ was an ordinary human person.
The term ‘Māori’ provided a collective identity that was utilised by the State, by Pākehā, and by Māori, in complex and contradictory ways. The idea of a collective Māori identity was forced into being by a rapidly changing social and political environment. Colonisation after 1840 saw land ‘sold’ and confiscated at an alarming rate, high mortality amongst Māori from the spread of disease and the ‘relinquishing’ of traditional epistemologies through the adoption – and adaption – of Christianity (S. M. Mead, 1997; Metge, 1976; Walker, 1990). A strategic sense of Māori unity through a collective Māori identity was one response to the developing fears of a rapidly increasing Pākehā population and resulted in a lean towards pan-tribal amalgams and the notion of a collectivised Māori identity.

While tribal identity remained important, Māori leaders increasingly sought out pan-tribal amalgams as a way to increase Māori political voice (A. Durie, 1997). From the mid 20th century to early this century, pan-tribal Māori collectives such as The Māori Women’s Welfare League, The Māori Party and Ngā Tamatoa gained political traction and influence using a collective approach to resistance (Walker, 1990). The 1975 Land March and the 2004 Foreshore and Seabed hīkoi are examples of pan-tribal groups from across the country uniting under a Māori banner to protest against government policy and assert self-determination (Harris, 2004; Walker, 1990). Although a unified Māori identity risks homogenisation, it can also serve to strengthen Māori capacity to both resist and effect change.

Tribal identity through the 20th century remained an important cultural marker for Māori. By 1991, however, the census showed that as many as 29% of all Māori did not identify with any particular tribe (M. Durie, 1998) and those who did had retained very little contact with their tribe or aspects of tribal life. Physical and cultural dislocation as a result of colonisation and urbanisation had resulted in large numbers of urban Māori with little or no knowledge of their tribal or cultural identity. Almost 20 years ago Durie warned that self-determination remains a shallow goal if developing a strong Māori identity and cultural base is not part of that equation (M. Durie, 1998). The effects of cultural assimilation and urbanisation led to a rapidly increasing number of people who were Māori through whakapapa but who had few opportunities to engage with Māori language, culture and identity.

As the full negative impact of urbanisation upon Māori identity was realised, Māori began to question the validity of a universal Māori identity. Prominent Māori leaders suggested that the notion of a Māori identity had been created by Pākehā to assist their control of Māori, that is, “if you cannot divide and rule tribal people, all you can do is unite and rule” (M. Durie, 1998, p.
55). Significant rates of intermarriage between Māori and non-Māori meant that the New Zealand population was becoming more heterogeneous. Intermarriage inevitably signalled a change to the traditional Māori cultural characteristics. How Māori looked, sounded and lived was changing.

For some Māori in urban centres, opportunities to either retain or reclaim a Māori identity based on tribal connections were limited. Dissociation from a tribal identity led some urban-located Māori to promote a move away from a fixed notion of what constitutes Māori identity, that is, tribal connections, language competency and physical appearance, to one that is fluid and inclusive (Gangé, 2013). For the last fifteen years or so however, there has been a strong move back to initiatives and identities that are hapū (sub-tribe) and whānau based as an important re-forming and reclaiming of identity. In this research, for example, Tia identifies as a Ngāti Hine woman and a Māori woman and Kim discusses her ways of being in relation to her whānau identity as opposed to a generic Māori way of being. Māori identity then, as it is now, remains a fluid, complex and sensitive area.

The idea ‘to live as Māori’ emerges as another site in the struggle for, and about, Māori identity. Having survived the theft of land, introduced diseases and the wars of the 19th century, followed by the relentless processes of cultural assimilation of the 20th century, Māori are now increasingly engaging in reclaiming and restoring what it means to live as Māori in the 21st century. As Ani Mikaere (2011) states:

[T]here is more to survival than merely ensuring the continuation of our gene pool. We have come to realise that in order to guarantee our ongoing presence as Māori, we need to preserve those things that make us unique. In other words while our physical survival may no longer be under threat, it is our cultural survival that now must be fought for. (p. 299)

Mikaere’s call for ‘cultural survival’ echoes that of Mason Durie who said that survival for Māori is about being strong “numerically, economically and culturally – and rejecting any notion of passive assimilation” (1998, p. 5). These Māori scholars remind us that Māori aspirations are not to only be Māori, but also to maintain our culture, language, knowledges and beliefs against the forces of assimilation, so that we may live as Māori. Such a statement, of course, does not suggest how ‘living as Māori’ or Māori identity might be defined. My contribution to this complex idea is to explore what ‘living as Māori’ means in depth to eight Māori women. I take
up the historical threads of a Māori identity and attempt to activate multiple and intersecting markers of being Māori with a political imperative – one that positions living as Māori as a decolonising activity that reclaims and re-visions living a well, fulfilled and culturally connected life.

**Māori identity in the literature**

While there are some broadly agreed markers of Māori identity – and some that are contested – Māori identity is not homogeneous, nor can it be defined precisely. This section examines some of these accepted and contested identity markers through foregrounding the literature that focuses on Māori identity development, its social and political construction and Māori women’s identity. Two approaches by Tracey McIntosh and Mason Durie respectively, provide a useful starting point and set of language to describe how the women in this research discuss living as Māori women.

**Fixed, fluid and forced notions of identity**

Associate Professor Tracey McIntosh, a Māori academic and respected contributor to the fields of sociology and criminology says that to ‘be Māori’ is to make an identity claim to a collective but heterogeneous group of people that is “enduring but ever in a state of flux” (McIntosh, 2005, p. 39). Her descriptions of Māori identities that are ‘fixed’, ‘forced’ or ‘fluid’ (McIntosh, 2005) provide some discernible contemporary ideas about identity useful to this research, and suggests how representations of Māori identities can either resist or reinforce negative stereotypes.

McIntosh suggests that a *fixed* or ‘traditional’ Māori identity is associated with those people who are actively engaged with a decolonising praxis, that is, the theory and practice of Māori identity politics. This engagement is often in, though not restricted to, the public and political arenas. Māori with fixed identities are, according to McIntosh (2005), those with a “cohesive, comprehensive and coherent Māori identity … culturally and politically adept Māori who consciously work towards ensuring that Māori values and aspirations receive wide coverage” (p. 44). People with this identity often demonstrate outward markers of a ‘traditional Māori’ appearance – that is, they have brown skin, black hair and Polynesian features – as well as possessing cultural and linguistic competency.

According to McIntosh, the constant challenge for this often highly visible group is to be critically conscious of the identity they convey and to work to challenge stereotypes, such as fixed notions of what Māori should look like, sound like or behave like (McIntosh, 2005). Part of
a Whatuora approach as a decolonising way of seeing, is understanding the implications that colonisation, urbanisation, cross-cultural engagement and intermarriage have had on Māori identity, leaving markers such as a certain phenotype and the ability to speak Māori as contested and sensitive areas.

According to McIntosh, those with a fixed traditional identity have an important responsibility to represent and respond to racial stereotypes. McIntosh (2005) maintains that “the manifestation and articulation of the traditional identity is vital to the Māori struggle” (p. 46) but, that those who have this identity should be forever mindful that Māori identities, due to historical and socio-political factors, encompass a wide diversity leading to identities that may be perceived as not traditional but, instead, fluid.

The fixed identity today is, according to McIntosh, a reaction to the modern socio-political environment and may be described as a “fusion of classical Māori identity and the politics of the ‘radical Māori’ of the Māori renaissance” (McIntosh, 2005, p. 47). While a traditional fixed identity may be aspirational for some Māori, it may also exclude others (McIntosh, 2005). Despite the strong tendency from both within and outside Māori society to apply fixed identity labels to what it means to ‘be Māori’, many Māori instead choose a pluralist or fluid notion of identity.

McIntosh (2005) describes fluid identities as “a response to the social/material world as well as an accommodation, manipulation and gentle rebuff of the traditional identity” (p. 46). Those who choose to assert a fluid identity, select cultural markers such as language, custom and place, and use them in ways that best fit their social environment in order to “articulate a Māori identity that is strongly grounded in its particular social landscape” (McIntosh, 2005, p. 46). Those Māori (like myself) who do not fit the traditional Māori ‘look’ may seek to associate strongly with other cultural markers such as language competency, cultural knowledge and participation in cultural activities such as the practice of whatu.

Fluid identities are contextual. They form, as they inform, our realities. The idea of fluidity refers to the multiple ways we understand ourselves, the choices we make for our children, and how we live as Māori women. According to McIntosh (2005):

[A] fluid identity can be seen as part of the dynamics of identity formation. It borrows and transforms many of the more fixed elements found in the traditional identity. It also challenges notions of authenticity and lays out new forms of claims making. Over time it
is likely that many of the elements of this identity will be seen as part of an established Māori identity. (p. 50)

The notion of a fluid identity is evidenced in the voices of the participants. Based on the description above, I could describe all eight wāhine in this research as having fluid Māori identities as they discuss adapting and negotiating urban, academic and multicultural environments.

*Forced* identities in McIntosh’s categories, on the other hand, offer little agency for change, and are usually imposed by others. These identities are often formed under conditions of deprivation and are “distorted by the realities of living with a marginal status” (McIntosh, 2005, p. 48). Certain political agendas will, for example, focus on aspects that are attributed to a negative forced Māori identity such as poor educational achievement, high crime rates and high rates of child abuse, in order to advance their cause and further entrench a negative view of that identity. McIntosh says, “all identities can be understood as socially constructed, [but] with forced identities the individuals have very little control of the process” (2005, p. 48). Those who use forced identity agendas tend to promote negative Māori identities that perpetuate colonising attitudes and seek to define and limit Māori ways of being.

McIntosh’s categorisation of Māori identities reminds us that ‘being Māori’ and ‘living as Māori’ are constructed both internally and externally (amongst Māori and from others). All of these identities can be perceived as having positive and negative elements; all are adaptive and contextual. While traditional fixed markers of identity, particularly language ability, tribal connection and cultural knowledge may be limiting for those who do not hold this cultural capital, I suggest that these markers provide a level of knowledge and active participation to aspire to as we actively engage in a transforming praxis that moves from the passive notion of ‘being Māori’ to be actively engaged as living ‘as Māori’.

It is worth reiterating here that this research rejects a hierarchy of ‘Māori-ness’. For many years Māori have had to fight for and justify being Māori – even amongst our own. This effectively perpetuates a form of historical trauma harking back to cultural authenticity being determined by blood quantum and phenotype. Instead, I argue that a ‘living as Māori’ discourse recognises the impact of colonisation on all Māori and works to decolonise those powerful societal influences that seek full assimilation of Māori. Similarly, a Whatuora approach seeks to decolonise the eyes
through which we view ourselves as Māori, reclaiming and re-presenting Māori identity in ways that are useful and create positive change for ourselves and for our families.

Māori identity as secure, positive, notional and compromised
Describing Māori identities as ‘secure’, ‘positive’, ‘notional’ and ‘compromised’, Mason Durie (1998) offers another useful set of ideas to an examination of the complex ways living as Māori can be understood. In his book Te Mana, Te Kawanatanga: The Politics of Māori Self-determination, Durie (1998) refers to a 25-year study, Te Hoe Nuku Roa, to which he contributed a set of ideas about Māori identity and culturally appropriate research processes. A longitudinal study of Māori individuals and families launched in 1993, Te Hoe Nuku Roa aimed to provide empirical information on the characteristics, relationships and structures, as well as the socio-political and historical issues that impact on identity constructs for Māori families – in a sense measuring and tracking Māori realities, identities and wellbeing. Utilising Māori cultural frameworks such as Te Whare Tapa Whā (M. Durie, 1994), Te Wheke (Pere, 1991) and Ngā Pou Mana, Te Hoe Nuku Roa (M. Durie, 1995) sought to better understand Māori experiences, aspirations and circumstances across a broad range of indicators, resulting in the development of four Māori identity descriptors: secure, positive, notional and compromised.

A secure Māori identity describes someone who self-identifies as Māori and is involved in and/or has knowledge of their whakapapa (ancestry), marae, whānau, whenua tupu (ancestral land), maintains contact with Māori people and has some Māori language ability. A positive identity profile has lower levels of involvement in Māori society and access to te ao Māori. Someone with a notional identity profile has no access to te ao Māori but may still self-identify as Māori. Finally, a compromised identity reflects non-identification as Māori, often despite quite considerable access to te ao Māori and an active rejection of what is perceived to be things Māori.

Bringing these approaches together
Twining together Durie and McIntosh’s ideas helps me discuss Māori identity in this research. Where a fixed-secure Māori identity may have indicated a well and fulfilled life as Māori a hundred years ago, our contemporary conditions require a careful and considered negotiation of socio-cultural and historical impacts. For the current generation of Māori women, a fluid-positive Māori identity acknowledges the decolonising reclamation work that has gone before them and the continued work that remains for cultural continuity to be sustained so that their children may enjoy a fluid-secure identity living as Māori.
These identity profiles are not intended as fixed and immovable labels. To fix them would suggest that identity is static and uninfluenced by one’s surroundings, and is to deny that one person might have a number of different identities at different times. Identity is instead described by Durie (1998) as “an amalgam of personal attitudes, cultural knowledge, and participation” (p. 58) all of which contribute to a continually evolving and dynamic understanding of who we are at any one time. Arohia Durie (1997) reminds us that,

identities continue to be made and re-made as life circumstances change, so that even the submerged can recover a Māori identity given sufficient confidence and opportunity. (p. 157)

It is these notions of reclaiming and restoring that are embedded in the participants’ stories through the aspirations they hold for their tamariki and mokopuna now and in the future. An amalgam of McIntosh and Durie’s identity ideas provide another layer of theory and language to understand how the participants in this research see themselves living as Māori women.

Amalgamated ideas of identity are useful to describe how the wāhine in this research might describe themselves – but I use them with caution. The wāhine reminded me during the research wānanga that they are weary, and wary, of being labelled and made to fit prescribed descriptions. When I discussed Durie and McIntosh’s theories with them I was met with a resounding groan. They were tired of being told by others that they were or were not ‘Māori enough’.

Feelings of inadequacy and lacking-ness swirled through a number of the discussions amongst the wāhine. While all of the wāhine hold strong views that they will self-determine living as Māori for themselves, ever-present colonised views of what being Māori should be occasionally surfaced. Goodyear-Ka’ōpua (2007) says that:

For a long time I understood my Hawaiianness as a lack or a loss. Not because I felt that it was shameful or inferior to be Hawaiian. Quite the contrary, I have been fortunate to grow up in a generation taught to be proud of being Hawaiian … I understood who I was as a Hawaiian through a recognition of what I lacked. I lacked all these things that I thought marked an ‘authentic’ Hawaiian youth. (2007, p. 55)

Instead these educated and conscientised wāhine spoke about wanting to self-determine, in their own ways, what living as Māori means to them and their whānau. They discussed the limitations that are invoked in an academic naming exercise including the idea that no one felt they could fit
fully or comfortably within either theory of Māori identity. With the women’s protests in mind, I cautiously describe the wāhine as inhabiting the intersecting spaces of fluid-secure and fluid-positive identities, as I show in more detail in Part Three.

What may appear as simple labels also belie the multiple and over-lapping realities of how Māori understand their identities as well as the sensitive emotions that intertwine their experiences. As Arohia Durie (1997) says, “as long as there is growth and change, what once may have been settled may need to be renegotiated over again” (p. 161). Māori identity markers continue to undergo a re-imagining to consciously avoid fixed and simplified interpretations of complex and evolving ideas about living as Māori. Durie and McIntosh’s respective ideas about Māori identity provide a useful theoretical starting point to discuss how the women participants live as Māori in relation to other identity markers.

**Māori identity markers**

While Māori ancestry is the universally accepted foundation of ‘being’ Māori, other determinants are contested. The following section highlights three identity markers – whakapapa, language proficiency and a connection to place (tribal lands) and people – that are prominent identity terms in this research and emerged strongly in the thematic analysis of the women’s stories in Part Three.

**Whakapapa**

Whakapapa is widely accepted as a key determinant in a Māori identity claim. It connects people and places through time, re-complexifying the idea of whakapapa beyond the simplified notion of human genealogy. Whakapapa provides a conceptual framework with which to view the world and, in Ani Mikaere’s words, allows Māori to:

> explain where we have come from and to envisage where we are going. It provides us with guidance on how we should behave towards one another and it helps us to understand how we fit into the world around us. It shapes the way we think about ourselves and about the issues that confront us from one day to the next. (2011, p. 286)

To reiterate the importance of whakapapa to a living as Māori discourse is to highlight whakapapa as the intrinsic interweaving of connections between the past, the present and the future.
Joan Metge is a preeminent Pākehā academic who has, over many decades, respectfully contributed to scholarship on Māori and Pākehā relationships. Significantly, she has a close association with Te Rarawa, my tribal people in the Far North and to my marae. Metge says that, while Māori must determine the issue of identity in their own way and on their own terms, her research with Māori showed that whakapapa is widely acknowledged as a basic requirement to a Māori identity claim (Metge, 1995). Narrower definitions based on cultural competency are often resisted, acknowledging that the assimilatory practices of colonisation rendered generations of Māori unable, and then sometimes unwilling, to access language and participate culturally. For those with Māori ancestry who have become disconnected from the Māori world, whakapapa remains a potential connection, if and when they choose to engage with that identity. Ultimately I agree that being Māori has an essence and that essence is whakapapa.

While whakapapa is the essence of being Māori, this research argues that living as Māori intertwines whakapapa with other markers of Māori identity such as positive self-identification, participation in te ao Māori and a willingness to ‘contribute’ positively to that identity. I argue that the right to claim an identity comes with associated responsibilities to that identity. As Arohia Durie points out, whakapapa is “a governing factor in a Māori identity claim and in the establishment of rights and obligations which accrue in respect of that identity” (1997, p. 152). The research wāhine and I would argue that to rest on whakapapa as the sole determinant of a Māori identity is to be Māori. To actively seek to strengthen and contribute to the continuation of that whakapapa, through activities such as, but not limited to, language and cultural activities, is to live as Māori.

**Knowledge of Te Reo Māori**

Māori language proficiency is a sensitive subject for many Māori who were denied the opportunity to learn the language at home and at school. Overt education policy and more covert social interventions reinforced hegemonic beliefs that speaking te reo was detrimental to Māori progress, further restricting the ability of Māori to develop a secure and positive identity (Edwards, 1999). For many Māori this resulted in feelings of shame, disconnection and inadequacy (Webber, 2008).

Attempts to impose a narrow definition of what constitutes a Māori identity, based on language proficiency is limiting and fails to acknowledge the complex socio-historical contexts that disrupted the transmission of language. Four of the wāhine in this research spoke emotionally about not being able to converse ‘fluently’ in te reo – a dis-ease they have attempted to disrupt
by making deliberate educational choices for their children to become confident Māori language speakers. They shared stories mixed with emotions of shame and anger when their Māori identity was questioned, by both Māori and non-Māori, who assumed that they should be able to speak their own language. Such experiences prompted a number of the wāhine to engage themselves and their whānau in language revitalisation programmes to reclaim knowledge of te reo Māori while other participants reject having their Māori identity defined by their language proficiency, or lack thereof.

In 1985 Ngā Kaiwhakapūmau i te Reo (The Māori Language Board) took a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal to have te reo Māori recognised as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand – a claim known as WAI 11. The claim argued that the Crown had failed to protect te reo Māori as a taonga (treasure) under the Treaty of Waitangi and that overt policies in education and media broadcasting continued to threaten the reclamation and survival of the language. A report for The Waitangi Tribunal written by Judge Eddie Durie and Sir Graham Latimer (1986) states that:

the evidence and argument has made it clear to us that by the Treaty the Crown did promise to recognise and protect the language and that that promise has not been kept. The ‘guarantee’ in the Treaty requires affirmative action to protect and sustain the language, not a passive obligation to tolerate its existence and certainly not a right to deny its use in any place. It is, after all, the first language of the country, the language of the original inhabitants and the language in which the first signed copy of the Treaty was written. But educational policy over many years and the effect of the media in using almost nothing but English has swamped the Māori language and done it great harm. (Durie & Latimer, 1986, p. 1)

During the WAI 11 tribunal hearing, a number of witnesses spoke to the vital role of te reo within Māori culture. Ngā Puhi leader, Sir James Hēnare, famously said:

The language is the core of our Māori culture and mana. Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori. If the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us? Then, I ask our own people, who are we? (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, December, 2016)

Another unnamed witness is quoted in the report as saying this proverb:
Ka ngaro te reo, ka ngaro tāua, pērā i te ngaro o te Moa (If the language be lost, man will be lost, as dead as the Moa). (Durie & Latimer, 1986, p. 7)

The recommendations made from this report to the Minister of Māori Affairs were explicit. Some of the recommendations suggested changes to legislation such as: allowing any person to use te reo Māori in court; to make provision for bilingualism in Māori and English to be a pre-requisite for appointments to the State Services Commission; and the formulation of a State broadcasting policy that reflected the Crown’s responsibilities to protect Māori language. A further recommendation of a supervising body to foster and promote te reo Māori saw The Māori Language Commission established.

Recommendation three in the report was specifically about the role of education in protecting te reo Māori. The recommendation states:

That an enquiry be instituted forthwith into the way Māori children are educated including particular reference to the changes in current departmental policies which may be necessary to ensure that all children who wish to learn Māori should be able to do so from an early stage in the educational process in circumstances most beneficial to them and with financial support from the State. (Durie & Latimer, 1986, p. 51)

While Sir James Henare’s statement noted previously argues that knowledge of the language is fundamental to Māori identity, others are more cautious. Carla Houkamau is a lecturer in management and international business at the University of Auckland, specialising in personal identity and diversity management. The women in her PhD research (2011), which explored transformations in Māori women’s identity, revealed that their sense of identity was not exclusively bound up in language ability or engagement in traditional cultural practices but was instead defined by their relationships with other Māori people. Houkamau says:

This is not to suggest that speaking Māori and understanding Māori culture or having a close connection to one’s own whānau and hapū is not important to Māori identity. Instead, it is suggested that these factors may be seen as a potential resource in the development of a positive sense of being Māori and not as a gauge of who is really Māori. (p. 307)

Views about the role of language in identity formation are varied. Smolicz and Secombe (1981), Australian academics who write about minority language issues, provide some descriptors about
how people view language. They differentiate four broad approaches to minority languages that are evident between and within ethnic minority groups. These begin with a negative evaluation of the language or an active rejection of that language. Second is indifference or seeing no purpose in language maintenance and therefore showing no interest in it. Next is a general positive evaluation – regarding language as an important cultural marker but not being prepared or willing personally to learn. And finally personal positive evaluation, that is, regarding the language as a key cultural marker and putting this language commitment into practice.

While these descriptors provide some useful terms to describe how language is valued, they are also problematic. By simply describing someone as being negative or indifferent to learning their ‘native language’ disregards the complex mechanisms of hegemony inherent in a colonising agenda. In Aotearoa New Zealand, educational and governmental policy convinced Māori that their language was of little economic use and would eventually, along with their cultural beliefs and identity, be completely subsumed by dominant Western ways of speaking and being. Even now you will hear some Māori talk about ‘losing their language’ as if it was carelessly left somewhere without thought and can now not be found (Mikaere, 2011). Such entrenched ideologies add to the shame and guilt experienced amongst Māori who feel less able to ‘live as Māori’ because they cannot speak the language.

To shift from a general positive to a personal positive evaluation of language is not as simple as Smoltz and Seacombe present. To learn te reo in Aotearoa New Zealand, where it should be most easily accessed, is not a straightforward exercise. In English-medium State schools, where 90.5% of Māori children are educated (Ministry of Education, 2016) there are very few sites that offer more than the rudimentary basics of te reo and some, despite education policy and the recommendations forwarded in the WAI 11 report thirty years ago, offer no Māori language learning at all. The few Māori language schooling options that do exist are often under-resourced and may be located some distance from the child’s home, imposing a further financial burden and the ability to provide transport to and from school. For adults wanting to learn te reo, the journey is often difficult.

Learning te reo Māori is a radical political activity that requires active engagement and commitment. To learn their own language, a Māori adult learner in Aotearoa New Zealand could enrol in night classes, which are often free. Another option, for those who are financially capable and not required to earn a full-time salary, could be to commit to a full-time immersion course. More recently online programmes have been developed which still require an extra-mural
commitment on top of the day-to-day commitments of work and family life. Despite the introduction of the 1987 Māori Language Act, as a result of the WAI 11 claim establishing te reo Māori as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, the language is not spoken widely and is certainly not heard in most everyday communities. It is not, as it should be, as simple as deciding you want to learn te reo. Such an assumption further exacerbates the negative feelings of inadequacy amongst Māori who are not able to speak their language.

It is widely acknowledged that some proficiency in te reo Māori offers a greater understanding of the Māori world as so much knowledge, history and information is contained within its language corpus (A. Durie, 1997; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Pohatu, 2011; Royal, 2014; C. Winitana, 2011). As Arohia Durie (1997) says, “te reo Māori serves as the medium through which symbolic and cultural components are properly united and Māori-ness most appropriately expressed” (p. 152). As with other Indigenous cultures where inference and metaphor play an important role in the language, the greater the proficiency and experience in the language, the greater the ability to decode and interpret its deeper meaning.

According to the Te Hoe Nuku Roa Survey, the importance Māori place on language ability as a cultural marker is decreasing (Foster, 2010). The survey of 956 Māori revealed that more than 50%, 478 of those surveyed, over the age of 15 acknowledged their Māori identity as important to them. Of this group over the age of 15, 19.5% stated that the ability to speak Māori was unimportant or extremely unimportant (Foster, 2010) – a statistical finding that is not reflected in the voices of the women who participated in this study. The decrease in the number of Māori who perceive having some knowledge of te reo as important is a concern given the energy exerted by Māori to the revitalisation of te reo since the 1980s.

Language revitalisation initiatives are crucial to reclaiming Māori language and culture. Perhaps, as I argue in this project, energy and resources should also be invested in promoting a wellness of identity ‘as Māori’, interwoven with language and education initiatives. After all, if we are producing proficient speakers of Māori who do not have a secure and positive identity and an aspiration to pass their language and culture on to future generations, then Māori identity will continue to hang in the balance. While a significant minority of Māori youth in the study above consider learning te reo as unimportant to their Māori identity, a majority, like the women in my study, are committed to reclaiming te reo Māori within their whānau for the benefit of future generations.
**Tribal connection – connecting to people and places**

The ability to connect to tribal land and community is considered here as another aspect of ‘living as Māori’. The importance of connecting to land and place is evident in the manner in which Māori introduce themselves through *pepeha*. To pepeha literally means ‘to boast’ (Williams, 1997), in a sense to lay claim to belonging to place. Pepeha connects the speaker to key geographical features within their tribal area such as mountains, rivers, and bodies of water as a means of identification. Those who whakapapa or connect to multiple iwi may choose to identify with multiple geographical features depending on who they are introducing themselves to. The purpose of pepeha is to make human connections through our relationship to and with the land. I suggest that claims made through pepeha carry with them an equivalent responsibility to contribute back in positive ways to the land and its people – understood not as a burden but more an opportunity and responsibility to strengthen connections.

While whakapapa is internal and inherent, a stated connection to place and space is an external activity and one that requires a conscious commitment to maintain. This can be a fraught and difficult experience for those who, for a multitude of reasons, have become disconnected from their tribal base. Perhaps knowledge about tribal connections was not passed down or there was a falling out in the family. Perhaps the distance and cost of returning ‘home’ to tribal lands meant that, over time, a relationship with the people of the area was weakened. Māori may have multiple tribal connections to maintain, often resulting in one or two taking precedence. For others there may be few whānau left living in their tribal area meaning that there are no relations to return home to. Returning home may stir painful memories that are embedded in a history of colonisation but it can also be a spiritual and grounding experience as one connects physically with the land of their ancestors (Gangé, 2013). The return home can be difficult and/or fulfilling and joyous as those urban-located Māori make conscious efforts and moves to reconnect with tribal- and marae-based whānau in an effort to strengthen and reclaim connections.

The struggle to express whakapapa, strengthen tribal connections and learn te reo are woven throughout the diverse stories and experiences of the wāhine in this research; these key ideas appear frequently in their accounts of living as Māori. The women will take comfort from Ani Mikaere’s reminder that:

> The life experiences of a woman who has grown up away from the marae, with neither language nor strong whānau connections are just as much part of what it now means to be Māori as those of the woman who has grown up in a rural, marae-centered Māori...
community, is fluent in the language and secure in her iwi identity. (Mikaere, 2003, pp. 141-142)

If ‘being Māori’ is to have whakapapa, and ‘living as Māori’ to activate that whakapapa through engagement with language, people, places and cultural activites, what is made possible when being Māori and living as Māori are twined together as a conscious and political discourse that seeks to reclaim, restore and represent living well-connected lives as Māori?

A ‘living as Māori’ discourse

To ‘live as Māori’ is a contested and intrinsically slippery concept. Linda Smith and others remind Māori against reifying imagined ideals or recolonising what it might mean to be Māori or live as Māori through definitions of what Māori should look, act and speak like, for example. This includes Māori society and communities of wāhine. It is not the intention of this research to define or delineate what ‘living as Māori’ should be. Rather than seek a definition, I engage the inherent complexity of a living as Māori discourse in relationship to Māori women.

I encountered ‘living as Māori’ as an educational discourse whilst teaching te reo Māori as a secondary school teacher in the early 2000s. As a young teacher looking to make a difference in Māori education, I was immediately excited by the idea that ‘Māori success as Māori’ had finally been recognised in education policy such as Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2008, 2013) as more than just academic achievement results but also included Māori aspirations to reclaim and restore language and culture as an intrinsic part of a Māori identity. My initial excitement did not last as I witnessed schools and school leaders grapple with what ‘living as Māori’ and ‘succeeding as Māori’ might mean in their contexts, how it was ‘defined’ and by whom.

To ‘succeed as Māori’ has its genesis in a Māori critique of English-medium State education which argues that schooling has been used as a powerful assimilatory tool. When Māori students are successful this is often measured in academic terms, despite their cultural identity not because of it, assuming that a non-Māori or mainstream ‘success’ benchmark captures whānau aspirations (M. Durie, 2006). As a critique, ‘success as Māori’ challenges educators to consider that, for Māori students to succeed ‘as Māori’ in education, they must do so as culturally intact beings.
"Ka Hikitia – Managing for success" (MoE, 2008) was the first mandatory Māori education strategy to be implemented in New Zealand schools. This policy insists that schools take clear and explicit steps “to ensure Māori are enjoying education success as Māori” (p. 10) a formal recognition in education policy that Māori learners bring with them their own culture, language and identity. This is a guiding principle of Ka Hikitia and is reinforced in an Education Review Office (ERO) report that says, for Māori to achieve ‘success’ in education it is crucial that all educators in Aotearoa New Zealand recognise, support and develop the inherent capabilities and skills that Māori students bring to their learning (ERO, 2010). The challenge for educators is to recognise and understand aspirations to live as Māori before a success as Māori ideal can be realised.

Ka Hikitia ‘encouraged’ schools in to conversations around what ‘success as Māori’ might look like in their context, for the first time bringing the aspirations of Māori communities to the heart of education policy. The school I taught at for example, lead by myself and other Māori staff, chose to hold a number of Māori community hui to seek whānau input about what ‘success’ might mean. The results were not surprising. For both the school and Māori whānau, ‘success’ meant Māori children attending and fully participating at school; getting ‘good marks’ and learning life skills.

Describing what ‘as Māori’ might mean however, was infinitely more problematic as Māori whānau and non-Māori school leaders debated the value of reo and tikanga and how values and beliefs such as manaakitanga (caring for others) would play out in a school environment. Debates within education about living and succeeding as Māori are necessarily complex and, in my experience, hugely frustrating for school leaders who want a fixed set of ‘success’ criteria with which to measure, compare and track against. Fixed criteria such as this disregard the fluid nature of Māori identity and the Māori prerogative for self-determination. Unfortunately the rhetoric of Ka Hikitia is not matched with governmental resourcing rendering a potentially transforming strategy woefully underfunded.

My developing interest in academic research and my continued personal and professional engagement with ideas about living as Māori led to a Masters thesis as I continued to see a living as Māori discourse struggled with – both in education and beyond. My interest continues here in this PhD. I choose to engage the entanglement of ideas about living as Māori, not to seek ‘the truth’ or a definition, not to create a checklist or template of how living as Māori should be enacted but as a site to continue to flesh out and re-complexify an inherently fluid set of ideas.
A Māori desire to ‘live as Māori’ is not new. As a decolonising activity it has been claimed and protested under a number of different banners for more than two hundred years. Aroha Harris (2004), a Māori scholar and researcher at the University of Auckland, says:

… if protest is about disputing, objecting, contesting and remonstrating, then it is a long-established characteristic of Māori interaction with Pākehā and with the State, spanning practically two centuries. (p. 13)

Although not couched explicitly as actions to ‘live as Māori’, Harris goes on to cite examples of protests for self-determination such as a sheep station occupied in 1877 to highlight outstanding land claims; blocking a railway track during a dispute with a timber company in 1900 and the non-violent resistance movement of Te Whiti ō Rongomai and Tohu Kākāhi at Parihaka in the 1860s as radical action to claim land and cultural rights.

The Māori Renaissance was a liberation movement that sought to reclaim and restore Māori rights. Reaching its peak in the mid 1970s, the Māori Renaissance added to a global groundswell in civil rights and revolutionary liberation movements that sought to reclaim and restore people’s rights to live self-determined lives free from, for example, apartheid, slavery and colonial oppression. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori actively sought to resist acculturating social and governmental pressures. Harris (2004) says:

Assimilation, and later integration, sought to socialise Māori into the modern urbanised world and the social and economic life of the nation. While arguably an innocent and even desirable goal, in practice it seemed to require Māori to forsake their identity and did little if anything to support the integrity of Māori society. Rapid assimilation threatened to destroy Māori culture. (p. 15)

Emerging from the Māori protest movement came the call for ‘Tino Rangatiratanga’ or Māori self-determination which could be understood as another way of talking about living as Māori, determined by Māori, with Māori aspirations at its centre.

In education, Māori took up ideas of self-determination and reclaiming Māori language, culture and knowledge through the establishment of Kura Kaupapa Māori. Dissatisfied with mainstream education and intent on revitalising te reo Māori, a Māori community in West Auckland established the first Kura Kaupapa Māori at Hoani Waititi Marae in 1985 (Hohepa, McNaughton, & Jenkins, 1996; Martin, 2012; G. H. Smith, 2003a; Tocker, 2007, 2012). These
radical educational sites provided a Māori language and cultural immersion education that self-determined its own curriculum under the philosophies of Te Aho Matua. A key intention of Kura Kaupapa Māori is that Māori children are implicitly surrounded by, and nurtured in, Te Ao Māori as an inherent part of who they are.

The idea of ‘living as Māori’ has been taken up more explicitly in education in recent times. In 2001 Mason Durie delivered a keynote speech at the Hui Taumata Mātauranga, or Māori Education Summit, held in Taupō that is widely attributed as positing a living as Māori discourse in its current popular form. This gathering is regarded as a significant moment of Māori engagement with Māori education, attracting wide representation from Māori women, men, youth, tribal organisations, teachers, whānau, education administrators, the public sector and the church (M. Durie, 2001a), all with an interest in advancing Māori education.

Durie’s address began by setting the socio-political and socio-historical scene that had led to the education summit being called. He broadly describes Māori lives at the beginning of the first millennium, in the year 1 AD, as being inseparable from the language, traditions and ways of being of those from Tahiti, Hawaii or Rarotonga. Move forward a millennium and Māori lives are being formed and shaped by the terrain and climate in Aotearoa New Zealand which saw Māori develop, as a people, a set of traditions and a language that was “increasingly distinctive from other Polynesian people” (2001a, p. 1). The ensuing millennium – up to 2001 – saw radical shifts from early colonial contact, Christianisation, land confiscations and disease through to cultural assimilation, urbanisation and Māori renaissance – all of which continue to shape the lives of Māori. Durie’s speech highlighted the complexity of what being Māori meant – an identity that has changed, and will continue to change.

With a focus on education and Māori self-determination, Durie popularised a framework for Māori educational advancement, setting forth challenges for educators across a wide range of contexts to enable Māori to live and prosper ‘as Māori’ (M. Durie, 2003). Durie’s conceptualisation of living as Māori created space within education that rejected previously held hegemonic ideas of assimilation and deliberately placed Māori aspirations for self-determination at its centre. His ideas encompass a holistic approach to wellbeing, knowledge and cultural identity and have at their core three aspirational goals.

The first goal set out in Durie’s framework – a key theoretical idea in this research – is what he calls the ability to live as Māori, that is to live a well, fulfilled, holistically balanced life with
access to the Māori world including language, culture, marae, community, tikanga, resources and land as well as active participation at a global level (Durie, 2001a). Placing this idea in an educational context Durie says that:

If after twelve years or so of formal education a Māori youth were totally unprepared to interact within te ao Māori, then no matter what else had been learned, [their] education would have been incomplete. (p. 3)

According to Durie, state education is not, and should not be the sole vehicle of access to the Māori world. As he puts it, “being Māori is a Māori reality. Education should be as much about that reality as it is about literacy and numeracy” (Durie, 2001a, p. 3). Education, for many Māori however, continues to be an omnipotent and pervasive acculturating tool and therefore has a keen responsibility to enable Māori to live ‘as Māori’ and participate in the Māori world.

Durie’s second goal, to actively participate as citizens of the world, recognises Māori aspirations to participate in, and contribute to, global knowledge’s including economics, technology, arts and sciences. Living as Māori does not sit in contradiction to wider global participation but, instead, embraces the uniqueness of being Māori as a cultural asset that sits alongside, and is enhanced by, global knowledge’s. Durie says:

There is a wide Māori expectation that education should open the doors to technology, to the economy, to the arts and sciences, to understanding others, and to making a contribution to a greater good. (pp. 3-4)

The third goal of Durie’s ‘as Māori’ discourse is to enjoy good health and a high standard of living. Durie (2001a) makes an explicit link between good health and education stating that a successful education ‘as Māori’ “lays the groundwork for a healthy lifestyle and a career with an income adequate enough to provide a high standard of living” (p. 4). If an element of living as Māori is a positive internal perception and understanding of one’s cultural self then, says Durie, without fundamental good health and a standard of living, the ability to live a well, fulfilled life becomes difficult.

In advancing a living as Māori discourse in this research, I acknowledge the intrinsically problematic nature of attempting to explain issues of ‘as Māori’ identity that are fluid and complex. Despite the difficulties of a living as Māori discourse (what counts ‘as Māori’ or ‘living as Māori’), Durie’s phrase ‘as Māori’ has been taken up within education in Aotearoa.
New Zealand as a pervasive, and variously understood, discourse that has influenced education for Māori over the last fifteen years.

**Living as Māori women**

While ‘living as Māori’ has developed as a set of influential ideas particularly in health and education, and Mana Wāhine has been explored through art, resistance and language to name a few, this research engages the political agency of Mana Wāhine theory to explore ‘living as Māori women’. There is little research that takes a Mana Wāhine approach to living as Māori and, importantly, how Māori women form and inform the cultural identity of their tamariki and mokopuna. Living as Māori women in this research goes beyond a description of Māori women’s lives to explore how Māori women are actively reclaiming and re-visioning a self-determined cultural identity.

The critical work of Ani Mikaere and Aroha Yates-Smith provides particularly useful ideas about how Māori women construct and importantly work to decolonise their identity. Aroha Yates-Smith is a distinguished Māori academic and Māori artist who has contributed to scholarship about karanga, Māori women’s artistic practice and in particular the wellbeing of Māori women in relation to the environment. Her PhD thesis, *Hine e Hine! – Rediscovering the Feminine in Māori Spirituality* (1998), explores, among other things, the reclaiming of knowledge of the traditional Māori feminine as a means to decolonise and empower the contemporary Māori feminine. In a subsequent article she writes about the notion of reclamation as a common aspiration amongst the diverse group of Māori women who participated in her study, and the potential power that occurs through the act of reclaiming. Of the women she says:

> The common bond is the need they feel to reacquaint themselves fully with their taha Māori and assert their identity as Māori, at the inner core of which is the spiritual dimension, te taha wairua. Many of the women with strong cultural backgrounds recognize the positive impact that knowledge of the atua wāhine would have on Māori women’s self esteem. Through such knowledge women are empowered. (Yates-Smith, 2003, p. 12)

Ani Mikaere is an academic and solicitor who teaches law and politics at Te Whare Wānanga o Raukawa - a tribal university - contributing to literature on Māori legal practices, biculturalism, Māori self-determination and the Treaty of Waitangi. Most relevant to this thesis is her work on the impact of colonisation on Māori women (Mikaere, 1994, 2003, 2004, 2011) and future
generations. Her published thesis entitled ‘The balance destroyed: The consequences for Māori women of the colonisation of tikanga Māori’ (2003) offers a critical view on the double impact of colonisation for Māori women resulting in what she describes as “a lethal combination of oppression by race with oppression by gender” (p. 126). Mikaere, like me, does not aspire to return to an imagined or constructed view of being a Māori woman:

Rather it is to enable us to make sense of the present and to plan effectively for the future. Colonisation has shaped the pasts of all of us in Aotearoa, Māori and Pākehā, female and male. As such it also shapes our presents and futures. The reality for all Māori is a colonised reality. The complexity of each Māori persons experience is the direct result of the particular mix of ingredients and forces that collectively embody her or his colonised existence. (Mikaere, 2003, p. 126)

Māori women’s roles in society continue to be viewed through a gendered colonial lens. Such a view distorts the vital role Māori women play in creating balance and healing for ourselves and our children, resulting in some Māori women having a negative self-image and feeling undervalued in Māori society (Mikaere, 2003). By writing into the spaces of decolonising Māori women’s identity, my research presents the artistic practice of whatu and its kākahu as a further site of resistance and reclamation that extends on how Māori women – as the balancers and healers, keepers and continuers of whakapapa – pass on secure and fluid notions of living as Māori. Research such as mine offers another perspective on what living as Māori might mean and encourages those in education, and beyond, to gain an insight into how Māori women live as Māori for themselves and for their whānau through the broad ideas explored here.

Summary

Claiming a Māori identity is a political activity. By asserting a Māori identity one is claiming a connection or belonging to a particular heterogeneous identity in Aotearoa New Zealand: Māori. Initially used as a term to differentiate early European settlers to the land from its Indigenous inhabitants, and later to strategically provide a collective identity position from which to negotiate with the settlers, the identity label ‘Māori’ has been utilised in a wide range of ways. The Māori language and cultural renaissance of the 1970s is an example of how Māori united under a collective identity banner to increase political voice and create positive change. At other times a collective Māori identity has been used to reinforce negative stereotypes and define for Māori what being Māori means.
Māori identity claims are complex and socially influenced. While there are dominant forms, all identities are constantly informed by and responding to social conditions. Identity claims are made within (and because of) our multiple environments and speak of how we make sense of who we are, how we relate to other people, and to the wider world. When negative forced identities sit alongside negative and notional perceptions of being Māori, how a Māori person relates to others in the wider world is affected as they struggle to ‘fit’ in to either, both or multiple worlds. On the other hand, a positive and secure Māori identity can critically engage the complex historical shifts that have led to this identity, better enabling the claimant to assert an enduring and cohesive narrative (McIntosh, 2005) about who they are and how they connect to the world around them – better enabling them to meet Durie’s three concurrent goals of living well and fulfilled lives as Māori.

To move from being Māori to living as Māori, as a radical activation of whakapapa, is conceptualised here as oho (an awakening) – a term introduced in chapter two and explained further in chapter six. As a key marker of identity, one can claim to be Māori by having Māori whakapapa yet this whakapapa may lie dormant in a state of moe unless expressed or activated by other elements of being Māori. To live in a state of ora – to live well as Māori – is to see the world around us with decolonising and critically aware eyes: Whatuora. If being Māori is to possess Māori heritage or whakapapa, then living as Māori is to engage a critical political consciousness that works to reclaim and self-determine living a fulfilled and culturally connected life.

Making a distinction between being Māori and living as Māori is not intended to provide yet another set of criteria for Māori to be measured or judged against – there are already enough yardsticks by which Māori-ness is gauged. This research builds on the idea of living as Māori as enjoying a fulfilled and engaged life, able to participate and access both – or indeed multiple – worlds, and enjoy the benefits and responsibilities of those worlds. Such a distinction denotes a transforming action that moves being Māori from someone who has Māori whakapapa to someone who is conscious and capable of critically engaging and re-visioning colonised imaginings.

This chapter began with the historical origins of the noun category ‘Māori’ and how this term has evolved to describe the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand using sets of ideas about Māori identity as fluid, positive and secure. Although Māori as an identity label is heterogeneous, I argue that, despite colonisation, there remain constant and unbroken aho matua
that connect Māori to the past and are deemed important to sustain in to the future – such as maintaining and strengthening connections to the land and its people, including cultural and linguistic knowledge.

This chapter completes Part One. Ngā turuturu o Hine-te-iwaiwa, now fully fashioned, are securely embedded within the theoretical grounding of Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine theory. As the kaiwhatu of this work I move on to harvest and prepare the many hundreds of strands of theory and literature necessary for Part Two of this thesis – beginning with an in-depth look at the feminine knowledge and language contained within whatu and the role that whatu kākahu play in sustaining maternal connections.
Part Two:
Whakaritea ngā whenu – preparing the theoretical strands

Chapter Four:
Re-awakening the feminine in whatu

To explore a relationship between living as Māori women and whatu kākahu is to celebrate the female language and knowledge embodied in the practice of whatu. Whatu emerges from within female traditions and has been handed down inter-generationally through our matrilineal “foremothers” (Malcolm-Buchanan, Te Awekotuku, & Nikora, 2012, p. 52). While the art of whatu is not the sole domain of women – there are number of fine male kaiwhatu – a Mana Wāhine discourse enables a deliberate focus on whatu as a female art form, rich with feminine language and imagery.

Reflecting back through the decolonising lens of Whatuora we are better able to see the colonial imperative to codify and classify whatu kākahu. The mostly male European ethnographic and anthropologic gaze (Wereta, 2007) appeared incapable or unwilling to ‘see’ the female nature of whatu the result – a rich catalogue of whatu kākahu detailing method and materials but one that is almost completely devoid of maternal and feminine knowledge. Much of the embodied language associated with whatu was lost in translation to digestible English words such as ‘cloaks’ and ‘weaving’.

The aho of reclaiming and re-complexifying takes up the work in this chapter through a theorisation of the maternal language and knowledge embodied in whatu practice. Connections will be made between whatu kākahu and how Māori women create, protect and nurture children as a continuation of our whakapapa. Colonial interpretations of whatu kākahu are re-visioned, casting a decolonising lens over the language and function of these taonga by reclaiming and re-complexifying their language and meaning. Finally, whatu kākahu in contemporary times will be discussed as a way to express a Māori identity through the creation of whatu kākahu as tangible text-tiles, capable of transmitting intergenerational mana, stories and aspirations. This chapter begins by locating the maternal embodied nature of whatu in the cosmological stories of the female deity, Hine-te-iwaiwa.
Tracing the female origins of whatu

**Hine-te-iwaiwa**

The art of whatu falls under the auspices of Hine-te-iwaiwa the female goddess of Te Whare Pōrā (Simmonds, 2014; Te Kanawa, 2008; Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011; Te Rito, 2006). While there has been much written about the male gods in Māori tradition, there is far less recorded about the role of their female counterparts. One source on traditional Māori parenting practices names Hine-te-iwaiwa as the sister of the demi-god Maui (Jenkins & Mountain Harte, 2011); in another she is the daughter of Tane-nui-ā-rangi, god of the forests and birds, and Hine-rauāmoa, goddess of light and enlightenment (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011). The few literature sources that do speak of Hine-te-iwaiwa tell of a goddess that embodies and celebrates all aspects of the feminine including, weaving, childbirth and menstruation (Ferris, 2009; Murphy, 2013; Simmonds, 2014; Yates-Smith 1998).

Despite the importance of Hine-te-iwaiwa to the Māori feminine, there is little historical information or literature on this auspicious atua wāhine. This is an unfortunate and common occurrence in a colonised history that reifies male gods and relegates the contribution of female gods to brief historical references and allusions (Murphy, 2013; Simmonds, 2014; Te Awekotuku, 1991b). A cursory look at Māori ‘myths and legends’ – particularly in children’s literature – reveals masculine imagery of heroic male figures such as Tāwhaki and Maui, juxtaposed against Māori female characters such as Mahuika as the wizened old crone, or the ‘vengeful’ Hine-nui-i-te-pō. Through the act of reclaiming atua wāhine from colonial storying that rendered atua wāhine invisible (Te Awekotuku 1991b, 2003), Māori women are reclaiming, restor(y)ing and re-presenting how we determine living as Māori women.

An element of decolonising our vision is to reclaim and re-complexify our stories in our own way that asserts a positive and secure Māori women’s identity. A range of Māori women have undertaken critical work in this area. Wāhine Māori such as Te Awekotuku (2003), Aroha Yates-Smith (1998), Irwin (1994) and Pihama (2001) Rose Pere (1991) Te Raina Ferris (2009) Robyn Kahukiwa (Kahukiwa, Irwin, & Ramsden, 1995) and more recently, emerging Māori researchers such as Ngāhuia Murphy (2013) and Naomi Simmonds (2014) seek to reclaim the crucial role of atua wāhine in Mana Wāhine discourse and for Māori women’s wellbeing. These women are simultaneously academics, tikanga proponents, researchers, artists and activists all working in complex and multiple ways both within and outside of the academy to reclaim and re-present Mana Wāhine, Māori women’s identities.
The resilient aho threads of Hine-te-iwaiwa – from whatu to the monthly rhythms of menses, childbirth and the rhythmic waxing and waning of the moon – remind Māori women of the sacred nature of our bodies. Through Hine-te-iwaiwa, women as the givers of life, reflect the unique genealogical relationship that women have to Papatūānuku from whom all living things descend (Murphy, 2013). Māori women are the aho that bind together whakapapa and whenua and keep these threads vital and healthy for our continued physical, spiritual and cultural survival.

Te Whare Pōrā

Hine-te-iwaiwa is said to have gained her knowledge of weaving in Te Whare Pōrā (Baker, Hudson, Rewiti, & Te Tau, 2013; Pere, 2006; Te Rito, 2006) a ritual space where initiation into the teachings of rāranga and whatu took place. Te Whare Pōrā, as a ‘house’ of learning the knowledge and skills of whatu, suggests a physical structure. While one historical reference (Buck, 1949) describes Te Whare Pōrā as a crude building, there is further evidence to suggest that entering Te Whare Pōrā was to enter into a certain consciousness, a “state of being” (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000, p. 24) or optimal readiness to receive and retain new knowledge. Puketapu-Hetet (2000) says, “when one is dedicated to pursuing the knowledge of weaving in its totality, then one is in Te Whare Pōrā” (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000, p. 24). It is in this space of ‘being’ that a weaving initiate is prepared physically, emotionally and spiritually through karakia and ceremony, to engage in the task of learning.

A holistic approach to learning required initiates to transcend the realm of ‘being’ by connecting with the skills and knowledge of whatu beyond its physical practice. Knowledge and learning in this sense was embodied and experiential. The process of conveying knowledge, skills and values was viewed as more than a physical act of production but rather one that required of the learner – and no doubt the teacher – a holistic engagement with the process. Discussed previously, whatu praxis – the thinking and doing of whatu – required the wāhine to participate at a deeper level with whatu that went beyond the physical performative task of ‘making a cloak’.

Traditionally, a senior woman of the family was responsible for teaching a learner who had entered into Te Whare Pōrā. This mode of intergenerational female knowledge transmission passed on important, and sometimes closely guarded knowledge, of patterns and techniques, selectively safeguarding what, and to whom, knowledge was taught (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000). The teaching and learning process continued over a number of years in what Puketapu-Hetet (2000)
describes as “a very relaxed, natural way” (p. 2) that was slow and deliberate, and required a high degree of attention. Only when a young weaver had mastered the skill and knowledge required, as determined by her teacher, was her mana or reputation as an expert weaver acknowledged and publicly celebrated amongst her people.

The privilege of entering Te Whare Pōrā came with expectations and responsibilities. Once initiated, a weaver was expected to seek “deeper knowledge and a greater understanding in all matters relating to weaving, including the spiritual concepts” (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000, p. 24) – a theorising if you will of the skills and knowledge she had learnt. I understand Puketapu-Hetet’s comments as requiring the learner to contribute back to Te Whare Pōrā. This could be through passing on the knowledge and tikanga that they have received or through innovation in the use of new materials, patterns or techniques by adapting, evolving and advancing the art form. Students of Te Whare Pōrā were actively encouraged to create ‘new’ knowledge and ideas and thus keep the practice vital and evolving.

Te Whare Pōrā can be seen as present and living in a contemporary context – though not in the ancient form described above. Although necessarily contemporised, the fundamental values and knowledge – ngā taonga tuku iho – of Te Whare Pōrā remain present in some places and in varied forms. Kaiwhatu and kairāranga, by and large, maintain many traditional rituals around harvesting, gifting and protecting the tapu of their work. Puketapu-Hetet (2000) says:

… without being aware, many older Māori weavers are of Te Whare Pōrā. They have instinctively existed in that state of being although they do not attempt to verbalise or write about these things. It has simply been a way of living. (p. 25)

Today, instead of formalised initiation processes, experienced weavers maintain a keen eye for spotting potential amongst learners and are quick to take those who show aptitude under their wing. Although less able to recreate the ancient initiation rites and rituals of Te Whare Pōrā, many modern weavers like myself seek to draw through those ancient aho of Te Whare Pōrā into our contemporary practice as a means to reconnect to and reclaim those values, beliefs and traditions that nurture female creativity, new ideas and knowledge.

Modern living presents challenges to the women of the modern day Te Whare Pōrā. Today’s weavers contend with a different kind of ‘busy’ living than their ancestresses, wrapped up in complex and competing cultural values. What was once an essential skill needed to create clothing and valuable possessions able to be traded and gifted, whatu is now seen by many as
'arts and crafts’ and commoditised according to the modern marketplace. Traditional whānau structures, where children were cared for collectively enabling women the time and space to create, have been replaced with busy working mothers and grandmothers with little time to indulge in ‘crafts’. Whereas creativity was once fostered in a collective environment, urbanisation and de-culturation seem to have isolated women from the arts, if not the aspirations, of Te Whare Pōrā. Despite these challenges the female elements of whatu are retained in its embodied practice and maternal language.

**Whenu ki te whenua – Whatu kākahu and our maternal bodies**

The practice of whatu, and whatu kākahu, is richly embedded with maternal language. Some whatu terminology expresses the physical connections between a mother and child, including aspects of childbirth. Other whatu terms refer to the complex and symbolic ideas embodied in whatu kākahu as a means for cultural production and continuity (Henare, 2005). Amiria Henare, an anthropologist at the University of Auckland, describes the symbiotic relationship or “homology” (Henare, 2005, p. 127) in the language of whatu that reveals a deep connection between women as mothers and whatu kākahu. As I learnt to whatu and began to engage at a deeper level with the language and theory of the practice, I was struck by the richness of its maternal language. Whatu terminology such as whenu and aho that linked directly to vital elements of sustaining our child in utero are not coincidental.

![The aho or horizontal weft threads (pictured on the left) are the threads used to whatu or bind each whenu. Whenu, the vertical strands or warp threads of a whatu kākahu (pictured on the right) at the beginning of a contemporary kākahu.](image)

The maternal language of whatu exists within its very fibres, those whenu that comprise the body of a kākahu. Whenu, the many strands or warp threads that make up the body of a kākahu, is an abbreviation of the word ‘whenua’ meaning ‘placenta’ and ‘land’. Whenu(a) therefore can be described dualistically to refer to both placenta and land – one is the essential element that
sustains the child within the mother’s womb while the other continues to nurture the child once she is born (Maihi, 2011).

Present in other indigenous cultures, for example the Navajo (Lamphere, 2007) and Oiwi Hawai’i (Green & Beckwith, 2009), paying special attention to the umbilical cord and placental afterbirth has long been a traditional practice for Māori (H. M. Mead, 2003; Jenkins & Mountain Harte, 2011). A newborn baby’s whenua (placenta) is returned to the whenua (land) as a means of connecting that child to Papatūānuku (Earth Mother). The ritual act of burying whenua reinforces a Māori connection to the land as tāngata whenua – quite literally as people of the land.

Until fairly recently, the cultural practice of burying whenua, intended to reinforce connection and identity, was seen as unhygienic and unnecessary by Western medical standards. Whenua were regarded as medical waste in maternity hospitals, where the majority of Māori women from the mid-20th century onwards were encouraged to give birth (M. H. Mead, 2003; Simmonds, 2014). When I was born in Auckland in 1976 my mother was not encouraged by her whānau or hospital staff to claim my whenua and return it to the land. Over the years I have witnessed my mother’s grief at her decision to not fulfil this tradition, understood perhaps as a hegemonic acceptance of colonised thought at that time. It was not until much later and through her own decolonising and reclaiming processes that, following a hysterectomy, she redressed this historical trauma by returning and burying her whare tangata – that place that held and nurtured her children – to her tribal land.

Before our daughters were born, my partner and I had determined that their whenua would be returned to the earth – an element of our personal reclamation of living as Māori. Both our daughters’ whenua are now buried in my tribal lands in the Far North of Aotearoa New Zealand reinforcing their identity as tangata whenua and forever connecting them and their descendants to an ensuing responsibility to protect and contribute to that place.

**The aho tapu – sacred threads**

The term aho has multiple meanings in the Māori language, most relevant is as that important connection that sustained the baby physically and connected it to its mother. The aho, those continuous strands that are twined together to form the kākahu, are defined as line, genealogy and chord, the word aho is the umbilical cord, that which connects the baby to its mother (Williams, 1997). The section of the umbilical cord attached to the mother is called the rauru
while the section closest to the baby is the pito also understood as the ‘end’ (Best, 1929a, 1929b). It is the name for the middle section of the cord, known as the iho or aho, which resonates with whatu.

Aho are understood as vital connectors to the past and the future. Henare says that aho act as “tangible and substantive links between ancestors or tīpuna and their living descendants” (Henare, 2005, p. 121) understood as a connection to the ancestors and the means through which the weaver enables ancestral energy to ‘live on’ in the present. This abstract idea moves aho from ‘metaphorical’ connectors to tangible instantiations of ancestral efficacy – those threads that bind and connect us to our past and will continue into the future.

The aho are vital elements of the kākahu without which creating whatu kākahu would not be possible. If the aho that connects the mother to the baby is not strong and healthy the wellbeing of the child is at risk. Similarly, if the aho of the kākahu are not strong and break, the kākahu will not hold together and will eventually fall apart. It is through this vital connector – the aho – that sustenance is given from the mother to the child ensuring survival. The word aho evokes ideas of linking generations of whakapapa or ancestral lineage layer upon layer with a continuous and unbroken thread (Henare, 2005; Salmond, 1991). Here I whatu together the idea of aho (those continuous threads that bind a kākahu together) with aho (the physical and metaphysical cord between Māori mothers and our children) both of which connect us to the land and ensure the continuity of whakapapa and cultural identity.

The term kākahu or kahu is another element of whatu that is rich with maternal language. A kahu or kahukahu is the Māori name for the amniotic sac or foetal membrane that envelops the unborn child (Henare, 2005; MacAulay & Te Waru-Rewiri, 1996). I am intrigued by the idea that, as mothers, we ‘cloak’ our children both literally and metaphorically in a protective (kā)kahu before they are born and this protective and nurturing kākahu continues to be woven and influenced by us, as mothers, once our children enter the world.

The whare kahu is a term used to describe a temporary shelter constructed in some tribal areas for giving birth (Best, 1929a, 1929b) and adds to the rich idea of the kahu, or whare kahu, as both birthing house and a place of protective nurturing. Ngāhuia Murphy (2013) says that the birthing houses of her own tribal group, Tuhoe, were called whare kahu and acted as dedicated, protective spaces that “shielded the imminent mother as her body opened up to act as a doorway between the worlds” (p. 119). Henare confirms the connection between the word kahu and
kākahu as a point of interest as the *whare kahu* – literally translated as ‘foetus house’ – and *kahu* referring to the amniotic sac surrounding the foetus (Henare, 2005, p. 218).

Historically, kākahu or woven textiles surrounded children from the moment they entered the world. Elsdon Best (1929a, 1929b) recounts examples of kākahu being laid between the legs of the birthing mother to receive the child while more finely woven pieces were used to wrap the newborn child to present her to her people. Kākahu were often gifted to the newborn, depending on the child’s lineage, to enhance the mana of the child and of the people from whom it was gifted, in this way strengthening relationships and connections.

I suggest that our children are embraced within in a protective kākahu before they enter the physical world. From the moment of conception, as mothers we metaphysically cloak our children with our desires for them; our hopes, aspirations and dreams. Everyday that I was hapū (pregnant), I would talk to my babies as they grew within the protective kahu of my womb, stroking them, singing to them, telling them of their whakapapa and the aspirations I had for them once they were born. As mothers we create that aho or direct line that acts as a physical and spiritual conduit between our ancestral past and our present. It is through this aho and within the protective waters of the kahu that I suggest we pass on more than our physical DNA understood as whakapapa but also our cultural aspirations for our children to live as Māori.

**Whatu kākahu and mediating relationships**

Whatu kākahu are recognised as symbols of mana (Wirihana, 2008). Mana – and its sub-levels of mana atua, mana tūpuna and mana tangata – are deeply complex (H. M. Mead, 2003; Pere, 1991; Pohatu, 2003; Walker, 1990) and beyond the realms of this thesis to explore fully. Everything possesses mana. In this instance mana, or mana tangata, can be understood, as ‘reputation’ or ‘social standing’. One’s mana tangata – how one is perceived – can increase or decrease depending on one’s words, actions and interactions. Just as a person’s mana can be increased, for example through receiving a kākahu, they could also be humiliated by that kākahu being deliberately destroyed or taken back. Mana is used here to describe the power and energy that is transmitted by the kaiwhatu into the kākahu, how this mana can be enhanced or diminished by the actions of the wearer, and how the mana of people and their histories can be instantiated within the garment’s fibres.

The mana embodied within a kākahu can be understood in a number of ways. It may be the skill and expertise of the weaver that gives the kākahu mana. For example the work of whatu kākahu
matriarchs Diggeress Te Kanawa and Rangimarie Hetet carries on in their descendants Kahutoi Te Kanawa and Veranoa Hetet, two expert and world renowned kaiwhatu who continue their mothers’ legacies. Pendergrast (1987) sums up this idea:

The mana of the craftswomen, and through her that of her tūpuna or ancestors is vested in the garment during manufacture; later its mana will increase from association with those who wear it and the ceremonies and other occasions of importance at which it is displayed. Thus while the kākahu is recognised as a work of art it is also imbued with a spiritual significance and life force of its own and maintains a mystical link with the past. (pp. 13-14)

The mana of a kākahu may stem from the materials it is constructed from. The kahukura (kahu meaning garment and kura a Māori term for red and precious) is a whatu kākahu using the rare and highly prized red underwing feathers of the South Island kākā (a native mountain parrot). These feathers were highly valued not only because the feathers were hard to source but because the colour red is regarded as “a powerfully potent and sacred colour throughout the Pacific” (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011, p. 26) and a symbol of nobility. It is also said that the kahukura was instilled with the affable characteristics of the kākā in particular its superb oratory skills (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011).

The mana of a kākahu may depend on its historical significance and the stories associated with it. Patricia Te Arapo Wallace, a senior lecturer at Canterbury University whose PhD work investigated traditional Māori clothing and textiles, refers to one such magnificent garment. She describes a kahukura called Te Aho o Kuranui that belonged to Taiwhakaea a chief who lived some twenty generations ago on the sacred mountain Mauao in the Tauranga Harbour. Taiwhakaea’s mana was due to the renowned compassion and generosity he showed to his people. When he required food provisions for a feast he is said to have spread his red kākahu on the slopes of Mauao mountain, making it visible for many kilometres. His people would in turn immediately respond, sending what was required (Wallace, 2007). The mana of Taiwhakaea was instantiated within Te Aho o Kuranui.

**Whatu kākahu as protection**

In its physical form, a whatu kākahu is worn about the shoulders to ‘protect’ the wearer (MacAulay & Te Waru-Rewiri, 1996; Tamarapa, 2011). At their most practical level, rough raincape kākahu offered physical protection from the elements while warmer, more finely woven,
garments were essential to survive the often-harsh climate of Aotearoa New Zealand. Some whatu kākahu are said to have been worn like armour, the rows of whatu woven so tightly together as to produce a dense rigid fabric capable of parrying the thrust of a taiaha (Māori weapon) (Tamarapa, 2011). While whatu kākahu were essential as physical protection from the elements, they also are believed to offer spiritual protection to its wearer.

Well-known weaver, Christina Wirihana, shares a personal example of whatu kākahu as the gift of protection. The daughter of esteemed weaver Matekino Lawless, Wirihana carries on a lineage of expert weavers who contribute to the practice and theory of Māori textiles. In her article ‘Kākahu as cultural identity’ (2008) Wirihana recounts her mother’s pūrākau of completing a whatu kākahu for her. Once the ritual karakia had been completed and the tapu lifted from the kākahu Wirihana’s mother placed it on her shoulders and said:

In your mahi (work), you are in contact with many people who expect a great deal from you. This kākahu is my gift, to protect and embrace you. It is times like this that you will require the kākahu. (Wirihana, 2008, p. 11)

As mothers how often do we physically and metaphorically ‘throw our cloak’ around our children to protect them? Whatu kākahu in this sense can be seen as offering protection from present dangers – those that threaten to harm our children now and in the future.

Whatu kākahu were seen as powerful protectors. Ethnographer Elizabeth Corey-Pearce, describes feathered cloaks as physical and metaphorical connectors between the sky and the earth; the living and the dead and as “protective and empowering, a kind of metaphysical armouring of persons and things” (Corey-Pearce, 2005, p. 80). Patricia Wallace cites an historical example of a kākahu being used in 1840s’ Wellington to save an orphaned Pākehā boy who had severely breached protocol by unknowingly wandering into an unfinished whare. It is said that renowned kuia Ruhia Pōrutu threw her cloak over the boy, claiming him as her own and ultimately saving his life. While the kākahu may not have physically saved the child from imminent punishment, it was the mana imbued within the kākahu as an extension of the kuia’s mana that sheltered and protected the boy. That same kākahu is said to have lain on the boy’s coffin at his funeral in 1911 and is now displayed, along with its pūrākau, at Te Papa Museum (Wallace, 2007). In similar pūrākau, kākahu were known to have been thrown over captives or people under threat of death and lives that were subsequently spared because the kākahu acted as a semblance of its owner’s mana (Wallace, 2007).
Whatu kākahu continue to be used to protect the living and the deceased (Henare, 2005; Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai 2011; Wirihana, 2008). Historically and contemporarily, kākahu can be seen draped over the coffin during a tangihanga as a symbolic gesture of warmth and spiritual protection for the deceased as they take the return journey home to their ancestors (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011, p. 31). Whatu kākahu in this sense connect us to our ancestors by providing what Henare (2005) calls “a pathway between the papa or layers of generational time” (2005, p. 129). Depending on how the kākahu is laid on the casket determines whether or not it will be buried with the deceased, a significant decision for the custodians considering the priceless cultural and monetary value of such garments.

‘Binding’ koha and mediating relationships

Fine woven whatu kākahu were considered priceless taonga and were exchanged to create and cement relationships. For example inter-tribal bonds were managed through the gifting of taonga such as whatu kākahu either as koha, as ‘payment’ or as a means to avert conflict (Malcolm-Buchanan et al., 2012). In a similar way to a dowry, fine whatu kākahu were gifted as a symbol of the skill and mana of one whānau to another in order to strengthen genealogical connections and as an expression of aroha.

If the ‘spiritual’ nature of connecting to your ancestors through a kākahu can be questioned it is undeniable that, scientifically speaking, your ancestors are literally resting against your skin. Considering that each strand of muka in a whatu kākahu is individually rolled down the arm and leg of the kaiwhatu literally infusing her body oils – her DNA – into each fibre, it can be argued that the kaiwhatu is both literally and metaphorically embedding herself in to the fibres of the garment. Describing their work with whatu kākahu in the Te Papa Museum collection, renowned Māori weavers Kahutoi Te Kanawa and John Turi-Tiakitai say that whatu kākahu are:

… artefacts with the closest connection to tūpuna or ancestors. Many were worn in the nineteenth century, and some garments shimmer on the inside surfaces from the residue of body oils, showing generations of wear. The kākahu of ancestors are spiritual threads to the past, which is why they hold mana, as the wairua – the spirit – of the wearer is still deep within the fibres of the garment. (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011, p. 20)

My whānau does not have access to a kākahu made by one of our ancestresses; to my knowledge, one no longer exists. In speaking to those who do however, they have told me that there is an indescribable feeling of connection to the past, and its people, when they don a whatu
kākahu imbued with the mana and history of those who have worn it. Their personal accounts add to Henare’s assertion that kākahu provide a dynamic pathway to the past by “enacting genealogical relations in the present” (Henare, 2005, p. 135). I am completely inspired by the idea that I am weaving a muka kākahu, my DNA rolled into each whenu, that will one day sit on the shoulders of my descendants. It is my intention that my descendants will experience wearing a muka kākahu made by me, replete with stories of how we live as Māori women today to help them understand how they live as Māori women in the future.

Kākahu as koha

The practice of koha, often over-simplified as ‘gifting’ is better understood as a reciprocal means of enhancing mana and sustaining relationships. Kākahu were highly regarded koha as they suitably embodied both a high level of work-womanship and the symbolic value of the exchange (H. M. Mead, 2003; Wirihana, 2008). An important element of exchanging gifts, according to Mead (2003) was the whakapapa of relations between the partners, not only in terms of genealogical connections but also historical interactions because “the taonga chosen enhances the exchange relationship” (H. M Mead, 2003, p. 183). It was, and still is, appropriate that the koha offered is deemed, by the giver, to be more than necessary or expected, in this way incurring a sense of obligation that the koha, in some form, will be reciprocated at a later time.

The gifting of kākahu is a reciprocal act intended to reinforce relationships. Te Kanawa and Turi-Tiakitai state “the underlying concept of giving a kākahu [is] that together with the gift, a relationship is being offered” (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011, p. 43). As mothers in this research, our ‘gift’ of kākahu to our children – both literally and metaphorically – reinforces our relationship to them by passing on our stories in the hope that they will better understand how we choose to live as Māori women and where our aspirations for them to live as Māori were formed. If my daughters are able to understand the hard-fought political ground that was reclaimed, by their grandmother in the first instance and then me, if they could ‘read’ the stories in our kākahu, they may better understand how our experiences have influenced the aspirations we have for them.

Tradition, innovation and contemporary kākahu

A powerful element of Māori life that can be experienced through the stories of our kākahu is Māori innovation and adaptability. Māori have always been innovators, and nowhere is this more evident than in their development of clothing and shelter from locally available materials. On
arrival to Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori adaptive expertise was essential for their physical survival in a new and challenging environment. Early Māori quickly adapted their skills and technologies to make best use of the resources available to them (Hiroa, 1924; Puketapu-Hetet, 2000) as the weaving materials they were accustomed to in the Pacific Islands to make clothing and shelter did not grow here. Driven by necessity, early Māori were required to experiment with other natural materials, soon discovering the versatile harakeke plant with which they could adapt their weaving technologies to create warm clothing, medicines and much more. Failing to innovate and adapt would have resulted in physical suffering and their eventual demise.

Innovation and adaptation was driven by Māori weaver’s creative curiosity. Kaiwhatu in the 19th century enthusiastically experimented with newly introduced materials, such as wool and cotton, prompting a surge in creative expression that saw new stylisations incorporated into the design of the kākahu (Corey-Pearce, 2005; Hiroa, 1924; Lander, 2011; Tamarapa, 2011; Te Rito, 2006). Māori weavers enthusiastically experimented by incorporating ‘exotic’ new materials such as wool, macramé and cotton threads (Te Awekotuku, 1993; Wirihana, 2008), even kangaroo hide (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000) into their kākahu. Te Kanawa and Tiakitai (2011) state that:

At first contact, when European materials such as wool and cotton were uncommon and new, their perceived value was high. The novelty these fibres presented would have been exciting for weavers. (p. 30)

Not unlike modern fashion trends today, kākahu that reflected the new ‘Pākehā’ materials of the time were highly sought after (Corey-Pearce, 2005; Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011). Aside from the novelty factor, mass-produced materials required less preparation, time and energy to create a kākahu (Wirihana, 2008) as machine-produced materials reduced the necessity to harvest and prepare natural resources.

Museums here and around the world have within their collections a number of kākahu that incorporate Western materials feeding into the sometimes-tense debate about what constitutes ‘traditional’ whatu kākahu. Māori academic Joe Te Rito (Te Rito, 2006) argues that using Western materials, patterns or style should not diminish the value or beauty of a kākahu. Instead these ‘hybridised’ taonga may historically have been a means to mediate intercultural Māori – Pākehā relationships through the economic exchange of goods and services. These ‘bi-cultural’ hybridised kākahu were highly sought after by Māori and Pākehā as kaiwhatu innovated and adapted their traditional whatu practice to incorporate ‘new’ Western materials and ideas.
Introduced Western clothing in the 19th century changed the role and purpose of whatu kākahu. Machine woven fabric and clothing was far less laborious and time consuming to produce shifting the purpose of whatu from creating clothing and highly regarded taonga, to weaving as an art form, creating aesthetic works of art (McRae-Tarei) useful as economic and cultural currency. What was once an essential skill became less of a practical necessity as Western clothing was taken up amongst Māori. While kaiwhatu were still highly regarded for their expertise, the whatu kākahu they produced were viewed as an exotic commodity for trade and sale to overseas collections and museums were a large number of examples still reside (Corey-Pearce, 2005; Lander, 2011; Roth, 1924; Te Manakura, 2006).

The debate around what constitutes traditional and contemporary Māori textiles is contentious. Te Rito (2006) provides a coherent critique of the traditional-contemporary binary evident in Māori textiles, explaining the limitations that these notions of ‘hybridity’ impose on Māori identity. He reinforces the idea that whatu kākahu link the past to the present, suggesting that ‘hybrid’ textiles are more than just a response to changes in social environment and materials. Instead he says they are a “forum for reclamation of the works of our ancestors through the mediums and materials available” (Te Rito, 2006, p. 141). Eminent weaver Puketapu-Hetet (2000) reminds us that the art of weaving has never been rigid and fixed, instead “there has always been room for originality and invention” (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000, p. 6). Both positions support my theory that whatu kākahu as storied expressions of living as Māori are a tangible way for Māori women to pass down aspirations for cultural continuity regardless of the materials used – the question remains for whatu, as it does for a Māori identity, how much innovation and adaptation is too much and what essential elements/threads are deemed vital to retain?

New materials have been adapted and adopted over time but it appears that the physical practice of whatu has remained essentially the same. According to Te Awekotuku (1993):

Change and flexibility, tempered with discipline and constraint, have formed the supple fabric of Māori traditional weaving for over a thousand years. Like the voyagers who first settled these islands, finding an unfamiliar climate hostile to their own precious fibre plants, the weavers of today meet new challenges in materials, synthetic products, and popular expectation. Yet the techniques remain the same. (p. 4)

Innovation and adaptation create interesting tensions within the Māori creative arts community calling attention to the diverse ways in which whatu kākahu are produced, used and understood.
Some weavers with a ‘fluid’ opinion consider innovation as progressive and vital to the arts’ survival, while others with more ‘fixed’ views express concerns that using contemporary materials poses a threat to traditional knowledge moving whatu kākahu dramatically away from its traditional roots.

Fixed traditionalists advocate for the use of traditional materials and techniques. Te Awekotuku (1993) says that introduced materials, and the ease with which they could be attained and produced, seduced Māori weavers. She questions the inherent mana and value of hybridised taonga asking whether kākahu made from contemporary materials are still capable of embodying the notions of taonga tuku iho and the holistic qualities of the harakeke. An advocate for the use of natural fibres and traditional techniques, Wirihana (2008) describes the introduction of contemporary materials as “intrusive” (Wirihana, 2008, p. 5) adding that colonisation has significantly influenced Māori textiles and it remains the responsibility of kaiwhatu to reclaim our traditions. On the other hand, Te Kanawa and Turi-Tiakitai (2011) refer to esteemed weaver Eddie Maxwell who felt that it was the mana of the weaver and the wearer that determined the value of the kākahu as opposed to the materials it was constructed from, regarding kākahu made from contemporary materials as having “their own beauty” (p. 30).

I agree that traditional materials such as muka, pingao, kuta and kiekie as well as native bird feathers are most capable of creating a deep connection to the natural environment and are better able to instantiate connections to our tūpuna. When natural muka fibre is replaced by mop string, and the process of harvesting, preparing and rolling each strand separately is missed, so too, are the values of patience and perseverance as well as the physical embedding of the kaiwhatu into the materials. On the other hand, the ability to use accessible contemporary materials such as cotton, wool and twine, creates a greater opportunity for Māori women to learn the art of whatu. Understood colloquially perhaps as ‘doing your time in the kitchen’, using contemporary materials allows those with less time and opportunity to access traditional knowledge to begin their whatu journey. The wāhine in this research say that they most certainly would not have had the opportunity or time to learn if there had been an insistence on starting with traditional muka fibres. They, like myself, all hold an aspiration to complete a muka kākahu, something I am concurrently completing alongside this thesis.

Without the ability to use contemporary materials I am certain that my aspiration to learn whatu would have remained just that – an aspiration – as finding the time, natural resources and opportunity to create a traditional whatu kākahu in a busy urban existence would have been
impossible. Instead, the opportunity to do my whatu ‘apprenticeship’ using contemporary resources instilled a deep love and respect for the art and subsequently led to my theoretical research interest in the practice.

Despite the continuing debate, whatu kākahu made from contemporary materials fulfil a number of purposes. Lander (2011) points out that due to a disruption in knowledge transmission many whānau no longer have skilled weavers to create a whatu kākahu to identify or celebrate a Māori identity. This has led to an increase in contemporary fabric-based kākahu. Fabric kākahu can be produced in a matter of hours from manufactured materials and may be purchased on-line, ‘off the rack’ or commissioned. Despite lacking the embodied and storied nature of a hand-made whatu kākahu, these contemporary pieces can be said to “fulfil the functions for which they were made” (Lander, 2011) if, for example, that function is to identify as Māori or celebrate an auspicious occasion. Despite the contemporary materials used in its construction, each time the kākahu is worn it gains another layer of memory and story, and over time may become a treasured taonga (Lander, 2011).

There is often a critique – sometimes gentle, sometimes not – of kākahu made with contemporary materials. Sometimes the critique comes from those who have access to the expertise to create traditional muka kākahu; at other times it is done by others who have little or no knowledge of the purpose and symbolic meaning of kākahu. The methodology and methods of this research maintain that the practice of creating a whatu kākahu is less about the materials used and more about the process and purpose of whatu kākahu to embody our stories and aspirations. After all, as Wereta (2007) says, “what is contemporary today will be traditional tomorrow” (p. 12) yet it is the stories, mana and aroha embodied within that kākahu that will endure.

**Identifying as Māori**

Whatu kākahu, in contemporary times, continue to demarcate space, symbolise mana and act as identity markers (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011) in similar and different ways to their ‘traditional’ predecessors. It is common to see kākahu worn at academic gradations around the country as outward and visible symbols of a Māori identity. Graduates may be given kākahu to wear to enhance mana, celebrate an academic achievement (Evans & Ngarimu, 2005) or as an expression of pride as Māori from their family without whom they may not have achieved their success. In the context of the academy, wearing a kākahu or whatu kākahu over the academic
regalia could be seen as a radical statement of reclaiming and reclothing oneself in a Māori identity – demarcating Māori from non-Māori so as to claim space and voice in the academy (Malcolm-Buchanan et al., 2012). Whatever the reasons, it is clear that wearing a kākahu is an outward expression of a Māori identity and (McKinley & Middleton, 2010; Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011) one that is worn with pride. While wearing a kākahu at a graduation is often a celebration of achievement, being adorned in a kākahu in death serves another purpose.

Whatu kākahu perform an important role in tangihanga (funerary proceedings). Metaphorically speaking, whatu kākahu keep the dearly departed warm and safe as they transition between the world of the living and the dead. Buchanan and Te Awekotuku (2012) say the kākahu act as “an anchor, connecting the deceased to both the ‘now’ and the ‘before’, which correlates to the whānau who are present today, and the deceased tūpuna from which the whānau descended” (p. 55). During the tangihanga process the tupāpaku (deceased body) is understood as being neither in the world of the living or the dead but instead occupying a liminal space between. The kākahu therefore creates the connection between the living and the dead – the past and the present.

The presence of whatu kākahu at a tangihanga is an evocative symbol of mana and status as the garment is imbued with the mana of the weaver, those who have worn the garment and the histories and stories attached to it. To have a kākahu draped over the deceased’s coffin connects that recently departed loved one with the people, histories and stories of that kākahu in a sense cloaking the deceased in the mana of their people. As Buchanan and Te Awekotuku (2012) point out, the presence of kākahu at a tangihanga “can speak a thousand subtle though significant words, whilst their observable absence can be deafening” (Malcolm-Buchanan et al., 2012, p. 55). When people of great mana pass, as was the case with the death of Dame Te Atairangikaahu, multiple kākahu were layered upon and around her coffin as a sign of her people’s respect and love.

Whatu kākahu that honour the dead and celebrate special occasions are a symbolically rich and visual public acknowledgement of the many layers of whakapapa, experiences and stories that metaphorically ‘cloak’ that person. I return to Mum’s pūrākau of feathered kākahu as emblematic of past interactions, leading to the present and informing the future. While whatu kākahu are undoubtedly a symbol of Māori identity, they have more recently been adopted, or perhaps appropriated, as a symbol of New Zealand identity.

**Whatu kākahu as a ‘New Zealand’ symbol**
In their book chapter ‘Te mana o te kākahu’ (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011), the authors discuss the making of whatu kākahu specifically for special occasions that celebrate New Zealand identity on an overseas stage. One example, Te Māhutonga is the name of the whatu kākahu worn by Olympic flag bearers and was made by distinguished weavers Te Aue Davis and Ranui Ngarimu (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011). A more recent example is the beautifully woven muka whatu kākahu ‘Pouhine’ made by Veranoa Hetet and awarded for the first time in 2015 to the New Zealander of the year.

Overseas dignitaries, such as the English royals, are afforded the honour of wearing a whatu kākahu when visiting Aotearoa New Zealand. In the summer of 1953/4 Queen Elizabeth II was gifted a highly prestigious kahukiwi whilst on her first visit to Aotearoa New Zealand (McKergow, 2015). This whatu kākahu has been worn on subsequent visits to the country during formal public engagements. More recently, Prince William and Prince Harry have worn this whatu kākahu whilst here on royal duties.

On one hand I feel a sense of pride to see beautiful taonga Māori such as whatu kākahu displayed on the world stage. As symbols of Māori culture, whatu kākahu have the potential to be cross-cultural mediators capable of teaching and communicating histories, stories and aspirations – for those with the eyes and desire to see – yet it raises this question: If whatu kākahu are indeed imbued with the mana of the weaver and signify relationships with past histories (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011), how is the whakapapa and storied meaning of these kākahu conveyed to each wearer who in turn imbues their own wairua and story into the kākahu thus adding to its whakapapa?

A more critical concern is that the appropriation of whatu kākahu as a ‘New Zealand’ symbol is selective cultural acceptance of some elements of Māori while others are resoundingly rejected. In a similar way that ‘tā moko’ (the Māori tradition of tattoo) has been enthusiastically taken up by non-Māori here in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas, I am concerned that the rich knowledge of whatu kākahu is in danger of being of lost, again, through simplified and uncritical adoptions of whatu kākahu as symbols of a ‘New Zealand identity’ absent of its Māori cultural language and knowledge.

**Summary**

Whatu and whatu kākahu are embedded with feminine and maternal knowledge. This knowledge has always been there, like the whenu of a kākahu, ingrained within its language and the
practices. The purpose of this chapter has been to tease apart the female knowledge, language and traditions of whatu and whatu kākahu then twine these together with ideas about living as Māori women to highlight the intrinsic relationship between the two.

For many hundreds of years, the practice of whatu and the garments it produces has played a key role in Māori women’s lives. Traditions held within Māori cosmogony connected Māori women with the art of whatu to the cycles of the moon and body and to childbirth. Within this Mātauranga Māori are teachings about how muka was used to tie off a newborn’s umbilical cord — a story I elaborate on in Part Three — and how newborn babies were presented to their people on finely woven whatu kākahu. Although much of this knowledge has been fractured and fragmented in our recent colonised history, the very language of whatu resonates deeply with women’s maternal bodies creating intimate connections between the two.

Whatu kākahu are capable of mediating relationships. As embodied and storied taonga, whatu kākahu can offer protection, from physical and metaphorical danger and can strengthen and bind relationships through the act of koha. Symbolically they are visible examples of a Māori identity and, of some concern, also emerge as a symbol of a New Zealand identity.

Whatu kākahu are a site for innovation and adaptation as they negotiate and sometimes step far beyond what might be described as the traditional–contemporary binary. Such innovation is a legacy handed down from Māori women for many generations who adapted their skills to provide clothing and shelter in a new and harsh environment. The challenge for whatu, as it is for a living as Māori discourse, continues as we debate and negotiate, pick apart and twine together, theorise and reclaim those threads deemed as important to live as Māori.
Chapter Five:
Re-claiming whatu

Methodology through the eyes of a 5 year old

This chapter begins with a pūrākau – a gift of wisdom from my, then, five-year-old daughter. Kahukura provided me with a vital moment, a moment of oho or awakening that enhanced my understanding of whatu with rich and complex layers of meaning. I began to think about the relationship between the different meanings of the term whatu – something that Kahukura as a bi-literate child did instinctively – and how these intertwining meanings came together as a relationship between whatu and living as Māori. Her ‘vision’ offered me a way to ‘re-vision’ the practice of whatu, beyond its practical sense, and instead as methodology. This is her pūrākau.

I sit deep in thought, working on a kākahu. Fingers moving rhythmically. Aho tangling and untangling. Whenu coming together. Building the kākahu whenu by whenu, one by one as the feathers are added. Some in pattern some not. Some selected, others discarded. I am in the zone. Thinking, thinking. Thinking about my research. Thinking about who this kākahu is for. Thinking about what to cook for dinner. Thinking that it is getting dark and the girls need to come in for a shower. Thinking.

Kahukura is 5 years old. She often sits beside me and does her version of ‘whatu’ – twisting and plaiting and twirling of whenu into curious knots. I think to myself, “I love it when she sits here with me” and I tell her so. She smiles and I can tell that she enjoys the time we sit together. I think, “I wish I had had someone to sit next to, to learn whatu. Yet I do not ‘teach’ Kahukura to whatu. She watches. She talks. She sings. The pedagogy at work here is not teaching. It is education. It is the deliberate act of whatu pedagogy – reclaiming knowledge and learning and passing this on to our children. My aspirations, handed down to her through the time we spend together, talking, telling stories, weaving. I am cloaking her in my aspirations that, in turn, she will continue these traditions with her daughters, my future mokopuna.

She comes in from outside. “Kei te aha koe Māmā? (what are you doing mum?) E whatu ana ahau bubba.” (I am weaving) “Oh” she says, hums to herself, plays with the whenu and then replies. “Whatu eh Mama like seeing with your eyes? I look up. She smiles and walks away. I stare after her as a connection is made, blinding me like a bolt of
lightening. Whatu – finger twining. Whatu – eyes to see, a way of seeing, to be seen. I watch her go and thank the universe for the simple yet complex brain of a 5 year old and wish I could think with her clarity more often.

Kahukura at three years old doing her ‘whatu’ with Māmā

Kahukura’s (in)sight reminded me of the richness that exists within our own knowledge systems and that sometimes it takes a different ‘whatu’, lens or set of eyes with which to view that knowledge. As Pohatu (2011) says:

[A]n unwillingness to properly value the potential held within Māori bodies of knowledge, deposited by generations past into the ‘library of te reo’, will have the effect of limiting our visions, horizons, and so expectations (Pohatu, 2011, p. 3)

While I maintained a strong sense that the methodological framework appropriate for this research could be found within the art and its language, it was the uncomplicated whatu, in this case the eyes of a child, that allowed me to soften my gaze from a clinical academic examination of methodology to one that softly blurred the edges of whatu and its multiple meanings.

An intention of this chapter is to provide some language around the multiple meanings of whatu. For those with Māori linguistic and cultural knowledge, drawing a connection between whatu as practice and whatu as eyes, as Kahukura did, is not difficult. For others, understanding the conceptual relationship may prove more challenging. Because whatu is an embodied art form, its language, technique and stories are most easily understood and expressed through a praxis of thinking and doing such as that encountered in wānanga, highlighting the inherent difficulty of attempting to express a multi-dimensional embodied practice, like whatu, in the two-dimensional written form of a thesis. Nevertheless, a basic understanding of whatu as technique as well as its
broader definitions is necessary to understand how whatu has been theorised as a Kaupapa Māori methodology appropriate to this work.

A further intention of this chapter is to reclaim some of the terminology around whatu and whatu kākahu that has, over time, been translated and simplified. A decolonising lens recognises that much of what has been retained in the literature of traditional whatu emerges from a colonial context, one that largely dismissed women’s knowledge and experiences – a void that this research attempts to write into. While useful in terms of contributing to the revival of whatu as practice, these early historical accounts failed to see the wider knowledge transmission at work and should be viewed critically through decolonising eyes. By re-complexifying the language and concepts of whatu, I aim to provide another lens with which whatu can be viewed to better enable a comprehensive reading of this work.

Re-complexifying the language of whatu

Te reo Māori is a rich and embodied language with much of its deeply held knowledge contained within its etymology. Due in part to colonising processes that disrupted intergenerational language transmission, some of the complex meanings contained within the Māori language have not been passed on (Fishman, 1996; Harlow, 2005; O'Regan, 2011; Spolsky, 2003). Pohatu (2011) says that:

> Te reo Māori holds definitions, explanations, and angles to encourage reflective interpretation and for use in our activities. The ongoing requirement is to develop understandings of the connections that exist between Māori phrases, their bodies of knowledge, thinking and how they undertake their commitment to and with one another.

(p. 3)

My interest in re-complexifying the language and ideas around whatu and living as Māori is in itself a storied kākahu. There are no Māori language speakers in my immediate family and very few in my extended family. As a second language learner who missed the Kura Kaupapa Māori schooling revolution, it is an unfortunate necessity that the recovery of my language has been through direct formal learning rather than experiential immersion. No language models and having to learn through texts meant that I needed to understand simple meanings first, translating Māori terms into words and concepts from my own English language experience in order to make sense of the meaning. It is only now, as an adult speaker confident in te reo, that I understand Māori terms at a deeper level. I am now better able to theorise my knowledge of te
reo Māori in complex ways and adapt those understandings to my current context. This section highlights some of the different etymological layers of the term whatu and how I have theorised a relationship between these meanings and living as Māori women.

As Kahukura’s pūrākau highlighted, whatu can be used as both a verb and a noun. As a verb, whatu is the creative practice described in English as ‘finger twining’ – the technical process used to create whatu kākahu. As a noun, whatu means eye and can be theorised as a way of seeing, that which expresses emotion, analyses and makes sense of the world, bringing it in to focus. Whatu is also defined as fruit pip, anchor and stone (Williams, 1997) and theorised here as a seed of potential, to flourish and that which holds vital genetic information. Of interest to this research is the idea of whatu as a way of ‘seeing’ in multiple and complex ways, in particular how Māori women ‘see’ ourselves living as Māori and how we envision a similar future for our children.

The eyes and the whatu

The metaphor of the ‘eyes’ and ‘seeing’ in relation to wellness, vision and feminine energy is not a new idea. Linguistically, the eyes as metaphor appears frequently in our everyday English lexicon where it is common to hear people talking about their ‘vision’ for a project, someone having ‘foresight’ or expressing understanding through ‘seeing something clearer’. Shakespeare, for example, makes multiple references to the eyes as a source of feminine beauty, and a means of expressing emotion such as the well known saying ‘the eyes are the windows to the soul and the entrance to our hearts and minds’.

In another example, The Eye of Rā in ancient Egypt was a goddess and mother figure capable of giving life and providing protection and is understood as the feminine balance to the powerful sun god Rā. The Eye of Rā was represented as a sun disk which symbolised the womb or placenta, that which sustains and nurtures life (Renggli, 2002). The powerful feminine energy associated with the eyes and ways of seeing adds to the idea of eyes or whatu as possessing female power – a way of being that encompasses the notions of giving life, protecting and passing down knowledge.

The term whatu can be theorised alongside other ideas in ways that resonate with this research, for example the notion of whatumanawa. Etymologically ‘whatumanawa’ is made up of ‘whatu’ as eyes and ‘manawa’ as both the physical heart and the metaphysical ‘soul’ of a person and is commonly heard in formal speechmaking, karanga and proverbs. A Māori dictionary search
defines whatumanawa as the kidney, the seat of emotions and affections, heart, mind and the bowels of the earth (Williams, 1997). If, as explained above, whatu is associated with sight and vision then the notion of whatumanawa twines together the idea of seeing and vision with the expression of feelings and emotions.

The idea of the whatumanawa as a way to connect to the past in order to understand the present and envisage the future is important in this research. Pohatu (2011) describes the whatumanawa as “the inner eye … that site that enables the connecting of the visions of earlier generations to those of now and the future” (Pohatu, 2011, p. 9). Each of the women connected through their whatumanawa as they shared deeply moving and often personal reflections of, and aspirations to, live as Māori women. Despite the important role of the whatumanawa as a means to express and connect, there is a dearth of literature that describes whatumanawa in detail.

One Māori writer who talks about whatumanawa is Rangimarie Turuki Pere whose book, *Te Wheke* (1991), explores traditional Māori concepts in relation to child development. According to Pere, ‘ranga whatumanawa’ relates to the emotions and senses and the expression of these emotions and senses. She explains that emotions have both negative and positive attributes and that Māori cultural beliefs prefer to express rather than repress emotion. Crying for example by both men and women, whether in joy or sorrow, is not viewed as a sign of weakness. Instead tears are regarded as coming from the whatumanawa “the sacred pools of healing” (Pere, 1991, p. 30) and are encouraged as a sign of holistic wellness.

Another writer, Catherine Love (2004), adds to Pere’s ideas in *Extensions on Te Wheke*. She reiterates that the whatumanawa is that place of deep-seated emotion. The whatumanawa is sustained through the full and unrepressed expression of emotions such as grief, joy, anger jealousy, hope and so on. Love (2004) suggests that there are formalised vehicles for expressing emotion in te ao Māori, for example, kapahaka (Māori cultural performance), waiata (singing), tangihanga (funerary rites), karanga (female calling) and whaiākōrero (speech making) – I add to this list, Māori creative practices such as whatu. Each of these vehicles enables an external or outward expression of an internal or inner emotion. Whatu kākahu, as embodied taonga tuku iho (heirlooms) can be viewed as beautiful examples of craft-womanship, ‘feathered cloaks’ or, when one has the eyes to ‘see’, a means to express emotions such as pride, grief or aspirations.

Separating feelings from expression is considered unhealthy in te ao Māori. Love (2004) cites an example from a Western counselling perspective that encourages the expression of emotion in
words – that is one should talk about one’s feelings. She suggests that such an approach is logocentric, elevating words as superior to other forms of expression subsequently invalidating expression through and from the whatumanawa. Skilled and confident exponents of karanga, whaikōrero, Māori performance and visual arts to name a few are able to intertwine both emotional and physical expression into their art forms in much the same way that abstract emotion, stories and aspirations are argued here can be expressed in the tangible form of whatu kākahu.

The whatumanawa, as the seat of emotion and where our deeply held aspirations, dreams and desires reside, can be harmed and conversely healed. Each of the women in the research spoke in different and similar ways of their efforts to heal harm, to recover and reclaim living as Māori women. Their stories speak of healing from the damage of colonisation, repairing, reclaiming and restoring, and in doing so creating wellness – oranga – for themselves and, in turn, their tamariki and mokopuna. Whatumanawa in this sense extends on the idea that whatu kākahu can be created to heal as well as protect from harm in similar ways that a Whatuora approach to research is intended to heal and encourage wellbeing.

**Whatu as technique**

Although best understood experientially, it is necessary to give some attention to whatu as technique as an important element to the reading of this thesis. The following section draws on the seminal work of Te Rangi Hiroa and Mick Pendergrast whose prolific publications, which include detailed diagrams and descriptions on Māori textiles, have played an important role in the revival of Māori textile production.

Whatu technique has been adapted and refined by Pacific peoples over thousands of years based on their needs and available resources (Hiroa, 1949). Brought across the Pacific by the first voyagers, Māori applied their innovative expertise of whatu to the abundant natural resources available in Aotearoa New Zealand developing a wide range of garments from rough, everyday day rain-capes through to fine woven whatu kākahu.

Whatu aho pātahi – or single warp whatu – requires two sets of threads set at right angles to each other. Hiroa provides detailed descriptions and illustrations of the process of whatu describing whatu aho pātahi as:
A set of warps set up by doubling a long weft thread around the upper end of the first warp, making a half turn to enclose it, and adding successive warps with a half turn of the two weft threads in the single-pair twined technique. (Hiroa, 1949, p. 165)

Whatu aho pātahi was the standard whatu used to create rain-capes and other everyday practical items of early clothing. Māori creative curiosity spurred an evolution in whatu, from single aho pātahi to whatu ahorua. This innovation is unique to Māori and is not, according to Hiroa (1949), to be found anywhere else in the Pacific. Whatu ahorua allowed kaiwhatu to attach feathers and tassels to the garments and led to the creation of highly prized feathered kākahu. Whatu ahorua consists of doubling a long pair of weft threads around the first warp on the left to form a front and a back pair. The back pair is opened out and the front pair is passed between its two threads. The next warp is placed between the two pairs and the process repeated, the two pairs changing position on each warp.

Whatu aho pātahi, single-pair weft-twining. Reproduced with permission from the Te Papa Collection Line drawing by Tim Galloway © Te Papa (MA_I.278976)

Whatu weft-twined structure: two aho (wefts) for each ara (row). Line drawing by Tim Galloway © Te Papa (MA_I.278969)

The intertwining action between these two sets of threads is a key idea in a Whatuora methodology. As one set comes to the fore, it is exchanged for another that is then foregrounded, both sets of aho interacting with each other. Neither can exist in isolation or independent of the
other. If these aho can be understood multiply as theory and practice, doing and thinking, Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori then both sets of intertwined ideas must co-exist and continually interact in order to create the ‘fabric’ of the kākahu or research.

**Reclaiming the language of whatu**

The language of whatu has over time been translated, simplified and uncritically adopted – homogenising the art, its processes and its embodied knowledge. Many years ago as I began to learn whatu, I used the term korowai to describe all Māori cloaks. This was the word I had been taught and therefore become a part of my lexicon. A developing critical consciousness around the power of naming and language introduced me to the small but growing literature field (Blackman, 2011; Henare, 2005; Maihi, 2011, Puketapu-Hetet, 2000; Tamarapa, 2011; Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011; Te Rito, 2006) concerned with restoring and reclaiming the dignity of Māori weaving through its language and terminology which is, according to Tamarapa (2011), “a consideration for everyone involved in the transmission of Māori knowledge” (p. 15).

By developing my theoretical knowledge of whatu and intertwining this with my existing practical knowledge, I became critically aware that I was using incorrect terminology and moved swiftly to change it.

The simplified translation of Māori terms to English concepts has been problematic. As Pihama (2001) states, language is vital in the transmission of knowledge, therefore “we must have a critical understanding of the ways in which the coloniser’s language impacts on wider values, beliefs and understandings” (Pihama, 2001, p. 264). Describing Māori textiles, for example, from a Eurocentric perspective has consequences according to Smith and Laing (C. Smith & Laing, 2011), who discuss the codification and classification of whatu kākahu. They argue that “the need to describe Māori textiles in English has determined the terminology chosen to describe them, and also affected understandings of Māori textiles” (p. 220) and, in turn, how they are understood and communicated. Decolonising the language of our arts and practices remains a vital site of resistance.

Language loss in general, but particularly about whatu and whatu kākahu, has led to a simplified understanding of whatu as ‘weaving’ and kākahu or korowai as ‘cloaks’. Puketapu-Hetet (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000) holds out hope that “one day scholars will return dignity to Māori weaving and plaiting by using Māori terms. This is part of New Zealand’s unique heritage” (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000, p. 232). In this research I re-complexify the language of whatu, returning
the mana of the language to the practice, or what I consider a duty of care and responsibility, for those involved in the transmission of Māori knowledge and the arts.

I am acutely aware that there are few expert weavers who are also fluent speakers of te reo Māori and even fewer are women. In a conversation with a Māori male, and renowned expert weaver at the National Weavers Hui hosted by my iwi in Ahipara in October 2015, we lamented this fact and discussed how the language of whatu and rāranga might be restored to the art. As we looked around the tent we were reminded of the growing number of non-Māori who have taken up the art form and the impact of this on cultural and linguistic revival in Māori creative practice. We also remarked on how little reo Māori was being spoken amongst the more than 200 weavers who were gathered there. Neither of us had a single solution but we both agreed that the issue of revitalising the reo alongside the art is serious and, however sensitive and controversial, should be continually brought to the fore to be discussed and debated.

This is not a criticism of non-Māori weavers or indeed Māori weavers who do not speak Māori. It is instead a critical awareness, and position that I take, that the language and the art must develop and prosper interdependently. To practise and reclaim the art and not its language is incongruous with a decolonising agenda that works to restore knowledge ‘lost’ through the process of colonisation and to revitalise them as vibrant and relevant in contemporary living. With ‘Māori cloaks’ – in all their varied forms – experiencing a resurgence in popularity, I am concerned that the rich and embodied nature of the art will continue to be lost if its language is not simultaneously reclaimed.

Reclaiming the language of whatu requires a critical decolonising lens. Māori scholars have begun a critique of the homogenising terminology that has become the language of Māori fibre art, ‘unravelling’ what has been woven to reveal its true kaupapa (foundation), in this way restoring the language of whatu and rāranga to the field. One way of reclaiming cultural identity and practices is by taking control and practising the language, definitions and descriptions that have been ascribed to them (Mead, 1990a). Māori need to speak with our own voices and present those things symbolic to us in ways that we decide are appropriate and meaningful (Mead, 1990b). Perhaps a bigger challenge lies in the dissemination of this scholarly reclamation of whatu terminology to the wider public – in particular, the Māori arts community itself.
Whatu in the literature

Re-visioning the practice of whatu and living as Māori women through a decolonising Whatuora lens is a critical aho that runs through this thesis. While early writings provided practical information about manufacturing, construction and the use of kākahu in Māori society (C. Smith & Laing, 2011) there is a paucity of literature that examines the art and its practice beyond the process and product. What was missed, or rather dismissed, was the significance of whatu kākahu as storied and embodied garments capable of transmitting cultural knowledge and aspirations.

Only recently has attention been given to whatu kākahu as more than an ‘artefact’ but as embodied taonga that link is to the past and extends forward into the future. The majority of whatu literature references historical records on textile production and methods, the cataloguing of artefacts and materials, and photographs. There are a number of basic ‘learn to weave’ books on rāranga and whatu (Pendergrast 1986, 1987, 2005, 2011; Puketapu-Hetet, 2000). There is also a small, but growing, body of literature that explores the pedagogy of whatu beyond its technical aspects (Henare, 2003; Lander, 2011; Maihi, 2011; Puketapu-Hetet, 2000). Within this literature field a small group of innovative scholars have written about whatu and rāranga as sites of resistance (Henare, 2005; Kaeppler, 1990; Te Manakura, 2006). Nearly twenty-five years ago, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku’s critical article, ‘We will become ill if we stop weaving’ (1991a), was a forerunner of the idea that rāranga and whatu are indicators of mental, spiritual and cultural wellbeing. Christina Wirihana (2008) is another weaver who discusses Māori textiles as a means of cultural expression, in particular the power of kākahu to embody and express identity. This research contributes Whatuora as a Kaupapa Māori research approach to the academic literature on whatu.

Most relevant to this project is the publication Whatu Kākahu: Māori Cloaks (Tamarapa, 2011). Following ‘Kahu Ora: Living Cloaks’, a critically acclaimed exhibition at Te Papa (New Zealand’s National museum) in 2012, Awhina Tamarapa edited a collection of scholarly articles from academics, curators and expert practitioners of whatu and rāranga. This book is a rare examination of whatu beyond its tangible creations, understanding kākahu as “more than mere items of clothing” (Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011) but as a rich site of knowledge and teachings. The contributors to the book explore the epistemology embodied within the art of whatu kākahu alluding to, but not investigating fully, the inherent methodological potential of
whatu. Prior to this publication, much of the knowledge that has been reclaimed about whatu comes from the anthropological literature of last century.

Ngāti Mutunga descendant Te Rangi Hiroa (also known as Sir Peter Buck) played an important role in documenting material culture throughout the Pacific in the early to mid 1900s, including the process of whatu. As a medical doctor, military leader, health administrator, politician, anthropologist and museum director, he received honorary doctorates from a number of countries and is credited with documenting the process and practices around Māori garments, arts and rāranga and whatu – art forms that were feared, at one point in history to be near extinction.

Hiroa’s anthropological observations, while meticulous, need to be viewed critically in the context of his time. His books, *The Evolution of Māori Clothing* (1924) and *The Coming of the Māori* (1949) are regarded as seminal texts in the revitalisation of whatu. His methodical documentation of the technical processes used in the manufacture of garments and their evolution, provided detailed sketches and explanations of whatu processes and materials. Hiroa’s approach to anthropology is described as “practical, empirical, pragmatic rather than abstract and theoretical” (Tirikatene-Sullivan, 2001, paragraph 32) and has proven an invaluable resource for those working to revitalise the creative practice of whatu. While Hiroa’s work offered a Māori, although solely male, view of whatu and Māori material culture, earlier ethnographic writing did not.

**Reclaiming whatu through a decolonising lens**

Since the time of first contact with Māori in Aotearoa, non-Māori sought to classify and codify Māori textiles (C. Smith & Laing, 2011). Observations from colonial ethnographers record descriptions of ‘primitive’ Māori clothing (Hiroa, 1924; Roth, 1924) using their own empirical lens and language to interpret and describe their observations. One example, Henry Ling Roth was a curator of the Bankfield Museum Halifax England in the early 20th century who wrote extensively on material culture in Australasia and the Pacific based mainly on the fieldwork of other men. In his book, *The Māori Mantle* (1924), he cites entries from the *Journal of Commander Cook* (London, 1893, pp. 219-220) where he likened Māori clothing to the crude mats that “lay at the doors or passages into houses to clean shoes upon” (p. 7), remarking that the “common dress of these people is certainly to a stranger one of the most uncouth and extraordinary sights that can be imagined” (p. 7). Not all disparaging, some of his descriptions commend Māori skill in textile production describing whatu kākahu that shone like silk as
“ingeniously worked” (Roth, 1924, p. 7) and created with a surprising ingenuity considering their perceived lack of technology.

The colonial ethnographic obsession to compare, describe and classify was directly influenced by its own experience of textile production as a sign of modernity. Māori textiles were made entirely by hand from natural resources and did not use a loom or machine, a fact not celebrated as skilful and ingenious by early observers but instead viewed as primitive and backward at a time when the textile industry in England had mechanised mass production (Corey-Pearce, 2005; C. Smith & Laing, 2011). Smith and Laing state, “Victorian ideas of technology as progress and evidence of social complexity and advancement meant that non-mechanised production was considered primitive” (2011, p. 224). Such a view rendered kākahu as curious and exotic artefacts suitable for the collections of the wealthy and museums but otherwise of little cultural or commercial value. What was missed, or rather dismissed, was the significance of kākahu and the practice of whatu as an embodied creative practice capable of transmitting knowledge, epistemology and stories.

Incorrect descriptions and simplified language about kākahu were exacerbated by the fact that those scientists and anthropological observers responsible for collecting, coding and classifying Māori textiles were seldom weavers and were almost always men (C. Smith & Laing, 2011). Their brief was to closely observe techniques and processes then describe and document these in as great a detail as possible often including finely drawn diagrams. Add to this the inability of many early ethnographers to accurately translate from Māori to English and the result is a simplistic and inaccurate set of terminology. In his book The Māori Mantle (1924), Roth’s comment is an example of the colonial approach to language that recent publications such as Whatu Kākahu (2011) and this research seek to address. Roth says:

[T]he use of the Māori names [in this book] has been avoided as much as possible because the meaning intended to be conveyed by the native name is not always sufficiently clear, also because the same article frequently has a different name according to locality and also because as elsewhere a native name may have different meanings. All of this is of course well known to New Zealanders and while it is essential to retain the native Māori names their full use in a technical study like this, is apt to make for confusion rather than clearness especially when the technical terms at one’s disposal are already sufficient. (Roth 1924, p. 14)
The methods and methodologies used to classify material culture are evidence of the social and cultural context of the time. The approaches of early ethnographers informed a wider agenda of “imperialism and colonisation” (C. Smith & Laing 2011, p. 221). As Wereta (2007) says, “language embodies freedom and constraint as it is given meaning based on the reality it confronts, and the direction that the thinking of the day presents” (p. 3). It is now the responsibility of those working in Māori creative practice and academia to decolonise the language and methodologies that produce what are often seen as seminal texts and ‘objective truth’.

There are no recorded direct observations by Māori about their own practices, knowledge and teachings prior to European observation (McAllum, 2005). Moreover, only a small handful of early ethnographers are recorded as having female informants (Yates-Smith, 1998) – further evidence perhaps of the patriarchal perspective of early observers that women were not seen as holders of knowledge when, in fact, women were the primary weavers (McAllum, 2005). The dismissal of women’s voices has resulted in desiccated fragments of knowledge being retained about whatu and a major disruption in knowledge transmission.

The skill of early ethnographers to record such detail and precision is not being questioned here. Their brief was to record the practices of what was understood as a dying race – which they did. Indeed, it is through the study of early manuscripts and diagrams that contemporary kaiwhatu have been able to reclaim, decipher and theorise much of what we know today. What is important to examine, however, are the colonial methodologies of the time and offer a critique to decolonise what has become accepted as factual and true. Colonial representations of whatu and whatu kākahu have in some ways helped (through recorded documentation) and in other ways hindered (the limited nature of that documentation) what we now know about whatu kākahu and the creative practice of whatu.

**Reviving a dying art**

The work of Māori scholars in the early to mid 20th century played a vital role in the revitalisation of Māori textiles. Without their diligence, much of the knowledge of whatu may have been lost forever (Henare, 2005; Puketapu-Hetet, 2000; C. Smith & Laing, 2011). Te Rangi Hīroa is regarded as the first person to make a serious effort to record and document Māori textiles (Blackman, 2011; Pendergrast, 2005). His book, *The Evolution of Māori Clothing* (1924) is, according to Blackman (2011), “an important foundation document for the study of kākahu” (p. 76). Following Te Rangi Hīroa, Hirini Moko Mead became an academic expert on Māori
textiles (Evans & Ngarimu, 2005) providing an insight into the technological developments and classifications of Māori clothing.

The 1950s witnessed a movement to revitalise Māori arts, language and tikanga, (Pendergrast, 1987; Tamarapa, 2011). Inspirational leaders such as Sir Apirana Ngata centred the revival of Māori arts on rebuilding marae as papakainga, with a particular focus on the art of carving. It is difficult to find references to female arts such as rāranga and whatu during this period despite what I imagine would have been the necessity to adorn the inside of these newly refurbished marae – an indication perhaps of the reification of male ‘art’ of woodcarving over the female ‘craft’ of whatu and rāranga (Kaeppler, 1990) – at least in written accounts.

It was not until 1983, thirty years after the marae revitalisation project, that the first national gathering of weavers was organised. The few remaining expert weavers who remained in small pockets around the country gathered at Pākirikiri marae in Tokomaru Bay on the East Coast of the North Island led by visionary Māori woman, Ngoi Pewhairangi. At this hui, she stood and said “Ka rāranga tonu tātou i a tātou; let us weave ourselves together” (Te Awekotuku, 1993, p. 5) imploring those gathered to come together so that the important knowledge, and skills of rāranga and whatu would not be lost.

The first National Māori and Pacific weavers hui is widely accepted as a critical event in the revitalisation of rāranga and whatu. The report from the hui states that its primary aim was to establish an organisation to preserve, promote, and support systems to revitalise Māori weaving (Te Awekotuku, 1991a). Since this first hui there continues to be discussion about the security of ‘traditional’ rāranga and whatu practices (Kaeppler, 1990; Te Awekotuku, 1991a, 1993; Te Kanawa & Turi-Tiakitai, 2011; Voss, 2011), despite the steadily increasing number of expert weavers and passionate learners. The first national hui led to establishing a national body for the Māori arts of rāranga and whatu called Te Roopu Rāranga Whatu o Aotearoa of which I am a long-term member.

Thanks to the tireless work of those few eminent weavers of the 1980s, rāranga and whatu are now taught widely throughout the country. In 1992 Diggeress Te Kanawa published Weaving a Kākahu, which helped budding weavers to make their first ‘cloak’. Whatu is now taught at various night classes, in community groups and in tertiary institutions where students can graduate with a certificate, diploma or degree in Māori material culture. These learning sites “have encouraged students to recover the knowledge of this ‘forgotten skill’ through museum
research and practical projects, stimulating a resurgence of interest in customary materials and
techniques” (Lander, 2011, p. 63). Some of the spaces created to learn whatu are more informal,
such as Te Whare Whiri Toi, an art gallery and workshop space established at my marae in
Ahipara and the urban-located spaces created by the women in this research.

The security afforded by a groundswell in those knowledgeable and passionate about Māori
textiles, creates space for the next wave of innovation – an academic theorisation of our practices
such as whatu as methodology. Te Rito (2006) says, “perhaps the most reliable indicator of the
health of any tradition is the extent to which practitioners have the confidence and cultural
capital to innovate” (p. 134). While Te Rito was referring specifically to the innovation of whatu
materials, I suggest an innovation in whatu theory asserts a confidence in, and autonomy over,
the knowledge base necessary to keep knowledge and practices vital. This research celebrates the
highly technical skill of whatu and the aesthetically beautiful taonga that it creates and seeks to
move this to a theorisation of whatu kākahu as storied and embodied expressions of living as
Māori women.

Summary

This chapter has further laid out some of the key ideas and language that underpin this research
project. A relationship between whatu as practice and whatu as eyes was introduced beginning
with my daughter’s pūrākau which provided me with a moment of oho through her fluid bi-
literate understanding of the term whatu. It was in this moment that I recognised whatu as multi-
layered, complex and as containing within it the most appropriate methodological approach for
this research.

More than two hundred years of written observations of whatu practice have been both useful
and problematic to reclaiming and restoring what we now know about whatu. Ethnographic
recordings determined the naming of Māori material culture as they sought to observe and record
the ‘new world’ and satisfy the West’s avid curiosity for the exotic South Pacific. I suggest that
the methodology that underpinned early observations was driven by a conscious, and no doubt
well-intentioned, desire to record ‘the new and exotic’ before it became extinct. It is however,
the more covert ideology of colonial rule and the might of the Empire that has had the most far-
reaching effects on the knowledge of whatu that has been retained.

While detailed sketches and descriptions offer contemporary kaiwhatu an insight into past
practices, much of this information should be viewed through a decolonising lens that recognises
the gendered and colonial context from which it emerged. Re-complexifying whatu terminology, for example, recognises that colonial representations of whatu and whatu kākahu emerged from a particular time. While these early accounts have, in some way, contributed to the survival and revival of whatu, they are largely absent of female voice and do not record the purpose and intentions embodied within whatu kākahu.

Finally, this chapter reviewed the work that has been done to revitalise the art of whatu and with it the exciting field of literature that is beginning to develop around whatu (and more broadly Māori arts) as contributing to positive transformational change for Māori and in particular, Māori women. The following chapter brings the aho of reclaiming and re-complexifying whatu language and ideas to a theorisation of whatu as methodology – an approach I call Whatuora.
Chapter Six: Whatuora Methodology

Whatuora, the methodology for this thesis, is laid out in this chapter. I begin by locating my research approach within the field of Māori and Indigenous methodologies by discussing Indigenous methodologies as ‘old’ sets of knowledge that are being applied in ‘new’ and theoretical ways in research. Reframing methodology in this way is an attempt to re-complexify the idea of methodology as broad and inclusive, and an integral part of “living life every day according to certain values” (Kovach, 2009, p. 62) rather than a term exclusively couched within academic language and writing.

Indigenous methodologies have existed in various forms for thousands of years. These theoretical sets of knowledge supported great technological and creative advances enabling Indigenous communities around the world to explore, adapt and advance their technologies. In this chapter I explain how Kaupapa Māori, as a politicising agent, activates whatu as Mātauranga Māori (practice as knowledge and vice versa) thereby providing the key theoretical underpinnings of Whatuora methodology. I return to the ideas of moe, oho and ora, concepts introduced in Part One, explained here in Part Two and which serve to frame the analysis of the women’s stories in Part Three.

Re-complexifying methodology

At its broadest, methodology can be understood as a way of being in, thinking about and interacting with the world – the thinking behind the doing (Kovach, 2009). How we approach planting a garden, for example, or how we raise our children has a methodology to it based on our experiences and knowledge, values and beliefs. We test theories and discuss problems that arise. We may seek out ‘expert’ advice or consult literature. Often our personal methodology, our way of being in the world and how this has come to be, is not examined. How often do we think about where our knowledge, beliefs and theories emerge from or consider the impact that our experiences, upbringing or environment have on the decisions we make for ourselves and, in turn, our tamariki and mokopuna?

Methodology, as an element of research, is an immutable aspect of academic scholarship. It refers to the concepts and theories that frame the way research is conducted; in a thesis, it refers to the conscious articulation of the concepts and theories, knowledges and influences that
underpin research as a process for creating ‘new’ knowledge. Elizabeth Grierson, a professor of art and philosophy at RMIT University who writes about creative arts methodologies, utilises a weaving metaphor to describe methodology as that which “contains the limits and holds the research strands in place as the researcher weaves the textures of new knowledge” (2007, p. 5).

In this chapter, I give methodology some ‘re-complexifying’ attention to explain my theorisation of Whatuora methodology.

Over the last forty years, Indigenous research methodologies within an academic context have taken up critical Indigenous theories that seek to re-claim, re-frame and re-present the lived realities of Indigenous peoples. Rather than accept a Western academic definition of methodology, I am encouraged by other Māori and Indigenous researchers to look to our own ‘ways of being’ in the world based on our own methodologies to create new knowledges that will serve us in our current lived realities. By re-claiming methodology as an aspect of being Māori and Indigenous that has for centuries served our people and allowed them to flourish, we are re-framing how methodology can be viewed both within academic paradigms and beyond.

**Indigenous methodologies**

Indigenous methodologies in their broadest sense are informed by bodies of knowledge handed down, retained, evolved and adapted over generations to meet the changing needs of the people. More recently Indigenous methodologies have evolved to fit a contemporary reality shaped by the struggle to resist the assault of colonisation through projects of cultural reclamation. Leah Abayao (2006), an academic who works in Indigenous Peoples’ education, environmental studies, ethno-medicine and Indigenous methodology, defines the latter as being:

[A]cquired over generations by communities as they interact with the environment. It encompasses technology, social, economic, philosophical, learning, and governance systems, and is not just about woven baskets and handicrafts for tourists per se. It is about excavating the technologies such as looms, textiles, jewellery, and brass work manufacture, exploring indigenous technological knowledge and knowledge transmission systems, and recasting the potentialities they represent. (2006, p. 180)

Margaret Kovach (2009), a North American Professor in education of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry explains Indigenous methodologies as ways of knowing that are both practical and capable of transmitting values and knowledge. She says:
Indigenous ways of knowing encompass the spirit of collectivity, reciprocity, and respect. It is born of the land and locality of the tribe. Indigenous knowledge ought to be purposeful and practical. It is born of the necessity to feed, clothe, and transmit values. As such the method of knowing must be practical and purposeful. Indigenous ways of knowing are organic with emphasis on reciprocity and humour. These ways of knowing are both cerebral and heartfelt. As the elders say, ‘If you have important things to say, speak from the heart’. (Kovach, 2009, p. 28)

Pihama (2001) reminds us that the idea of research and methodology did not arrive with the coloniser. Rather, Indigenous peoples have for centuries engaged in their own forms of methodological research to test theories and advance thinking:

As Māori we have a history of investigation. It is an ancient history of exploration, of navigation, not solely in the physical domain, but in ways that reach throughout the many dimensions of Te Ao Māori. These are all forms of research, they are all ways within which our people have developed knowledge and have located ourselves in the wider world. (p. 47)

Consider for example the sophisticated navigational systems developed by Polynesian sea voyagers that enabled them to criss-cross the Pacific Ocean, technologies later regarded as superior to those of the Western world at the time (Evans, 2015). Navigational methods and methodologies such as these required high-level theorisation, research, development and testing in order for return voyages across vast expanses of ocean to succeed.

Indigenous methodologies hold sophisticated systems of knowledge that guide how we move through and relate to the world, how we learn and are taught, how we experience life and pass down knowledge. Historically these ways of being were often practical and purposeful – such as the knowledge required to create clothing and shelter. They also embraced a holism that included the spiritual, relational and emotional elements of transmitting values and knowledge, making these methodologies “both cerebral and heartfelt” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 28). For the past few decades Indigenous people have sought to reclaim knowledge systems that, in many cases, have been disrupted or dismantled, in order to create transformative change that will advance their current conditions and ensure cultural continuity into the future.
Indigenous research methodologies

Indigenous research methodologies emerged in the 1970s as part of a wider global movement of resistance and reclamation (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2005). Indigenous researchers sought to re-centre Indigenous beliefs and privilege Indigenous knowledge systems in an effort to “decolonize dominant research methodologies” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 31) by theorising Indigenous approaches as valid, robust and rigorous forms of inquiry. In her book, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (2012), Bagele Chilisa says that Indigenous ways of being have always been practical and purposeful as well as critical and theoretical. She contends that Indigenous methodologies are decolonising and work to create legitimate academic space where the Indigenous disenfranchised and dispossessed, can reclaim, restore and re-present – seeing with their own eyes their history of colonisation (Chilisa, 2012). Indigenous research methodologies therefore are formed in resistance to Western colonial thought and further resist the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous research methodologies are conceptual frameworks that stem from Indigenous knowledge systems and are theorised as an approach to research. Rangimārie Rose Pere (1991), for example, utilised the wisdom of Te Wheke (the octopus) within academic discourse to explain her perspective on multi-dimensional ways of being and James Graham (2005) theorised whakapapa (the Māori concept of genealogy as layer upon layer of generations) as methodology to explain how knowledge is connected, organised, stored and created. Indigenous research methodologies are not a recipe (Kovach, 2009) or process to follow to conduct research. Instead they offer a sophisticated system of knowledge and concepts rich with the potential to help us understand and transform our current lived realities.

Indigenous methodologies run the risk of becoming appropriated ‘culturally responsive’ add-ons to research. Jacobs (2008) and Kovach (2009), for example, discuss how the Native American tradition of talking circles is sometimes ‘added in’ as a research methodology but not integrated fully throughout the research project. In a Māori research context this occurs when Kaupapa Māori methodology is included and even written about as a section of a research project but then disappears through the methods, analysis and conclusions. I suggest that to theorise and/or apply an Indigenous research methodology requires a commitment to understanding and engaging in that set of knowledge at a theoretical, practical and personal level.

Indigenous research methodologies create space in the Western academy to view and conduct research through an Indigenous lens. Kovach (2009) says that, in her early academic career there
was a paucity of theoretical literature, particularly on human subject research, that centred Indigenous conceptual frameworks and tribal knowledge. Kovach, amongst others, encourages Indigenous researchers to look to our own systems of knowledge to develop methodologies to investigate our own problems and make visible the way we see the world. Instead of looking outside of Mātauranga Māori for a research methodology to explore a relationship between Māori women and whatu kākahu, it seemed obvious that a methodology for this work should come from within whatu.

Indigenous research methodologies position Indigenous knowledge within academic research. Often activated by a politics of resistance, Indigenous researchers using Indigenous approaches speak back to Western research practices that marginalise Indigenous knowledge. Instead Indigenous methodologies work to re-centre, re-claim and re-present Indigenous knowledge as a valid and legitimate academic approach to research and, more importantly, as capable of contributing to positive transformations for Indigenous people.

**Through the ‘eyes’ of the researcher**

In many Māori and Indigenous methodologies, researchers are culturally bound to articulate through which ‘eyes’ they view the research. What or who should be included or excluded in the work, how data are interpreted, analysed and presented, and for what purpose, means that how the researcher locates herself in relationship to the research is an important methodological consideration. Chilisa (2012) says that “traditional social sciences have stubbornly refused to interrogate how we as researchers create our own texts” (p. 14). I agree that revealing the researchers’ relationships and intentions, and the theoretical underpinnings of the research through its methodology, is as important as the methods, data collection, analysis and conclusions which is why chapter one laid out in detail the stories that led me to this research.

Locating oneself within the research goes against a Western scientific paradigm that prefers the researcher to be objective and disembodied from that which they are investigating. A whatu methodology places importance on the researcher’s location in, and relationship to, the research, because it is through the researcher’s eyes that the research will be filtered, analysed and presented. A theorised whatu methodology insists that the whatu – the eyes through which the researcher ‘sees’ the research – are made visible and interrogated.

A further aspect to Māori and Indigenous researcher location is that of responsibility and accountability. Graham Smith (2000) warns against researchers becoming disconnected from
their communities and instead performing only to the demands of the academy. Hawaiian academic Julie Kaomea (2001) describes working in her own community as her responsibility or *kuleana* to actively work towards remedying those problems that she uncovered. In choosing a Kaupapa Māori research agenda I understand that I have an on-going responsibility to follow through with the wāhine in this research to honour their contribution. Part of that responsibility is to continue to support them on their whatu journey for however long it takes for them to complete their kākahu and beyond as we maintain those relationships that initially bound us together.

**Whatu as Mātauranga Māori**

Whatu is a set of knowledge contained within Mātauranga Māori – a modern term for a body or a continuum of knowledge with Polynesian origins (Royal, 2011). Described as a term that places importance on Māori histories, knowledge and language, Mātauranga Māori refers to Māori ways of thinking, doing, and acting (Doherty, 2009). Māori traditionally did not view knowledge as a discrete phenomenon, but instead as ‘know how’ (Royal, 2011) – an external expression of internalised knowing.

Wiremu Doherty, a Tuhoe scholar who leads Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi in Aotearoa New Zealand, says that, while core values and principles held by Māori are expressed within Mātauranga Māori, their application or action is not. The application, he says “rests within the context of iwi and their unique environments (Doherty, 2009, p. 67). He warns against an assumption that Māori knowledge, like identity, is a homogenous set of practices and ideas, instead reiterating that, while Mātauranga Māori provides many commonalities in language, traditions and beliefs it also provides the space to contextualise and innovate Mātauranga Māori to meet the localised needs of whānau and hapū.

Royal’s insights into Mātauranga Māori and the creation of ‘new’ knowledge through wānanga are useful to this project. According to Royal (2011), Māori did not traditionally view knowledge as a discrete phenomenon. He says that there was no conscious understanding that knowledge – as we understand the concept in academic terms – existed. Instead, Māori ancestors thought of knowledge as ‘know how’, for example the ‘know how’ necessary to build houses, fish, live sustainably from the land. Royal (2011) argues that we do not need to defend or justify Mātauranga Māori – “it simply is what it is” (Royal, 2011, p. 10). Similarly, we cannot make unsubstantiated claims for what Mātauranga Māori contains. Instead Royal encourages Māori to
take up the threads of what has been retained in Mātauranga Māori, “building a bridge between pre-existing knowledge and new knowledge” (Royal, 2011, p. 11) by theorising what remains of the old knowledge in ‘new’ and useful ways.

If mātauranga is knowledge, then to be mātau (knowledgeable or wise) was to be able to express skills and abilities to do certain things understood as an external expression of this internalised ‘know how’. To demonstrate newly gained knowledge in traditional times, students would be required to demonstrate their knowledge of a particular field such as bush lore, medicine or creative arts such as whatu through an external expression or demonstration of that knowledge.

Traditionally, the accumulation of knowledge for knowledge’s sake was not the goal. Gaining wisdom, according to Māori Marsden (2003), is less about the amount of knowledge that you accumulate and more about the internalisation and theorisation of that knowledge. He says that:

[A] truly educated person is not one who knows a bit about everything, or everything about something, but one who is truly in touch with his centre. He will be in no doubt about his convictions, about his view on the meaning and purpose of life, and his own life will show a sureness of touch that stems from inner clarity. This is true wisdom. (Marsden, 2003, p. 28)

Through colonial contact and its ensuing engagement with Western understandings of knowledge, knowledge production, and acquisition, mātauranga is now commonly associated with literacy, education and ‘the pursuit of knowledge’. For example the Māori name for the Ministry of Education in Aotearoa New Zealand – Te Tāhū o te Mātauranga – can be literally translated as ‘the central ridge pole of knowledge’. There is a danger that such applications of the term mātauranga simplify the idea of knowledge into a discrete and narrow meritocratic definition of individuals pursuing knowledge to gain qualifications.

Around the world and throughout history societies have fought to maintain the traditions, cultures and histories – their mātauranga – with which they identify. As Royal (2011) points out, “traditions and cultures offer people an orientation to life and a way of identifying themselves. They provide wisdom and guidance when faced with dilemmas” (Royal, 2011, p. 4). Creating whatu kākahu through a Whatuora methodology, for example, provides a body of knowledge with which to connect and theorise, bringing an ‘old’ set of practices and beliefs to life in a ‘new’ way.
Awakening ‘new’ knowledge from the ‘old’

Theorising Mātauranga Māori in new ways serves to awaken our creative potential, enabling Māori to take control of and create our own solutions. Royal (2011) suggests that Māori are moving from a time “dominated by the quest for social justice and cultural restoration” (p. 51) to a place where we are more capable than ever to awaken our creativity. In doing so, opportunities exist to theorise Mātauranga Māori in ways that are meaningful and useful to transform our present realities. As a rich source of potential solutions to issues that continue to oppress Māori, Royal encourages Māori to draw the rich knowledge and experiences of the past through into our modern experience, in a sense awakening ‘new’ knowledge from the ‘old’ through theorisation that seeks solutions to current questions.

The world for Māori has changed radically since their arrival to Aotearoa New Zealand. Physical survival and protection from the elements, for most Māori, is no longer our main challenge (although Māori continue have a disproportionately high representation in negative poverty and homelessness statistics). As Royal (2011) reminds us:

… our knowledge today of traditional Māori knowledge is fragmentary and concerns a world in history … a ‘way’ forward for Mātauranga Māori is to discover within it certain perspectives and ideas that assist us in our contemporary experience. (Royal, 2011, p. 89)

The need and desire to innovate, learn and adapt can be seen as a taonga tuku iho or legacy that has been passed down. Think back to the advancements in technology and literacy that tūpuna Māori would have experienced in a relatively short time. Evolutions of thinking have been consciously forged by our tūpuna so that other Māori voices can add their insights and interpretations. As such Mātauranga Māori has no beginning and no end (S. M. Mead, 1997). Instead each generation is charged with refining and enhancing this knowledge to serve its people.

Theorising existing Mātauranga Māori deepens its meaning and relevance. Much of the knowledge retained, of whatu for example, is via a colonised and gendered lens and therefore new and innovative ways of viewing and understanding that knowledge are required. Royal says, “creativity and innovation deepens traditions and pre-existing knowledge rather than weakens them … because in order for an innovation to take place, one has to fully understand all that has gone before” (Royal, 2011, p. 63). Although it is not possible to know ‘all that has gone before’, I argue that theorising Mātauranga Māori requires a deep theoretical and practical engagement.
with the practice, a commitment to contribute to its academic body of knowledge, and importantly, retain relationships to the artistic practice and its people.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori academics are theorising Mātauranga Māori in new and innovative ways in research. Māori academic Jenny Lee (2008), for example, theorises pūrākau as pedagogy, method and methodology in her encounters of Māori teachers’ work in secondary schools (2008). In the field of Māori art there is exciting doctoral research being undertaken by Donna Campbell and Kahutoi Te Kanawa (2008, 2011) both recognised internationally as experts in traditional Māori arts, as they theorise tāniko and rāranga as research methodologies. Campbell and Te Kanawa’s in-depth practical expertise in their respective fields, bound together with their academic work in teaching and research, sees a rare intertwining of ‘old’ know how with innovative ideas grounded in a politically active Kaupapa Māori approach and seen through Mana Wāhine eyes. Their work to transform, reclaim, restore and represent ‘old’ Māori knowledge in their respective fields in ‘new’ ways that seek positive change is inspiring and contributes to Māori artistic practices, Māori methodologies and to a wider Kaupapa Māori agenda.

Awakening the creative potential within Mātauranga Māori through theorisation seeks to contribute new ideas to Mātauranga Māori. Rather than undermine traditional Mātauranga Māori, creative theorisation is designed to be grounded in it and must remain responsive, relevant and meaningful (Royal, 2011). As Royal says, the goal of theorisation:

…is not the creation of yet new knowledge for its own sake but rather to develop a way of encountering the world that upholds life, deepens our relationships with the natural world and with each other (p. 48)

It is important that our knowledge does not become rigid and static, but instead utilises creative innovation to develop and address the needs and issues of our contemporary realities.

Where Māori once used our innovative skills to create clothing as protection from the elements, we are now theorising new and innovative ways with which to protect ourselves from the omnipotent threat of cultural assimilation to our ability to live as Māori now and in the future. It is the legacy of innovation, adaptation and theorisation, whilst retaining those key tenets within Mātauranga Māori that provides a precedent to theorise the Mātauranga Māori of whatu, as Whatuora methodology.
Activating Mātauranga Māori with Kaupapa Māori theory

While core values and principles held by Māori are expressed within Mātauranga Māori, how they might be applied or acted on in our current context is not (Doherty, 2009). Whatu, seen ‘simply’ as a creative practice, is a body of knowledge that evolved from technologies to produce clothing. To theorise this body of knowledge as research methodology requires that it be twined together with theory in order to transform it from a body of practical knowledge into research methodology. Theorising Mātauranga Māori as methodology requires an activating force to move the knowledge from ‘know how’ to an idea or activity that is driven by a politicising agenda. In the case of this research, that motivation is the desire to reclaim and restore self-determined expressions of living as Māori women. The political activation to transform whatu from an artistic practice to a research methodology is provided by Kaupapa Māori theory.

Kaupapa Māori theory is not a study of Mātauranga Māori nor is it a synonym for Mātauranga Māori (Pohatu, 2003; Royal, 2011; G. H. Smith, 2003d). Mātauranga Māori as a body of knowledge does not necessarily have a specific intention. Those working with Mātauranga Māori may not be as conscious of Kaupapa Māori’s emancipatory goals of transformation and liberation as those working to forward a Kaupapa Māori agenda (Royal, 2011; G. H. Smith, 2003b). As Royal points out, “those interested in advancing Mātauranga Māori study ways in which Mātauranga Māori explains aspects of existence” (Royal, 2011, p. 71). In my view, when Mātauranga Māori (the know how) is twined together with Kaupapa Māori theory (the activating force) a decolonising Kaupapa Māori methodology is potentialised.

Apart from the current methodological doctoral work being developed by Donna Campbell (rāranga) and Kahutoi Te Kanawa (tāniko), there is little published literature that twines methodology and whatu together as a research approach. There are a few examples of whatu kākahu being used conceptually to provide theoretical frameworks for research (Martin, 2012; Timu-Parata, 2010; Walker et al., 2009). For example, Dr Lesley Rameka (2012), a teacher and researcher in early childhood education, used whatu kākahu as a metaphorical framework for her doctoral thesis, though she did not appear to engage in detail with the language or practice of whatu. At this time there appears to be no academic work that theorises whatu as research methodology.

A desire to theorise Mātauranga Māori as an approach to research is not a new activity. I follow in the footsteps of other Māori women whose creativity work in academia, the arts, social
movements and raising whānau have evolved to meet the changing social, political and environmental demands of their current conditions. For example, when Māori arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand they did not abandon their traditional knowledge but instead retained those sets of knowledge considered important and useful, drawing on this knowledge to tackle the challenges they faced adapting to a new environment. Māori women now take up this legacy of creative innovation as we continue to whatu those crucial threads of cultural continuity from the past, into our present, for the future.

From the intertwining and multiple theoretical threads of Indigenous Mana Wāhine methodologies, Whatuora emerges as a Kaupapa Māori research methodology. The following section ‘unpicks’ the threads of Whatuora methodology, teasing apart the different strands of theory and practices that, when twined together, combine to form its theoretical and methodological aho matua (primary threads).

**Whatuora – a Kaupapa Māori research methodology**

I have argued that developing and applying a methodology for research should stem from a deep engagement with the history, knowledge, language, culture and beliefs from which that methodology emerges. My desire to theorise a Whatuora methodology comes from many years of engaging in Māori creative practice and experiencing its embodied transformative potential. It is because of my experience that I feel able to develop this theory – that is, theorising my experience rather than attempting to experience the theory. I read, with interest, academic literature that utilises Māori weaving metaphors and refers to weaving and ‘cloaks’ or ‘korowai’ as conceptual frameworks yet the writers often appear to have little practical experience of weaving or whatu. While the analogous metaphor of weaving and ‘cloaks’ has some value as a means to express or explain a concept, the deeper understanding of rāranga and whatu, and importantly its language, is often missed. While these expressions of whatu and rāranga serve to celebrate and make visible our creative practices, I am critically cautious when Mātauranga Māori is used as vague metaphors that simplify and commodify our knowledge.

The Aotearoa New Zealand education system is rife with Māori metaphor. It is often, I suspect, a well-intentioned attempt to express bicultural aspirations. Māori may even be consulted and valuable knowledge shared. But when Māori metaphor is used, absent of its language and cultural context, and becomes appropriated by Western institutions, the metaphor is inevitably simplified and the original intent lost. Take for example the Early Childhood Curriculum of
Aotearoa New Zealand – Te Whāriki – which refers to an intricately woven ‘mat’ made of harakeke. This is a beautiful document, enriched with Māori imagery and the metaphor of the many strands that comprise a whāriki. As a weaver and educationalist I am able to bring my experience of both fields to the metaphor to understand it as an integrated ‘woven’ curriculum with a strong bi-cultural foundation. While metaphors have the power to reveal culturally embedded messages (Barrett, 2013) how do those with little or no understanding of whāriki interpret the metaphor? Might they think of a ‘mat’ as something you wipe you feet on when you enter a house? Is it the place where children sit in school? The paradigm and experiences that the reader brings to the metaphor are crucial and causes me to question if the aspirations and intentions of those who worked to create this unique curriculum can be realised in the Western institutions in which it is pre-dominantly delivered.

**Moe, oho and ora**

The Māori ideas of moe, oho and ora – introduced in Part One - play an important conceptual role in this thesis. Understood as states of being, moe is a state of dormant potential, oho is an awakening or conscientisation, and ora, as discussed in Part One, encompasses ideas of holistic wellness. Important to note is that these states of being are not linear progressions that advance from one to the other with a final transformative destination as its goal. Similar to Graham Smith’s idea of transformative praxis (G. H. Smith, 2003b), movement through moe, oho and ora are cyclic and iterative, can be engaged in at any point and even simultaneously. The following section ‘unpicks’ the threads of moe, oho and ora in relation to Whatuora. The intention is to add another layer of meaning to these ideas as well as providing a set of language that continues throughout this thesis and is drawn through to the analysis of the women’s stories in Part Three.

**Moe – creative potential**

The term moe is defined as dormant, asleep, inactive or unconscious (Ryan, 1995; Williams, 1997) physically, emotionally and/or spiritually. A state of moe can be viewed as expressing negative emotions of disconnection, non-participation, isolation, the inability to connect to, or interact with, and is often related to negative feelings of hurt, pain, neglect and sorrow. Conversely, moe can also mean a safe place of reflection, a time to think, a process and space of dormant potential (Pohatu, 2011). When we are asleep, for example we may be physically inactive yet we are dreaming, processing thoughts and feelings or clearing the mind in order to better deal with a challenge. How often do we awaken in the middle of the night with a brilliant idea or dream up a solution to a problem having had the opportunity to ‘sleep on it’? Moe is not
used in this research to mean ‘asleep’ or ‘inactive’ but instead as being in a state of reflection or dormant potential.

The idea of dreaming as a state of dormant potential is not uncommon amongst Indigenous people. For Aboriginal Australians, the Dreamtime is an integral part of their Indigenous methodologies. While the English translation of Dreamtime is incapable of capturing the deep esoteric meaning behind the idea, Dreamtime might be described as a time and space that encompasses stories of creation and how people connect to all things human and non-human (Creative Spirits, 2015). Of relevance to this thesis is the idea that Dreaming helps to reinforce identity for Indigenous Australians. One source claims that Dreaming gives Aboriginal Australians their “identity, dictates how they express their spirituality and tells which other Aboriginal people they are related to” (Creative Spirits, 2015, paragraph four). It is through ceremony when in a trance-like state – understood perhaps as being in a state of moe – that Aboriginal Australians connect to their Dreaming and in doing so come into relationship with their ancestors.

Dreaming as an element of moe could be considered a decolonising process. Poka Laenui, a Hawaiian law scholar of Human Rights, Hawaiian sovereignty and decolonisation, considers dreaming as a crucial phase of decolonisation (Laenui, 2000) stating that, through dreaming, Indigenous people find a safe space to express, consider and debate “the full panorama of possibilities” (Laenui, 2000, p. 155). The notion of moe is forwarded here as an agentic space to reflect and consider possibilities, brimming with inherent potential, aspirations and possibilities for the future.

I think about moe in relation to whakapapa – that inherent potential that exists within every Māori person. For some Māori their whakapapa may lay dormant – that is, their whakapapa is not actively engaged with or acknowledged in terms of how they identify as Māori, but it is never extinguished. How often do we hear stories of Māori adults reclaiming or re-discovering Māori relationships by investigating their whakapapa connections to people and places, in a way awakening that whakapapa that had lain dormant. For some of the women in this research the impetus to actively engage their whakapapa to ‘live as Māori’ came through an activating moment in time or experience – what they came to describe as an oho or awakening.
Oho – a conscious awakening

Oho means to awaken, sometimes suddenly, to become conscious or to jump into action (Ryan, 1995). A state of oho includes being curious, interested, awakened and demonstrating a keenness to participate, interact in and engage (Pohatu, 2011). Oho can be understood as that moment, action or impetus that compels one to ‘awaken’ from a state of moe – moving from actions and expressions of inactive potential to actions and expressions of proactivity. An awakening to living as Māori for example could be a profound moment in time, a clear conscious thought or it could be a gradual semi-conscious set of events or experiences that lead one to make an active and political decision to not only be Māori, by virtue of having whakapapa, but to actively live as Māori.

The idea of oho, or conscientisation as a decolonising activity, is a popular idea in Māori and Indigenous movements. Indigenous scholars around the world enthusiastically took up the critical resistance theories forwarded in the 1970s as tools to address oppression and colonisation. Critical theories such as those forwarded by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1972), discuss the complexities of hegemony, oppression and conscientisation in the context of teaching literacy and subsequently political consciousness to the oppressed citizens in his homeland of Brazil. Freire’s critical theory was of particular interest to Māori academics such as Graham Smith, who extends on Freire’s ideas, to create transformative change for Māori.

When, how and why the Māori women in this research became conscientised with a desire to reclaim notions of living as Māori is unique to the individual. An experience, person or event may provide a catalyst to re-engage in te ao Māori (Pohatu, 2011). For some of the wāhine in this research, becoming a mother awoke within them an omnipresent desire to reclaim a secure Māori identity for themselves and their tamariki. For others it was an opportunity to experience the “wisdoms and decodings” (Pohatu, 2011, p. 6) embodied within Māori-centred activities such as whatu, kapahaka, karanga, waka ama or te reo that ignited a desire to engage further with reclaiming knowledge interrupted through colonisation. For some of the wāhine the aspiration to make a kākahu lay dormant, a latent desire to connect to, and embody, an understanding of living as Māori through the creation of a tangible taonga tuku iho.

Moving from a state of moe to oho for some Māori can be an anxious and fraught part of weaving their life’s ‘kākahu’. It takes courage to move from moe (positions of potential, non-participation and often isolation) to an activation of oho: a sense of belonging through inclusion,
involvement and participation (Pohatu, 2011). Pohatu identifies this transition as a significant demonstration of personal courage:

As people strive to face and manage their fear, so do they locate inner strength and understand more about their personal courage and therefore the potential to proactively engage and advance. (Pohatu, 2011, p. 6)

To live as Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand requires courage as hostilities and ignorance of things Māori continue in both explicit and implicit ways. As Pohatu (2011) points out, each person’s reason to engage in the Māori world is “personal, significant and individually justified. Every context requires its own form of courage that has to be discovered by participants” (p. 6). Māori who choose to ‘live as Māori’ engage in a radical re-visioning of the past and a reclaiming of the present contributing to Māori cultural continuity for their children – the future. Finding and enabling that courage is theorised here as transitioning from a state of moe to oho.

As well as fear, other emotions including grief, anger and resentment can follow the awakening and recovery of cultural identity (Laenui, 2000). For the women in the research whānau, the state of oho became a self-perpetuating cycle of learning, discovery and reclamation. As they engaged further and more deeply with the Mātauranga Māori of whatu they learnt new and interesting things about themselves as Māori women.

Activities to reclaim and restore see people move between states of moe and oho. Moments of awakening develop out of what Pohatu (2011) might describe as “an obvious purpose for being, clarity of the past with its legacies and a willingness to actively engage in the forging of a future, with the range of relationships we are part of” (Pohatu, 2011, p. 7). Becoming conscious of our physical health for example and making active and appropriate changes to diet and exercise or actively working towards healthy and positive relationships are both examples of engaging a transforming praxis that awakens the conscious as it strives for holistic and connected wellbeing or ora.

**Ora – living well and connected lives**

Ora is a holistic and inter-connected understanding of wellbeing. In line with Durie’s model of Te Whare Tapawhā the physical, spiritual, psychological and relational aspects of wellbeing are, ideally, interconnected and equally nurtured to exist in a state of ora. For example, someone may have excellent physical health but struggle to maintain healthy relationships. Conversely, another
person’s poor physical health may have a negative effect on their psychological and relational wellbeing.

Ora can be expressed in diverse ways. Pohatu (2011) suggests a person in a state of ora shows signs of being highly motivated, active and alert, content, committed and engaged. They may be more likely to participate and support cultural activities or indeed lead from the front. Applied to notions of living as Māori in this research, ora is understood as being culturally connected to place, people and identity, living a fulfilled life, confident to participate positively in te ao Māori and the wider world and engaged and committed to ensuring the cultural continuity of living as Māori into the future through our tamariki and mokopuna.

To make a statement that ora encompasses the above is not intended as a definition or benchmark. The tendency with claim-making or ‘definitions’ is to insist that something means one thing, and to simultaneously assume that it cannot mean something else. The women in this research were emphatic that ora, like living as Māori, is a fluid and contextual concept that is both lived and aspirational; is expressed in multiple and complex ways; is iterative and can be engaged and disengaged with in a wide variety of ways. While we were able to come to some consensus on what ora as an aspect of living as Māori might mean broadly, we all agreed that we each engage in these ideas in multiple ways. Importantly, being well in a state of ora and living as Māori was unique to us, not a set of expectations used to compare and contrast – a tendency that many of us agreed should be resisted.

The pursuit of ora or wellness is not an end goal. Indeed to be well requires a constant engagement with, and healing of, all parts of one’s being. The active verb ‘whakaora’ means to rescue, resuscitate, revive, restore to health, cure, heal (Williams, 1997). An aspiration to revitalise te reo Māori in our whānau by enrolling our children in Māori-medium educational settings or making significant financial and time commitments to learn te reo as adults are examples of reclamation to heal and restore wellness. An active process, healing demands a personal response from the individual (M. Durie, 2001b), a sometimes-radical determination to resist dominant cultural norms and instead engage in restorative processes with holistic transformational outcomes.

Whatuora as a radical decolonising methodology

Radical ideas, methodologies and approaches are necessary to decolonise our current conditions. If ‘radical’ – another politicised word that deserves some re-complexifying attention – means to
change from the accepted, to go beyond the norm, or advocate for fundamental or revolutionary change, then Whatuora can be seen as a radical Kaupapa Māori methodology. Whatuora methodology seeks to push the boundaries of whatu beyond its established understanding as ‘eye’ or ‘finger twining’ to a theorised approach to research that expounds a way of ‘seeing’ the world through decolonising eyes.

There was not an established methodology that appeared to me as appropriate for a project that explored living as Māori women and whatu kākahu. In some research projects, methodology is explained in a small section within a chapter where established and accepted methodological approaches are drawn upon then related to the research project. Methodology in this project is a far more diffuse, interwoven idea: theorising a Whatuora methodology is concerned with creating a methodology, and in turn methods, from within the embodied knowledge of whatu. In theorising Whatuora I am weaving together a methodology that emerges from Māori knowledge and is activated by Kaupapa Māori theory as a means to decolonise our vision as Māori women.

Whatuora asserts that the ability to ‘see clearly’ or to ‘see well’ requires an active and critical reflection of our past experiences in order to better understand what and how we view our present. Applied to this research, Whatuora is a lens through with which to ‘see’ the pūrākau and experiences of Māori women living as Māori. While Whatuora has been developed concurrently with this research it is not intended to remain in this Māori arts and education space but has the potential to transcend a number of academic fields, educational settings and contexts. While the concept emerges from within the Māori practice of whatu, the political decolonising lens of Whatuora is both fluid and flexible.

**Summary**

In this chapter I set out to re-complexify notions of methodology by discussing the possibilities that are created when ‘new’ knowledge is awakened from ‘old’ practices. Activated by a Kaupapa Māori politics, new knowledge useful to address our current lived realities is awakened from within the knowledge systems of Mātauranga Māori – a decolonising emancipatory action repeated amongst other Indigenous peoples around the world. By encouraging ‘new’ innovations and ideas that emerge from ‘old’ knowledge systems, Māori and Indigenous researchers are reclaiming knowledge fragmented through colonisation and re-presenting this knowledge in new and useful ways.
Mātauranga Māori is a rich body of knowledge that holds within it embodied understandings possibly far greater than we can currently comprehend. Royal encourages Māori to bring the rich knowledge and experiences of tradition from our tūpuna into our modern experience. As we continue to whatu together those fragments of knowledge that have been retained from Mātauranga Māori into our current realities we continue to strengthen and deepen our understanding of Mātauranga Māori and choose those threads – ideas, ideologies, wisdoms, concepts – from the past to serve us in our present.

Somewhere in the past, someone, probably a woman, decided to drag a mussel shell across a piece of harakeke to extract muka. At some time, collective innovation evolved single whatu into double whatu, which enabled the fashioning of elaborately adorned feathered kākahu. This innovation, while holding fast to knowledge handed down over generations created a new technique that spurred on further adaptation and innovation. It is this legacy of innovation and creativity that is harnessed here to theorise whatu as a radical decolonising methodology used to discuss the experiences of reclaiming, restoring and representing living as Māori women.

Where Part One established the framework and revealed the theoretical underpinnings of this project, Part Two has explored the origins of whatu and the kākahu it produces offering up some language and ideas that both form and inform how this research is shaped. Whatuora, the continuous methodological aho that runs through this research, was ‘unpicked’, revealing and explaining its multiple theoretical threads.

Conceptually Part Two has been the active preparation stage of creating this research kākahu. The most time-consuming and laborious part of the creation process, each strand is harvested, prepared, scrutinised, selected and sorted before the first whatu stitch is made. Throughout the preparation process the kaiwhatu is thinking and doing, reflecting back and visualising forward about how this kākahu will be brought to life.

In Part Three I take up the whenu and aho prepared in Part Two to whatu the women’s stories together. By my hands and through my whatu – as both eyes and practice – I attempt to bind together the women’s experiences of living as Māori women to bring their stories to life in a new form. My intention is to honour the women through their stories using the states of moe, oho and ora as theoretical threads to analyse and discuss the themes that emerged during our research wānanga.
Often the most enjoyable part of creating a whātu kākahu – the process of sitting for months, sometimes years, working with the materials that I have prepared – is simultaneously an immense honour and a responsibility. Once the first row of whātu – the aho tapu – has been laid and the whātu has begun it is difficult to stop and unravel. Hence Parts One and Two have been a slow and careful preparation of ideas and materials for the important analytical discussion work in Part Three.
Part Three:

**Whatu kōrero, Whatuora – twining stories, practising the theory**

Part Three is the thematic analysis section of this thesis. The states of moe, oho and ora – concepts explained in the previous section – are used here to frame and analyse the women’s stories. Each of the three chapters in Part Three foregrounds one of these states of being, beginning with the notion of moe used here, not in its commonly understood form as ‘to sleep’, but instead as being in a contemplative state of reflection in order to heal and recover. My influence in Part Three is through my analysis and selection of the women’s written and spoken stories interweaving words from their journals with data from the transcribed wānanga.

My role as the weaver of this research kākahu is to draw together the voices of the wāhine in a respectful way that honours their stories. As the kaiwhatu I am tasked with selecting strands and feathers, binding these together to create the shape and form of the garment. Similarly, as the researcher it is my role to select and analyse the themes that emerge through the stories in an effort create a coherent analysis. When presented with such quality ‘strands’ (stories), selecting which to use and how to bring them to life is not an easy task. Just as I would if I was weaving a kākahu, those stories not incorporated into this research are not discarded but instead are carefully stored away waiting to be brought to life in another form at another time.

Conceptually, Part Three is the active weaving process of creating this research kākahu. Here the women in this research, including myself, take up those whenu and aho, weaving our stories and experiences deep into the fibres of this research garment, in effect ingraining ourselves into its fabric. With the harvesting, preparation and sorting of materials completed in Part Two, the most satisfying part of whatu begins as I, along with the other women, take up the strands that have been prepared and weave our stories together – row by row, line by line as our research kākahu takes shape.

**Chapter seven:**

**Moe – Reflections on growing up and being Māori**

There are multiple ways to explore the diverse experiences that the wāhine shared. To begin, I have chosen to focus specifically on how the women discuss their experiences of growing up and being Māori. In this reflective state of moe, the wāhine look back on their childhood experiences
of growing up and being Māori through critical, conscientised adult eyes that recognise some of the social influences that informed their development as Māori women. As Kim points out:

My childhood was exposed to extreme settings of what it was to be Māori. In my adulthood I can reflect back to some contradictions and re-examine myself and my impressions with a bit more analysis.

Arndrea agrees that critically reflecting on our experiences, while at times painful, has the potential to heal which is a part of reclaiming and revitalising how she understands herself living as a Māori women.

I think reflection is part of the process and getting all your feelings and emotions on the plate so you can look at it, deal with it and then move forward from there.

Briefly introduced in chapter one, we meet the wāhine again in this chapter as they share their reflections of growing up and being Māori. Each of the wāhine are beautiful writers, with their own style and music in their voice. My intention is to honour their stories by using their words as much as possible as I take up the aho of Whatuora and begin to whatu together their rich recollections of childhood interspersed with my own thematic analysis.

**Growing up Māori**

Jo-Ann, Kim and Esther shared experiences of growing up in Māori communities. Their experiences of being Māori surrounded them as they engaged in marae activities, connected to the land and sea as sources of food and were actively involved with extended whānau.

**Jo-Ann**

A big part of my childhood was spent on the beaches of Matapouri Bay on my grandmother’s whenua. We kids, and cousins roamed from beach to beach in the Ngāti Wai rohe from Matapouri to Tutukākā to Shelly Beach and Ngūguru. Every Christmas and all other school holidays I went to my Nana’s to help her. I was the “little working moko” while my cousins were the ones who were given knowledge by her. It was my duty to look after my Nan, so I just did it without complaining.

I loved my early childhood, I remember from the age of 2 or 3 when we lived in Hikurangi and my Dad worked in forestry and Mum was the homemaker with 6 kids. Happy times until we moved to Auckland. The time I stayed with my Nan was not a happy
time in my life … I remember her tangi. I remember the marae being so full, the surrounding Aunties and Uncle’s houses were emptied out and filled up with mattresses to house everyone.

Jo-Ann was surrounded by tikanga in her daily interactions with her whānau and the environment through the experiences provided by her parents and wider whānau. She was exposed to tikanga Māori such as karakia (prayers) and koha (the cultural practice of securing relationships through reciprocal gifting) although it appears that the reason for these cultural traditions may not always have been made clear:

*Because we were brought up by the beach, before we went swimming or did anything on the beach my Pa would karakia before he would let us go down. When we gathered kaimoana [seafood] we only took what we could eat ourselves “Never be greedy” he would say “save some for Tangaroa”. I would think “who is Tangaroa? – oh he must be another Uncle.*

The sharing or gifting kai was an important cultural practice intended to support extended whānau and to reinforce whānau bonds.

*Whenever we went to visit anyone, we always took kai, we never went with nothing. We always went with something – a packet of biscuits, loaf of bread, cake, bottle of milk.*

Jo-Ann, her siblings and wider whānau regularly participated at a number of their local marae. While these interactions may have seemed boring to her as a child, her early experiences provided Jo-Ann with an invaluable knowledge of tribal stories and an increased connection to the land.

*I remember one particular time when I was five, and on the marae. Whenever my Uncle and my Dad went to the marae WE HAD TO GO WITH THEM and stay and listen to the kōrero. Sometimes they would pull out the whāriki and we knew it was for story time – usually a story about a tūpuna like Tamaho Te Huehue. Other times when the whāriki wasn’t out, it was listening to the politics at the time – BORING-AS FOR KIDS!* [emphasis in original]

Jo-Ann’s recollection is perhaps an example of how her Father and Uncle made deliberate attempts to pass on knowledge, in this instance through stories and history, to the younger generation.
Kim
Kim grew up with no doubt in her mind that she was Māori. She takes a clear and confident position about living as Māori, stating:

*I have been fiercely Māori from my birth with an absolute pride in being Māori.*

Growing up, Kim’s parents made deliberate and conscious decisions for her to live as Māori:

*From my birth, my parents decided that we needed to locate ourselves in a Māori environment that would influence my upbringing and ensure that my identity as Māori would not be left to my DNA and whakapapa, but reinforced by osmosis through my wairua [spiritual self] and my hinengaro [intellectual self]. My parents were schoolteachers. My Dad is a descendant of the Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Tamaterā and Ngāti Raukawa tribes. My Mum is Scottish and was an immigrant to Aotearoa in 1963. By 1964 she was married to a Māori and mother to a wee pelly wally bairn (that was me and this is a Scottish term for pale).*

*I was to spend the first eight years of my life in a small rural Māori community that had retained traditional Māori societal structures and whose activities revolved around the Marae at its centre. This was ‘the Pa’ and I grew up there in the 60’s and 70’s as the only white child.*

Kim expresses an appreciation for the deliberate and conscious choices her parents made for her:

*I tell this story all the time because it is really fresh for me, it’s reoccurring, it’s around all the time. Scottish mother, Māori father, I am the fairest, I have two younger brothers. My parents took me to an all Māori community to raise me to ensure that my identity in being Māori is solid. And it has been. I am in so many forum where I feel so aroha because our own people are having big tangi, having an identity crises, being pouri about what they haven’t got, strung out – it affects their whole lives. I feel like my upbringing was deliberate, we will put you in a space where you will soak it all up by osmosis, and it worked.*

Esther
Born into a large, rurally located family, Esther was raised in a predominantly Māori community surrounded by te reo Māori and tikanga. While being Māori in her home environment was normal, being Māori at school was not:
[Being Māori] was just the norm, i te ao Māori [in the Māori world], being exposed in that context everyday at home on the farm was just the norm. But it was not matched at school. When I went to school I would feel whakamā. When the uniform changed and Mum and Dad couldn't afford the uniform. Can you imagine there must have been 5 of us with the old uniform and everyone else had the new uniform. And my shoes! I had chicken wire to hold them together!

Before going to school we had to do the cleaning and housework. When we came back we would do the same thing. Our neighbours owned a big farm in another part of the local area. They sold it and built a brick and tile house next to us where it used to be all paddocks. I would be at the kitchen washing the dishes and I would look across and see my school friends sitting at their desk in their bedrooms with their lamp doing their homework. Sometimes to get some peace and quiet in a big family I would sit in the bathtub just to get some quiet time to study.

Esther reflects fondly on childhood experiences that connected her intimately to the land through working collectively as a whānau to grow kai for themselves and for their local community. Caring for the collective wellbeing of the wider community is a value that has been handed down to Esther:

Mahi kai [gardening] when we used to do the planting, rows and rows in the paddocks that would feed the whānau. Watermelon, kumara, kamokamo. Our Dad made a whata, laid with ferns and you would store the kumara there.

Going to the farm to pick plums and peaches. If you can imagine it, hearing the cicadas, the heat of the sun and then going for a swim in the creek. Walking along the side of the bank, over the watercress, tuna would come out. We would catch them. I couldn't do that now! To me it was play and education as well. Catch karawaka wai Māori [freshwater crayfish] get the bait and catch a feed.

Arndrea

Born and raised in Auckland, Arndrea discusses being Māori as normal and positive, reinforced through strong whakapapa connections and a deep love of her tribal lands in the Far North.
I was born in Auckland and have spent all my life living here. My mother’s side come from Whatuwhiwhi, located in the Far North on the east coast. We fondly refer to it as ‘the centre of the universe’ aka paradise! It is certainly all of this.

Whatuwhiwhi is on the Karikari Peninsula, a landmass that stretches out to sea and is surrounded by water. In every direction is the moana [ocean]. The beaches are diverse from white sand, clear sparkling warm waters like you find in Fiji to rugged cliff faces, dark deep waters like you would find on the West Coast.

Looking back through my whakapapa almost all my tūpuna came from this place. One tūpuna of special note is Manuel Jose, the Spaniard. Ngāti Porou were not at all sure if they wanted to share their tūpuna with us but there is no denying it – he was in the Far North first! He had two children to my kuia Mereana Ngakohekohe. He then left and went to a settlement in Tikitiki not far from Gisborne where he had 5 wives and the rest as they say is history.

On my father’s side they came from Scotland most likely Ireland originally. My great-grandfather, Dennis McCartney moved his family out to New Zealand. His oldest son my grandfather was named Dennis McCartney. His oldest son, my father, is named Dennis. His oldest daughter, who is named after all these men is Denise McCartney. Her oldest born was named Dennis McCartney. Sadly Dennis joined his tūpuna at birth and the line was broken.

I love my Scottish side. I have started to research this whānau but I am at the beginning stage.

I am the youngest of 5 children. The baby and the spoilt one according to my siblings. I am mum to two amazing, beautiful children who I am so proud of and in love with. My daughter Savanah Rose Welch is my oldest and is 14 years of age at the time I write this. She has a witty way about her. Her humour is very old school Māori woman. She is very strong and humble. She continues to amaze me with her views on issues or topics of the world. Intelligent and protective her nickname is ‘Bearer of justice’ or ‘the silent assassin’. In fact I think she is a taniwha incarnate.

My son, 10-year-old Logan Charles Welch is the youngest and my baby. He is different to Savannah. Shy. Quiet. He has inner strength and is very gentle. He too possesses a quick
wit and the ability to find humour in challenging situations. I call him ‘the protector’. He is not easily ruffled but I have seen him stand up for his friends and cousins to much older bigger boys if he feels that his loved ones have been unfairly treated. He too is a taniwha. One of those gentle, friendly kaitiaki. I feel so blessed to have these two beautiful beings in my life. Right from the start in knew they were special and destined for this world.

For Jo-Ann, Esther, Kim and Arndrea being Māori was an accepted part of their childhood experience that contributes to how they now understand themselves living as Māori women. Luana, Tia, Mum and myself reflect differently on growing up and being Māori.

Tia

Tia introduces her story by placing herself in time and space.

As I write my newborn son lays to my right and my husband to my left. I am cloaked in my tāne. I am here and this journey is a reflective one.

I am here and I am returned home and living in the company of my whakapapa and my tūpuna. This is a story of a woman who left and came home.

Born in Auckland in 1974 to an Australian mother of Russian and English heritage and a Māori Ngāpuhi father. I am one of his 9 tamariki, however, I only grew up with my elder brother. At the age of five my parents separated. The extended whānau were told we were off to see my aunty, but instead my mother, brother and I were on our way to the Auckland International Airport with a final destination of Brisbane, Australia. I never saw my father again until I returned to Aotearoa New Zealand, six years ago, I was 33 years old, he was sick, and a week later he died of cancer.

Born in Māngere, grew up in Australia, lived in London. Returned after the death of her papa to know her whakapapa to celebrate Papatūānuku. All I say is that I remember so much as it moves in waves of memory in tinana and consciousness. So with my son to the right and my tāne to the left I am exactly where I should be … cloaked in aroha and overlooked by the guidance of others.

Tia’s reflection on growing up and being Māori returns her to a moment in time, captured in a photo that she shared at the wānanga, of her as a young child sitting on her father’s lap.
I was living in South Auckland ... my father’s daughter with my Mum, brother and sister. Yet within the space of a year my sister would pass away, my parents [would] separate and we would move to Australia, change our names and begin life with experiences that have paved their own until now.

My mum said she married my father because he was Māori and my father said he married her because she wasn't. I grew up in Australia with a mum who had a lot of pain associated with life in Aotearoa New Zealand and I lived under that umbrella for a really long time. I grew up in a reality thinking that my father didn't love us. That is always going to make me tangi because it is a big reality to grow up in.

I remember being 16 and working in Woolworths in Australia, always working, that is one side of my father coming through. A man came up to me asking, “What’s your last name? “oh Reihana”, “I know a Reihana his name’s Butch”. That was my father. I remember scanning and knowing that he was talking about my father but looking at him blankly and saying” no I don't know him”.

I thought about what it meant for me as a young Māori girl living in Australia and not living in this country. The one thing I knew was that I was not Australian. There was a deep resonating thing in my puku, a deep sense of identity that was romanticized.

I sit here as a Māori woman who didn't grow up in Māoridom at all. I was given quite a negative picture about what it was to be Māori but I held on to something deep inside.

I left home, Aotearoa New Zealand, when I was 7 and then I came back as a 33 year old woman when my dad brought me home – he was sick with cancer. He died a week and a half later. When I talk about ākonga eākongo ... was when I knew I was coming home. Nothing has ever called me stronger.

Growing up in Australia, disconnected from her Māori world, Tia shares her experiences of racial violence and discrimination:

I had one aboriginal friend at school. He was the only aboriginal at our school. His name was Phillip. Phillip lived in what was commonly known as Vegemite Village in our local community. It was a single street on the outskirts of town where the blacks lived. You need not be a rocket scientist to work out some of the harsh realities of being an Indigenous black man in Australia. My own experiences of being a Māori were enough. I
have been called nigger, vegemite, marmite, blackie, brownie, darkie, chocolate and caramel you name it. Probably the most poignant memory is having a friend’s mother slam the door in my face telling me to “get away from our house you dirty black thing”. I was 16 years old, but it had explained why I had never been invited over after school or on weekends. These were the realities of growing up in a remote suburban Australian town.

Luana

Luana shares her childhood reflections of feeling disconnected to being Māori:

I was born in the South Island in a little town called Blenheim. We moved to Ohākea when I was about 6 months old. My parents were in the Air force. We then moved to Auckland during that time, my parents divorced and Dad remarried. We lived with Dad. I was 7 or 8.

Whenever someone asks where I am from I always say Ōpōtiki, although I never lived there I wasn’t even born there. It is where my Dad’s mum is from, where my marae Waiaua is, where I have a lot of family but most importantly where I have a deep connection to.

At 17 I moved to Palmerston North to live with my mum. I was getting into a lot of trouble with the law and needed to remove myself before I ended up either dead or in jail. I went back to Ōpōtiki for the first time since I was a child at the age of 19. That is when my life changed. I reconnected with whānau who showed me what it means to love unconditionally.

I remember a comment my Aunty said to me while I was down there, “You’re like a little lost lamb Luana; you don’t know where you belong”. And she was right. I didn't know where to call home, who I could rely on, who I could tell my darkest fears to, whose shoulder to cry on, who to ask when I needed help, who could push me in the right direction. No one really knew the true Luana, the suicidal thoughts that ran through my head, the dangerous situations I found myself in, the negative image I had of myself when I looked in the mirror.

Luana is mother to two young children:
My children are my world. I would walk over hot coals for them and I want to provide them with all the knowledge and skills to grow up well adjusted, confident and with drive to know that whatever hurdle stands in their way or whatever they want to be in life they can achieve it!

Carol
Mum spent her early childhood years being nurtured by her strong, and in the context of the 1950s, radical, Pākehā grandmother to whom she credits as being the main influence in the early development of her identity, values and beliefs.

We lived with my Pākehā grandmother in a house where lots of other whānau members stayed. I don’t recall much about my engagement with my mother but a huge engagement with my grandmother who worked at Westfield Freezing Works where amongst other things she was an active frontline unionist.

I believe that the concept of manaakitanga, I learnt from my Pākehā grandmother because she ran an open home, whereby if someone was in need she would awhi them. There were many times when she was robbed, stolen from, physically abused. She was a very staunch strong person who had separated from my grandfather many years before. In those days this was unheard of, but she left him, and set up home with my mother and continued working.

Mum does not recall an explicit engagement in Māori community, language or tikanga as a child. Her childhood memories reflect perhaps her family’s aspirations for her to assimilate to the dominant Pākehā urban society of the 1950s:

I don't recall memories of being singled out as a "Māori child" although we were classed as a Māori whānau. It seemed to me that on reflection Māori were invisible ... I must have been invisible as a Māori child .... were we "the white elephants in the room?" Whilst it did not affect me as a child, I can recall hearing disparaging remarks made about my mother being married to a Māori.

Mum recalls attending Māori events with her Māori uncle:

Uncle Lou was Tainui but did not outwardly demonstrate his being Māori and often he was asked if he was a Pacific Islander.
He would take Mum to the Māori Community Centre in central Auckland, a well known hub for urban located Māori to gather in the 50s and 60s (D. M. Winitana, 1959).

As a 4-5 year old I recall going with Uncle Lou to the Māori Community Centre, at Victoria Park although I would not have known that it was a specifically Māori place. I loved being there. It was such a whānau place. Basketball, social evenings, kai, lots of other children to play with.

My grandfather, Mum’s father, worked on the Railways, which meant living in different communities in the Waikato and then in Northland.

In the Waikato we lived in a predominately Pākehā community of farmers. There were not many "visibly" Māori children at Walton Primary School but my Dad worked with other Māori men. Sometimes he would take us to Waharoa to see his workmates and some of them lived in huts with dirt floors. My Mum did not like going there. It was very important for her to show how clean and well kept her house and children were in her mind perhaps “despite” being a Māori whānau.

When I was 12 years old we moved to Taumarere in Northland. It was a very different environment from the Waikato with predominately Māori whānau.

Both Mum’s birth father and atawhai (‘adoptive’) father were Māori although she did not meet her birth father until she was in her forties.

When my matua atawhai came into my life I didn’t even think of him as being Māori. He was just my Dad and we were just a whānau. I always thought I was Māori as I had a Māori Dad. I do recall one time when I was dressed up and someone commented on my being a little Māori girl. As a child I didn’t know what that meant.

I did not know that I was atawhai until I was round 40 years old and was so relieved when I met him [birth father] for the first time, to learn that he was Māori. I am not sure what effect it would have had on me if he had not been Māori. Like what might that do to your self-identity? Oh the dread ... had I been living a lie? Finally I could confirm it. I am Māori. The half-truths and whispers about my whakapapa made claiming a Māori identity for myself a challenge. This was a challenge I did not want my children to experience.
Hinekura

I wrote this reflection of growing up and being Māori in my reflective journal:

Born in Auckland in 1976 I am the white red-haired daughter of a passionate educationalist Māori mother and an English policeman father. I have one younger brother. My parents divorced years ago when my brother and I were in our early-teens. Now, as an adult Māori women, I am better able to understand why my mother, who was consciously trying to reclaim what being Māori meant for her and her children, needed to leave my Dad. He was not able to understand WHY she would want to be Māori and certainly refused to be a part of any of her attempts to reclaim living as Māori for her or her children.

I learnt early on to ‘walk in two worlds’. Visits to my Mum’s side of the family, where I have 33 first cousins, were loud, boisterous events where we removed our shoes before going into the house, ate communally with children eating first, ran around outside in the rain, played games late into the night, argued, laughed, fought, formed and tested family bonds. Family occasions with our Dad’s family, where I have one first cousin, were very different. We were encouraged to keep our shoes on in the house and to not talk at the table. I recall as a child thinking that ‘they’ never hug and kiss each other like ‘we’ do. I guess that from an early age I could see that being Māori felt more comfortable to me.

Being Māori

The wāhine hold fluid views of what being Māori means to them. Their explanations of being Māori reject notions of fixed or forced identity constructions (McIntosh, 2005) that seek to reduce a Māori identity to a simplified ideal. They are quick to comment that being Māori looks, feels and embodies a broad range of realities and resist the notion of a strict or simplified definition of what being Māori means. As Tia says:

being Māori means many different things to many different people.

She elaborates with a poem about how she understands herself as Māori:

Being Māori is about connection and relationships to people, place, earth, cosmos. Whakapapa is a path through these relationships that can be fostered through ways of being and tikanga
Being Māori is a strong part of my identity. This is part of my reclamation.

Being Māori is spiritual. This is part of my reconciliation.

Being Māori can be a responsibility. This is part of my deconstruction.

Being Māori can bring you strength. This is part of my reconstruction.

Similarly, Jo-Ann resists a prescriptive view of what being Māori means:

For me I can’t pinpoint it to just one thing ... that to me is the epitome of being Māori. You can’t define it by one thing. It is a whole lot of different things. It is your maunga [mountain]. It is your whenua [land] ... It is being you.

From my experience some people I have met have a very misconceived view of what being Māori is – must be fluent in speaking, must exercise tikanga, must do kapahaka, must do mau rakau etc. It is in my opinion that being Māori is in the heart.

Despite their assertion of fluid Māori identities, the women’s comments reinforce the view that a Māori identity claim is predicated on having Māori whakapapa but is not fractionised or determined by blood quantum. Mum says:

Being Māori to me means that I can lay claim, that I have a right to be here. You don’t do blood quantum and fractionise one’s blood. I am Māori, through whakapapa, therefore I can claim that identity, whatever it means to me.

She goes on to challenge what constitutes ‘being Māori’:

Who decides who is most Māori? We are the best Māori that we know how to be. For me I am the best Māori that I know how to be now, tomorrow I will know more. It is how we interpret what Māori is and how others interpret what Māori is. I am very sensitive to that.

Although Mum grew up in largely Māori communities and with a Māori father, she experienced a number of negative attitudes about being Māori. As a child and young adult this caused her to feel conflicted about how to assert a Māori identity. She says:

I had to learn to be Māori. The stronger I became in understanding what it means to be Māori, the more determined I became that I was going to continue on this journey.
regardless of what anyone else said. As I have become older I have become more absorbed in being Māori. What does it mean now? It is just my way of knowing being and doing.

Kim says that being Māori for her has been a life-long journey of learning. According to her, being Māori is:

a complete knowing and understanding of who I am, where I come from, what I believe in, were I belong, how I am connected to others and my ultimate sense of resonance to Te Ao Māori that has not come from books but is embedded in my whole being.

Kim is critical about attempts to define or measure ‘Māori-ness’:

I smile at textbook indicators developed by people who quantify some kind of measure to gauge what it means to be Māori. However it is an academic exercise to be able to highlight where whānau or individuals are engaging with hapū or with Māori community with a view to comparing with what areas they are not.

Arndrea agrees that being Māori begins with whakapapa:

Being Māori comes from our bloodline. An inherent source of mauri that has been passed down through whakapapa that stems from the time of creation. We have an intricate and intimate relationship with our whenua and a complex but highly practical understanding of nature. We have a spoken language that holds the key to our essence that provides explanations of our values.

Arndrea expressed some frustration as she rejected the idea of a rigid and inflexible definition of being Māori, in particular, the tendency for these descriptions to be hijacked and used to exclude rather than encompass diverse experiences:

I don't want to label what it is to be Māori or to label what it is to live as Māori as I am sure we all have our own personal views on this and live our lives accordingly. I am feeling more uncomfortable the more I read the question. I know that this question was not asked to be offensive but to gauge peoples’ thoughts and opinions. I think my concern is based on where this answer might lead to … If I say that I think living as Māori looks like, feels like, sounds like … if someone does not live like this does that make them less Māori?
Arndrea was surprised at her own reaction to questions around what being Māori might look like, feel like and sound like:

*I was going over some of your very challenging questions. I reacted to this question. I thought if I am going to voice my opinion on what I think that [being Māori] looks like, does it mean that one of my friends or family who don't live like that, does that make them less Māori? I found that really challenging.*

Kim, Jo-Ann and Tia share a similar view on the spiritual dimension of being Māori. Kim draws together being Māori, spirituality and whakapapa as a source of strength that grounds her in her identity:

*Māori possess a connection to their spiritual sense that non-Māori crave, envy, resent, resist and tend to exploit. It is this wairuatanga dimension that keeps everything connected through whakapapa and maintains the balance of the two worlds co-existing through iwi Māori. I was never brought up with any religious influences, which is what sets aside this phenomenon of wairua and karakia as an innate and unexplained trait of what it means to be Māori. I feel it, I respond to it, I gravitate to it and I rely on it to settle, to uplift to feel safe, to guide, to motivate and gain strength whatever the situation.*

I understand ‘being Māori’ as a birthright – a taonga tuku iho handed down to me through my whakapapa. In the right to claim a Māori identity there is, I believe, an equal responsibility to respect, protect and contribute to that identity in positive ways. During our wānanga I shared my story, mentioned in chapter one, about endorsing senior Māori scholarships for students who did not acknowledge their Māori whakapapa:

*I was always torn. Part of me thought, it's not your fault that you don't acknowledge being Māori, maybe getting a Māori focused scholarship might prompt them into learning about their Māori side. The other part was, what the hell! You are happy to put your hand out without giving anything back!*

Whilst sharing my pūrākau, a number of the wāhine nodded and agreed that the issues are complex, historical and deeply personal to the individual and their whānau. Some of the women said that my pūrākau resonated with them even expressing that they have family members who choose when and how they assert a Māori identity while at other times shying away from responsibilities associated with that identity claim. This moment moved our conversation on
from a discussion about being Māori – inherent in our right to claim this identity through our Māori whakapapa – to explore what it might mean to live as Māori.

**Living as Māori**

Through the course of the wānanga we came to a general consensus of what it means to us to live as Māori. While *being Māori* is understood as possessing the whakapapa to claim a Māori identity, *living as Māori* was agreed as the activation and expression of that whakapapa, through actions and decisions that seek positive ways of living as Māori, not only for ourselves but for our whānau and our people. The women agreed that part of living as Māori is to actively engage in reclaiming and re-visioning a future for our tamariki and mokopuna that encompasses holistic wellness including, but not exclusive to, engagement and knowledge of te reo Māori maintaining connections to the land and whakapapa. Tia said:

*I remember talking with my elder cousin at home. I told him about this journey of returning to Aotearoa and he just turned and said that everything is all right as I had my whakapapa. As Māori we all have it and I guess the power that it has depends on the type of relationship for which we engage with it. It can be positive and negative, strengthening and fearful.*

Tia points out that living as Māori emerges from an internalised and conscious way of being that is about ora – living a well and balanced life:

*For me to live as Māori is to try and sustain a certain state of consciousness. This state of consciousness is to understand we connect to each other and all things. To engage with all aspects of my being I am able to locate where balance needs restoring. When balance is central within me I live as Māori.*

Jo-Ann describes living as Māori through a number of actions and expressions:

*Living as Māori looks to me like aroha, unconditional respect, respect for our whānau, looking after each other, listening to our old people, looking after them, learning from them. It looks like many colours not brown and white.*

*It feels like – a burning love so deep in your heart you want to cry. It feels so proud and strong, respectful and shy. It feels hurtful and sad. It feels like we are always fighting and struggling to keep our own identity.*
It sounds like – waiata, whaikōrero, karanga, tangi. It sounds like power of the soul, wailing kuia, stern voiced koro, laughing tamariki. It sounds like my nannie growling me on the marae. It sounds like my nannie growling my Uncles for growling her moko.

The women’s reflections on being Māori and growing up Māori highlight the complex and multi-layered nature of identity work. Rather than attempt the impossible task of defining what living as a Māori woman is, this research adds to the complexity of Māori identity through the stories and experiences of these eight women. A number of sub-themes about what it means to us to be Māori and live as Māori emerge from our reflections such as our relationship to place and people, the role of language and ‘looking Māori.’

**Connected to whenua**

Arndrea, Tia, Luana, and I did not grow up on our tribal lands. Despite this, we each expressed a palpable feeling of connection when we return ‘home’ to whānau and whenua. Luana writes in her journal that:

> Every time I pass through the pohutukawa trees lining the road into Ōpōtiki a feeling of relief, happiness and peace come over me and I can’t stop smiling. I feel at my most relaxed and peaceful state. That is my home, where my heart lies and my soul revitalises!! Opotiki is my home.

Arndrea says it is difficult to describe the feelings of going ‘home’:

> It is certainly a mixed bag of emotions all rolled into one. I feel serene, content, calm, exhilarated, happy, sad, awake, stimulated, sleepy, alive and much more. Without sounding corny I feel like I am truly myself. I feel free and alive. I can feel the air and the sand, the salt from the moana. Every blade of grass and every bit of soil feels fantastic under my feet. I feel loved by all of it and find myself grinning. I want to say ‘I love you too!’ But then I feel a bit silly. I say the words in my head and hope that it can hear me. If I feel like this about this place I am sure it already knows.

For me connecting to the land is claiming tūrangawaewae – literally translated as ‘a standing place’ for my children and myself:

> Tūrangawaewae – that place in the world where I can stand and say this is where I am from. In my early 20’s after 4 years of being a Māori teacher I was burnt out and needed a break from teaching and I am ashamed to say from the pressures of being a Māori! So I
went to England, you could say I metaphorically took my kākahu off but had it with me in my suitcase! Every now and then I would put it on to strengthen myself and return me home and then I would take it off again. Before long I found I was wearing my kākahu more and more and I knew that it was time to come home.

If I had stayed in England for 50 years and someone asked me “where are you from?” I would say Ahipara, oh but you have been living here for 50 years but still this is where my grandfather and ancestors are buried. This is where my marae stands. This is where I return, to weave and swim and just be. This is my tūrangawaewae.

Each year I run a half marathon down Te Oneroa a Tohe – 90 Mile Beach. There is something about running towards your maunga with your moana next to you. It is a spiritual journey that overrides the physical pain. Just when I think I can’t go on I look up and see my maunga and I am reminded that I belong to this land and its people.

Esther grew up in her tribal area where a relationship with the land was fostered from an early age. She reflects on a close engagement with the natural environment of her haukainga/tribal lands, swimming, gardening, milking, harvesting food and playing:

*He wāhi mahi he wā takaro o te taiaro. Tata ki te tahana o te awa e āta takahi mātou kei runga i ngā wātakirihi. Aue! Ka puta ngā tuna, tere ana ki te hopu tuna, tango wātakirihi. E ngākau nui e au ki te hopu karawaka waimāori, ka kohi noke hei mounu mō ngā karawaka.*

[The environment provided a place for work and a time to play. We would walk carefully on the watercress growing near the edge of the river. Ha! We were quick to catch the eels that appeared and pick watercress. I loved catching freshwater crayfish. Worms were gathered as bait].

Ētahi wā ka haere mātou mā runga taraka, tae atu ki te paamu o tāku pāpā. Kei reira he wāhi huarākau. Piki ake i ngā rākau, whāwhaki paramu, pītiti, āporo, pea. A muri tērā e wera ana te rā, paī rawa ki te kaukau i roto i te awa.

[Sometimes we would travel by truck to my father’s farm where there was an orchard. (We) would climb the trees to pick plums, peaches, apples, pears. After which, if the day was hot, it was wonderful to be able to swim in the river].
Esther’s family was well known in their community as hard workers and for their ability to provide food for the community from the land:

*Ka mahi matou i roto i te maara hei tō i nga momo kai rīwai, kumara, kamokamo, kānga. He maara nui i te whenua, te haukainga o tōku māma. Na te maara ka whāngai a mātou whānau whānui.*

*[We worked in the garden to plant a variety of food such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, kamokamo and corn. My mother’s garden at our homestead was large. From this garden we were able to feed our extended family].*

A physical engagement with her tribal land has fostered within Kim a profound connection to the land:

*This whenua is who I am, where I come from, where I belong, how I am connected to Papatūānuku and what its means to be Māori. My tamariki, my mokopuna and those of the whānau whānui have been inducted into understanding this whenua is a manifestation of “ngā taonga tuku iho” no mua rā anō. It draws us together, it has nurtured our tūpuna, it is our kaitiaki, it is our sustenance, it is the safe space to be ourselves and it provides the spiritual clarity we need when we identify who we are through pepeha.*

A family history of working the land ensures that Kim’s extended whānau who are urban located or living overseas maintain a connection to their whenua:

*We all frequent “the farm” and have ensured our tamariki and mokopuna know and love this place of belonging. Our whānau urupā [burial ground] is on this whenua and so our kōiwi [ancestral bones] are what call us home regularly. All the descendants of Haare and Atareta are connected and engaged with the farm that has fed and hosted generations.*

*Our adult children introduce their partners to this whenua. They bury their babies’ whenua [placenta] here. They bring their birthdays and consequently their friends to this place. It is our sanctuary, it is our place to retreat, our place to mourn loss and to celebrate achievements. It is humble, it is loved and it is our papakainga and tūrangawaewae.*
The notion of tūrangawaewae encompasses more than the land. It includes the wider physical environment including the sea, forests and all those things animate and inanimate that reside there. Arndrea says that regularly connecting to her papakainga (homelands) is vital to her wellbeing and enables her children to experience where they come from – in a sense connecting them to the land and the land to them:

We connect with our whenua at least once a year. We are fortunate enough that much of our whenua has no permanent residents. This is beneficial for many of us and means we can camp there with our families. No water, no power, no technology, which allows plenty of quality time for storytelling, exploring, swimming and simplicity. It is important to me as I am committed to making this whenua familiar with my children and my children familiar with their whenua. I want my children to know who they are by knowing where they come from.

Arndrea’s statement suggests that the land, to her, is also whānau. She personifies the land as a dearly held relative who she wants her children to know and vice versa.

The land as relative is seen as both nurturer and healer. Arndrea shares a pūrākau of how connecting to her tūrangawaewae helped to heal her daughter after her mother passed away:

My daughter she was very close to mum and she really felt it. She wouldn't eat she wouldn't drink. So I said to her “Baby come on I will take you down to the beach for a swim” because the marae is set right on the beach. So we are swimming on our backs looking up at the sky and I said to her “You know baby when you think about it, this place is really special. When you swim here you swim in the same place that your mum swam, and your grandmother and her mother and her mother and so on and so on”.

Whenua and whakapapa are intimately intertwined. Like the aho strands of whatu, one cannot exist without the other. Instead both interact and intertwine, supporting, holding and sustaining the other.

Connected to whānau and whakapapa
The women reflected on how they connect to whānau and whakapapa, and the role this connection plays in how they live as Māori. Jo-Ann for example spoke of her childhood experiences where she was immersed in a Māori way of living that was deeply connected to whānau and kaumātua (elderly):
As a Māori child we were taught that our kuia and kaumātua were the pinnacle of hierarchy in our whānau and extended whānau. We did as we were told, it was all about respecting our elders ... this is where my infinite respect and love of old people stems from. I have the utmost respect for ALL elderly.

For Kim the dynamics of whāngai – translated in simple terms as to foster, adopt, raise or nurture – is a normalised legacy that adds to the dynamic of whānau:

The notion of whāngai has become even more prevalent in my generation with the now labelled “blended families” ... it is our normal, it is whāngattanga nurtured by our tūpuna in another time and passed on to us.

My father and his siblings spent time between 3 households shared between Uncles, Aunties and grandparents at different ages for different reasons. They have close relationships with cousins raised together similarly with them and the presence of whāngai.

For Mum however being whāngai, or as she calls it atawahi, had its challenges:

The man I call my Dad is the man who raised me and gave me an identity as Māori, from the age of 5 years. He married my mother when I was 5. He was Māori, Te Rarawa no Ahipara and my brother and I were “adopted” by him. There were no formal papers signed. He gave us his name and he provided for us. He seemed to have always been in my life.

Being atawahi presented its challenges and this was particularly noticeable when my sister was born when I was 6 years old. I clearly remember how differently my brother and I were treated then. It was not cruel but more that a different kind of affection was shown to her than had been shown to us. Further seeds were planted in my mind about my belonging, when we would go to our Dad’s whānau and they would ask him if this was his first or second child when in fact they should have asked is this your third or fourth. It did not register that we were not of Dad’s issue, I just thought they could not count.

Although Mum is whāngai to a Māori father and claims Ahipara as her turangawaewae, her ‘birth father’ is also Māori rendering a further whakapapa connection for her and her whānau to the people of Te Ati Awa on the west coast of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Growing up with te reo Māori

Kim, Esther and Mum, the grandmothers in our research whānau, share similar experiences of being exposed to te reo Māori in their childhood. These wāhine grew up in largely Māori communities in the 1950s and 60s and had at least one parent who was a fluent Māori speaker, yet all of them have had to reclaim te reo to different degrees as adults. Kim, who professes that her reo “is not flash” says:

*The groundings of reo are innate in that it was heard from the community and through those matatau i te reo [knowledgeable in the language] in my early years. At 50 I return to wānanga to immerse myself in that space again.*

As children, Kim and Esther participated in a wide range of Māori contexts, both formal and informal, but were not directly taught to speak, read or write in Māori. A passive exposure to te reo Māori did not result in an in-depth fluency in the language. When Esther entered tertiary education as an adult she says:

*I wasn’t fluent. The nearest thing I could say was “Kia ora”.*

The negative prevailing attitudes towards te reo Māori and being Māori in general in the mid 1950s and 60s is evident in one of Mum’s reflections. She recalls hearing her father speak Māori only on rare occasions and only with close Māori relatives. She shares a conversation she overheard between her aunts, her Pākehā mother’s sisters, that highlights the racist attitudes that prevailed in a time when Māori were not encouraged to live as Māori but instead to assimilate and live as Pākehā:

*I remember my aunts talking about Poppa. They said that he so was clean – my father was always immaculately dressed – and well mannered because he didn't speak “that language” around them. It’s no wonder Poppa didn't speak Māori to us. That belief that speaking English was what would be most beneficial for us children often meant that fluent speaking Māori parents discouraged speaking Māori within the home. I don't think they [Māori parents] could have imagined that within one generation our language would be endanger[ed] and we are now left with the gruelling task to reclaim and restore a vital part of who we are as Māori.*

Mum went on to discuss the role te reo Māori has played in her identity as Māori has changed:
When people would say to me you haven’t got the reo so you don’t understand I would get very defensive. It wasn’t my choice not to learn. That choice was made for me. I would say, surely because I have the tikanga then that should not preclude me from my own identity. For me, the language was not as important as practicing tikanga – as I understand it.

I asked Mum what being fluent in te reo Māori would mean for her living as a Māori woman:

I would feel more confident to stand in my identity I suppose ... But at this age and stage in my life I will not let others question my identity as Māori just because my reo is not at the same level as others.

I can only theorise that my grandfather, and many of his generation, did what they thought was best for their children in the context of the time. Their aspiration perhaps was to give their children the best chance to find work and support their own families and to do that they believed that te reo Māori would not serve them in an English-dominant society. As a result of the decisions made by their parents and grandparents many of the women now have aspirations that their children and mokopuna are confident in their reo, as part of developing a positive and secure Māori identity. I wrote this reflection in my journal:

As a teenager struggling to learn te reo Māori at secondary school and reclaim what being Māori meant to me, I recall moments of anger directed at my Māori grandfather – why didn't you fight harder to be Māori? Why didn't you speak Māori to your children and pass on your knowledge to us your mokopuna? Why do I now have to fight to reclaim what you didn’t see as important to pass on? It was when I began to understand the power of hegemony – arguably colonisations most effective tool – that persuaded our grandparents that the best thing for their children was to be Māori but live as Pākehā.

By critically understanding the assimilatory nature of colonisation we are better able to understand and therefore work to restore the language and ways of being, ‘lost’ less than two generations prior.

**Being Māori and looking Māori**

During our research wānanga the issue of living as Māori and looking Māori emerged. Because I know each of the women, when I look at them I see beautiful Māori women. Yet I am often
reminded that the stereotypic phenotype (appearance) of what Māori ‘should’ look like impacts on us in different ways.

Luana experienced insecurities about her perceived non-Māori appearance at a crucial time in her life when she was grappling with learning about being Māori. She shares her pūrākau of beginning a Māori immersion teaching course:

   My kaiako was an older “hard” lady from the coast. Her name escapes me but her presence I will never forget. She didn't like me. Maybe because she looked at me as a little “white” girl, maybe because I couldn’t kōrero or maybe because I had a smart mouth! Now a new feeling of shame came creeping in. Am I not worthy to be doing this course? Am I just a little nobody who can’t claim she is Māori because she can’t kōrero or she can’t recite her pepeha or she’s not brown enough?

Although Kim maintains a strong Māori identity, as a child she was often confronted about looking white and being Māori. Reflecting on her childhood Kim compared her own skin colour to other Māori and even Pākehā, describing herself as a “pure white Māori” and “whiter than most Pākehā!” She says:

   I was fiercely Māori and I did not see the whiteness that my father had seen when he and my mother made the decision to raise me Māori. This aside, my peers at school saw it, and my attention was drawn to the obvious whenever there was an argument or scrap in the playground. I was called “Casper” and a “white maggot”. Being the teacher’s kid came with certain advantages for me, so my difference was exacerbated and at a young age it wasn't always obvious to me whether white privilege was already in play, or I was just needing to claim my identity really early on in life as a product of racial intermarriage.

   My difference was constantly highlighted by the labelling as “half-caste”, “Pakeha-Māori” “keha” “kehua” “Casper” and “white maggot” I was obviously colour blind as I took great offence when my skin colour was highlighted through this name calling. Everything else about me was Māori.

The perceived mismatch between her appearance and her identity was made most obvious when Kim moved schools:
To be removed to Wanganui to start intermediate I suddenly saw colour because my world of peers changed to a sea of white with a smattering of brown. Here my difference too was highlighted. I “spoke like a hori” “pronounced Māori words funny” and hung out with other brown kids as preferred company. They were different people to me again. Their reo had been re-configured and mangled then presented back to them in this bastardised form. They sounded like Pākehā and they laughed at me pronouncing kūpū Māori the only way I knew how – correctly!

Challenges around being Māori and looking Māori extend to places and people that could be assumed have a critical awareness of the negative impacts that such a fixed identity entails. I made the following journal entry after attending an international Indigenous Knowledge and Research conference here in Aotearoa New Zealand. The conference began with an inspiring keynote from Karina Walters (Walters, 2007; Walters & Simoni, 2002) around micro-aggressions – those overt and covert, implicit and explicit, acts of cultural violence that Indigenous peoples face, for example having to explain or justify our indigienity:

This morning I attended a presentation from a Hawaiian woman who spoke about sacred female sites on Oahu. I enjoyed her presentation as I had recently visited these sacred female sites on the Hawaiian island of Maui. During question time I stood and acknowledged her, first in Māori and then in English, and made a connection between her work and my transformational experience on Maui. She responded by saying that it was important that Hawaiians held on to their own knowledge ... to which I nodded and agreed ... then she said "actually I think I am allergic to white people and can’t really respond any further" ... to which I nodded ... until I realised that she was talking about me. I was taken back and was reminded that, even at an indigenous conference on my own whenua I am still required to justify WHO I am – even to a foreign visitor.

Following this interaction I confronted the speaker in private as I was taken aback and wanted to be clear about what had just happened:

I went up and spoke to her afterwards. I said to her “Do you understand that I am Māori?” She said incredulously, “You’re Māori?” I reminded her of Karina Walter’s presentation that morning about micro-aggressions and that she had either purposefully or inadvertently just enacted her own micro-aggression on another Indigenous woman in her own country. I don’t know if she was remorseful. I suppose I will never really know.
My white skin has afforded me more privilege throughout my life than it has oppression. This experience reminded me to continually be open and reflexive in how I see myself through Whatuora – ‘well’ eyes – and that being Māori looks, feels, talks and walks in many different ways.

Despite our constant and conscious critical engagement with micro-aggressions around looking Māori, some of the wāhine admitted to sometimes making similar judgements about what being Māori looks like, an issue highlighted in a pūrākau I shared during one of our wānanga:

*I remember Mum asking me for a photo of my girls to use in a PowerPoint for a class she was teaching. I gave her one. She looked at it and said, “is there one where they look, ummm, a bit more Māori like wearing their kapahaka kākahu? I exclaimed, “I can’t believe you just said that Mum!” There is still so much emphasis placed on what [a] Māori looks like.*

For Tia, in my view a ‘very Māori-looking’ wāhine, looking Māori is not the issue. Instead it is not *sounding* Māori that calls her identity into question. In our wānanga she said:

*Yeah sis we come with Aussie accents! It took a long time before I wanted to talk, to even open my mouth. Being asked ‘what culture are you? expecting American Indian or whatever. I open up my mouth and there it is – an Australian accent.*

*Sometimes it got met with suspicion and other times it got met with statements like “she’s Australian” “she’s an Aussie”. Lots and lots of times. It got to a point when I would not talk because I would talk with an Australian accent and someone would question [me] and I would have to go through this big checklist of who I am. It took me a long time to find that certainty to open my mouth, to find my own self about what I should look and sound like.*

Tia provides a critical perspective as to why the issue of looking and, in her case sounding, Māori is problematic.

*I come back to this one of my favourite sayings “a colonized imagination”. The process of what we choose to see and what we think we should be seeing because that is what has been told to us – what we should look like and sound like.*
Summary

The eight Māori women participants come from diverse backgrounds and, as such, share different and similar experiences of growing up and being Māori. Stereotypical perspectives on how Māori should look and sound, the language we should be able to speak and the experiences we are expected to have had reflect an uncritical appreciation of colonisation for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. The stories and perspectives of these eight women, including my own, instead speak to some of the diverse ways that we experience being Māori and living as Māori women. Some of the experiences the women shared were significant memories that have shaped and informed who they are and how they now work to reclaim and restore elements they deem important to live full and positive lives as Māori women.

I return to Mum’s analogy of wearing a kākahu created in part by our parents as they seek to cloak us in those attributes, aspirations and values they regard as important. Our childhood is when our metaphorical kākahu is, by in large, being woven by our whānau and the socio-historical context of our environment. During our childhood our whānau provide experiences and stimuli – both implicitly and explicitly – that influence how we later in life come to understand ourselves as Māori women. Mum’s pūrākau suggests that as we move into early adulthood we begin to embrace or discard, reclaim or seek out those ‘feathers’ that shape how we want to live as Māori women. The memories and stories in this chapter are just a few of the ‘feathers’ that adorn the women’s kākahu as they reflect on their childhood memories of being Māori.
Chapter Eight:
Oho – Reclaiming living as Māori women

To be in a state of oho is to be awoken, to open one’s eyes and to become aware. This chapter highlights the women’s deliberate attempts to reclaim aspects of language, culture and identity understood by them as important to how they live as Māori women. For some of the wāhine, acts of reclamation were moments in time, a startling awakening or awareness that they were disrupting colonial legacies handed down to them. At other times, reclaiming and restoring pieces of ourselves was, and continues to be, a series of slow, sometimes painful steps, as we become critical and active agents of change in our own lives.

Our reflections on growing up and being Māori in the previous chapter suggest that our ‘choices’ to live as Māori women do not fall out of thin air. Scholar, artist and social activist Antonia Darder (2015) says:

[T]he struggle for change begins, at the moment when human beings become both critically aware and intolerant of the oppressive conditions in which they find themselves and push toward new ways of knowing and being in the world. (p. 80)

I did not, for example, wake up one morning with a sudden aspiration that my children would be confident Māori speakers. My decision arose from my own journey to live as Māori – an aspiration handed to me by my mother – and a determination that my children would not experience the same struggle.

How we reclaim aspects of living as Māori women can be seen as responses to our early formative experiences. While there are any number of variables that inform how and why the Māori women in this study actively reclaim living as Māori women, this chapter establishes a relationship between our early experiences of growing up and being Māori and our present-day activities to reclaim and restore living as Māori women.

The idea of reclamation is important in this chapter. It is used here to discuss how the wāhine reflect on their experiences, which then inform their choices to reclaim and restore aspects of living as Māori women that they deem important. The idea of ‘reclaiming’ suggests a conscious choice and determination to not only strive to return or restore aspects of living as Māori disrupted through colonising processes but to represent these in ways that are positive and useful in our lives.
Oho is used here as a critical lens through which the women viewed their current lived realities. During our third wānanga, I highlighted the uneasy tension that exists when ideas, aspirations and beliefs are uncritically accepted as ‘the truth’ and not seen as emerging from a particular socio-political context, for example learning from and respecting traditional knowledge and at the same time understanding that our predecessors, like us, existed and responded to the socio-political and historical contexts of their time.

How often do I hear people say resolutely and without compromise “No you have to wear black to tangi, its tikanga because that is what my Aunty or Nanny or whoever said”. While I understand the importance of passing down knowledge, after all that's what this research is all about, I think that how we have come to know what we know, is often disassociated from the places and spaces that it emerged from. Did we always wear black at funerals? Or was that actually a Victorian tradition? My grandfather said speaking Māori would never get you anywhere and look where that got my family!

When we are able to view how ‘being Māori’ has been constructed through critically and politically ‘awakened eyes’, we are better positioned to reclaim and re-vision living as Māori for our tamariki, our mokopuna and ourselves. Oho as an awakened and critically conscious state offers a way to see clearer the places and spaces that surround and inform the decisions we make to actively live as Māori women.

**Awakening a critical consciousness**

Being and becoming critically conscious has played out in multiple places and spaces for the women in this research. Their stories range from active involvement in public protests in the Māori renaissance movement, to whānau-centred activities and individual acts of resistance and reclamation. Kirsten Gabel’s (2013) PhD thesis on Māori maternities points out that reclaiming activities can be radical and simple, collective and individual, community, iwi, hapu and whānau based and that all contribute to a critical resistance movement. Whether individual or collective, the actions undertaken by the women in this research have had purpose and have contributed in big and small ways to reclaiming and restoring how they understand themselves living as Māori women.

Coming from different ages and backgrounds the women shared a wide range of transforming and politicising experiences that contributed to their determination to live as Māori women. I am the daughter of an educationalist mother who confronted numerous challenges to reclaim and
assert ways of living as Māori for herself and her children. As an adult I am grateful for the ‘activist feathers’ that she wove into my kākahu although I did not always appreciate her actions as a child:

I can remember as a teenager being embarrassed by Mum, protesting and being vocal and confrontational in whānau hui. Red-faced, I would beg her to please sit down and be quiet. One day she held my hand and, not in a patronizing way, said “my darling I am too old to wait any longer and things are not moving fast enough”. I understand that now as a parent. Now it is me who embarrasses my girls!

Mum attributes her oho or awakening to the idea of living as Māori in part to the feminist and Māori renaissance movements of the 1970s.

My real determination to be Māori was when I realised as a woman that I had rights. Who said that was my job? Who said I could only earn this much money? At the same time I realised that I am Māori and I have rights there too! It was these movements that pushed me forward and my impetus to become stronger and more knowledgeable in my Māoritanga only grew stronger when my children were born. This coincided with my entering the education profession. It became clear to me at this time that my marriage to my English husband was impeding my children’s ability to live as Māori and so after 20 years we parted.

The Māori revitalisation and feminist movements provided Mum with what identity development author Jane Kroger (2007) might refer to as an identity crisis. Far from alluding to ‘crisis’ as a sense of impending disaster, it is instead a key turning point in one’s identity development, offering Mum an opportunity to reclaim a Māori identity for herself and for her children. Mum says that her journey was about:

[M]y growth as well, it was about me being prepared to stand up and say if I want my children to live strong and positive as Māori then I have to do something about it.

From an early age Jo-Ann was exposed to Māori political activism. Equipped with a sharp critical consciousness, nurtured perhaps through her interaction with protest movements and exposure to marae politics as a child, Jo-Ann describes her understanding of activism in a journal entry:
I have been accused of being an activist, racist, one-sided ... really? Perhaps I am! I think about it ... and have come to the conclusion that it is a compliment, although it probably wasn't meant to be.

To me activist = active-ly take inter – ist in things Māori for the benefit of Māori future. Yep that's me.

As a child, Jo-Ann was encouraged by her whānau to attend and participate in protest movements such as the Māori Land March and the WAI 262 claim for Indigenous Flora and Fauna:

I watched as a youngan my Uncle’s as they prepared for the next protest. My Uncle and my Dad always taught us kids, or rather told us, that to achieve the desired outcome, we had to be clever like the Pākehā, to be knowledgeable in the Māori world as well as the Pākehā world. My Uncle Witi and my Dad were clever that way. They could match the Pākehā in court as well.

Luana identified returning to her marae and extended whānau as a teenager as her awakening – a critical turning point for her in her determination to reclaim her sense of living as Māori:

From then on I began looking into my Māori side. Where it all began. I remember picking up my family tree book ‘Olive Branches’ and began to learn about my whakapapa on my dad’s side at least. I began to wonder where did my name Teowai come from? Where did I get my feisty-ness from? Whose genes was I carrying? The more I learnt about my whakapapa the more confident I became in myself.

For Tia, a sense of awakening began whilst studying Indigenous knowledge and history at university in Australia. A growing awareness of indigenous issues can provide a critical turning point that can lead to acts of reclamation and a desire to delve deeper and learn more (Gangē, 2013). Tia says:

There were no other Māori in town or, in our lives and it remained that way till I finished high school. We never learnt about New Zealand, Māori or Indigenous Australian culture at school. Social Studies taught us that Captain Cook discovered Australia. It wasn’t until university that I was presented with an opportunity to learn about Indigenous Australian culture for one semester. I enrolled and was so excited to be learning about indigenous people. Learning about the tangata whenua of Australia felt
like I could be learning about my own culture. It was the closest thing available to me. Heritage, family, the effects of colonisation, that brief semester at university would also inform my own approaches to teaching indigenous dance content in Australia for many years after.

For some of us education, political movements and returning ‘home’ provide moments of awakening as we become conscious of our desire to reclaim and re-vision how we understand ourselves to live as Māori. For others an awakening occurred when our tamariki and mokopuna were born.

**Becoming mothers and grandmothers**

The women in this research were invited to participate because they are Māori women, mothers and grandmothers. During the course of our wānanga many of them described an inescapable obligation to affirm and pass on to the next generation the aho of a Māori world view that is positive and affirms a holistic wellbeing. This responsibility requires each generation to re-vision how, and what, will be passed on by exploring and tracing understandings held in bodies of knowledge then making them relevant to our current lived realities (Pohatu, 2003). Not only are we as mothers and grandmothers responsible for nurturing the day-to-day physical and emotional wellbeing of our children, we are arguably the most important contributors to how they understand themselves living secure and positive lives as Māori.

Being mothers and grandmothers is inextricably intertwined with our efforts to live as Māori women. For some of us becoming a mother or grandmother acts as a turning point providing a conscious awakening that strengthens our resolve to reclaim and restore (Gangé, 2013; Pohatu, 2003). As Lana Sue Goodyear-Ka’ōpua says:

> Becoming a mother only made learning and work seem more important – now there were young lives, a visible sign of the future. What kind of life did I want you to inherit? (2007, p. 60)

During the wānanga, and in the journals, the wāhine made an explicit connection between their determination to live as Māori and being mothers and grandmothers.

> *When I think back to my life 20 years ago and compare the things that I found important back then to my values and aspirations now, I am almost unrecognisable! Haa! And it all started when I gave birth to my children.* (Arndrea)
Being home now as a 41 year old I also feel at times the outsider. It's a repetitive story that maybe in some way I should make peace with especially now as I am a mother. (Tia)

When Maioha was born I remember looking down into this perfect little face and saying to her, “I will never let you feel lost and uncertain about who you are and where you come from.” (Hinekura)

Becoming a mother was a profound moment in Mum’s life. When her first child was born (me) she experienced an almost inexplicable moment of awakening that this child would reclaim and restore aspects of living as Māori that she herself had not yet realised she aspired to. It appears that from my birth I was cloaked in my mother’s aspirations for us both to live as Māori. Mum writes in her journal:

Hinekura was born weighing 9lb 14oz. She was as perfect a child as could be when born. Beautiful skin, head covered in red hair and as the nurse commented, “as if she was 3 months old.” I recall I was standing at the side of the bed and I lifted her up to me and said, “You are my secret weapon”.

What that might have meant at the time I have no idea. I now contend, in my maturity, that not only had she chosen me but that a wairua had sent me a message that she was going to be the reclamation, restoration and rejuvenation I felt our whānau needed.

Mum and her ‘secret weapon’ – 2 months old

Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua (2007) shared a story with similar sentiments of creating change now for the imagined – and unimaginable future. In a series of letters exchanged between her
and her mother she talks about the meaning of her daughter’s name Kaiakahinali’i: “the ocean waters that cause the chiefs to fall down” (p. 50).

Goodyear-Ka’ōpuia says:

Decolonizing our ‘aina [lands], our minds, our spirits. As we continue directing our energies toward such changes, we also want to nurture our child to extend that work in ways that we may not yet have imagined. (2007, p. 50)

Esther, Kim and Mum are the three grandmothers of the group. During the research process they spoke at different times, and with great pride, about their mokopuna alluding to a special connection different to that experienced with their children. Kim says:

_I remember a koro [male elder] I met down in Otautahi talking about that word mokopuna, talking about the reflection in the puna [spring of water] of the moko [traditional facial tattoo] looking back at you. When the nanny or koro looks at their mokopuna there is a reflection of themselves in there because they possess the DNA of that taonga. As a grandparent you ’see’ them even more so because you saw it in their father or mother as your child and then you see it come out in that mokopuna._

The emotive imagery created by Kim’s words perhaps shifts the idea of reflection as looking back into our past to see where we have come from to reflection as looking forward into our future to see where our mokopuna will take us.

Kim talks about the different space she finds herself in as a grandmother and the role that she played in shaping her mokopuna through the deliberate choices she made in raising her children:

_For me, in my time in life as I have become a nanny, things shift again. You realise how deliberate some of the things are that you are instilling in your kids that come out in your mokopuna, that you haven’t even had a chance to directly influence._

Mum talks about being a mother and then becoming a grandmother:

_Giving birth was a truly wondrous experience, to give life. But to watch my granddaughter coming from the body of a child I had birthed was life changing._

_Being a mother is a very responsible and stressful time. It is the most important role that any woman can play. Being a grandmother is also a very responsible and busy time, but_
busy in different ways. It is a most important role. Being a grandmother allows me to reflect on my parenting so that I can embrace new ways of knowing, being, doing and relating which may be more appropriate for this time, a kind of ‘re-parenting’. I am learning new skills and I am sharing my experiences, I am being supportive and developing trust from the parent and the child. I have a new sense of value and contribution.

Mum shares the very special relationship that she had with her grandmother and how this relationship strongly influenced the grandmother that she aspires to be:

She was, in my eyes, everything to me. Every time she came to visit us during our 6 years of living in the Waikato, I recall going and hiding under the tubs in the washhouse because I could not bring myself to say goodbye. I would sob for ages as I loved her so much and wanted to be with her. She was my role model for my as a grandmother.

Becoming a grandmother, for me, was so special however, this role carried a huge responsibility. I knew exactly what I felt was required of my role. I knew I was to be involved, available, supportive, contributing, sharing of experiences and most of all be that role model I had experienced. I have always believed that it takes a village to raise a child and that raising children should not be the sole responsibility of two people. In my role as grandmother I have to ensure that the village environment is as safe and secure as possible for all members. It is a very important role and a role that I am committed to with a passion.

My children are still young, yet already I think about having mokopuna and what sort of grandmother I want to be. I shared this story during our wānanga about connecting to my future mokopuna:

The other night I watched a documentary on TV about conception, gestation and birth. What moved me deeply was learning that women hold all of the eggs that we will ever have whilst we are still in our mother’s womb. It struck me that when I was pregnant with my daughters I was also carrying my future mokopuna as tiny eggs in their yet unborn ovaries – he taonga tuku iho – the thought that I have already nurtured my future mokopuna is amazing!
My reflection reminded me of the powerful connection my mother has with my daughters. That relationship is, in my mind, untouchable and beyond the realms of a parent–child relationship. It is special and unique to them and it began before I was born.

Claiming space – confronting challenge

Claiming space and confronting challenge is not new for Māori women who continue to challenge dominant hegemonies to re-claim space to live as Māori (Gabel, 2013). Creating space can be challenging. From defending against dominant external voices that question the value of living as Māori, to our own internal self-conscious doubts about our own cultural inadequacies. Our work to resist colonising processes and reclaim practices of living as Māori women is, as Gabel (2013) describes, an “unfailing and constant mode of action, characterised by our assertions of tino rangatiratanga, our absolute authority, autonomy and self-determination” (p. 153). During our wānanga we discussed the challenges of living as Māori women as a continuous commitment to often challenging work as we assert ourselves in spaces that may not support our reclamation and re-visioning work.

Jo-Ann shares a pūrākau of challenging ignorance when she was invited to speak to a group of teachers about a kākahu she was making:

*The blank gaze on some of the faces was bewildering to me. Why do you not understand? My impatience said “put it away, bugger you all, I don't want to share my thoughts with you ignoramuses”. But ... my calmer, gracious conscience said “teach them Jo, make them listen and if by some miracle they learn something then that is an accomplishment for ALL Māori”. I find that as I get older my impatience grows.*

*After my presentation I asked if there were any questions or comments. A senior teacher stands and says to me “I make maaree cloaks”. I had to count to 20 to stop myself from abruptly interrupting her with a lesson on pronunciation. She continues to say “I make mine on a sewing machine, I don't have time to do it that way [whatu], it's very tedious. I don't know where you find the time.”*

*I felt like saying SIT DOWN STUPID! I reply “Do you? And what are Māori cloaks called? Her reply: “keekeehu!! I think everyone could feel my annoyance by now, so I just calmly replied to this idiot, “I would love to see a piece one day” and smiled ... the part of me that won’t let go piped*
up and said, “Oh by the way, it is pronounced kākahu, not keekeehu, and also known as korowai so perhaps before you stand up and voice your ignorance with our language, you might like to practise it first. I suggest starting with AEIOU.”

With that I sat down. I looked around the room. I got side-glances. I got smiles. I got red-faces. I got thumbs up by one. I got “Well said” by another … sitting there all I felt was annoyance.

Somehow I don’t think I will get any more requests for presentations in the future.

Despite being thoroughly articulate, Jo-Ann confesses that she does not enjoy speaking in public. Her assertive response to the speaker is an example of her determination to no longer tolerate the use of incorrect terminology and pronunciation instead choosing to challenge ignorance directly in a public forum.

Kim’s work in a mainstream tertiary education institution is at the interface of education, social justice and Kaupapa Māori. Despite being presented with multiple challenges to create and maintain space to be Māori in her workplace, Kim remains unequivocal in her approach:

In my mahi I am a Māori who works to benefit Māori. I value the very essence of what it is to be Māori, and Māori is what makes us unique on the global stage. My entire commitment to my discipline and my career is to improve outcomes for my own people. Being Māori for me is ever present and will never be left at the door – naked and uncloaked.

Kim reinforces the metaphor of wearing a richly woven kākahu that identifies and informs us of who we are and perhaps as a protective or deflective shield.

As Kim spoke I was reminded of the often-used metaphor of wearing multiple hats, which I later wrote about in my journal:

I hear people talk about their ability to wear different hats in different situations like I am wearing my ‘mother hat’ this morning and then my ‘teacher hat’ this afternoon – but how many hats can I wear simultaneously? One head, one hat right? I am mother, and Māori, and wāhine, and teacher and daughter and, and, and ... I cannot remove being woman, being Māori, being mother like a hat and replace it with another. All of these hats are simultaneously me. The idea of wearing a richly woven kākahu made up of multiple
interconnected strands and a wide variety of feathers better speaks to me about the complex, layered and interconnected ways that I can simultaneously be ME in the world.

Mum recalls an experience when she felt challenged to choose between revealing the feathers on her kākahu by revealing her Māori identity:

*I recall putting my name forward as a board of trustee member at my children’s primary school. I remember going to the school to introduce myself. I was standing amongst this group of Pākehā parents and I thought, should I declare that I am Māori and say that I want to have more Māori in the school or do I say nothing? It was deciding whether to declare my Māori-ness and possibly not get in or say nothing, get in and then make changes. I chose to stand and take a Māori position. I didn’t get in.*

While Mum’s decision to reveal her Māori identity may not have been the deciding factor in her non-election to the school’s board, her story highlights the complex choices that accompany our internal dialogue in how we choose to activate and express living as Māori women.

For some Māori women making choices to reclaim living as Māori can invoke feelings of fear, hurt and shame. Kim talks about seeing this māmae (hurt) amongst a group of women participating in a wānanga as they learnt the sacred female practice of karanga.

*In that room full of Māori women there is a lot of māmae. These women are all 30–70 yrs old and we are all crying for each other. They get up and are wiriwiri [shaking] and tangitangi, crying for what they have been deprived of as far as their culture [goes]. At this stage in life they are looking for it, hungry for it. It’s pouri. It’s awesome we are having these wānanga because it is bringing people together and strengthening and reconnecting but at the same time it is sad that it is occurring. You think of where we are in time and how much has happened in terms of resistance amongst our people.*

For many of the women a key site of resistance has been through engaging their children in educational contexts that support them to reclaim and revitalise living as Māori.

During the research process I wrote this pūrākau as I reflected on my experience of being a young Māori woman in a large multicultural mainstream secondary school in the 1990s:

*As a teenager I was deeply involved in kapahaka, learning te reo, the school marae and the whānau class. Like many of my Māori friends in the whānau class, we wore taonga or*
hei kaki (carved bone or greenstone adornments) around our necks as an outward expression of our developing Māori identity. My mother had gifted my taonga to me and I wore it proudly as a sign of what I called at that time my 'Māoriness'. One day just before a physical education (PE) class the relieving teacher told me “that Mow-ree thing” would have to come off as it was jewellery and therefore, according to the rules, was dangerous. I informed her, in my assertive yet undoubtedly immature teenage language that it was not jewellery and was of great cultural significance to me – emboldened by a number of my Māori friends who had gathered around me for support. She dismissed my comment saying that if she let me wear it, she would have to let others wear their ‘jewellery’ and besides, it was still dangerous. I asked her whom it might endanger and continued to explain that it had been placed on me using karakia [Māori blessing] and could not be removed. Before I knew what was happening she produced a pair of scissors and cut the taonga off by its muka cord. It fell to the ground and a small piece of the matau (hook) broke off. Needless to say, my mother was enraged and protested long and loud to the school principal. The teacher was made to apologise to me – which as a teenager is in itself quite satisfying – but we were still not allowed to wear taonga in PE class. Instead we enjoyed coming up with new and ingenious ways to hide our taonga and keep them safe, often delighting in our ability to deceive the PE teachers. I still have that taonga. It reminds me that the struggle is not old and it is not over. What was once cut from my neck – an outward symbol of my identity – can symbolically be taken and damaged in other ways.

Reflecting on this pūrākau now, through adult eyes, I can only imagine what wider politics were at play that caused this teacher to act as she did. Did she feel her authority was being questioned? Were there issues of equality for all? Did she not see how important that taonga was to me, not because of its value as a piece of ‘jewellery’ but as a significant expression of my identity? I guess I will never know. What I do know is that I still talk about this incident twenty-five years later as an example of power and dominant discourse that reinforced for me that I would not let another person determine how I would express myself as a Māori woman.

**Engaging our children in Māori-medium education**

Placing our tamariki and mokopuna in Māori-medium education requires commitment on a number of levels – one being access and availability. Māori-medium education sites, where students are immersed in Māori language and tikanga through the curriculum, are often few and far between. Where my family lives, for example, there are three primary schools within walking
distance of our house, none of which offer a Māori-medium option. Instead we, and eight other
whānau from our immediate neighbourhood transport our children into the city to a Māori
language immersion school. Our working middle-class privilege means that we can afford the
time and expense to make this ‘choice’ – an economic luxury that not all Māori whānau enjoy.
Despite education policy rhetoric that says every child in Aotearoa has the right to be educated in
te reo Māori as an official language of this country, the reality for Māori whānau is very
different.

Mum, Luana, Jo-Ann, Arndrea and me discussed our desire for our children to engage in a
Māori-medium education that we did not have the opportunity to experience.

My brother and I were at secondary school in the late 1980s to the mid 90s. We ‘missed the
waka’ so to speak of the Māori education movements of Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa
Māori that began in the 1980s (see Hohepa, McNaughton, & Jenkins, 1996; G. H. Smith, 2003a;
Tocker, 2007). Instead our mother sought out opportunities in urban Auckland to engage us in te
ao Māori. Below she discusses being a part of a marae-a-kuā (L. J. Smith, 2012) whānau and
learning te reo at our local secondary school:

_I wanted you to get as much Māori as you could, and I wasn’t going to be able to give
you that. I didn’t have anywhere else to go. So it seemed to me like being part of the
marae and part of the whānau class, part of the teacher up there at school, that was
going to create that sense of Māori whānau that I wanted my children to experience._

Kim enrolled all of her children in Māori-medium education. Despite the fact that they achieved
academically and culturally, Kim often found herself defending her choice of educational
pathways. When her daughter opted to attend a Māori tertiary institution Kim was challenged by
members of her own whānau:

_Why is she going there when their tohu [degree] it not recognised in the system? Because
that is where she wants to go, it’s important to her. It was a stepping-stone from
wharekura [Māori-medium secondary school] to whare wānanga [Māori-based tertiary
institution]. She loved it. I couldn't see her surviving anywhere else and she did really
well there. But that challenge came from whānau. She had a choice to go to Waikato
University that was going to give her a diploma and a degree but she wants to go way
down there [to Raukawa] for the equivalent of a diploma and a degree. It [her degree]
has huge value in te ao Māori. I wasn't going to measure the value of that alongside_
Participating in Māori-medium education is a commitment for parents and whānau. Most Māori-medium settings require that at least one parent or caregiver is competent in te reo or is actively committed to learn. On one hand this commitment is vital in order to support the child’s learning by providing language modeling and a te reo Māori environment at home. On the other hand, a lack of language ability can deter whānau from engaging in Māori-medium education giving rise to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Esther says:

I think sometimes in kōhanga and kura there is an expectation that because your child is coming into that context the parents and whānau have to understand the reo. On the kōhanga and kura side there needs to be some understanding of parents and grandparents who don't speak [te reo] too.

During our wānanga, Luana spoke about the courage it took to enrol her son in a Māori medium school. She shared her anxiety about her language ability:

I get that fear inside because I can’t kōrero Māori. I don't want him to lose out on going to a kura because of me, because of what I didn't do when I was younger. That fear is starting to set in now and I am starting to panic about it. I want to give that to him. At the same time it is a really scary journey. I am again looking at doing a reo course, but it is so hard. I have been struggling on this journey, as you know, for a long long time. That’s what has been eating away at me lately.

Almost immediately the other wāhine wrapped Luana in a protective kākahu by sharing their experience and words of encouragement. Jo-Ann offered Luana some reassurance through her own experience with her daughter’s Māori-medium secondary school:

They are hard-core. Everyone there, all the kaiako there speak reo. I don't speak reo and I find that they always speak reo to me but that's not going to stop me from putting my baby where I think she needs to be. It is a really difficult journey mate, it really is. I am still scared when I go in there but for me I don't care. As long as my baby is there and I know that she is learning what she needs to learn, it doesn't matter about me. When they kōrero to me I can understand a little bit of what they say, but if they kōrero too much I
get lost I just tell them straight up. It is really scary but you get used to it. I came to the
decision that it was irrelevant to me. It was my baby first.

Arndrea encourages us to face the fear and do it anyway reminding us that we do so with a vision
that is greater than ourselves:

*Our tūpuna work in very challenging and unusual ways. I know for me it has always been
if you want it, come get it! You start making those steps to get there and something else
comes up ‘You want this as well girl? Come get it! Take away that fear because that is
what’s going to stop you.*

*As for shame, for myself I am not shameful, but I have seen it at a hui I was at a few
weeks ago for beginning Yr. 9 students. A different set of whānau and when they stood to
introduce themselves I couldn't believe how embarrassed they appeared to feel. I thought
to myself why do you feel so embarrassed? You have made a commitment to put your
child through a bilingual education; they will be immersed in te ao Māori, why are you
embarrassed. It’s nothing to be embarrassed about.*

Arndrea’s words reflect a critical understanding that our feelings of fear, inadequacy and shame
emerge from a particular time and place that sought to oppress our right to live as Māori and
question our identity based on blood quantum and knowledge of language and culture. Such a
narrow definition ignores the effects that cultural assimilation has had on a Māori ability to live
as Māori.

Kim offers some encouraging words based on her own experience now that all of her children
have successfully completed their formal education in Māori medium:

*It has been a life long journey for me too. I have put all my kids through kōhanga reo and
kura kaupapa and really been one of those people, at times, that didn't get out of the car
and just sent them in and hoped that no one would come and talk to me. And at other
times just faced the fear, got out of the car and had a conversation. I have been the sort
of parent that can hear and understand, but sometimes don't have the kupu to reply so I
will reply in English and feel whakamā about that. I have worn it as “its time to get your
shit together Kim!”*

*Having gone through the system and out the other end they [Kim’s children] are really
awesome well-rounded individuals who stand tall as Māori. They just have to navigate*
the Pākehā world at a later age. Because some of that [being Māori] has been handed to them on a plate they are not conscious of the struggle that has led to what they have got today. Now that they are parents and are putting their kids into kōhanga, they are more aware of the struggle that enabled them to have what they have today.

Arndrea discusses the challenges she faced from her whānau to enrol her children in Māori-medium education.

*Challenges from all sides really. Challenges from my husband’s family as to why we were putting our children into bilingual education, why would they need to speak Māori, why would they need to learn anything about being Māori when that has gone, that is not our world today.*

*Their argument was, do you really want te ao Māori for your children because it is a Pākehā world? Where are they going to be able to speak Māori? Only here in New Zealand, which I don't agree with.*

Arndrea’s comment highlights some common misconceptions about the reasons whānau choose Māori-medium education for their children. First, that attending Māori-medium schooling is solely about learning the language when it is equally as much about living as Māori by being immersed in a Māori-centred curriculum, traditions and culture. Second, that language learning has an economic imperative, that is, the only reason to learn a language is to increase employment opportunities. This perspective negates the vital role that language plays in our ability to access and participate in our own culture and identity. As Mum says:

*I think knowing language is essential if people are truly going to understand ways of knowing being and doing that people have in that cultural context. That may not mean being fluent, whatever that means, but even a little reo allows you greater access and understanding to the Māori culture than none at all.*

 Returning to Durie’s statement that active participation as a citizen of the world is a shallow goal if the cost of participation and access is at the expense of living a well, fulfilled, holistically balanced life with full participation in the Māori world (M. Durie, 2001a). While I would strongly argue that the ability to speak Māori is certainly an academic and economic advantage – whatever the profession – it is equally, if not more, important as an element of living as Māori. As Māori women we are challenged to weigh up the value of our language, and the languages we
want our children to speak, with multiple challenges of access to Māori-medium education, familial pressures and the pressure and expectations we place on ourselves to provide our children with opportunities we may not have had ourselves.

**Creating change – taking action**

During our wānanga I asked the women about the deliberate actions they have undertaken, and continue to maintain, to live as Māori. Of the many ideas that were discussed, three themes are explored below – reclaiming connections to the land and to people, reclaiming language and reclaiming Māori names.

**Reclaiming connections to the land and its people**

Māori connection to the land is reinforced in a number of ways, none more significant than the returning of a newborn’s afterbirth to their tribal land. Burying a baby’s placental afterbirth on tribal lands is an important Māori tradition (Gabel, 2013; Jenkins & Mountain Harte, 2011; H. M. Mead, 2003; Pere, 2006; Reese, Hayne, & MacDonald, 2008; Simmonds, 2014) that seeks to connect the child physically and spiritually to the land.

When I was born, the tradition of returning a child’s whenua to the land was deemed by Western maternity practices as unhygienic and unnecessary (Gabel, 2013; Simmonds, 2014; L. T. Smith, 1999). Mum tells how she created a ceremony to complete a process that she was denied when I was born, in doing so restoring a tradition of connecting to the land that she deemed important:

*At the time of the birth of both my children the institutionalised racism of the health system did not allow for me to have the whenua (placenta) returned to me. I recall a nurse saying “that is disgusting”. Whilst I was learning about tikanga Māori I did not challenge this at the time, however as I became more aware and was reclaiming living as Māori, I felt a real sense of loss. In 1999 I had a hysterectomy and decided then that because I was unable to bury my children’s whenua I would bury the kōhanga (nest) from which they came. I arranged for my whare tangata (uterus) to be given back to me and along with a minister, my aunt, my uncle, my daughter, my son and my sister’s mokopuna, we returned to my father’s land and buried my whare tangata with ceremony and the planting of a tree. The significance of taking that action grounded me and gave me strength. I was identifying more with my need to find my being Māori in every way I could.*
Mum’s deliberate action to create a ceremony that re-connected her and her children to the land provided me with the example to also do the same. During our wānanga I shared a pūrākau of returning our girls’ whenua back to our tribal grounds:

*One of my dearly held aspirations was that their whenua is back on their whenua, that they have one or more places in the world where they can stand and say this is me this is where I come from as they look over to their maunga [mountain] and look down their beach.*

*It was really great for my Mum as well. She did a karanga as the whenua was put into the ground and also having all her mokopuna there in the same place, I think for her was really special.*

The women spoke about connections to people and whakapapa suggesting that the right to claim a connection to the whenua is also a responsibility to contribute to the people of that land.

For the last five years I have travelled four-and-a-half hours every month back to my marae and tribal area to weave and contribute to our marae art gallery. My relationship to our marae has not always been like this due to family disagreements and disconnection:

*My cousins and I got together one day and decided that if we allowed that raru [disagreement] to filter down to our generation then we would never go back and our children would miss out. So rāranga [weaving] has literally woven me back to my home. When I see my maunga I karanga to my maunga and walk the beach. A vital part of living as Māori for me and my children is to have that place in the world where I can stand and say “I am from here”.*

*Travelling home each month is something that I do for myself and for my children and future grandchildren because we are still reclaiming and restoring a lot of things in our whānau. It is a responsibility and a privilege. I mean who drives four-and-a-half hours just for the hell of it! It is a commitment. It reminds me again of having a vision, a purpose, that we do these things for a reason, not just for us in the here and now but for our future and our ways of being to continue.*

Esther returns regularly to her tribal lands and actively participates in wānanga, working bees and marae events to maintain and strengthen her connections to people and places:
We hold whānau reunions on both our father and mother’s side.

A lot of preparation goes into the organising. Regular whānau meetings, fund-raising events and programming for the days and nights.

Because most of Esther’s aunts and uncles have passed on, these whānau gatherings are an important time to strengthen knowledge of whakapapa and marae history and maintain a connection with the land:

[The whānau reunion] is a real and authentic context, very meaningful. Te reo Māori me ona tikanga embedded, encompasses te ao Māori. This is Māori education not only for all but focussing on our rangatahi [young people] and mokopuna [grandchildren].

Holding whānau reunion is an important aspect in our lives. The same as returning back to tangihanga [funerary rites], hura kohatu [unveilings], marena [marriages], huritau [birthdays], ngā momo hui [other types of gatherings].

Claiming and re-claiming connections to the land and its people was considered amongst the wāhine as an important element of living as Māori. Another common element that emerged was our engagement and understanding of Māori language.

Reclaiming language

Knowledge of te reo, as an important element of living as Māori, is a sensitive and contentious subject. Sir James Henare (cited in M. Durie, 1998) said that knowledge of te reo is fundamental to a Māori cultural identity claim, asking “if the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us?” (p. 34). Others are cautious about imposing a narrow definition of Māori identity based on linguistic and cultural competence (Metge, 1995; Webber, 2008).

Collectively the women were conflicted by an assertion that Māori identity is predicated on knowledge of te reo. We are all, to varying degrees, ‘second-language learners’ of te reo, therefore on one hand we rejected language ability as a requisite cultural marker of a Māori identity – recognising perhaps the assimilative socio-historical environment from which ourselves and our parents emerged. On the other hand, many of us are intent on our children being confident and competent Māori speakers in order to strengthen their connection to te ao Māori. We all agreed that language ability is a complex, contentious and deeply personal issue.

Competency in te reo is an important part of my determination to live as Māori. I wrote this entry in my journal:
I do not possess a traditional Māori phenotype. I have red hair green eyes and (very) white skin. I was raised in an urban environment, physically distant from our tribal connections. In terms of outward Māori cultural markers I possess few. I knew from an early age that in order to assert a Māori identity I needed to have a firm grasp on at least one cultural marker. One way that I seek to reclaim and reconnect – to live as Māori – is through my language. Te reo Māori, for me, becomes an outward marker of my identity as a Māori woman.

I am a second-language learner of te reo. I would (humbly) describe myself as competently fluent. I do not possess a ‘mother tongue’ knowledge of my language although I am constantly seeking opportunities to improve my reo. It was, ironically, through the very education system that convinced my grandfather that he should not pass te reo on to his children, that my whānau and I were able to begin to reclaim te reo as a part of living as Māori.

As a cultural marker, the ability (or lack of) to speak Māori is a sensitive subject as many Māori were denied the opportunity to learn te reo at home and at school. The wāhine spoke and wrote about feelings of sadness and anger at not being able to converse fluently in te reo – a dis-ease they have attempted to disrupt by actively encouraging their children to engage with learning te reo.

Three of the wāhine spoke about how difficult it is to reclaim language as an adult and the limited opportunities that exist to learn. Adults who wish to reclaim te reo have limited opportunities to learn that often require a financial commitment to become full-time students or learn extra-murally in their own time. Mum shares her pūrākau:

In 2000 I did an immersion course. I was a full time student for a year and that had some significant financial implications. I did a number of other jobs as well as study like filling shelves at Countdown just to make ends meet. There were only a couple of older students all the rest were much younger. I had to make a decision about how I was going to survive financially. In Aotearoa the decision to learn te reo as part of one’s identity is a huge commitment.

Kim says:
I am just starting this week with Te Aupikitanga [a te reo Māori course] with Te Wānanga [a Māori tertiary institution]. I chose that because I was looking for one that had wānanga. They have one night in class and then weekend wānanga once a month so this is another attempt at being immersed, because I think that being immersed is the best way to learn and to retain and to continue to have conversations with people around you.

Tia expresses the challenge of learning te reo as a busy working and studying mother and how she seeks out informal opportunities to improve her language:

In my journey with the reo, which I am not doing this year as it is just the doctorate and mamahood, I just can’t fit it in. But my reo comes here, it comes when I am hanging out with my tuākana.

Intergenerational language transmission occurs when language knowledge is passed from the parent, or grandparent, to the child (Fishman, 1991, 1996). In my whānau however, reclamation of the language has involved a reversal of roles, that is, my children, Mum’s grandchildren, have become the language models. Mum says that her mokopuna will often teach her new words and correct her Māori grammar. She admits that already their reo ability has exceeded hers.

In many ways I rely on my mokopuna to teach me. If I could have my time over again I would have embraced the learning of te reo Māori so much more vigorously as I do believe that it is the foundation of a being. Whilst I have done many te reo Māori courses, my concentration was on ensuring that I was able to resource my children to pursue their goals and in particular live as Māori.

For Mum and me, it took one generation to ‘lose’ te reo in our whānau and it has taken three generations to reclaim and restore it.

Despite growing up in a Māori community, Esther also had to learn te reo in a formal context:

As an adult starting training college, I couldn't speak much at all. Growing up, I heard the language but I wasn't fluent. The nearest thing I could say was “Kia ora” so what did I do? I threw myself into the deep end. Ae tino mataku au, I used to be scared.

Coming through teachers training college I started on the mainstream [English-medium education] side and then came into the bilingual. When I finished the mainstream side, I said, “No I am going to get that reo” so I came into the Kura Kaupapa side here with
Whaea Tuki Nepe [a highly respected educationalist central to the development of Māori-medium education]. Now that was challenging. I had relations that spoke so fast and I would have to say “hey cuz slow down”. But it was a matter of throwing yourself into immersion – feel the fear and do it anyway.

Esther’s daughter-in-law is Polish and speaks Polish to Esther’s mokopuna. Esther makes a conscious effort to speak and sing in te reo Māori to her mokopuna so that he will know three languages – English, Polish and Māori.

Hei whāngai i ngā mātauranga o te ao Māori, te reo Māori me ōna tikanga, te reo o te kainga me te reo whānui o ngā hapu, iwi.

[So that he will be fed knowledge of the Māori world, its language and customs, the language of our homelands and of our whānau, hapū and iwi].

E haere ana tōku mokopuna ki tētahi whare nohinohi (ECE) heoi anō ka kōrero au i roto i te reo Māori pānui pukapuka, waiata kanohi ki te kanohi.

[He attends an Early Childhood Centre but I speak, sing and read books to him in Māori].

Although Luana feels a sense of loss and personal inadequacy around her language ability, she has not let that limit her children’s access to learning te reo. Conversely, her experience has driven her determination that they will be confident speakers:

I am not a beautiful brown wāhine who can kōrero like a pro, but I am me who is learning about her culture, who is embracing her language, who is not ashamed that she is a learner. I am me who can now recite her pepeha, who can hold a simple conversation in te reo, who has a 4 year old son who can kōrero like a pro.

Tia reminds us that learning te reo is more than simply speaking a language. It is part of a way of being – living as Māori – what she names “the living of the language”:

When I am in my classes with my reo, I am learning how to bring my sentences together. But what I am also learning, in the deep philosophical level of the reo, is that there is the living of the language as well. So even though I might not be saying the kupu [words] to my pepi [baby] as well as what my husband is or his aunties are, I am still able to bestow upon him an understanding of wairuatanga or whanaungatanga so those concepts are really lived and enriched in our whare [home] and then the sentences string together.
Re-naming and reclaiming Māori names

The marginalisation of te reo Māori over the last century not only interrupted language transmission, it also disrupted the practice of giving our children Māori names. Although there is little academic writing of the complex cultural politics of Māori names, Māori naming is explored in Simmond’s (2014) doctoral work on Māori maternities and geography and also in Kirsten Gabel’s (2013) research on Māori maternities and the law. There is some exciting doctoral research being done by Joellee Seed-Pihama around the power and meaning of Māori names and practices within her whānau.

Schools in particular were sites where Māori names were shortened, transliterated or changed entirely predominantly without any consultation with the child or their whānau (Simmonds, 2014, p. 232). Some parents, either tired of teachers mispronouncing their child’s name or eager to aid their child to better assimilate to the Western world, anglicized Māori names or adopted English first names. The practice of re-naming had a lasting effect. As Simmonds (2014) points out, “the marginalisation of names is worn by many in the names that they carry, or don’t carry as the case may be” (p. 232). Re-claiming naming has now become a site of reclamation and resistance.

Reclaiming Māori names for our children and mokopuna is a powerful way to reconnect us to our whakapapa, lands and traditions (Gabel, 2013; Simmonds, 2014). Linda Smith (1999) describes naming as one of 25 broadly defined Indigenous projects that reclaim, reformulate and reconstitute language and culture in the pursuit of social justice and self-determination. Kirsten Gabel (2013) says:

The resistance of naming our children and bestowing upon them significant tribal and traditional names is not merely an action that occurs at birth, but rather signifies a lifelong statement of resistance. This occurs because giving a child a significant ancestral or historical name brings with it a responsibility to protect the authority and prestige of that name. (p. 172)

The Māori names we choose for our children may be embedded with historical or traditional meaning that takes on significance that extends to the hapū and iwi (Gabel, 2013). For example when we name a child after an ancestor or in commemoration of a significant historical event or landmark, Linda Smith (1999) says that our children “quite literally wear their history in their names” (Smith, 1999, p. 157). Māori names may reflect an emotion, for example the common
Māori name *Aroha* meaning love (broadly understood), something that happened at that child’s birth or a favorite Māori word. Whether simple or complex, historical or contemporary, Māori naming is a ‘visible’ and outward expression of a Māori identity.

I have a personal interest in the reclaiming of Māori names as an element of living as Māori. In 2013 my mother created ceremony and re-named me Hinekura – a pūrākau I share below. Although the notion of naming and re-naming was not directly asked as a question in our wānanga, other wāhine discussed the relationship between Māori naming and reclaiming. In her journal Kim writes to her mokopuna about his name as a way of remembering loved ones that have passed:

*Haamihi you are named after your Uncle Hamish who passed away as a child. Your Mum felt a pull to bring her Uncle’s memory alive again with your arrival.*

Kim also writes about reclaiming important ancestral names:

*My generation has re-claimed tūpuna [ancestral] names for our children. My generation were named to appease convenience, following trendy fashionable names with tūpuna Māori names as second names. My parent’s generation all have English names with ingoa Māori embedded in there somewhere but not obvious.*

Before our children were born, my partner and I determined that they would have Māori first names. Despite concerns from a small number of non-Māori family members that they would struggle to pronounce Māori names, we wanted their Māori identity to be ‘visible’ in their name as well as their language and their whakapapa.

During our wānanga I shared a pūrākau about my grandfather’s experience of re-naming. Although members of my whānau could dispute the ‘facts’, I hold on to this pūrākau to highlight the whakapapa of assimilation and hegemony that my mother and I continue to address:

*Born Tana Kingi Arano in the early part of the 20th century, it was common not to have a birth certificate issued immediately, so when one was required he travelled to the Post Office in the ‘metropolis’ of Kawakawa [a very small but bustling railway town] to have one issued. I can only speculate on what actually happened on that day in the early 1930’s. In my imagination he would have approached the counter and spoken to a Pākehā deemed to be in a position of power. He may have said his name – Tana Kingi Arano to which the teller may have replied, “How about we just write Tony Allan”. My*
grandfather, who was taught to ‘not rock the boat’ would not have questioned this authority figure. He would have nodded and agreed. I don’t know exactly how this unfolded. What is clear is that with the stroke of a pen Tana Kingi Arano ceased to legally exist and Tony Allan came into being.

Some seventy years later, my re-naming experience was very different. I had for a long time held an unvoiced desire to have a Māori name. I understand names as part of our identity, one of many markers that make up how we ‘see’ ourselves and how others ‘see’ us. I was curious as to how having a Māori name might change my own perception of my identity and how others viewed me, my own social experiment if you will. What follows is a journal entry written to my daughters so that, when they are older, they might understand how and why their mother reclaimed a Māori name.

I had asked Nana some time ago what she might have named me if she had not been bound by the societal norms that prevailed in 1976 to give your baby an English name. She said she would have probably consulted with the Aunties in our whānau. Unbeknownst to me Nana had spoken with Whaea Te Raina and asked her for advice to choose a name for me.

As our karanga wānanga started, Whaea Te Raina informed us that she had found a name for me and that I would be undergoing a re-naming ceremony. I began to cry at the shock and honour of receiving something that I had desired deeply but would never have asked for.

A small group of us went outside and waited to be called back in to the whare. As I was waiting a million thoughts went through my head. What if I don’t like the name? What if it is really long? What if … what if…? Whaea then called, “Haere mai ra Hinekura e ...” I began to cry again as Hinekura had been one of the names I had thought about for myself for many years. Perhaps I heard it in my dreams? Perhaps Nana had spoken this name while I lay in her womb. I will never really know. All I know is that it fit perfectly.

Some years later the novelty of introducing myself as Hinekura and observing the second or two of disconnect as the listener works to associate my Māori name with my non-Māori appearance has worn thin. Although it is made up of two very common words in the Māori language, non-Māori will often say “I have never heard that name before” and how “unusual” it is. I now automatically spell my name to avoid the inevitable “could you spell that for me?”, field
questions about the meaning of my name and get asked if there is a simplified version – questions that were never asked of Lisa Jane.

What is worse is when people proceed to tell me what my own name means. On one occasion a Pākehā woman whom I had just been introduced to for the first time told me with a degree of authority that she knew what my name meant. She said “Hine means girl and kura means dog so your name means female dog”. She was partly correct. Hine does in fact mean girl, daughter or female child. But kura – not kuri the Māori word for dog – means precious and also red. Perhaps she mis-heard my name hearing kuri instead or kura. Perhaps she was learning te reo but got her words confused. Regardless, it was the authority with which she spoke that I remember and the simplistic way that she believed Māori names can be translated. Because of experiences such as this I am better able to understand past generation’s reluctance to give their children Māori names. While taking a Māori name is not an easy option it is, for me, a deliberate way of re-claiming how I choose to express living as Māori.

Tia shares her pūrākau of re-naming and re-claiming following her family’s relocation to Australia.

As a child on that plane travelling across the ditch in 1980, my mother had my brother and I recite our new names. My brother, Tahi, became Peter and until my parents finally divorced at 14 years of age I was known as Tina Third. I hated Tina, and I really hated the surname Third. For a young single parent family in a suburban beach setting, East Coast of Australia in the 1980’s it may have seemed appropriate to have Pākehā names for the little brown faces that had moved to town.

When I was 15 years old, my mum sat my brother and I down and said that she and dad were finally getting divorced. I remember it vividly because I straightaway asked mum if he had wanted to see us? She replied no. My brother then stood up and proclaimed that he wanted his name back. He wanted to be known as Tahi Reihana. I immediately said that I wanted my name back [too]. The story that we needed new names so our dad couldn’t find us seemed obsolete now that mum had said he didn’t really care. And although many years later I was to understand that this was NOT the truth... the relief that I was able to have my name back was a wonderful feeling. It felt like I was being honest with the world.
I went to school the following day and entered the office to make an official statement to the administrating staff that I was changing my name on the roll. My friends were also told. Sometimes this was hard, having to explain, sometimes being ridiculed and then a prolonged period of having to answer to both.

As a woman, I am more at peace with Tina. I have to thank her for all the quite horrible life experiences she got me through. Tina is strong and resilient and she still supports Tia to this day. However, as coming home to my whānau and my whakapapa the significance of my name makes sense to why for all those years it remained a powerful echo in my soul. Tina didn’t have whakapapa, she didn’t have memories of whenua. Tia has that, more importantly Reihana is a name that gathers me within the love of my tūpuna – the tūpuna that Tina was dreaming of all those years in Australia.

As Tia’s pūrākau highlights, the reasons for naming and re-naming are powerful. Names can hold our whakapapa, they can connect us to people, places and spaces in time. They are an outward and audible expression of an internal identity and, as argued here, a deliberate act of reclaiming living as Māori.

**Summary**

How the women in this research reclaim *living as Māori women* is discussed in this chapter as an oho, or awakening. Each wāhine recognised that their experience of living as Māori women has been shaped not only by their own individual experiences but also by a complex social history. They now actively select and de-select, retain and discard those ‘choices’ made for them by their parents and whānau – the feathers woven into their kākahu – based on what they believe will enable them and their children and mokopuna to live as Māori.

Choosing which ideas to feature in this chapter was challenging. While I have chosen to explore the themes of reclaiming living as Māori through language and connection to whenua and whakapapa, there are many more ideas that could have been written about. From a small number of participants, it was remarkable how different and similar our experiences of awakening our critical consciousness has played out – a reminder that the lived reality of Māori women is broad, fluid and beautifully textured.

Conceptually, this chapter honours the role we play as kaiwhatu in the here and now. We are the current weavers of an aho that stretches intact back to our past to link us to and inform our
present. While this continuous thread may at times have been weakened through colonising processes, it has never broken. As we whatu, we are, everyday, adding to our kākahu and that of our children and mokopuna through the decisions we make to enact change that we feel enables them to live full and fulfilled lives as Māori. As Mum has said to me many times before, “I do the best I can in the now with what I have learnt from the past and with my aspirations for the future of my children and mokopuna in mind.” In this sense we take up the responsibility to whatu a kākahu for our children that keeps them warm and protected, cloaking them in our aspirations for them to live as Māori.
Chapter Nine:

Whatuora – cloaked in aspirations to live as Māori

Whatuora, the name of the methodology and key theoretical idea in this thesis, is to see ourselves, our past experiences and possible future through decolonising eyes. A Whatuora approach does not stop with simply ‘seeing’ the damage but insists that we actively reclaim and restore a culturally well and clear vision of our present realities and, importantly, create a vision for the future. Whatuora encourages us, as Māori women, to re-vision a future for our tamariki and mokopuna as culturally intact and engaged, holistically well people of this land. To be in a state of ora in this chapter, is to choose to engage in a process of decolonising our vision, resisting negative hegemonic constructs of being Māori and recognising the impact of colonisation on our ability to live secure and positive lives as Māori.

The idea of ora as an element of living as Māori is discussed here as a positive cultural legacy passed down from one generation to the next. Handing on our cultural aspirations, values and beliefs can be described as ‘cultural generativity’, a term Kroger (2007) uses to describe “the care that adults give to their cultures, through acts of creation, conservation, material acquisitions and/or community participation to ensure that the culture itself will survive and flourish” (p. 181). Not only are our children and mokopuna an extension of our genealogical whakapapa, they are the continuation of our aspirations and beliefs, our values and traditions.

Both whatu kākahu and aspirations to live as Māori are discussed here as taonga tuku iho – simply translated as treasured heirlooms. While whatu kākahu are tangible artefacts and aspirations are abstract ideas, both are storied and seek to link the ‘wearer’ to their past as well as inform their future. Whatu kākahu as taonga tuku iho include not only the stories and relationships embodied in the kākahu but importantly the idea of cultural survival (Maihi, 2011), what I describe as reclaiming and restoring living as Māori. In this sense the whatu kākahu we create for our children and the aspirations we have to live as Māori are embodied ‘gifts’ that act as an intermediary between our present aspirations and our children’s future.

This chapter begins by looking at what the wāhine in this research learnt about themselves as they engaged in the practice of whatu. Next the idea of ‘re-modelling’ and ‘role-modelling’ how we live as Māori is explored before turning our gaze to the future and the aspirations we hold for our tamariki and mokopuna to take up the threads we have prepared for them to live as Māori. Having reflected on our experiences of growing up and being Māori in chapter seven, then
discussing our conscious awakening as Māori women in chapter eight, the aho of Whatuora as both methodology and lens is taken up here to discuss how we cloak our children in our aspirations for them to live as Māori now and into the future.

**Learning about ourselves as Māori women through the practice of whatu**

At various times during our wānanga the wāhine spoke about whatu as ‘teacher’. We discussed cultivating the art of patience and perseverance through the many long hours of work and repetition that whatu demands. Importantly, we discussed the *purpose*, rather than the *process* or the product of whatu as the key motivation to complete a whatu kākahu. Without a clear vision of WHY the kākahu is being made – that is, WHAT it says and WHO it is for – the HOW or mechanics of whatu is made more difficult.

The motivation to create a whatu kākahu and the motivation to live as Māori have some similarities. For some of the wāhine, the purpose or WHY we choose to live as Māori women centres on continuing to strengthen those ways of being that we experienced growing up and working to adapt these ways of being to our current conditions. For others our WHY is driven by a desire to reclaim and restore elements of living as Māori we felt we ‘missed out on’. Importantly, WHY we choose to live as Māori is for our tamariki and mokopuna so that they will understand who they are and how they connect as culturally well and connected beings to the land and to its people.

**Creating ‘me time’, enjoying ‘wāhine time’**

Reflecting on our wānanga, it is difficult to ignore the relationship between time and living as Māori women. Only once in eight wānanga did we have all eight wāhine there ‘on time’ and present for the whole day. Wāhine would arrive at wānanga after dropping children off at sports activities or dashing from another hui as they juggled multiple commitments. Often wāhine had to make choices between whānau events and attending the whatu wānanga. On occasions someone would receive a phone call to say that they were needed at home or a child was unwell. Rather than view this sometimes-fragmented participation as impacting negatively on the research, I instead see this as a critical issue that we as Māori women constantly negotiate. How do we manage multiple demands on our time and energy in a busy urban environment as we concurrently seek to reclaim and restore living as Māori?
The wāhine talked about the importance of creating ‘me time’ and the almost instant feelings of guilt that follow. At one of the wānanga, Luana received a phone call from her husband asking what time she would be home. Luana said:

_I was just writing about that in my journal about time management and giving more time to myself. Being a bit selfish in that way. Making time to do the things that I want to do, like this, that’s why I am going to stay. But it is hard to do because we have so many other commitments and so many people relying on us._

She later wrote in her journal that:

_I wish I could attend more wānanga, however life gets in the way!_

_I need to make more time for myself and the things that make me – me. To make time for the things that help me grow and learn about myself, how I am and my purpose. It is a balancing act when you have a whānau, little ones that rely on you and I am all about providing meaningful experiences for my children, making memories and exposing them to all the wonderful and not so wonderful things in life._

Jo-Ann reflected on creating ‘me time’ in her journal after attending a whatu wānanga at my marae in the Far North.

_My thoughts go back to my learning at Ahipara, missing the next two wānanga is not ideal, and is such a beautiful way to spend ‘me time’, time for myself ... what am I thinking ME TIME?? I imagine my tūpuna didn't feel like they needed me time! I tell myself “but the pressures are different these days” ... whatever JO! The pressures are definitely different, not to say we have it harder because we don’t._

One of my favourite quotes to emerge from the wānanga was Tia’s analogy of the ‘heartbeat in the boot’. She describes the tension of committing time to whatu and the constant demands of life, work and a new baby:

_This little piece of whatu that we have or haven’t been working on [giggle] ... it could have stayed in the box in the boot for a while because there is so much else that we are doing or could be doing as a whānau, to come out and make that commitment to be here, to pull through. It’s like driving around with this little heartbeat in the boot that's going boom boom, boom boom. That resonates a lot in our life, and living as a Māori wāhine..._
as well, there is the being and there is also the commitment and work that comes with that, in all its forms and shapes.

I remarked that, as a Māori woman, I am often busy being busy – an attribute of hard work, and a desire to contribute, modelled and woven into my kākahu by my mother. I wrote this reflection in my journal:

Why do I get a weird satisfaction about being busy ALL the time? It’s like I am trying to win ‘the busy game’, comparing myself with others to see who has the busiest life – I am busier than you so I win! That is not a game that I want to play and certainly not a legacy I want to hand to my girls … hmm I am not sure I am role-modelling that very well. I guess some legacies are hard to resist.

Participating in the whatu wānanga was agreed as, not only creating ‘me’ time, but also creating wāhine time – time and space to be with other Māori women. I wrote this analogy in my journal:

Wāhine time. Self-care. Me time I am reminded of the safety briefing on an aeroplane. In an emergency, the adults are advised to put on their oxygen masks first before they assist their children. On the surface this appears a selfish act, surely I need to see to the needs of my children first before my own? But how do I care for my children when I am not receiving enough oxygen myself? My responsibility to them is a responsibility to myself – to ensure that I breathe in deeply that oxygen that will nourish my body and mind. Through this nourishment I am able to then nourish and care for my children.

Being correct and being tika
The wāhine brought a critical lens to the idea of being tika, a term often over-simplified as meaning to be right or correct. I was reminded during our wānanga that there is not one fixed way of being ‘right’ just as there is not one fixed way of living as Māori. Jo-Ann shared an example that highlighted the difference for her between being right and being tika:

I went through one stage with my kākahu, when I was doing the tāniko on it and I let my youngest girl do some, because she has always wanted to learn how to do it, she has said to me Mum can you show me how to do it. I showed her how to do the twisting. Because I am a bit fussy I could see that it was crooked, it wasn't tight enough and I thought I am going to take that out, but I didn't. I left it there because that was hers. I know that there
are some bits in there that are a bit huckery, a bit loose, but I left it there because that's her, she did that. So when I look at it then I will know that's my baby’s.

Despite Jo-Ann’s initial desire to re-do the whatu so that is was ‘correct’, what she decided was tika was to honour her daughter’s contribution to the kākahu by allowing her to add her story to its fabric.

Jo-Ann’s pūrākau prompted a response from Arndrea:

_Having to undo your whatu to make it correct, does it make it anymore beautiful or does it just make it correct? I know with my first piece, which I am still working on. If you look at the back there are bits missing here and there, but you know what, I am leaving it in there because this is for my moko niece and that is the journey of life, you make mistakes but you learn from them and you carry on._

**Learning to koha and let go**

Koha, the Māori principle of giving, is defined as a gift or contribution intended to enhance relationships and, in doing so, enhance the mana of those involved in the exchange (H. M. Mead, 2003). Luana writes about the importance of intentions and being in a tika emotional and spiritual state:

_Now my journey has come to an end at kōhanga, I am ready to start my kākahu. I still want to gift it to the kōhanga because I have learnt a lot from working there, bad and good, but I feel that my time there was invaluable and I would like to leave this gift for them. So now is the time, in the right frame of mind and the right environment, now is where I am getting a feeling of excitement and love for the work I am about to start. Ohhhh it feels GOOD!_

She later journals about her sense of accomplishment in completing the kākahu and her difficulty in parting with something that required a great deal of time and emotional energy to create.

_I have finally finished my first kākahu ... damn I am so proud of myself! I think it is the most beautiful thing ever and even though I was happy to gift it to Jai and Kaya’s kōhanga I wish I could hold on to it!!_

Arndrea tells her pūrākau of completing a whatu kākahu for a teacher she respected very highly who had taught her children. This young teacher was leaving the school and, with only a few
weeks’ notice, Arndrea undertook to create a whatu kākahu to present to him at his farewell. She describes an emotional journey that highlights the depth of intention necessary to create storied taonga:

All in all that sacrifice that you make and that everyone around you makes, you really have to love that person. I didn’t mind. It was the love for that kaiako that kept me going, what he has done for my family. So that made it well worth it. That really came to my mind. The time that you put in, the sacrifice that everyone has to make. You have to love that person to do it. But it was amazing. There was so much going on. There was the drive and determination. The physical pain. The sacrifice, a bit of oppression that was surrounding that kaupapa about the ways that things “should be done” in farewelling this young man. That was quite hard. But that’s okay, because I didn’t actually tell anyone that I was doing it because I don’t want anyone else dictating to me [tangi] how to do it, what it was for. I just do it my own way.

Arndrea spoke about many nights’ weaving until the early hours of the morning and of the sacrifices her whānau made to enable her to complete the kākahu. While it was Arndrea’s hands that did the whatu, her whānau were equally integral to its completion. During a wānanga Arndrea spoke emotionally about entering another ‘zone’ as the physical and emotional pressure of completing the kākahu came to bear.

I don't know why I am crying and why I am so emotional ... maybe because it is the first time I have spoken about it out loud. The oppression thing happening at the school, that was hard. You know at a tangihanga when you are close to that person and you get almost into a veil that no matter what people are saying to you, or what they are doing in their lives, you are in this zone with this connection to what ever you are doing. That's how I felt in the last week of weaving. In my house I have got this little plaque that my goddaughter gave me that says ‘If it wasn't for the last minute I would never get anything done’ and it is so true. The last assembly for him our poroporoaki [farewell] was at 2 o’clock. I was putting the last stiches in my lining at 1.30.

I was supposed to pick my daughter up from school to bring her down for this poroporoaki which Jo did and it gave me some quiet time which I didn't realise I needed, just to put my thoughts together, put the last stitches in. A name had sort of been developing. So I spent the last 20mins doing karakia, sitting with the kākahu, my last
connections with it, making up a tag. I rolled it up so I could unveil it and then out the door down the road. Lucky it is only 5 mins down that road. Yes it was a journey and a half. I actually felt really sad because I felt like I needed another day just to spend a bit of time with it, really look at it, appreciate it a little bit, check the stitches, but I didn't have that I only had that last 20 mins so I felt really pouri [sad] actually. Just to feel it, touch it.

When I got home, my weaving rack was naked, gone – just like that. It was quite strange. It felt like the house was empty like a part of our family had gone. Maybe because it was so intense in such a short amount of time I don’t know because that is the first one I have completed one. I don’t know how it feels if you’ve got more time. Man it was a journey but worth it, well worth it for the young man.

As discussed earlier, an array of kākahu can be machine sewn or purchased on-line from an anonymous maker. Arndrea’s pūrākau highlights that it was the time and effort, as well as the story connected to the whatu kākahu that brought the garment to life and in doing so embodied within it, the depth of emotion and aroha that she wished to convey.

Learning to accept
Luana’s stories of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ Māori highlighted the lesson of learning to accept ourselves as Māori women. Her moving written and spoken words revealed some significant shifts in her sense of self. At the end of the wānanga Luana wrote about a sense of contentment and wellbeing. She signals an increased sense of confidence in who she is and her ability to make decisions for herself and her children to live as Māori.

I am finally realising that being me is not that bad! I have always thought I was a bad person that lacked intelligence and good looks haha! But coming to this experience and whatu-Ing like a pro I realise that I am okay and its okay to be okay.

Luana draws strength from the knowledge that she is not alone on this journey to live as a Māori woman. She realised that Māori wāhine from diverse experiences and backgrounds confront similar uncertainties and challenges as she does and that this is okay, because living as Māori women is shaped by us, for us and with our aspirations at its centre.
By the end of the wānanga Luana recognised that others’ perceptions of her were not important. Those people who she perceived had judged her were unable to see the richly storied and beautiful kākahu that she wears:

Thinking back to what I have written in my journal I have seen the change in myself. There was a lot of anger in the things I wrote and I feel bad for some of those things. I realise that, at that time, I was in a place that I was not enjoying. I felt judged on what I wore, where I lived and what I had. I felt the people I worked with saw me as a rich white girl, which is so far from the truth. It makes me laugh that they had no idea of who I was. It hurt me because it was where I wanted to be – in a Māori environment with other like minded people ... but our views on life were miles apart.

Reflecting on what we learnt about ourselves extended into thinking about how we role-model, and in some cases re-model, the behaviours, beliefs and attitudes to living as Māori handed down to us.

**Re-modelling and role modelling living as Māori women**

Tia, Mum and Kim spoke directly about their responsibility as mothers and grandmothers to role model and in some cases re-model living as Māori for their children and mokopuna. Kim talks about taking up certain threads from her parents as role models and applying them to her role as a parent:

I think a lot of the decisions my parents made for me were about rangatiratanga and identity. They set the precedent or modelled the behaviour or whatever it is parents do, you take the good from your experience, you want your tamariki to have that, and you sift out the stuff that you didn't like. Sometimes some of that stuff comes in a bit later in life when you get to a point of maturity when your thinking has changed and you start realising the gems, that at the time in your youth were hōhā – ugh I am not going to do that with my kids ... next minute you are doing it!

Kim discusses her conscious decisions to re-model how she wants to be as a mother as she selects and de-selects those ‘feathers’ (attributes and attitudes) woven into her kākahu. She shares a personal pūrākau of her relationship with her Mum:

We knock heads all the time because we are so different from each other but having said that I have never negated her as my mother and the Scottish culture that she comes from,
her background. I can’t because it is me as well. It is funny those things that try to pull you apart, the tensions with your parents and their values.

That's that thing about how you weed out some of the ugly stuff, some of the stuff you feel really uncomfortable with and you think I would never want to continue that kind of communication with my children so I am going to leave that over there.

Kim also shared an example of her deliberate role modelling of te reo Māori as a way of re-modelling and reclaiming.

Ahakoa he pepi noa iho tōku reo me kōrero i te reo rangatira tuatahi ki ō māua tamariki, mokopuna [although my language is still developing, I speak our noble language first to our children and grandchildren]. This is one of the most prominent examples of deliberate modelling we [her husband and whānau] have made a conscious decision about.

Tino kaha tō rātou reo Māori, reo Pākehā hoki [the children and grandchildren’s Māori and English languages are very strong]. This was one of the aspects of cultural practice my whānau was compromised in in my grandparents and parents generation. My generation has been most diligent to restore this right with our children and their children consequently.

After years of sometimes-painful reclamation work to restore living as Māori for her children, Mum’s determination has not diminished as she transitioned into her role as grandmother and kuia:

As the years of my autumn approach, my determination is to be the best Māori I can be. To role model this is now my absolute focus. I will continue to reclaim as I can, I will continue to restore as I can and I will always support our rejuvenation. In terms of my whānau, my daughter is the leader and restorer and her children are the rejuvenators. My son and his children, I do not envisage, will have the same level of reclamation, restoration or rejuvenation but will do so at a different level and with a different sense of urgency.

I have every intention to ‘lose no ground’ nor go back over ‘the glass I have crawled over’. In becoming the Māori woman that I claim to be today I will continue to introduce new ways of knowing being and doing to, not only my whānau, but to all with whom I
have engagement with. I will continue to challenge the structures that question my being as a Māori woman. I will continue to insist that I am tangata whenua and as such this is my mana whenua (land of my ancestors).

I am Māori, I am wāhine, I am me, I am me, I am me.

Ko au he Māori, ko au he Wāhine, Ko au ko au ko au.

Tia writes about the roles she models as Māori woman and mother. Her thoughts simultaneously cast back to her father and forward to her son:

*I have an aspiration to be the daughter that my father would have been proud of. My whakapapa gives me some richness of relationship to this place, how I engage with it is important. It allows a positive path to my Dad. Having this positive path lights one to my son and my role as mother. These are my aspirations, somehow my needs are enriched by ones to be a good māmā.*

*When I think about our tūpuna and our mokopuna and the kupu puna – a source of the past and future and the strength in that. My boy is my strength ... he carries something of me into the future and as a wāhine that is a big responsibility informed by love.*

Arndrea shares a legacy from her kuia (an elder woman) that guides her in her role as mother:

*I would like to think of my children as my very own, for forever and beyond but I remember something my mother told me when Savannah was born. Her mother told it to her. She said ... “when you have your children you birth them, you care for them, you love them and you watch them grow. You think of them as your own special taonga, that they belong to you. But what happens is they grow and age and become men and women. Before long they spread their wings and are off making a life for themselves. We have been entrusted by the creator of life to teach, love and guide these little souls to become good men and women and then, one day, to set them free so that they may do the same. Then we will know that our job is done.”* 

*These are very wise words of my Nana’s. It makes perfect sense on so many levels. In modern times it could mean exactly how you read it, but in days gone by it could also mean “Ngā taonga tuku iho o ngā tūpuna” [the gifts bequeathed to us by our ancestors] I am sure my nan meant this when she said “then we will know our job is done.”*
Jo-Ann has two entries in her journal written by her daughters. These entries speak to the values of patience and perseverance, love and dedication that Jo-Ann models and has attempted to weave into their kākahu. Her youngest daughter writes:

*I think about Mum making her korowai, special and creative. She takes forever to make it. Mum says she is going to make me one but Paige is first. My Mum is clever. I want purple and white in my korowai (love you Mummy).*

Her eldest daughter Paige follows with this entry:

*I can see what it takes to make a korowai. A lot of time and effort, and a lot of patience. I don't think I would last long if I were to make one. My mother is perfect for this sort of thing. She will put in a lot of love and she is passionate about her korowai. These things take so long to make. But that's alright because the result is all that matters.*

As Māori women we seek to re-model and role-model living as Māori for, and with, our children in a sense surrounding them, as much as possible, in a protective and secure kākahu – cloaking them in our aspirations for them to live as Māori.

**Cloaking our children in aspirations to live as Māori**

As mothers, we aspire to surround our children with positive experiences and ‘cloak’ them in the values and beliefs that we feel will enable them to live full and enriched lives. We make conscious and semi-conscious decisions based on what we believe is ‘best’ for them in the context of the time, informed by our interaction with the world and influenced by the people and ideologies that surround us. The broader aspirations that the wāhine hold for their children and mokopuna range from wanting them to be healthy and active, to being ‘good people’, sensitive and connected to the environment, contributing in meaningful ways to society and being life-long learners. Rather than aspirations being ‘dreams’ or hopes that are passively engaged with, aspirations in this context arise from a conscious reflection on our own experiences and an active commitment to embody the change we want to create. This section looks specifically at how the wāhine spoke about cloaking their tamariki and mokopuna in aspirations to live as Māori.

The idea of whatu kākahu as storied taonga tuku iho capable of physically, and metaphorically, cloaking our children is taken up here. Described as “silent woven repositories, which discretely speak a thousand words” (Malcolm-Buchanan et al., 2012, p. 59) and as “visual encyclopaedia bursting with knowledge … if only they could speak” (Maihi, 2011, p. 34), whatu kākahu are
embodied and storied garments. A whatu kākahu may hold the memories of a special occasion or
the stories of someone who has worn it. These stories may manifest clearly within the pattern or
style of the kākahu, for example, the symbols used in the tāniko. Other stories are less obvious
and require a complementary means of expression for the story to be heard. In my journal I recall
a pūrākau of creating my first whatu kākahu at the time my partner suffered a heart attack.

Despite being physically very fit and only 40 years old at the time, Michael suffered a
serious coronary event and spent some weeks in hospital. During this time I would come
home from the hospital and, as mothers do, feed and bathe our children and put them to
bed before preparing for the next day. Once the children were asleep and the house was
quiet I often could not sleep so I would sit up working on my whatu kākahu until the early
hours of the morning. Sometimes I cried with worry. Sometimes I screamed in frustration
while I was working. I am sure that if you tested this kākahu for DNA you would find
traces of tears and saliva that were literally woven into its fibres that would tell of my
pūrākau of worry and uncertainty.

When I look at that kākahu I can see exactly where I was weaving at that time. That story
is embedded in the fabric. I can read where the stitches are small and tight, a sign of my
physical and emotional tension, and I see clearly where the lines are uneven and
crooked, blurred through my tears and utter physical exhaustion. While this kākahu
speaks to me of the thousand unspoken prayers and thoughts I had at that time it is only
through my telling of the stories attached to the kākahu that they are heard. Nobody else
would see this story if I didn't tell it. Fortunately my partner made a full recovery and the
kākahu – my first full length creation – was gifted to my mother and is worn often as a
treasured reminder of that aroha and whānau can get us through any hardship.

Traditionally made muka kākahu are considered most capable of physically and metaphysically
embodying stories. Constructed from the inner fibre of the harakeke leaf, the process of
extracting muka is laborious and requires patience and dedication. Extracting muka involves
dragging a mussel shell across harvested harakeke revealing, almost magically, the hidden fibres
within. Toi Te Rito Maihi (2011) explains:

… muka was seen not only as a concrete way to represent wairua, or life force, but also
as powerfully symbolic of the unseen – the spiritual element that, to Māori, permeates all
aspects of life. (Maihi, 2011, p. 34)
Muka, in this sense acts as a liminal pathway connecting the physical and spiritual, the past with the present, and the future providing another layer of thinking about the synergy of whatu kākahu and living as Māori.

Whether in varying states of processing or hung in prepared bundles ready for the next kākahu project, muka is a vital and ever present fibre in my household. I wrote this about the role muka in my journal:

Prior to the birth of both of our children, I prepared muka that was used to tie off their umbilical cord. This birthing tradition was not passed directly to me. Using muka was, for me, a conscious attempt to reclaim and restore a Māori maternity practice disrupted through colonisation. Following the birth of our first daughter, an overseas trained obstetrician strenuously objected to the muka tie. Based on his scientific medical training, he deemed it unhygienic and insisted that it be replaced by the standard plastic clip. Still intoxicated with the joy of having given birth to my first child, I explained with uncharacteristic patience that muka had particular healing qualities and had been used by our people for many years for this very purpose. I knew that, as well as its medicinal qualities, muka is also a potent connector of the physical to the spiritual, the present to the past. I chose not to explain the metaphysical to a scientific medical professional. Through our persistence and the support of a Māori midwife the muka tie remained. Within less time than ‘normal’, had we used the plastic clip, the umbilical cord had dried beautifully and fallen away. When the obstetrician returned he was amazed and actually thanked us for expanding his knowledge and experience. The dried muka and umbilical cord were placed with both children’s after-birth and later buried in their tribal lands.

Muka is regarded as the ultimate fibre with which to create whatu kākahu. It can take a year or more to gather and prepare enough fibre for a kākahu and then anywhere from a year or more to whatu. While the wāhine who created kākahu in this research have, by and large, used contemporary non-traditional materials, creating a muka whatu kākahu remains an aspiration that many of the wāhine will go on to complete.

Throughout the course of this doctoral journey I have been gathering and preparing muka whenu for my first muka whatu kākahu. Often a time to be still and present with the fibre, gathering and preparing muka for this purpose provides me with an embodied way of ‘being’ with my research.
in a different form. I intend to make my first muka whatu kākahu to mark the completion of this doctoral journey and see it as a way to heal and recover: in other words to be in a state of ora.

Those who wear whatu kākahu add their mauri or life force energy to the garment. I have an aspiration that when my grandchildren and great-grandchildren wear a muka whatu kākahu that I have made, they will feel both a physical and spiritual connection to their ancestress. Not only will they ‘feel’ my mauri embodied within the garment, but they will also be told – or read – the storied history of how their tūpuna wāhine actively sought to reclaim and live as a Māori women so that they could enjoy a secure and positive Māori identity. The mauri or life force energy embedded within the kākahu is another way to conceive of how Māori mothers and grandmothers ‘hand down’ our aspirations to our children and mokopuna, retaining the continuous binding threads that link us through the generations.

As the wāhine planned, wove and discussed their kākahu, they spoke passionately about the aspirations they hold for their children and mokopuna to live as Māori. From the wānanga and journals the following themes emerged.

**Being proud to be Māori**

Important to the Māori women in this research is that their tamariki and mokopuna are proud of their identity as Māori. Being proud to be Māori is about knowing who you are and where you come from – and more. *Being Māori* is a birthright by whakapapa. *Living as Māori* and being proud of that identity builds on that whakapapa to actively engage with a positive and secure sense of cultural self.

Luana discusses how her experience of ‘missing out’ on a secure Māori identity has influenced how she wants her children to understand themselves as Māori:

> I have two beautiful children who I want to teach to not only be proud of who they are but to know where they are from and to have that feeling of belonging and mana. I want to give them what I missed out on. Not that it was my parents’ fault that I didn’t go to kōhanga it was society’s ideals at the time on what type of person ‘fitted in’. My parents tried to do right by me. My grandmother was told by her mum, “If you want to succeed in this world then you must live and breathe as a Pākehā”. And that's what she did because at that time that's what was expected of them.
Mum talks about a long and enduring struggle to reclaim and restore a sense of pride in being Māori so that her children and mokopuna may live as Māori:

*I want for my children to be proud to claim they are Māori. I want for them to know that they truly belong to this land and I want them to fight for this for their children and their mokopuna. I fear that as Māori, we are losing our whenua and ways of knowing being and doing and therefore our sense of identity. Ideally, I do not want them to have the challenges that I have had in reclaiming and acknowledging their Māoritanga but I fear that as the neo-liberal powers of our country and the world continue to govern us, this struggle will become more intense. I grieve that they will have this challenge however in my grief I have a hope that they will become stronger for the struggle. I pray that in embracing the challenges they will have the skills to balance their well being so that they grow from their struggle and not become unwell spiritually.*

*I reflect on my Dad’s demise, when I saw that the wairua had said enough is enough as he struggled to remain in his world. He once said a most profound statement when he stood for the first time in his whare (tribal meeting house) on the marae at the age of 60. “I have not spoken in this house before. I have been sleeping with the Pākehā for too long.” As I travel toward my time I want to be able to say I challenged Pākehā to see me as Māori so that my children and mokopuna can stand tall in that identity.*

How we navigate multi-cultured and ethnic identities, in particular Māori and Pākehā pluralism was spoken about as the ability, or instability, of walking in two worlds.

**To walk in two worlds**

Some of the wāhine hold aspirations for their tamariki and mokopuna to ‘walk in two worlds’ – a common rhetoric, perhaps most famously articulated by Ta Apirana Ngata, a Māori politician who led a wide range of initiatives intended to improve life for Māori in the early to mid 20th century. His well-known whakatauki encouraged Māori to take hold of the values, beliefs and knowledge of both Māori and Pākehā in order to flourish in a fast changing world. His proverb reads:

E tipu e rea mō ngā rā o tou āo  
Ko tō ringa ki ngā rākau a te Pākehā  
Hei oranga mō to tīnana.  
Ko tō ngākau ki ngā taonga ā ō tipuna Māori,
Hei tikitiki mō tō māhunga
Ko tō wairua ki te Atua nā na nei ngā mea katoa.

[Grow and flourish in the days destined to you
In one hand the tools of the Pākehā to provide your physical sustenance
Your heart to the treasures of your ancestors as a precious adornment upon your brow.
Your ‘soul’ to your god to whom all things belong].

Viewing Ngata’s words with a decolonising Whatuora lens reveals, perhaps, the Christianised early 20th century context in which it was spoken – a time when Māori, by and large, still retained their language and identity. Māori readily accepted that taking on Pākehā language and values was a way to access opportunities and material benefits. Time has demonstrated that the ideology of ‘balance’, or having the best of both worlds, was not sustained but instead, resulted in ‘those things Māori’ being subsumed by ‘those things Pākehā’, bringing our language, arts and culture to the brink.

Ngata’s whakatauki perhaps contains a different message for contemporary times. The omnipotent and omnipresent nature of Pākehā language and culture means that Māori have little choice but to grasp hold of Pākehā language, values and beliefs. Conversely, it is the need to reclaim, restore and represent those things Māori in the other hand that may redress the balance to better enable Māori to live well and fulfilled lives as Māori.

Esther discusses negotiating this bicultural dichotomy in terms of viewing the world through two lenses. Thinking about her mokopuna she says:

*It’s not like he is going to grow up in to the world that I grew up in ... so it changes with each generation.*

*The world to me is two lenses, everything to me is two lenses in terms of the Pākehā world, the modern world and bearing in mind the Māori world, but it is easy for me to say that. How are our tamariki able to perceive their world like that?*

*They need to truly know their tūrangawaewae so that they are able to stand proud and be able to walk in those two worlds ahakoa no hea ahakoa kei hea [regardless of who they are or where they are] wherever they are even if they go overseas, truly knowing who they are.*
Arndrea’s aspiration is that her children are able to walk in two worlds or, better still, bring these two worlds together:

The aspirations and decisions about what we [her and her husband] wanted for our kids came from all different areas. There was a lot of thought that went in to it. I thought about it because my husband is Pākehā. We wanted to gain that knowledge of te reo Māori but in the same breath I also thought about what our tūpuna had been through in terms of the Pākehā world. A lot of my people left their homes and came to the city for work; they could see what was happening. They knew that if you wanted to succeed in life, money wise, you had to relate to the Pākehā. Talking with my husband, he is pretty easy going, loves the kids, loves that they are Māori, loves me, and loves his Pakeha side. We had this conversation – if we put them into bilingual education what would that mean? What we decided for our children is that we wanted them to stand tall in both worlds. We didn't want them to be stronger in one culture than the other; we wanted them to be strong in both. I also thought into the future about what that would mean for our children and the aspiration I had was that, there is still a lot of racism, a lot of misunderstanding between Pākehā and Māori so what if there were people that were that have a strong understanding of both worlds, that could bring those two cultures together and communicate properly so that there wouldn't be all this fighting and misunderstanding of one another’s intentions. In our time I feel there is an inequality. From my experiences I believe I understand the Pākehā value system. That is not to say that I think all Pākehā choose to live by it. To be honest though I know very few Pākehā that understand our Māori values system. Ironically, I think that many Pākehā of our generation are a result of colonisation and they don't even realise it.

We truly wish for our tamariki to be secure within their identity. To find peace; to live as Māori ALL of the time; to be confident at navigating their way through and within te ao Māori. That's what we want for our children.

Listening to this discussion I struggled internally with the idea of ‘walking in two worlds’. Later that day I wrote this journal entry:

I have had people say to me, that I am so lucky to have a foot in both worlds – both the Māori and Pākehā world. I used to think that this was an advantage that I was able to ‘walk in both worlds’. This gives the false notion that there is a balance, a way to
negotiate both worlds equally. As a teenager I saw this dichotomy as more of an imbalance as I was challenged to jump from one side to another in an almost schizophrenic fashion, because it is hard to live as Māori in my Pākehā world. Now as a Māori woman and mother I choose to spend my time more fully in the world that best reflects those values and beliefs that resonate with me. I choose to live as Māori.

In Aotearoa I cannot help but acknowledge and express ‘being Pākehā’. It is in my whakapapa. It is all around me in the language on the street and the media I consume. It is pervasive in government policy and education curriculum. My determination to live as Māori is to redress that imbalance by reclaiming and restoring those elements that were impacted through colonial assimilation.

Aspirations to live as Māori inevitably mean a negotiation of our multiple ‘cultural selves’. I maintain that to live as Māori is not to negate other cultural or ethnic identities instead it is an assertion and active political engagement in choices to reclaim, restore and represent those things inherent in our whakapapa.

Reclaiming ways of being
Māori notions such as aroha, koha, manaaki tangata (care of people), manaaki whenua (care for the land) and rangatiratanga were discussed during our wānanga as important elements of living as Māori women. Māori ontological terms are most clearly expressed within our own language rendering simplified translations, such as aroha as ‘love’ and koha as a gift, as insufficient to capture their embodied depth of meaning (see Marsden, 2003; H.M Mead, 1997, 2003; Pere, 1991, 2006). The wāhine spoke and wrote about those aho from our past that continue as important ways of being in our present.

Kim talks about aroha as a way of being, handed down to her from her grandmother:

My Nanny’s words that have remained as a whakatauki in our whānau said the greatest gift you can share and maintain is aroha for each other and those you bring into our whānau. This is her legacy and is reinforced through our manaakitanga.

Mum draws on the key Māori value of koha as an act of reciprocal giving or contribution, to express an aspiration she has for her children:

For my children to be able to stand in both their worlds and to be successes in both is my ultimate dream. Success is subjective but as long as they are successful to themselves,
their whānau and iwi and that in this success they koha or contribute back those things they have gained and learned. It is important to me that they care and support others less fortunate than themselves, to share with others and to be role models to others to stand proud and live as Māori.

I wrote in my journal about reclaiming our rangatiratanga as Māori women. At the time I was learning the female art of karanga. I wrote this entry with my daughters at the forefront of my mind:

My daughters remain the aho matua – the central thread that binds all others together and gives meaning to the whole. I see that, at 8 and 6 years old, they are already confronted with the challenges of living as Māori women in a patriarchal world that overtly and covertly tells them that they should look, think, act, speak and relate in a particular way. I want them to understand their bodies physically and spiritually and the sanctity that they hold. Already I see them conforming to Western female stereotypes and pushing back at me when I work to challenge the images that mainstream media floods us with. They giggle, when I engage in my morning ritual of sending a karanga of love out into the universe. But I will persevere and cling to the hope that I am laying down the foundations for them to understand themselves, live and love themselves as Māori women.

Luana talks about wanting to pass down to her children Māori notions of respect, understood as aroha:

How Māori respect what they gather from the sea. How they respect what they gather from the forests, kōrero from their elders, how they behave in the wharekai [communal dining hall]. That’s what I really admire about Māori people; how they live and their respect for the resources that they use and their elders. That’s how I want my children to live, to respect Papatūānuku, to respect their parents and themselves.

My number one priority is my kids and showing them a life full of love and light. Giving them a rich fulfilled life and that’s not showering them in gifts and taking them to Disneyland. It’s about the experiences that will stay with them for life, going back to the marae and all the people in it. Getting to know the ins and outs of our home (Opotiki) giving them opportunities to know who they are and their culture through other people’s eyes. Giving them lots of love and time!! It brings a tear to my eye to think of them and
my home. The peaceful feeling I get when I go home, that strong connection I have with home. I want my kids to experience that too.

Luana highlights a connection between reclaiming ways of being and sustaining secure and enduring connections with our tribal lands and its people.

**Whenua and whakapapa – connecting to the land and its people**

The idea that living as Māori is to connect to whenua and whakapapa – the land and its people – emerged from our wānanga discussions and journaling. Similar to the intertwining aho of whatu, the notions of whānau and whakapapa interact and interlock, one anchoring the other. Although both elements can exist independently, the two are most powerful as interdependent and intertwining elements that connect us as Māori women to the land and its people.

The women discussed connecting to whenua and whakapapa in broad and fluid terms. Some were quick to point out that narrow and fixed definitions of what it means to connect to your tribal lands and whakapapa, negates the impact of colonisation, urbanisation and assimilation on our lived realities and risks further alienating some Māori from living as Māori. Tia, Luana and I, for example, have worked to reclaim a connection to our whenua and whakapapa as disrupted intergenerational knowledge transmission meant degrees of dislocation and disconnection from our ‘roots’. The wāhine chose to speak about connecting to the land and its people as an element of living as Māori women in broad and fluid ways.

Esther’s aspirations for her mokopuna to live as Māori, resides in a physical and spiritual connection to the land and its people. She says:

... the most important thing for our tamariki and mokopuna is that they truly know who they are no reira me pēhea so how are they going to know that. In terms of their, whakapapa, pepeha, their maunga their awa, their marae. Not only in words, being able to stand and say it, but to be able to live it, so that they are there at the maunga and there at the awa, they’re there at the marae to be able to truly have those connections, its all about connections. Family reunions and returning back home to support these connections.

Tia reminds us that, while connecting to tribal lands is an important way of being in the world, so too, is connecting to the wider natural universe:
My idea of living as Māori resonates from a deepened sense of being in the world, its knowledge systems. I think these delve deeper than the everyday living and life of the human being. They move further than whānau to include our living environments, our flora and fauna. We are placed humbly within its cycle, not on top but within.

Each year Kim’s extended family return to their tribal lands for family hui. Kim discusses their family hui as a way of sustaining connections to the land and its people by passing on knowledge, expectations and aspirations to their children and mokopuna. She lists a number of key outcomes of the annual hui in her journal:

My whānau has been having annual hui since 1989. This has been an exercise in building our Penetitotanga with many precious objectives including

- Ensuring our mokopuna and tamariki know their whānau
- Sharing whakapapa
- Discussing issues as a whānau
- Celebrating and supporting initiatives and achievements
- Experiencing tikanga-a-hapu at our marae
- Being visible to the haukainga as a whānau dispersed nationally and internationally
- Raising awareness of collective skill and knowledge
- Each generation has input in to the hui and contributes to the programme each year.

Celebrations such as whānau reunions, birthdays and funerals often provide opportunities to return home and connect with the land. Importantly, these events also enable us to engage with and strengthen connections to people and our whakapapa.

Arndrea makes the important link between whenua, whakapapa and living as Māori:

I think being Māori as a part of living as Māori comes from our bloodline. An inherent source of mauri that has been passed down through whakapapa that stems from the time of creation. We have an intricate and intimate relationship with our whenua and a
complex and highly practical understanding of nature. We have spoken language that holds the key to our essence, which provides explanations of our values.

Connecting to, and learning about, whakapapa is important to Arndrea:

My passion is whakapapa. I know that traditionally this realm is for males. My own personal view on this is as long as you are respectful, your intentions are good and that you are not scared or shocked by your tūpuna you will be fine.

I have always been intrigued at the intertwining, intricate relationships that people have with one another. This started from an early age. I remember my mother giggling at me and shaking her head when I would insist that she explain to me how different people were related to us upon meeting them. I would be standing there, arms crossed with a glare on my face if she didn't explain.

I could sit for hours listening to history and genealogy. To me it allows a glimpse into your past. I love my tūpuna with all my heart. The older I get I believe more and more in the help that our tūpuna give us. At times they help steer us on our path.

Mum wants her children and mokopuna to understand that, in claiming a connection to the land, they are simultaneously accepting a responsibility to that land:

I have 4 mokopuna from my children, and their whenua is buried together on whenua special to us. They know where their whenua is buried, they know where they stand on Papatūānuku. As with my children I want my mokopuna to pass through this physical realm leaving an ara (pathway) they have created which they can say “I made a contribution to this world.”

I have taken up my mother’s values around contribution, rights and responsibilities. I shared this kōrero with the wāhine during our wānanga:

I think about how some people stand up and say their pepeha. They name a mountain and an ocean, maybe a river or a lake. In that naming they are claiming and in that claim I feel that there is an equal and instant responsibility to contribute in positive ways to the places they claim. What and how that responsibility is expressed, that comes down to the individual, but in my mind it certainly doesn't mean saying I am from this place and then tearing it down or saying I am Māori but I don't do any of the Mow-ree bullshit!
Arndrea shares a pūrākau about creating a kākahu for her grand-niece, the newborn daughter of her eldest nephew, as a way of connecting the child to her whakapapa and whenua. This child carries the name of Arndrea’s mother and therefore holds a special place in her thoughts:

_Daisy Mauhaere Manuera. Part Māori, part Australian. As far as I know, my nephew and his partner have no intention to move home to New Zealand. I had been thinking a lot about my moko-niece before she was born. I had chosen to make her a cloak even before her mother had given birth._

_My thoughts are, what if her family did not move home to New Zealand? How would she become familiar with te ao Māori? Would her culture and her family be foreign to her? I have trust in my tūpuna but felt that a little Nanny Aunty intervention would not go astray!_  

_The kākahu that I am making for her depicts her family Te Whānau Moana and the inhabitants of the sea who have sustained my family for generations. I have included a little peak of Aussie because that is who she is also. I am hoping that the end result may also have a likeness to a Kahu [hawk] after my ancestress Kahutianui who Ngāti Kahu gets its name from._

The aspirations we hold for our children intertwine with the aspirations that we hold for the kākahu that we create. During our wānanga I asked the wāhine to reflect on the purpose and intention of the kākahu they were creating.
Aspirations for our kākahu

Through the process of learning to whatu, the wāhine came to understand the taonga they were creating as capable of expressing meaning. Not only were kākahu exchanged to enhance relationships and demonstrate aroha, as discussed in the stories above, kākahu were talked about as telling stories and embodying aspirations.

Tia wrote a number of journal entries about her aspirations for her kākahu to heal, mediate and repair past histories:

*I see the whatu kākahu as going to someone who is deserving of it. The kākahu is something that can heal, it maybe goes to someone that you don't think is deserving of it but actually it is about you shifting your space and you shifting your intentions of the how, the who and the what.*

*I would love my son to wear his kākahu whenever he wished ... to sit on his fathers lap whenever he wished ... and not do so with all the raruraru [difficulties] that has existed before him ... but all the aroha that comes instead.*

*I hope that my children and my sister’s children can play together one day. This is my vision. Maybe her son will wear the kākahu I make during this research process, maybe the kākahu can help heal as it represents my ideal of being protected by my father.*
Maybe unpacking the raruraru has its own significant socio-historical consideration – colonisation and its implications for Māori iwi. The kākahu is about re-building, healing, maybe this is my expectation, my hope for the young ones that will wear it.

Jo-Ann discusses her intention to create a kākahu that is a storied and embodied taonga tuku iho – a treasure to be handed down:

The reason behind this journey is ultimately to construct a korowai for my daughters. It will be a taonga that we all have input in. Its purpose ... I hope my girls when I am long gone can hold it, touch it remember me, remember us, because they will be adding their own wairua to it also. That's the way I want it to be. I want them both to hold it, to look at it and know that they played a part in its construction. They can go to a certain part of the korowai and say “I did this whatu”. The korowai will have a story to tell. Every garment constructed will tell a story, every whatu will have feeling behind it. I want for me and my girls to look at it and know everything that went into it while we were weaving. It will show every emotion I expect we will experience.

Creating a taonga tuku iho in the form of a tangible kākahu, complemented by her journal stories, presents as another of Tia’s intentions in engaging in this journey:

This cloak is about offering loved ones something I missed as a younger woman – spiritual guidance, identity, protection and acceptance.

I imagine it being worn with story/pūrākau ongoing enriching the wearer long after Piripi [her husband] and I are gone. My son and his son and so on. Kauri reading this and knowing he slept lovingly beside me as the words were written. This makes him stronger. These are my aspirations for him as a tāne, wairua, being, spirit, presence, Māori. I feel humbled at the chance to create this taonga for our whānau. For my husband’s children, grandchildren so they too can connect to us, connect lovingly to their father and grandfather to read our story, to read/experience our pūrākau.

Summary
Whatuora – seeing ourselves, through ‘well’ eyes as Māori women – has been illustrated in this chapter through the women’s stories and experiences as we actively create a positive cultural
legacy for our descendants. If, as the saying goes, ‘the best way to predict the future is to create it’, then the women in this research create change through their conscious choices to live as Māori women – as defined by them. They have not sat back, passively hoping that their children might live as Māori. Instead they act against dominant societal discourses to confront challenges and make deliberate, sometimes difficult, choices for themselves and their descendants.

During the research the wāhine were reminded how important creating time and space to be wāhine was for their wellbeing and that, through this self-care, they are better able to nurture those around them. Through their stories they talked about how they consciously re-model and role-model those broad values beliefs and behaviours they want to pass down to their children, in particular, the aspirations they have for their children to experience secure and positive lives as Māori.
Chapter Ten:

Conclusion

The whatu kākahu that is this research is now fully woven – but it is not yet complete. The final stage of creation involves a process of critical reflection, a close examination of the work by the kaiwhatu to consider what might have been done differently; how other materials may have enhanced the garment’s appearance; and what lessons have been learnt that will be carried through to the next project and beyond. Upon completion the kākahu may be given a name that speaks to its purpose and the intentions woven in to each whenu. Finally, once the kaiwhatu is satisfied, the garment she has worked on intently for months or even years is complete and the kākahu is gifted, allowing another to add their story to its fibres.

This research has set out to explore how eight wāhine reclaim, restore and self-determine living as Māori women through the stories they shared as they wove whatu kākahu. The women’s moving stories speak to the multiple aspirations they have for their children and mokopuna, in particular, the desire for their children to be holistically and culturally well, to have a secure and positive Māori identity, that is, for their children to live as Māori. These wāhine recognise that they are both a product of, and participants in, a colonised existence that is overlaid with multiple layers of socio-political and historical complexity. Rather than hope and wish that their children will enjoy fulfilled lives ‘as Māori’, they make deliberate radical and political decisions for themselves and their wider whānau to reclaim, restore and self-determine ways of ‘living as Māori’ in their whānau.

The purpose of this final chapter is less about arriving at a set of final conclusions, highlighting specific findings or making recommendations and more about conclusion as a process to complete a project. Guided by Whatuora methodology, this chapter follows the three stages I engage in to complete a whatu kākahu. I again utilise the ideas of moe as critical reflection, oho as an awakening of ideas, and ora to become whole and healed to frame this chapter. I begin by critically reflecting on my research journey – what did I learn alongside others about living as Māori women and whatu kākahu? What did I learn about theorising a Kaupapa Māori methodology? What is my contribution to the field of Māori women and Kaupapa Māori research and what might I have done differently? Next I discuss some ideas that have been ‘awoken’ during this journey and consider how Whatuora might be taken up in other contexts.
The final concluding task in completing this project, like completing a kākahu, is to name it then let it go.

**Examining the stitches**

**What I learnt about living as Māori women and whatu kākahu**

To ‘live as a Māori woman’ is as complex and richly textured as the finest whatu kākahu. Both are unique. Both have whakapapa. Both are constructed through story and experience, influenced by our environment, by available resources and by the people who shape us. The former is an abstract idea that has been developed to talk about reclaiming and self-determining an internal Māori identity and the latter is an outward material expression of that internal identity. Both are brought together in this research to explore the experiences of eight Māori women who tell stories of growing up and being Māori, how they now choose to live as Māori women and the aspirations they weave, both physically and metaphorically, into the kākahu they create for their tamariki and mokopuna to live secure and connected lives as Māori.

To ‘live as Māori’ has developed as a useful decolonising discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand. This ideal encompasses experiencing a secure positive Māori identity, connected to Māori spaces and places, is able to access and participate confidently in te ao Māori and the global world and feels compelled to hand this secure sense of cultural self to future generations. To ‘live as Māori’ is to consciously engage with our colonial history and a decolonising of the processes that have, for some Māori, led to a negative hegemonic sense of being Māori. Where once Māori parents held aspirations for their children to ‘live as Pākehā’ and assimilate to dominant Western language and society, Māori parents, and in particular, Māori mothers, are reclaiming, restoring and determining those elements of living as Māori from the past that they believe offer their children a strong and positive Māori identity now and in the future.

The literature on Māori identity is broad and complex. An amalgam of Durie and McIntosh’s identity descriptors in this thesis provided a useful starting point to consider how Māori identity might be described and also challenged. The wāhine reminded me that, while descriptions about what it means to be Māori may prove a useful academic exercise, they are wholly insufficient to capture the complexity and embodied nature of what it means to live as Māori. For example, what secure and fluid meant to one wāhine was both different and similar to another, reminding us of the heterogeneous and complex nature of identity work. While the wāhine unanimously agree that whakapapa is an inherent and essential part of being Māori, they were critical of other,
fixed markers, such as language competency and phenotype that failed to recognise the socio-historical impact of colonisation on how *being Māori* and *living as Māori* are understood.

The wāhine in this research tell us that they want to re-complexify and self-determine what living as Māori means to them and for their whānau. Rather than become perplexed that Māori women are different and similar, the wāhine in this research celebrated difference, swiftly rejecting ideas that being and living as a Māori woman should be defined or determined by others. Instead they chose to share their own experiences as an offering to the other women in the group who, in turn, learnt about themselves as they listened and learnt about others. Now, they are allowing their stories to be available through this research to other wāhine Māori outside of their group.

For some women the outward expression of an internal whakapapa may seem small – such as a renewed determination to re-connect to whānau and whenua. For other women activating their whakapapa through conscious actions to ‘live as Māori’ involved radical and brave decisions such as being the first in their extended family to send their child to kōhanga reo or Kura Kaupapa, learning te reo themselves, receiving tā moko or giving a child a Māori name. All of these interventions, big and small, required the wāhine to engage in a decolonising praxis where deliberate decisions were made that in many cases sat in contrast to their own experiences of growing up and being Māori.

The wāhine were adamant that living as Māori is not an attempt to return to an unrealistic traditional Māori ideal riddled with colonised imaginings. The women understood clearly that their aspirations to live as Māori are contextual and socially influenced and as such require a conscious decolonising lens to critically examine how, and from where, our aspirations to live as Māori emerge. The wāhine stated that their experience of the world ‘as Māori’ today is different from that of their parents and grandparents and will be different again to the world that their tamariki and mokopuna will encounter. Rather than attempt to recreate the past, these critically active women seek to reclaim and reaffirm those vital aho that have been retained in our artistic practices and our language, in our relationships to the land and to its people, in our belief systems and sets of knowledge – ways of being, they believe, help us to live secure and positive identities ‘as Māori’ in the present. These eight Māori mothers and grandmothers insist that they will determine for themselves what living as Māori looks like, speaks like and acts like, that offer another view of the world and that which they want to create for their tamariki and mokopuna.
To live as Māori women in this research, places Māori women’s stories and knowledge at its centre. While a ‘living as Māori’ discourse has created academic space to discuss how Māori are reclaiming and restoring secure and positive identities, a specific focus on Māori women and the role they play in identity making and shaping remains poorly understood. The Māori women in this research work in implicit and explicit ways to re-model and role-model living as Māori for themselves and their wider whānau. In doing so they are being the change they want to see, change that they hope will see their tamariki and mokopuna live full and culturally fulfilled lives as Māori.

I learnt that telling the pūrākau of ‘everyday’ Māori women, mothers and grandmothers is important. In a letter to her daughter, Lana Sue Goodyear-Ka’ōpua (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua & Ka’ōpua, 2007) says that telling our stories about identity, life reclaiming struggle, celebration and cultural survival helps us “understand how historical circumstances influence our place in the world” and reject the notion that “the only history worth learning is that which focuses on ‘great men’, nobility and aristocrats, the wealthy and the powerful” (2007, p. 53). By telling our stories we help to shape the future for our own tamariki and perhaps teach others through our stories about how we choose to live as Māori women.

Activated by Mana Wāhine and Kaupapa Māori theory, this research contributes to thinking about the key role Māori women, mothers and grandmothers play in creating positive transformative change for themselves and their wider whānau. As the participants wove, they shared their experiences, wrote reflections on their past and forecast their aspirations for the future, they experienced moments of oho or awakening as they identified how their own positive and negative experiences of growing up and being Māori now informed the experiences they want their tamariki and mokopuna to have – or not. These conscientised Māori women aspire to see the world through well and healed eyes – Whatuora – as a decolonising lens that informs the decisions they make.

The idea of seeing through ‘well’, twined together with the maternal language and ideas contained within whatu practice, provided the theorised Kaupapa Māori methodology for this work.

**What I learnt about theorising Whatuora methodology**

Kaupapa Māori research places Māori knowledge, language and ways of being at its centre and has positive transforming outcomes for Māori as an aspiration. As such, Kaupapa Māori theory
teaches us to look to our own sets of knowledge and ways of being to approach research, drawing on, but not relying on, Western ideas to support our own methods and methodologies. Activated by Kaupapa Māori theory, I looked to the knowledge, language and practices of whatu to guide this research and in the process gained some valuable insights about the challenges and rewards of theorising a ‘new’ Kaupapa Māori methodology.

I learnt that developing theory from the practice-based art of whatu is necessarily difficult. To explain and capture the embodied, tactile and tangible relationship between the creative practice of whatu and Māori women in the linear logical abstract form of a thesis is to attempt the impossible. The transformative nature of this research occurred in its fullest sense during the research wānanga when the wāhine sat and talked, wove and shared stories, connected and related to each other as Māori women, presented their completed kākahu and cried as they described the feeling of seeing it worn by their grandchild. Transforming moments were also experienced in our own private and quiet spaces when we wove, wrote and thought in solitude. I recognise the impossibility of trying to capture the essence of these interactions in a thesis.

I leave the emotions shared together and recorded in the fibres of each whatu kākahu as testament to the time and space from which they emerge. The whatu kākahu created are themselves woven ‘text-tiles’ embedded with stories that the wāhine choose to share in different written, spoken and embodied ways. Rather than tussle with the impossibility of capturing an embodied practice, this thesis instead offers a thematic analysis of the written and spoken stories that the wāhine proffered that teach us about how they reclaim and determine their lives living as Māori women.

I learnt that methodology does not belong solely to the academic realm. Māori and Indigenous people have always engaged in research, employing methods and methodologies to solve problems, advance technologies and test theories. By re-complexifying how methodology has been constructed in an academic context, I saw an opportunity to theorise the Mātauranga Māori of whatu as a research approach that emerged from within the topic of my thesis – whatu and Māori women. While I trusted that Mātauranga Māori contained the appropriate methodology for this research, the ability to theorise Māori knowledge required me to look with Whatuora – Kaupapa Māori-activated and decolonising whatu – in order to ‘see’ the theory that existed there.

I learnt that theory is everywhere if we only have the eyes to see it – and the ears to hear it. It does not reside exclusively in academic literature or with distant, sometimes dead, often
Western, theoreticians. While Western theory can be used as a useful theoretical ally and, like critical and emancipatory theory, has contributed to Māori and Indigenous thinking, astute theoreticians walk both physically and spiritually amongst our own people. As Goodyear-Kaʻōpua reminds us “the theorists of my academic genealogy include the women of our family who formulated their ideas through love and daily struggle” (2007 p. 53). Two theoreticians in my own whānau, my mother and five-year-old daughter, contributed key theoretical ideas to this work enabling me to ‘see’ more clearly a relationship between Māori women and whatu kākahu and to then theorise an appropriate research approach from within this relationship. Their stories could have remained anecdotal, cute vignettes at the top of a chapter. Instead I see their contributions as containing important theoretical knowledge and, as such, theorised their stories in useful ways to think about how whatu as methodology could be used to explore a relationship between whatu kākahu and living as Māori women.

Examining the stitches of this research I am satisfied that the methods of journaling and whatu wānanga, along with the text-tile kākahu that were created, offered different but appropriate ways to gather ‘data’ for this thesis. On reflection I would choose to present their stories as individual pūrākau rather than as part of a thematic analysis. While a thematic analysis has proven a useful theoretical exercise that provided a collective insight into how these wāhine live as Māori, individual pūrākau may have offered a more powerful portrait of each wāhine by celebrating their individual experiences. Although the wāhine have their individual journals to hand down to their tamariki and mokopuna along with a copy of this thesis, I imagine that a pūrākau about their mother, grandmother, aunt or ancestress would, in years to come, be a precious articulation of who they are and how they came to be. I hold an aspiration to return to these women and, if they so desire, re-present their stories as pūrākau.

**New ideas are woven**

As a kaiwhatu weaves in the present, she is simultaneously casting her thoughts back to the past – the experiences that led her to this moment – and forward to her aspirations for the future. In similar ways, the Māori women in the research spoke about weaving their experiences of being Māori from their past into the present with the aspiration that their tamariki and mokopuna would take up those threads to live as Māori in the future. As a researcher I have considered where the aho of this research may lead to in the future by posing the question of myself: What does Whatuora methodology guide me to do now?
As the research developed, I considered other sites where whatu methods and Whatuora methodology could be used as a Kaupapa Māori practice-based research approach. In a conversation with relations in Australia, it was suggested that Whatuora could be used to explore the stories and experiences of Māori women living in Australia to learn about how they (re)claim and retain Māori identity outside of Aotearoa New Zealand. Another idea that arose from a spate of deaths in my hometown is a research project around suicide prevention amongst rangatahi Māori (Māori youth) where they engage with Whatuora as a means to connect to Mātauranga Māori through Māori arts practice and consider the active role they play as ‘weavers’ of their present and the future. I am particularly interested in the possibility of working with Māori women, mothers and grandmothers in prison as a way to story their experiences and consider the vital role they play in the future they create for themselves and their children. Kaupapa Māori theory and a transforming praxis informed by thinking and doing, theory and practice, alongside connected relationships, remain the aho matua that connect these research ideas.

Importantly, Whatuora insists on maintaining and contributing to the interwoven relationships that bind this thesis together. My relationships with the women as friends, colleagues and family developed further as we shared stories and related our experiences to the kākahu we created. Although the research is over, our relationships remain; we are bound together by the time and space we shared. Another set of relationships sits with my own people. My hapū have asked me to write a book about the weaving work of women in our area, which offers a way for me to take my research ‘home’ in a way that is relevant and useful to them. In doing so I will honour my relationship to my whenua, marae and iwi while simultaneously continuing to weave the aho of Whatuora.

To view our world through well and healed eyes – Whatuora – is not an end goal or final destination. Instead, viewing our lived realities through Whatuora is a constantly engaged process of learning, listening consciously and critically, decolonising using the tools and materials at hand in the present – with an eye to the future. For me, enacting a Whatuora approach therefore does not end with this research. Instead, I have internalised Whatuora as a way of thinking about being and living in the world as a Māori woman and as such both the theory and practice of Whatuora is woven methodically and consciously into the whatu kākahu that I wear.

Whatuora is an original contribution to countless other decolonising ideas and actions, played out here in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond, that theorise our ways of being and doing to
address challenges now and in the future. Much like weaving a kākahu, the kaiwhatu makes the most of the materials available to her and when a new idea or resource is presented she employs her innovative and adaptive expertise twined together with her traditional knowledge to make something new and relevant in the present.

Whether it engenders agreement or dissent, others will view the research I have woven through a diverse collection of academic and artistic, Indigenous and non-Indigenous whatu. Seen from an endless number of angles, it is my hope that living as Māori women and whatu kākahu viewed through Whatuora will generate more ideas and questions, raising other possibilities to think about how fluid notions of identity are reclaimed and self-determined and how methodology can be adapted and innovated with transformational outcomes for Māori and Indigenous people at its centre.

**Gifting and letting go**

Having worked intimately on weaving this research project for the last four years, handing it over and letting it go is accompanied with mixed emotions. Just like creating a whatu kākahu there is without a doubt some relief that I can rest aching fingers, mind and body and that I am now able to move on to create something new with the learning gained from this project. There is also some sadness that the garment/research that has been years in the planning, preparation and production is now complete.

Although this research began in its formal sense four years ago, my relationship with its topic, Māori women and whatu kākahu, stretch back much further into the past and will inevitably extend into the future. This thesis could be considered an outward expression of my internal knowledge (Pohatu, 2011; Royal, 2011) gained, not only over the timespan of the project, but before that and beyond. It serves as a snapshot of thinking that contributes to thinking about how Māori women re-model and role-model ‘living as Māori’ for themselves and, importantly, for their tamariki and mokopuna.

As with identity, our stories and memories, thoughts and aspirations, and the relationships we forged are fluid and will undoubtedly evolve over time. I return for the last time to Mum’s analogy of the kākahu at the beginning of this thesis, where she describes its many feathers as representing people and experiences that add textured layers to who we are. Colloquially put, these ‘feathers’ may remain with us for a reason, a season or a lifetime. Despite our best efforts as mothers and grandmothers, our children, like our parents’ children – us – will pick and choose
their own ‘feathers’ to whatu into their kākahu. Although beyond the scope of this research, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the multiplicity of variables that impact how identity is constructed. Why is it, for example, that one person in a whānau chooses to actively live as Māori while another close sibling avidly chooses not to ‘live’ that identity? Similar to some feathers on a kākahu, some relationships and experiences may fall away while others, if twined into place using good methods and methodology, will remain for a lifetime adding their colour, warmth and vibrancy to the whatu kākahu we wear.

Cloaked in the aspirations of my mother to live as Māori I am now the mother who seeks to actively and deliberately cloak her daughters in similar aspirations, perpetuating a matrilineal legacy of reclaiming and self-determining living as Māori women in our whānau, for our whānau. Mum’s teachings, alongside the other learnings that have gone into this thesis, plus the countless experiences that led to it, have been a gift, a taonga tuku iho handed to me. My gift in return is this contribution to Mana Wāhine, Kaupapa Māori and whatu.

I name this research Kahu Whatuora Mana Wāhine Māori.
Appendix One

Former student gifts cloak to school

A hand-crafted korowai (cloak) has been gifted to Massey High School by a former student.

Lisa Smith made the taonga (treasure) to pass on each year to the student who has shown the greatest commitment and passion, both academically and spiritually, to Maoridom.

Called Te Aka Ki Kahurangi, it symbolises Lisa’s time of love, knowledge and aspirations she discovered while at the school.

“I hope it will encourage young people to aspire to and attain greater heights,” she says.

Lisa was a seventh former in 1993.

She now studies at the University of Waikato.

On the korowai, Lisa has incorporated the Pouatahara, or steps of knowledge, to represent an ever ascending climb to wisdom.

There is also Nga Kete Matauranga E Toru, the three kete and two stones handed to one of the Maori ancestors containing knowledge.

In the centre stands Io, the creator of all.

“She is a thing of beauty, as all our young people are, and is to be treasured and respected and worn proudly by the Maori recipient on any occasion they truly feel she should be worn,” says Lisa.

Lisa is shown wearing the cloak.
Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title:

He whatu kākahu, he taonga tuku iho – Māori aspirations to live ‘as Māori’
and whatu kākahu

Tēnā koe,

Tihewa mauriora!*

My name is Hinekura Lisa Smith. I am a PhD student studying at Te Puna Wananga, School of Māori Education, The University of Auckland, under the supervision of Professor Alison Jones and Dr Jenny Lee.

My research explores the creative practice of whatu as a way to teach, learn and research. I want to theorise whatu as methodology and how this practice manifests in the creation of whatu kākahu (hand woven cloaks) as storied, embodied instantiations of Māori aspirations to live ‘as Māori’.

My primary research question is: **What do we learn from a whatu research methodology and how are whatu kākahu understood as storied and embodied taonga tuku iho – instantiations of Māori aspirations to live as Māori?**

You are a parent of Māori children and have expressed an interest in learning to whatu in order to create a kākahu (cloak) for you and your whānau. Therefore I invite you to participate in this research. I am interested in hearing about how, and what, you learn through the process of learning to whatu. I am also interested in hearing about the aspirations that you hold for your
whānau to live ‘as Māori’. Your participation in this project is voluntary; you have the right to decline to participate or withdraw from this study at any stage.

This is what the research will involve for you:

**Hui whakarewa – introductory hui**

First you will be invited to attend a hui whakarewa – an introduction hui - to introduce the kaupapa to all the participants. This will be a 2 hour hui followed by a kai. The venue will be at Epsom campus, The University of Auckland. The purpose of the hui is to explain the research objectives and to answer any questions that you may have.

**Whatu wānanga**

Next, you will be invited to participate in a series of wānanga to learn whatu and to create your kākahu. Together we will co-construct the timing and regularity of these wānanga, for example - one Sunday a month for 6 months. Each participant will work at their own pace and set their own goals to create a kākahu. This will mean that you will work on your whatu practice and kākahu in your own time. Creating a whatu kākahu is a long process that requires perseverance. Although many will, there is no expectation that you will complete your kākahu within the research process time. This is not important, as the outcome, or creating the kākahu, is secondary to the contribution you will make through sharing your stories and thoughts about Māori aspirations to live as Māori. Our wānanga will begin in October 2014 and continue throughout 2015.

**Reflective journaling**

During the wānanga process I will ask you to keep a reflective journal of your experience of learning whatu and your thoughts about the aspirations you hold for your child/ren to live ‘as Māori.’ Your reflection, for example might include stories, thoughts or memories of learning from your childhood, your experience as a parent, your experience of being Māori, or your thoughts about your child living ‘as Māori’.

The style of journal is up to you. You may wish to write in a book, store your writing digitally or voice record your reflections. Your journal may also include images, drawings and/or photos of your experience and reflections.

I will ask you to share your reflective journals with me at regular intervals throughout the wānanga process and for you to send me your final journal at the end of the completion of the wānanga series. You do not have to send any part of your journal that you do not wish to share. Your journal will remain confidential. No part of your journal will be included in the research unless you agree.

It is hoped that the reflective journal may, in itself, become a taonga tuku iho that compliments the whatu kākahu produced by each research whānau member, as a way of recording the aspirations you hold for your child/ren to live ‘as Māori’ and as a record of your learning as you create a kākahu for your whānau.

**Semi-structured interview**

If there are themes that I wish to explore with you in more depth following the wānanga process, I may ask you to participate in 1 – 2 hour semi-structured interview. You may
decline without having to give a reason. I would want to audiotape our discussion. At any time during the semi-structured interview you can ask to have the recorder turned off. The semi-structured interview will be transcribed by me.

At our final hui in late 2015, following the wānanga and semi-structured interviews, a summary report of the discussion data will be presented. At this hui you will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and the summary data from your journal. You can remove or alter any of your information. You have 14 days following this hui to make any alterations. At this hui, we will discuss the storage and future use of the data.

The final hui will also be chance for us to celebrate our journey, share stories and exhibit the kākahu that have been created.

Naming the participants

Māori tribal affiliations are important cultural locators and an expected and accepted means of introducing oneself. Through pepeha, which name geographical and familial connections, research whānau are able to make connections with others through whanaungatanga ties thus creating a greater sense of connection within the research whānau. Identification of research whānau in the data through pepeha, in a sense ‘names’ them whether their names are used or not.

Due to the small numbers involved in this research, it is not possible to guarantee anonymity. Your experiences are important; therefore I would like to name you, by your first name, in the final thesis and possible further publications. By identifying yourself you play a part in owning the information that you provide about this kaupapa. By agreeing to participate in this research you understand that your name will be used.

The implications of being identified through pepeha and/or using individual names will be discussed at the hui whakarewa.

Archiving the data

An important aspect of the research is to tell the stories of your learning experience through whatu and the aspirations you have for your child/ren to live ‘as Māori’. At the end of this research, the approved transcript of your individual interview will be returned to you along with your journal. The data/stories and experiences that you have shared belong to you, and you may do with them as you wish.

To acknowledge your time and willingness to participate in this research, participants will be provided with the basic materials to begin their kākahu, however you will be asked to supply the feathers of your choice for your larger piece. At the end of the research we will celebrate your learning and the kākahu you have created. Participants will also receive a koha of materials and/or a book.

If you have any further questions or would like to discuss this research project further, you may contact:

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Whatuora,

Hinekura Lisa Smith

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711 or 87830. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 13th June 2014 for (3) years, Reference Number 012063
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