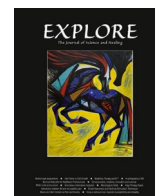


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## Review Article

## RANGATAHI MĀORI AND THE WHĀNAU CHOCOLATE BOX: Rangatahi wellbeing in whānau contexts<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Whānau (Māori understandings of family) are comprised of unique and vital relationships that support and scaffold rangatahi (youth) wellbeing, yet are often reduced to nuclear family structures within individualised notions of wellbeing. While rangatahi contend with racialised discourses in a colonial socio-cultural context, their whānau can be an important site for mitigating these challenges, supporting rangatahi agency and wellbeing. This article explores how whānau practices inform rangatahi wellbeing, drawing upon photo-projects and interviews with 51 rangatahi and their whānau. Interviews were thematically analysed, informing four themes that drew on Māori (the Indigenous people of Aotearoa) concepts and whakatauki: te haerenga whakamua, kotahitanga, he toa takitini and tātai hono. These themes speak to the significance of vitalising relationships between rangatahi, their whānau and beyond. We outline a strengths-based activity with rangatahi and their whānau, identifying and drawing from the delightful array of whānau relationships, qualities and characteristics that may be likened to a 'whānau chocolate box' for rangatahi to derive influence, systems of support and inspiration for future identities and inspiration.

Whānau are an important and influential site for rangatahi wellbeing<sup>20</sup>. Although traditional whānau structures have been forcibly displaced through ongoing processes of colonisation, Māori cultural values are preserved within contemporary whānau formations. Whānau is considered the primary socio-cultural unit of Māori society, contrived of several generations of relations that hold roles and responsibilities consistent with generational positioning and status<sup>17,9</sup>. Whānau are essential environments for the intergenerational nurturance of children, imparting values, healthful practices and secure identities<sup>11,26</sup>. Interdependence within whānau strengthens an individual's maturity and development, instilling skills of cooperation and commitment to achieve shared aspirations and cultural understandings<sup>38</sup>.

Contemporary whānau life has been substantially shaped by continuing colonial practices in Aotearoa<sup>25,1</sup>. Historically,

pre-colonisation, whānau, hapū, and iwi contexts of support were easily accessible and underpinned by philosophies of collectivism<sup>22</sup>. Yet the introduction of colonial law, land theft, urbanisation and economies based on individual rather than collective wellbeing have interpellated whānau Māori into increasingly nuclear configurations<sup>39,25</sup>. Here, a two-generational household structure became the primary economic unit where gendered roles of 'income-earner' and 'child-rearer' were assumed by men and women, respectively<sup>9,19</sup>. While these accommodations to urban life were pragmatic and often supplemented with practices to retain and strengthen whānau connections, the dominance of nuclear family formations has undoubtedly created greater distance between whānau members<sup>11</sup>.

Whānau experiences are diverse and unique, such that there is no universal definition for the myriad of whānau configurations<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>☆</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of the research, supporting data is not available unless via strict Data Access protocols.

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Consequentially, working depictions of whānau continue to evolve with socio-cultural shifts in our understandings and experiences of whānau<sup>17</sup>. Whānau arrangements today may be comprised of several nuclear families, connected through intergenerational relationships, and extended to wider networks of relationships united by common locations, purposes or kaupapa<sup>8</sup>.

### Whakapapa, whanaungatanga and aroha

In whānau contexts, whakapapa, whanaungatanga, and aroha underpin rangatahi identities, the quality of their relationships, and their capacity to support and be supported by one another<sup>14,35</sup>. These concepts are central to Māori expressions of identity and enhance Māori wellbeing by creating whānau contexts where rangatahi can flourish<sup>43,44</sup>. Well-bonded whānau with genuine connections are better placed to collectively strengthen and cultivate rangatahi resiliencies.

Whakapapa can be described as the glue that binds rangatahi Māori to their whānau and papakāinga within their larger hapū and iwi<sup>16</sup>. Whakapapa is an integral notion to whānau, connecting present relationships, ancestral connections and those yet to come. Whakapapa can also represent a form of esoteric knowledge that organises whānau narratives and inherited stories of persistence, aspiration and survival to support rangatahi resilience<sup>42</sup>. These whānau narratives can support rangatahi to understand where they come from and provide a stable foundation for positive identity development and future trajectories<sup>12,32</sup>.

Whanaungatanga is the crux of Māori social relationships, integral to whānau function and orientated towards the wellbeing of all within a sphere of relationships<sup>7,30</sup>. It is enacted when whānau members take initiative, support each other, and take steps to enhance, restore and empower one another<sup>35</sup>. The whakapapa connections between whānau members and the whānau narratives that bind them enable rangatahi to form stronger relationships with a wide range of relatives and enriching interactions between whānau members with diverse interests, aptitudes and skills<sup>18</sup>.

Aroha is a uniting force that connects whānau through affection, compassion, sacrifice and generosity, also extending to concern and sorrow<sup>35</sup>. The warmth of being together as whānau, showing care without the expectation of reciprocation or reward, and sharing whānau narratives are practices infused with aroha that play a critical role in fashioning rangatahi wellbeing<sup>37,30</sup>. Ultimately, aroha allows relationships between whānau members to flourish, and its application can uniquely fluctuate across various whānau contexts. The notion of aroha mutunga kore (love that never ends) assures us that the love expressed between whānau members extends beyond our lifetimes, connecting the past, present and future. Sharing whānau narratives across generations gives discernible form to the positive past practices that continue to shape current generations. Whānau narratives and practices informed by aroha affirm whanaungatanga between whānau members through the ages and across whakapapa connections.

### The whānau chocolate box

Whānau relationships are often interdependent, integrated and interconnected<sup>32,38</sup>. Whānau play a critical role in forming and developing rangatahi identities that provide a basis for understanding oneself and one's culture<sup>6</sup>. It becomes vital for rangatahi wellbeing to experience collective solidarity amongst their whānau to mitigate the marginalising dynamics of a broader colonial context<sup>17</sup>. The unique skills, traits and characteristics handed down to rangatahi from their tūpuna may be alive and present in everyday whānau interactions and available for rangatahi to engage with. In this study, we draw on a metaphor of a *whānau chocolate box* to describe an assemblage of diverse qualities and features represented in whānau contexts. The metaphor considers the agency rangatahi have to select the talents and characteristics from their whānau they esteem, represented by individual chocolates. We outline

the *whānau chocolate box* as a strengths-based whānau activity that affirms the unique combination of skills and capabilities within whānau to create personalised and unique resources for rangatahi to draw from. This model creates space for creative freedom so that whānau dynamics may be reflected in unique and innovative ways.

By contextualising rangatahi wellbeing as a specialised and evolving concept interconnected within their whānau, there is scope to explore whānau potential to support the wellbeing of rangatahi Māori. In particular, we are pursuing an awareness of the abundant resources within whānau relationships, or whānau chocolates, available for rangatahi to experience and select from. We then ask, how do whānau practices shape a range of rich resources for rangatahi to draw from? How is whānau support evident in the everyday experiences of rangatahi? How do rangatahi understand and experience whakapapa, whanaungatanga and aroha? How might we support rangatahi and their whānau to identify and draw from these rich resources in their lives? How do we sustain rangatahi who may have limited resources to grow and nurture new support systems?

### Methods

The study was conceived through a Kaupapa Māori research methodology to ensure significant benefits for Māori and that rangatahi and their whānau who participated were regarded with stringent ethical requirements of care and aroha to protect their mana<sup>33,40</sup>. Kaupapa Māori research is responsive to a broader research context where historical and contemporary research has legitimised racist, imperialist and culturally appropriated interpretations of Māori lives and worldviews as confirmed knowledge about Māori<sup>2,25</sup>. Kaupapa Māori research has been re-created from a context where Māori have been defined as the 'other' from dominant western culture to re-centre and re-situate Māori views as the norm<sup>27</sup>. Acknowledging the norm of Māori culture, this paper introduces Māori words without translations, as they are assumed concepts and ideals within te ao Māori. We provide a glossary at the end of this article.

Lead investigators, interviewers, and emerging researchers (including the authors) were all Māori with divergent lived ontological experiences of being Māori. The project aspirations were also supported by allied researchers who worked alongside us. The lead author, Maringi, who led the analysis and writing, brought a rangatahi perspective from Te Arawa that intertwined the vibrant kōrero of rangatahi participants with her own lived experiences. While the researchers comprise the 'core' research whānau, key community representatives, rangatahi, and kaumātua with aligned objectives also encompass our whānau rangahau. We especially acknowledge the late Rawiri Wharemate, whose mātauranga inveigled the direction of the conceptual themes outlined in this paper. Moe mai rā, e te rangatira.

Participants were approached by research assistants and community partners involved in kura kaupapa, mainstream secondary schools and other rangatahi cultural networks within Te Tai Tokerau, Tāmaki Makaurau and Waikato. We utilised purposive sampling to select rangatahi who culturally identified as Māori and were considered to be 'flourishing' by themselves, whānau members or community members, active and confident in their school and communities. We interviewed 51 rangatahi, including 35 wāhine and 16 tāne. Participants were recruited from a mix of small towns (6), urban centres (17) and rural areas (28). This study was approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (No. 020085).

Participant interviews were guided by photo-project techniques, given their means to facilitate engagement and communication with youth and create space for verbal and visual expression<sup>13,15,36</sup>. Rangatahi engaged in this project were asked to take photos and document what whanaungatanga meant to them and how it influenced their wellbeing. Research assistants met participants (rangatahi and whānau) at a place of convenience for them, often their homes, and explained the study, giving rangatahi and whānau an internet-capable tablet with a

digital camera and laminated instructions. After two weeks, researchers met again with participants for an interview to discuss their printed photos and stories behind these whanaungatanga practices and what this meant for the wellbeing of the rangatahi. Participants were also invited to a third interview where they could review or omit material, ensure protection over specific photos, and receive copies of their pictures. Although this photo-project was of great significance in structuring the interview and prompting kōrero, the primary analysis within this manuscript focused solely on the interview transcripts to value the whānau narrative within the dialogue.

We thematically analysed interview transcripts<sup>4</sup>, utilising a Māori social constructionist epistemology and critical realist ontology<sup>19</sup>. This analysis sought to explicate and connect rangatahi Māori lived experiences with knowledge, practice and wisdom from a Māori socio-cultural context as distinctive and resistive to wider colonising social formations (see Le Grice & Ong in<sup>5</sup>). Initially, we carved out a broad realm of interest, focusing on the enactment of whanaungatanga amongst whānau connected through kinship networks, including foster whānau. Participant-identifying features have been removed and replaced with pseudonyms. The second and last authors shared this manuscript focus at an advisory group hui, where Matua Rawiri Wharemate shared his reflections. The first author then followed a deductive process, shaping and refining the coding to form conceptual areas that resonated with the mātauranga shared by Matua Rawiri and developing smaller, condensed themes. These themes ultimately informed the gestation of a *whānau chocolate box* to help envisage the role of whānau and whanaungatanga practices within rangatahi experiences of wellbeing.

## Analysis

Rangatahi shared their unique and vibrant life experiences and personal encounters of whanaungatanga throughout these photo-projects. We assembled participants' interactions with whanaungatanga into four themes that speak to whakataukī and integral values within whānau life: (1) *te haerenga whakamua* explores how rangatahi futures are nourished within the whānau through the sharing of whānau narratives. (2) *Kotahitanga* focuses on the enabling of collective movement within a whānau that inspires unity and belonging. (3) *He toa takitini* values the role whānau has in supporting rangatahi talents, and (4) *tatai hono* considers the facilitation of intergenerational nurturance in rangatahi lives. These four themes ultimately form a more expansive picture of whanaungatanga experiences that are relevant to the prosperity and hauora of rangatahi.

### *Te haerenga whakamua*

*Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua*<sup>1</sup> is a whakataukī that considers the fundamentally intertwined nature of time with our relationships<sup>45</sup>. It encourages rangatahi to understand their past, including whānau narratives and whakapapa, to navigate their future as rangatahi Māori. Rangatahi perspectives of the past may also be informed by their current cultural, relational and whānau influences that inform healthy rangatahi aspirations<sup>11</sup>. Rangatahi accounts in this study resonated with this whakataukī, including discussions about how their futures are influenced and nurtured by their whānau hitori and whakapapa.

... one of my mates was able to tell me the hitori of the [location] with [tūpuna], and I thought it was so beautiful just being able to learn the hitori, to be in the presence of my tūpuna as well as learning that where I was standing was a taniwha that was protecting the [location] and so it was just really cool to feel so connected with te ao Māori and I was just in a position of awe, you know. I was just so

inspired, so overwhelmed and so yeah and I was just so proud of who I was and where I came from.

Te Hingatū, tāne, 13 years

Rangatahi accounts emphasised the significance of grounding yourself within your whakapapa. It can be captivating to realise your value and potential through the stories you are told about your papakāinga, hitori, and tūpuna ways of life<sup>42</sup>. When whānau share stories with rangatahi that confirm their identity, rangatahi can reflect and approach future aspirations with courage<sup>41</sup>. Te Hingatū's account affirmed the inspirational quality of knowing who you are. The qualities and talents of these whanaunga, discernable through whakapapa narratives, can become resources for rangatahi to draw from their *whānau chocolate box*.

Many participants spoke about the significance of kapa haka to connect contemporary and past expressions through collective practice. Kapa haka incorporates ancestral practices and reclaims contemporary Māori identity through group performances consisting of songs, chants, actions and dances<sup>29</sup>. It enables Māori to connect with the ancestral values and practices of iwi and hapū that invigorate and empower communities<sup>31</sup>, as articulated by participating rangatahi:

Interviewer: Why do you think that being connected to te ao Māori has kind of helped you be who you are? Through kapa haka and through your reo?

Manukau: That's just the only way we can express ourselves and what happened back in the past. Just our way of how to portray the problems or things happening around New Zealand.

Manukau, tāne, 16 years

Kapa haka also provides a space for rangatahi to articulate struggles with marginalisation and be supported through a collective understanding of adversity and responsive action. Manukau's kōrero demonstrates that when whānau support rangatahi to participate in the cultural practices that sustain Māori culture, rangatahi acquire a platform to speak to the difficulties around them and express ihiihi<sup>28</sup>. In doing so, the whānau relationship is further trussed by the connection sustained to Māori performance and the kōrero upheld and honoured in their performance<sup>31</sup>.

*I think our strength comes in being able to stand up for ourselves. And we are quite loud and proud people and I think that's something that's incredibly beautiful.*

Hakarangi, tāne, 12 years

Likewise, Hakarangi's account reflects the resistive and resilient strength of whānau that is cherished by rangatahi, actualising whanaungatanga and aroha in his life. It demonstrates his awareness and appreciation of the talents within his whānau, those whānau chocolates. In this case, the endurance of whānau resilience exists as a protective factor that rangatahi can draw on to encourage rangatahi aspirations.

Rangatahi wellbeing is ultimately facilitated by their understanding of their past, as influenced by their whānau. Te haerenga whakamua considers how whānau experiences can direct rangatahi engagement with their hitori, whakapapa and culture, thus inspiring the aspirations and futures of rangatahi Māori. Rangatahi responses highlighted that whānau belonging is fostered in the beauty of knowing where you come from, engaging in cultural practices and recognising whānau strengths. In this sense, te haerenga whakamua acknowledges the inherited qualities in rangatahi lives and demonstrates the value in being able to identify, learn and understand these characteristics as strengths for rangatahi and their whānau – as part of their *whānau chocolate box* to draw from with positive effect.

### *Kotahitanga*

Kotahitanga means moving together as one, encouraging whānau to work together for a common purpose. It focuses on sharing experiences and extending aroha through supportive acts to those around us.

<sup>1</sup> Looking backwards in order to move forward

Kotahitanga intentionally shapes whānau experiences to cultivate rangatahi wellbeing and imbues rangatahi with purpose. Kotahitanga is upheld and invigorated by a robust whānau identity where each whānau member experiences genuine feelings of belonging and acceptance. These experiences of unity come and go as whānau relationships evolve and change, creating distinct experiences of togetherness between whānau that are felt by rangatahi.

[This photo] was of the [kapa haka competition] last year in [region], and that's a photo of me and my nephew – that's [name]. So after that, we went straight to each other and gave each other the biggest handshake like, "Far we actually made it to nationals," like we still couldn't believe we made it to nationals. I still believe that we didn't really make it, but nah yeah, we were just buzzing out about what we accomplished over that performance. That bond was... because we had a bond before, but after that performance, it sort of brought us closer as whānau.

Te Rā, tāne, 13 years

Kapa haka has a deep-seated ability to bring whānau together and connect rangatahi with present relationships in their iwi and hapū<sup>28,29</sup>. The bond between whānau members is strengthened through the time spent together in practice and performance, and the connection maintained to Māori performance practices. It can create a deeper level of relationality imbued with the values, worldviews and tikanga of te ao Māori.

Ordinary, everyday whānau practices can also promote whānau bonding and rangatahi experiences, enhancing the belonging and wellbeing of rangatahi.

All the time but mostly when we do the dishes cause we always - not being mean but - mock my Nan and how my Nan used to treat us and all that like "Oh, you don't need to do the dishes, ... you guys can just go outside and play." But now we have to do dishes. She'll be like "Umm what are you guys doing? You guys do the dishes." We all connect because when four of us are on dishes, we'll just yell out sub and the next four will just go straight in, no arguing.

Anahera, wahine, 18 years

Kotahitanga can be fostered by engaging in daily activities and distributing the work amongst whānau members so that rangatahi may learn the value of shared responsibility. Anahera's response revealed that the progression of mahi was facilitated by kaumātua and tuākana, who ensure appropriate growth. Although these expectations and experiences will vary across whānau, they can facilitate rangatahi to build niche and helpful strengths within the whānau. These cultivated skills can be added to a repertoire of resources for rangatahi to draw from, their *whānau chocolate box*, that can empower their contributions to their community, society and the wider world.

Similarly, whānau presence through ngā piki me ngā heke can positively contribute to rangatahi wellbeing.

... because I talk about whānau a lot, and those people have really been there for me. Like through my toughest times, through my happiest times, through our achievements, through our failures, they have always been there for me every step of the way.

Te Rā, tāne, 13 years

Whānau support becomes increasingly apparent throughout experiences of success and failure. Whānau and individual wellbeing are intertwined and often co-dependant, influenced by the practices of aroha in whanaungatanga<sup>10</sup>. Te Rā's kōrero shows how whanaungatanga can be strengthened when rangatahi feel supported by their whānau during their achievements and missteps. Furthermore, this kind of support can manifest in any environment and bolster rangatahi morale with the reassurance of community support. This kōrero considers the significant role that support plays in whānau collectivity and rangatahi wellbeing through ngā piki me ngā heke.

Kotahitanga reveals the significance of unity for rangatahi in their

everyday whanaungatanga experiences. Responses indicate that rangatahi wellbeing can be facilitated by their experiences of whānau unity and the nature of collectivity within group practices of kapa haka, everyday mahi together, and the simple value of being present for significant moments. Kotahitanga considers whānau talents and skills available within the *whānau chocolate box* that rangatahi can draw on to foster whānau collectivity, achieve goals, or support one another through difficult times. However, it must be recognised that kotahitanga is a fluid concept that ebbs and flows as whānau dynamics shift. While these actions may not be present at every moment spent with whānau, they demonstrate whanaungatanga for rangatahi to observe, adapt and incorporate into their lives.

### He toa takitini

*Ehara i te toa takitahi, engari kē he toa takitini*<sup>2</sup> acknowledges one's success results from the support and contribution of the people around them<sup>23</sup>. While all rangatahi have the potential to thrive, rangatahi skills are often enhanced by experiences within whānau that facilitate their agency<sup>6</sup>. Participant accounts affirmed the significance of creating shared memories within whānau to foster their natural talents, recognising rangatahi as the product of their whānau experiences, nurturance and support.

So all the ones with me doing sport I guess that's one of the biggest ways my family supports me cause they always take me to trainings and always help me and like stay fit and not to slack off when I'm training. 'Cause training are always like a fair distance away so, having my mum there and always taking me and being there till the end and bringing me back home its like big for me because she has nine other kids and she's like taking the time out to take me.

Manurau, wahine, 16 years

Whānau can support and cultivate rangatahi skills across various contexts by imparting whanaungatanga experiences imbued with aroha<sup>3</sup>. Manurau's response indicated that the simple act of 'showing up' and being involved in sporting interests demonstrated faith in her skills. By endorsing rangatahi, whānau have the unique opportunity to bolster rangatahi confidence in themselves and their abilities, reflecting the significance of whanaungatanga and aroha within rangatahi lives. Whānau support and contribution could also be more ephemeral:

I think my whānau for me is the drive, you know, cause I always am wanting to do the best I can for my whānau, and always wanting to make something for my whānau because they've risked a lot and they've done a lot for me over the course of the 17 years I've been alive. Like literally I think without my grandmother I literally wouldn't be alive (laughs).

Hinearoha, wahine, 17 years

Participant accounts emphasise that whānau support may not occur through direct experiences of aid and encouragement but through the culmination of everyday mundane practices that accrue over a lifetime, ensuring their safety, security and survival. This may be particularly pertinent for whānau who manage economic precarity or who have substantial challenges to contend with, without rich relationships to offer support. In this sense, rangatahi often reciprocate aroha by crediting and expressing gratitude to those who raised them and dedicating their aspirations to their whānau<sup>37</sup>. Such observations can enhance rangatahi morale, facilitate their agency and encourage whānau belonging.

I love it, I just love te ao Māori, man. I'm just grateful for it because I don't know where I would be without it man, literally, like te ao Māori is my life (laughs) ... my pepeha, my whakapapa, and like

<sup>2</sup> My strength is not mine alone, but of the collective

pūrākau – like stories and stuff and theories, our tūpuna, and just to fully know where I come from and who I come from and whose my tūpuna and stuff, my marae, it's very, very nice (laughs). I can't find the word... I appreciate, I appreciate and love te ao Māori.

Hanatia, wahine, 16 years

Whanaungatanga can play a significant role in fostering the bond between whānau and te ao Māori through shared places, people and narratives that can support rangatahi to cultivate their capabilities<sup>12</sup>. Hanatia's response acknowledges that rangatahi talents may be enhanced through sharing mātauranga, whakapapa and tikanga Māori. Whakapapa narratives provides space for whānau members, such as Hanatia's tūpuna, to influence rangatahi growth. These narratives are additional, intergenerationally informed resources that may be included in the *whānau chocolate box*. These links to te ao Māori provide rangatahi with connections to tūpuna and hītori that embolden their place within whānau and, in turn, may lead to the appreciation for collective and intergenerational support.

This theme considers how *he toa takitini* reflects the value of whānau support to rangatahi, occurring interpersonally, intergenerationally or culturally. Participant responses outline that rangatahi talents can be cultivated through direct whānau support and through everyday actions that can shape their worldview and culture. These realisations of gratitude foster belonging and normalise reciprocation through aroha, facilitating rangatahi wellbeing through the many representations of whānau support. *He toa takitini* demonstrates how current and intergenerational whānau relationships – supplementary resources potentially available within the *whānau chocolate box* – can generate belonging, gratitude and confidence in rangatahi lives. It allows rangatahi to acknowledge how they can draw from their own whānau resource, or *whānau chocolate box*, to support others, creating a cycle of whānau support and belonging.

### Tātai hono

Tātai hono refers to the whakapapa connections that create unique and fundamental relationships within whānau. Pere<sup>30</sup> speaks to the value of intergenerational nurturance through *te hā a koro mā, a kuia mā*<sup>3</sup>, where talents, predispositions and roles may be inherited through our whakapapa and tuākana relationships<sup>21</sup>. Whānau role models may be able to guide rangatahi to identify talents and qualities they inherit from whānau from the *whānau chocolate box* and teach rangatahi the tikanga required to activate and sustain them. Kaumātua and tuākana are treasured within te ao Māori for the wisdom they possess, knowledge shared by their tūpuna. They can escort rangatahi through life, exemplify appropriate behaviours, and support rangatahi aspirations by sharing their knowledge.

Okay so some people think being stubborn is a terrible trait to have but I actually think it's a sign of leadership in their cases. Cause my mum and my nan were really powerful leaders and it's because when they believed in something they believed in it so strongly that no one could really sway from them from it. That doesn't mean that they didn't listen to other people's opinions, Mum and Nan were really gracious about having to hear other people's opinions or where they were coming from – they adopted those into their beliefs but their core beliefs did not change. They were not sheep. And they led by example so they were humble about it most of the time ... They were just such strong women that they got through everything life dealt them.

Hakarangi, tāne, 12 years

Relationships created within a whānau context allow stories and whānau characteristics to be shared and passed on to rangatahi Māori.

Hakarangi's kōrero emphasises the way that some qualities not valued in western contexts may be invaluable to rangatahi<sup>6</sup>. The strong leadership traits used to describe the wāhine of this account were highly desirable for the participant, speaking to the significance of older generations in shaping rangatahi ideals. Whānau narratives are powerful means for rangatahi to gain exposure to resilient traits outside dominant socio-cultural norms and identify them within a whānau resource, adding to their *whānau chocolate box*. Whānau can pass down these traits or *chocolates* to rangatahi, as articulated by one participant's sister:

Tawhito [speaking to her sister, Rerewa]: You definitely have [nurturing] too. I think. You know, you've just taken us in. And looking after us. You cook every night. You've definitely got that. So [our grandmother] definitely succeeded in passing that down a generation because yeah, you've just opened your home up really well.

Interview with Rerewa, wahine, 22 years

Whānau contexts can facilitate the sharing of skills and appreciation of valued qualities through strong connections that may be developed between rangatahi and their whānau role models<sup>30</sup>. Rerewa and Tawhito's contribution highlights the fluidity of skill-sharing, where rangatahi may not notice they have picked up their positive traits (or chocolates) from a whānau member. This kōrero demonstrates the compelling and sometimes indirect impact that kaumātua or tuākana can have in cultivating rangatahi talents and attributes, capturing an embodied style of whanaungatanga learning that can be uniquely perceived by rangatahi.

I was so privileged to grow up around them. The stories they told of old. Māori speaking kuia but they were also brought up in te ao Māori tūturu and they had those kōrero and that way about them as kuia. Kuia, the aura, the wairua you feel from them when you're talking to them, when you're listening to them, even just how they talk to you.

Ihaia, tāne, 22 years

There is unparalleled value in learning about te ao Māori from kaumātua themselves; their knowledge and wisdom represent the collective mātauranga of their tūpuna<sup>34</sup>. The relationships between rangatahi and kaumātua can support rangatahi to develop their personal identity and inform their whānau identity into the future. When rangatahi understand the chains of connection between their kaumātua, the intergenerational influence of their tūpuna, and their present-day whānau realities, they can fully appreciate the fullness of their whānau experiences. These relationships can also facilitate rangatahi continuance of these skills, qualities and knowledge into the future, sustaining their whakapapa connections.

*Tātai hono* considers the significance of role models within the whānau who can inform the characteristics and ambitions of rangatahi Māori. The passing down of traits is made possible by rangatahi relationships with a range of whānau members that reinforce positive qualities unique to each whānau and facilitate the intergenerational continuance of the knowledge around that. This theme centres the intergenerational relationships between rangatahi and influential whānau members, connects whānau narratives with experiences of whanaungatanga steeped in aroha, and explores how this can impact rangatahi wellbeing. *Tātai hono* proposes that rangatahi traits can be heavily influenced by their relationships and experiences with kaumātua and tuākana. These experiences can help rangatahi value their personal skills and characteristics by demonstrating the intergenerational beauty made manifest in the present and available as a collective whānau resource within their *whānau chocolate box*.

### Conclusion

This study explored how rangatahi contemplated and engaged with whanaungatanga by regarding rangatahi accounts of meaningful aspects

<sup>3</sup> Breath from our forebears

of whānau. As whanaungatanga is uniquely perceived across whānau and rangatahi, this research considered how rangatahi value and experience whanaungatanga in their everyday lives.

Whānau practices resourced rangatahi wellbeing in intergenerational and collective ways, fronting rangatahi potential. The wide array of rangatahi skills, talents and characteristics, holistically conceptualised through this paper as a *whānau chocolate box*, give form to whānau realities and enable rangatahi to autonomously create personalised and diverse realities. Acknowledging rangatahi decisions to enact different traits or qualities available to them by selecting chocolates also provides a context for rangatahi to consider whānau interests and engage in relationships and activities that encourage whānau wellbeing.

Whānau wellbeing is a testament to the collective strength and resilience of whānau practices and processes<sup>17</sup>. Whānau support and encouragement facilitate the endurance of rangatahi and whānau alike. Understanding the role and influence of whānau collectives in developing strength is a crucial step in achieving whānau ora<sup>11</sup>. Māori want rangatahi to flourish, overcome adversity, embrace change with certainty and control, and look optimistically toward the future<sup>38</sup>. We propose the metaphor of a *whānau chocolate box* as an accessible activity for youth workers, practitioners and clinicians working with rangatahi to engage whānau in a strengths-based appraisal of the resources they already have within them, or where they could cultivate further insights together as a whānau. This activity is guided by the themes of *te haerenga whakamua, kotahitanga, he toa takitini* and *tātai hono*, and may be freely conceptualised within the model however the practitioner and rangatahi see fit (see Table 1, Image 1 and Image 2). These images have been supplied for whānau to draw inspiration from and devise their own personalised approach. We propose this strengths-based activity to support whānau to activate their potential to assist and rebalance any issues that may arise across their own networks and to celebrate their endurance from the past to the present and into the future.

**Table 1**  
Guided questions to complete the *whānau chocolate box* activity.

Theme	Definition	Example guided questions
<i>Te haerenga whakamua</i>	Connecting to our tūpuna stories, qualities, arts and culture	What pūrākau do you know about the people and places you connect to? What qualities and talents do your tūpuna have? How might kapa haka, manu kōrero, or mahi toi support you in expressing yourself and overcoming challenges? What examples do you know of Māori being strong and resilient?
<i>Kotahitanga</i>	Sharing, activities and skills in whānau, groups or teams	What groups do you belong to? What do you value about belonging to that group? What skills and talents have these groups taught you? How have these groups supported you to move through ngā piki me ngā heke?
<i>He toa takitini</i>	Valuing whānau support and expressing gratitude	What does it feel like when your whānau supports you? How do your whānau support you in big and small ways? How do you show gratitude to your whānau? How are you supported in te ao Māori, culturally and intergenerationally?
<i>Tātai hono</i>	Inherited and learned traits from kaumātua and tuākana	What have your kaumātua taught you about the world and how to live well? How have your tuākana positively influenced you? What qualities and talents have you inherited from your tuākana and kaumātua? What is your role in continuing the intergenerational knowledge of your whānau?

Although this paper has adopted the metaphor of a *whānau chocolate box*, we recognise that this conceptualisation may not be relevant or appropriate for some whānau. As such, we implore practitioners, rangatahi and their whānau to utilise creative thinking to fashion this model to represent their whānau realities. We suggest that a waka huia (carved box for taonga) approach might be filled with pounamu, niho, and kota that reflect whānau characteristics and traits. A kete kota (basket for shells) approach might inspire rangatahi and their whānau to search for shells likened to such whānau attributes. Rangatahi and their whānau might suggest other approaches that connect with their whanaungatanga expressions. These additional ideas offer whānau the opportunity to highlight Indigenous tools, whakaaro and activities, returning practices of old to contemporary understandings of whanaungatanga.

We also acknowledge that this *whānau chocolate box* activity is derived from photo-projects and interviews with rangatahi considered to be ‘flourishing’ and strong in their Māori identity. Furthermore, this definition of ‘flourishing’ was subjective to each rangatahi and their understandings of hauora. As such, this activity is designed as a preventative intervention to be completed in times of healthful wellbeing, rather than a curative exercise. It is an activity to be adjusted and personalised to each rangatahi and their understanding and experiences of whānau. Numerous stories can frame and explain the *chocolates* within this box to develop a positive narrative for the rangatahi to move forward. Highlighting rangatahi agency and self-determination is essential to this *whānau chocolate box*, giving them the mana to determine their future aspirations. This *whānau chocolate box* can help scaffold safety plans, therapeutic interventions and whānau involvement during difficult times for rangatahi.

The current study supports approaches to rangatahi wellbeing led by Māori and incorporates intergenerational and collective dimensions of whānau. By re-centring Indigenous understandings, Māori rights and needs are given appropriate attention within cultural ontologies and motivations within which they can grow. This study illustrates that rangatahi wellbeing occurs within these diverse contexts and lived experiences of whānau Māori and that these experiences can support whānau and rangatahi flourishing.

**Glossary**

Māori words	English translations
Aotearoa	New Zealand
aroha	unconditional love, affection and compassion
hapū	kinship group descended from a common ancestor; a subsection of a larger tribe
hauora	wellbeing; health
<i>he toa takitini</i>	collective success
hiitori	history
ihiihi	expression; to display feeling with words or movements
iwi	tribe; extended kinship group
kapa haka	Māori performing arts; Māori performing group
kaumātua	elderly person; aged person of status
kaupapa	topic; purpose; approach
kete kota	woven basket that holds shells
kōrero	story; discussion; speech
kota	shell
<i>kotahitanga</i>	unity, solidarity
kuia	elderly woman; grandmother
kura kaupapa	primary school operating under Māori custom and language
mana	the ultimate and paramount authority of a person derived from the gods
manu kōrero	Māori speech competition for rangatahi
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa; the Indigenous ways of Aotearoa
Matua	respectful term for a male in the generation above
mātauranga	knowledge, wisdom or understanding acquired within the Māori world
ngā piki me ngā heke	the ups and downs
niho	carved tooth or tusk
papakāinga	ancestral homeland

(continued on next page)



Image 1. Whānau chocolate box activity.

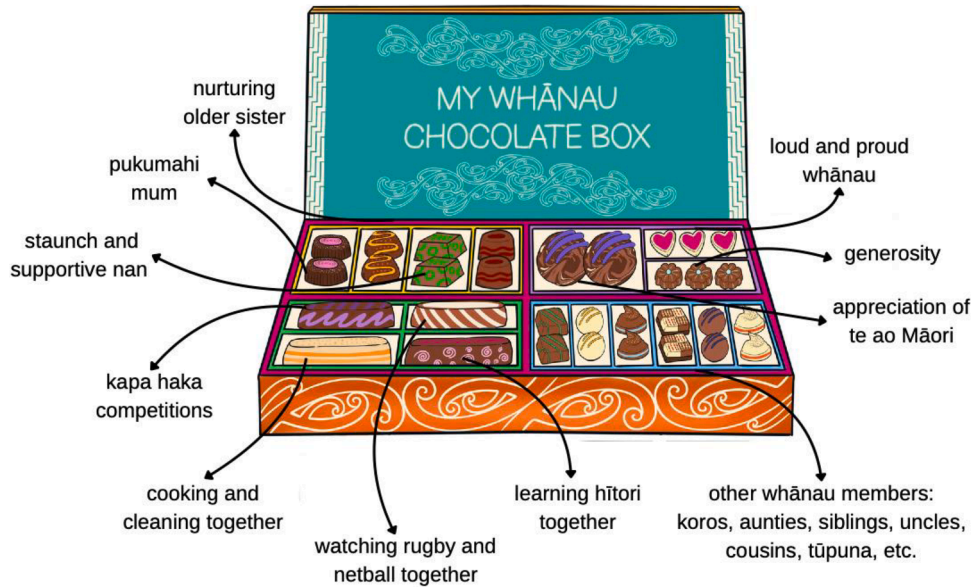


Image 2. Whānau chocolate box activity – an exemplar based upon rangatahi quotes in this paper.

(continued)

pepeha	way of introducing oneself; a formulaic expression of identity through whenua and whakapapa connections
pounamu	greenstone
pūrākau	narratives from ancient times
rangahau	research
rangatahi	youth; teenager
reo	language
tāne	male, man
taniwha	powerful guardian creatures residing in bodies of water
taonga	treasure; anything prized or valued
tātai hono	intergenerational connections
te ao Māori	the Māori world
te haerenga	to move forward
whakamua	

(continued)

tikanga	correct protocol or custom
tuākana	elder siblings of the same gender; senior whānau members that act as role models
tūturu	fixed, true, authentic
wahine / wāhine	female, woman
waka huia	carved box that holds taonga
whakapapa	genealogy; family lines of descendants
whakatauki	proverb or significant saying
whānau	family; the extended, nuanced concept of family
whanaungatanga	sense of whānau connection

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## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Te Maringi Mai o Hawaiiki:** Writing – original draft. **Jade Le Grice:** Writing – original draft. **Logan Hamley:** Writing – original draft. **Cinnamon Lindsay Latimer:** Writing – original draft. **Shiloh Groot:** Writing – original draft. **Ashlea Gillon:** Writing – original draft. **Lara Greaves:** Writing – original draft. **Terryann C. Clark:** .

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