



## 5 Raranga wha

### Mana whenua, mana moana and mixedness in a Māori/Pacific whānau

*Rae Si'ilata*

#### Introduction

*Ko Tararua te pae maunga; ko Ōhau, ko Ōtaki nga awa.  
Ko Tainui, ko te Arawa nga waka.  
Ko Ngāti Raukawa, ko Tūhourangi nga iwi. Ko Kikopiri te hapu me te marae.  
Ko Ōtaki te turangawaewae. Ko Hape ki Tuarangi, ko Te Akau nga tupuna.  
Ki te taha o toku matua, no Ōtaki ahau;  
Ki te taha o toku whaea, no Savusavu, no Fiti ahau.  
Ki te taha o toku tane me aku tamariki, kei te hono ahau ki Hamoa.  
Ni sa bula vinaka.*

*Tararua is the mountain; Ōhau, Ōtaki are the rivers.  
Tainui, Te Arawa are the canoes.  
Ngāti Raukawa, Tūhourangi are the tribes.  
Ngāti Kikopiri is the sub-tribe and the marae.  
Ōtaki is the place to stand. Hape ki Tuarangi and Te Akau are the ancestors.  
On my father's side, I come from Ōtaki;  
On my mother's side, I come from Savusavu, Fiji.  
Through my husband and children I connect with Samoa. Greetings to you all.*

*E kore ahau e ngaro; He kakano i ruia mai i Rangīātea.  
I will never be lost; I am a seed born from Rangīātea (ancient homeland).*

The whakataukī (proverb) above recognizes the enduring connections of both Māori and Pasifika peoples to their Pacific islands of origin. For indigenous Māori, the journey to Aotearoa/New Zealand occurred in migratory waves on waka hou-rua/drua/va'atele (double-hulled deep-sea canoes) at different times, from several points in East Polynesia, in the late thirteenth century (Howe, 2005). For many Māori, there is a belief that Hawaiki is the traditional Māori place of origin, and “is deeply associated with the cycle of birth, life and death” (Royal, 2015). Although there is little agreement as to the location of Hawaiki, its seminal position within Māori belief systems as the place of both origin and final destination remains. So too, for more recently arrived Pasifika peoples, the importance of a shared familial Polynesian bloodline with indigenous Māori, as well as recognition

of the unique position of Māori as tangata whenua (people of the land) in Aotearoa, is symbolized by a 'tuakana teina' (older sibling/younger sibling) relationship.

Relationships between Māori and non-Māori have ensued since the earliest migratory waves of British colonials to Aotearoa in the 1790s. Some of the sailors who jumped ship and cohabitated with Māori women became known as Pākehā Māori, and were welcomed into Māori whanau, "with most couples coming together for a combination of love, comfort, politics and pragmatic need" (Wanhalla, 2013, p. 13). The first official intermarriage between indigenous Māori and non-indigenous European (Pākehā) occurred in 1823 between a Ngāpuhi woman, Maria Ringa, and Danish trader Phillip Tapsell. Colonial missionaries believed that "marriage encouraged 'civilised' ways of life amongst Māori" (Wanhalla, 2011, p. 2). In 1860, all legal disabilities for children of interracial marriages were removed, with Māori women also retaining their rights to land (Wanhalla, 2011). The increase in both British colonial immigration to New Zealand, followed by Chinese, Dalmatian, Danish, Dutch, Greek, Italian, German and other migration, resulted in three different racial divisions or types being identified in the 1916 census: European, Māori and 'Race Alien.'

Significant post-war migration from the Pacific resulted in rapid population growth amongst Pacific peoples in New Zealand during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many came searching for the possibility of a better life, educational opportunities, upward social mobility and economic benefits. Since their arrival in Aotearoa, Pacific peoples have married non-Pacific Islanders in large numbers, with children of these marriages experiencing different connections to their island places of origin than their first-generation migrant parents (Bedford, MacPherson & Spoonley, 2001). Callister, Didham and Potter's (2007) study revealed that Pacific peoples who did not marry within their own particular Pacific ethnic group were also more likely to marry outside of the broader Pacific group than not, suggesting that "social distance between people *within* high level ethnic groups may be as important as social distance *between* high level ethnic groups" (p. 4).

Pacific migration coupled with Māori urbanization in the 1960s resulted in early instances of inter-ethnic marriage between Māori and Pacific peoples, with Metge (1957, 1964) noting that their choices attracted disapproval from parents. There has been little written on inter-ethnic marriage between Māori and Pacific peoples, however, Callister, Didham and Potter's (2007) study found that in terms of education, "marriage between Pacific Peoples and Māori is becoming more common" (p. 4), and "one of the strongest trends is that well educated Māori and Pacific Peoples are more likely to have a partner from outside their ethnic group than those with little education" (p. 5). Didham (2004) also makes the point that by the late 1990s, "a significant proportion of Pacific Peoples were in New Zealand and increasingly their children were also of Māori and other ethnicities" (p. 7). According to Callister et al., there were 2,793 Māori-Pacific marriages recorded in the 2001 census, equating to only 4.2% of total mixed Māori-other ethnicity marriages.

Pacific migrants who intermarried with indigenous Māori produced a diverse range of mixed ethnic Māori-Pacific offspring. This diversity is reflected in the

unique social structures, histories, values and identities of each Pacific group, although some forms of identity are not exclusive to any one Pacific cultural tradition. Pasifika peoples trace their heritage to distinct Pacific Island nations, however they are identified by New Zealand government institutions under the blanket Pacific/Pasifika categories. The terms ‘Pasifika peoples,’ or ‘Pasifika’ are used by the Ministry of Education (2013), while the Ministry for Pacific Peoples uses the terms ‘Pacific peoples’ and ‘Pacific population.’ These overarching labels, whilst somewhat problematic for individual Pacific nation peoples also could be said to represent the multiple identities and language resources of mixed heritage Pasifika peoples, with many whānau now celebrating their mixed linguistic and cultural heritages, sourced from both Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) and Te Moana a Nui a Kiwa (the Pacific).

Identity is seen as the personal and social characteristics that allow individuals or collectives to assert a measure of distinctiveness, frequently characterized along ethnic lines and influenced by ethno-cultural mores (Deer, 2011). Indigenous identity development is closely connected to moving beyond externally imposed concepts of identity, race and representation to enable indigenous peoples to “call upon their own tribal histories of complicity and marginalization in order to move toward new sovereign tribal identities and discourses . . . [and] recognize their own tribal voices of decolonization” (Pewewardy, 2003, p. 70). This notion of empowerment through self determination means that Māori and other indigenous people should regain control of investigations into their own lives (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Kaupapa Māori research is located within the wider struggle for Māori self determination, with Tuhiwai Smith arguing for the “concept of whanau as a supervisory and organisational structure for handling research . . . the whanau provides the intersection where research meets Māori, or Māori meets research on equalising terms” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 187).

This chapter explores the inter-generational identities of one mixed ethnic Māori/Fijian/Samoan/Pākehā (NZ European) whānau (family) through the narrative lens of three generations of individuals. It is a critical ethnographic account that begins with my own story as a person of mixed Māori, Fijian and Pākehā descent growing up in Aotearoa. I seek to share the voices of my whānau, as they discuss their inter-generational migrant journeying, their fluid identities, their rich cultural heritages and their aspirations for their generations to come. Their stories are the individually entwined strands in a richly woven korowai (cloak) of diversity that comprise the voices of three generations of mixed race whānau, who themselves were born from mixed heritage ancestors. The kaumātua (elder) voice is presented through my Fijian born mother, supported by stories from my Māori father who has since passed on. The voices of New Zealand-born mixed Māori/Fijian/Pākehā adults are presented through my own and my sister’s narratives, while the voices of the third generation of mixed indigenous ‘offspring of the Pacific diaspora’ in Aotearoa are presented through the stories of two of my adult children, who are of Māori/Fijian/Samoan/Pākehā descent. This study provides insights into individual perceptions held by different whānau members on what it

means to be of mixed heritage. This chapter reports on two research questions, situated within a broader study:

- 1 How do Māori/Pasifika whānau construct and realize their mixed identities?
- 2 What childhood experiences have impacted their identity construction?

### *My story*

As the pepeha (positioning introduction) signals, my whakapapa (lineage) includes Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori, Pākehā, and Fijian, with connections to Samoa through my husband and children. Through my father's mixed Māori whakapapa (lineage), I descend from Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga (Kāpiti Coast area) and Tūhourangi (Lake Tarawera, Rotorua), and from the Wallaces of Scotland, who came to Aotearoa in 1840. Through my mother's kailoma (mixed) paternal Fijian line, I come from the Cakaudrove province of Vanua Levu, tracing my lineage from Liku, an indigenous Fijian woman from Beqa, who was married to William Simpson of Poplar, England, who arrived in Fiji in 1820; and from David Whippy of Nantucket who arrived in Fiji in 1822 and married Adi Tulia (his first wife) from whom my grandfather descends. I also descend, through my mother's maternal line, from William Henry, an Irishman from Sligo who arrived on the first mission ship to Tahiti in 1797, whose son George Henry settled in Fiji and married Marama Pickering, whose mother was Burakaria of Rewa. My 'mixed identities' thus originate in the colonial history periods of both Aotearoa and Fiji, during my great, great grandparents' time.

My personal journey begins with my parents, who taught me from a young age to know my whakapapa (my genealogy), to stand tall and to celebrate the multifaceted dimensions of my mixed identities and cultures. Their pioneering commitment to valuing their own multidimensional 'Poly-Pacific' uniqueness, and to imparting that gift of 'knowing our own history' to their children, was extraordinary during a time in Aotearoa/New Zealand when it was uncommon to do so. I was born in Heretaunga-Orongomai (Upper Hutt) in 1960. It was a defining time in Māori history, with many Māori migrating from country to town. My father was one of those, who as a young Māori man moved from the family farm in Tokomaru, south of Papaioea (Palmerston North), with his mother, uncle and brother to a small home in Heretaunga in search of work and a future. His mother had grown up in Ōtaki, our ancestral tūrangawaewae (place to stand), and had met and married my grandfather, who was in the New Zealand Field Artillery during World War 1. He fought at Gallipoli and Passchendaele, but later succumbed to war wounds when my father was only three. My father told me bedtime stories of his life as a boy on their farm at Tokomaru. The mystique of Tokomaru and our father's childhood memories became our ritualized bedtime stories and part of our childhood memories too, as did our mother's stories of Savusavu, on the island of Vanua Levu, Fiji and her life growing up on a coconut plantation. The childhood experiences and places, still fresh in our parents' memories, became our treasured memories and our tūrangawaewae too.

In Heretaunga in the early 1960s, Māori, Pākehā and Pacific families came together to form a Māori cultural group: Māwai Hakona, from the name of a local stream. Within Māwai Hakona, Pacific (and Māori) members also formed ‘Tiare Māori,’ a Pacific performing arts group. Māwai Hakona went on to build Orongo-mai, one of the early ‘urban marae’ (traditional gathering places) in the Wellington region. This time also marked the beginnings of the regional kapa haka competitions and, in 1972, the national performing arts competition, known as ‘Te Matatini.’ Māwai Hakona was my whānau (family), my home, my place of belonging, where I learnt waiata ringa (action songs), long and short poi, haka, and titi tōrea (stick games) from a young age. We grew up performing at the regional ‘Māori competitions’ every year with our parents. Endeavouring to connect with her husband’s ways, my Fijian mother embraced ‘Te Ao Māori’ (the Māori world). Both parents were in the adults’ performing group and we had our own children’s competition. In Rainey’s (2007) history of Māwai Hakona, there is a letter from the Secretary of the Awakairangi Branch of the Māori Women’s Welfare League (my mother), to the secretary of Māwai Hakona (my father) thanking the club for “the wonderful support they gave to our Waitangi Day concert” (p. 48), sent to, and from, our home address!

Although the primary school I went to in the Hutt Valley was comprised predominantly of Pākehā middle class students, I was proud to be known as Māori. There was little consideration of Pacific worldviews or knowledge within the curriculum, however, I do remember a time when my uncle came to school to give a talk on Fiji and produced a photo of me in a hula skirt, which I remember feeling mortified about! Some of the women from Māwai Hakona also started a kapa haka group at our school, and I was one of the ‘kaea’ or leaders, because of my experience in the club. We spent many weekends together with our extended Māori whānau, at the beaches on the Kapiti Coast, collecting pāua (abalone), swimming, diving, singing, laughing and playing. I grew up with the strum of the guitar and the ukulele in my ears and my heart. The uke was the first instrument I learnt to play – taught by my mother who was an expert!

My mother made sure that we also remembered our Fijian side. Although she was one of the earliest migrants to Aotearoa in 1946, coming with her older sister, as a 12-year-old on the Mātua, she stayed connected to her island home and kept us connected too. Throughout our childhood we took trips back to her home – and the ancestral land she was born on – Walu, between Qorovaga and Kuladrusi, along the coast from Savusavu township, where many ‘kailoma’ lived (‘Kailoma’ is a ‘Taukei’/indigenous term for ‘in between,’ a term commonly applied to mixed European-indigenous Fijian families). We connected with our Fijian cousins, aunts and uncles, and learned first hand about life at Walu, the family coconut plantation where my mother was born. These were the names we grew up hearing and knowing as our own. I remember feeling different from other Māori and Pākēha because of our additional ‘island’ identity, but I saw it as a positive extension that we could whakapapa (trace our genealogy) to both. Within the club, we were just part of the whānau. My parents and my childhood experiences provided a strong foundation on which I could fashion both bicultural and multicultural identities.

Language, culture and identity were inextricably intertwined, and continue to underpin my ongoing life journey.

This study builds on my own lived experience by exploring the mixed identities of individuals who are members of my whānau/family, seeking to discover how the differences in our lived experiences have impacted our personal identities and understandings of culture. In telling these stories, a critical ethnographic approach is utilized, that is cognizant of the political and systemic hegemony that our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have lived through, growing up in colonial and postcolonial Aotearoa and Fiji, and in Samoa.

### ***Literature review and methodology***

A synthesized review of the literature and the methodology related to mixed heritage Māori-Pākehā-Pasifika peoples follows. Relevant literature is framed from Māori and Pasifika worldviews and critical autoethnographic methodological practices are outlined. Autoethnography is defined by Hayano (1979) as 'insider ethnography,' or the study of the culture of a group of which the researcher is a member. Specific Māori and Pasifika worldviews and methods were applied in data collection, analysis, and in the final framing of the study.

### ***Decolonizing methodologies***

A socially transformative agenda was envisioned and enacted through this study, with valued knowledge from Māori, Pasifika and Pākehā research domains being drawn on and utilized, thereby rejecting an assumption that any could be sufficient on their own for telling the stories of whānau. Mixed methodologies were used to tell the stories of this study of mixedness. These constructs fit well with methodologies that seek to 'de-colonize' traditionally researched indigenous spaces. Decolonizing methodologies was a term first coined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) as a research approach that seeks to 're-create' and 'research back' by utilizing indigenous knowledge constructs, rather than Western scientific methods that are codified within colonial ideologies. Within this approach, there is no 'one size fits all' formula and, in fact, within the 'mixed identities/mixed heritage' space, there is even greater need to utilize research approaches that are meaningful for individuals themselves, recognizing that traditional 'indigenous' methodologies should be responsive to particular people and their preferred methods of engagement. The notion of diversity within indigenous experience is of relevance to an even greater degree with mixed heritage peoples, who themselves can recognize their own experiences as being nested within the historical colonial past of their ancestors. Although there may be different approaches to engaging in research with mixed heritage peoples, in talking with the younger participants in this study, it became apparent that Smith's (1999) premise that an indigenous methodologies focus on "the survival of peoples, cultures, and languages; the need to become self determining, and the need to take back control of our destinies" (p. 142), was indeed as relevant today, and possibly closer to realization than when Smith first

posited it. The younger participants in this study drew on all of their linguistic and cultural resources to express their multiple identities. They were not limited by ‘fixed’ views of culture, but valued indigenous knowledge systems. They supported indigenous struggles for ‘tino rangatiratanga’ (political sovereignty and management of resources), not only within Aotearoa and the Pacific, but also for other indigenous peoples of the world (for example, Hawai’i, Rapanui, Standing Rock, West Papua).

### *Talanoa*

Talanoa (co-constructed dialogue) is a research method that sits within the ethnographic field. The whānau in this study preferred ‘storying’ as a method of meaning making and of reflecting on their own cultural locatedness. The ability to story, however, is not limited to the usual ‘face-to-face’ requirement of the Pacific research method known as ‘talanoa’ (Halapua, 2000, 2003, 2007; Vaiioleti, 2006). Vaiioleti suggests that in the Tongan lexicon, talanoa is “a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal. It is almost always carried out face-to-face” (p. 23). He further posits talanoa, “literally means talking about nothing in particular, and interacting without a rigid framework” (Vaiioleti, 2006, p. 24). Halapua (2007), who utilized talanoa within the context of reconciliation in both the Cook Islands and Fiji in the early 2000s, described talanoa a little differently, as “storytelling without concealment” (p. 1), in which there is no preconceived agenda. However, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) expressed concern that “talanoa is simply replacing informal open-ended interviews whilst glossing over its emotional and cultural complexity” (p. 1). They describe talanoa as the holistic and embodied amalgamation of emotions, knowledge, interests and experiences of both researcher and participants, and explain that:

For indigenous Fijians, values such as empathy, respect, love and humility are essential to the vanua indigenous worldview. Talanoa is an embodied expression of the vanua concept. Highlighting the connection between talanoa and empathy is vital . . . (p. 1). We will also argue that empathic apprenticeship . . . provides a meaningful contribution to decolonising research methodologies.

(p. 2)

Thus the utilization of talanoa as a Pasifika research methodology goes beyond a supposedly ‘simple’ use of co-constructed dialogue, to a process that is more deeply founded on familial, empathic and culturally appropriate relationships, as Fa’avae in his (2016) study also discovered. His use of talanoa as a Tongan ‘insider’ with older Tongan males was a navigational challenge, because successfully engaging in culturally competent practice meant that “equality – and the openness that goes with it” (p. 144) was not a value he saw as culturally appropriate with his particular participants.



In my roles as both insider-researcher and co-participant, the use of talanoa with whānau was enacted in various ways depending on the specific relationship and the preference of the participant for 'kanohi ki te kanohi' (face-to-face) talanoa, a phone conversation, an email exchange, a text conversation or written dialogue in response to co-constructed questions. The fact that whānau members had existing relationships already based on mutual respect and aroha (love), meant that the talanoa could be honestly and purposefully framed within a decolonizing framework, and that it didn't always need to be face to face. Ensuring that the familial relationship space was in a state of 'noa' (a non-tapu/ 'free from restriction' state), meant that the talanoa was enacted in a safe space that allowed free dialogue that was both unrestrained and culturally appropriate. Some whānau members preferred to write what they wanted to say to allow time for considering and crafting their story. The strength of individual relationships meant that regardless of physical presence and medium, there could be open dialogue that was both challenging and disruptive at times.

### ***Ethnographic research on mixed Māori identities***

A number of researchers have investigated mixed Māori/Pākehā identities, including Bozic-Vrbancic (2005), Doerr (2015) and Webber (2008, 2012, 2013, 2015), to name a few. Webber (2008) argues that for hybrid Māori/Pākehā peoples, ethnic identification is doubly difficult because of the need to navigate complexities in a range of contexts, meaning that identity formation is "fluid, multiple, relational, socially constructed and cyclic" (p. 81). Key to a positive hybrid identity, however, is the "degree to which people of mixed Māori/Pākehā descent experience a sense of belonging and acceptance amongst others" (p. 112). Webber goes on to argue for the right to inhabit the borderlands, or "both sides of the ethnic boundary," or "a third space in between" (p. 112). Other researchers suggest a range of identity constructions by mixed Māori/Pākehā peoples, including those who allow their identities to be constructed by others, through the "assimilationist representation of the Pākehā way" (Bozic-Vrbancic, 2005, p. 531), and those who choose to identify more as Māori because of their struggle *against* assimilation. Bozic-Vrbancic (2005) goes on to conclude that her participants offer very different interpretations of what it means to be Māori-Croatian in New Zealand, however both do so by describing who they are through the "antagonisms which beset them" (p. 540). Doerr's (2015) study identified the importance of classroom context for mixed Māori/Pākehā students, in supporting their identity development as Māori, as 'the whole being of the person' rather than simply seeing Māori ancestry as a 'thing to have': "Mainstream space was a kind of space conducive to creating hedged commitment to *Māoriness*" (p. 187). Ultimately people with mixed ethnic identities have the right to define their own identities, and for some, there may be preference of one over the other, or they may successfully navigate both/all worlds. The choice of identity and accompanying worldview certainly appear to be influenced by family context, place, interactions with others, childhood memories and experiences



of schooling (Fivush, 2008; Harris & Sim, 2002; Miller, 1994; Norquay, 1990; Rocha, 2010; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992).

### *Ethnographic research on mixed Pasifika identities*

There have been fewer studies relating to hybrid or mixed identities of Pacific/Pasifika peoples. Si'ilata's (2004, 2005) study found that the identities of Samoan and Tongan first generation migrant children were inextricably linked to students' sense of ownership of their heritage languages and cultures. Kearney (2003) suggests that, "memories framed in stories are integral to identity" (p. 85), and that identity with its links to culture is continually evolving, and is in fact "fluid and mobile" (p. 108). Kearney goes on to argue that the construction of identity consists of more than slipping in and out of roles in the negotiation of different social networks. Identity does not work in isolation and "each facet of a person's identity impacts on the others" (p. 113).

It is evident in the whānau narratives that individuals had both inner and outer selves that resulted in complex inner and outer dialogues and that "such syncretism is achieved by the orchestration of different influences and significant events into a coherent sense of self" (Kearney, 2003, p. 113). The whānau narratives revealed that individuals' identities were not only fluid and multiple but were also inextricably linked with language and culture. Franklin's (2003) study of Pacific identity construction articulated through internet discussion forums (the *Kava Bowl and the Kamehameha Roundtable*) revealed that Pacific people in the 'diaspora' (living in the United States, Australia and New Zealand) chose to define their identities on their own terms, rather than having it defined by majority cultures. Forum participants were "redefining what it means to be Samoan, Tongan – Polynesian – in a diasporic context" (p. 465). Their online discussions revolved around "the personal and political issues of race (ethnicity) as everyday embodiments" and "Tongan/Samoan and Pacific Island cultures as negotiable rather than fixed practices" (p. 465). In relation to identity, some forum members expressed that that they did not belong in either the 'Western' world, or their family's island of origin; while others felt that they had "the best of both worlds" (p. 480). They rearticulated "not only how Tongan – Samoan – Polynesian cultural practices are being lived, but also how they are being assumed, contested and moulded in all manner of everyday situations" (Franklin, 2003, p. 479).

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were all members of the same whānau – some living in Fiji, some in Samoa, and some in Aotearoa/New Zealand. All preferred that their own names be used when telling their stories. Their 'identity talanoa' was provided either orally or in writing, in line with their personal preference, and was built on face-to-face talanoa that we have shared over many years. The participants chose what to share and wanted to tell their stories. So, although the study presents the voices of individuals, it is also the story of 'mixedness' within one whānau. It is

not only our individual storytelling, but also our collective whānau storytelling and story. The participants' stories reported on in this chapter include the voices of my mother, my sister and two of my children. The voices of the Fijian cousins are reported elsewhere. The participants include:

- Dora – my 83-year-old mother who migrated to New Zealand as a 12-year-old from Fiji.
- Steph – my younger sister, who is a Director of Māori and Pacific Health at a District Health Board.
- Samuelu – (30 years), my eldest son, who lives in Pagopago, American Samoa with his mixed Samoan/German/American wife, and teaches Pacific History to middle school students.
- Aroha – (28 years), my eldest daughter, who lives in Auckland and is a doctor, working as a registrar specialising in radiology.

### **Results**

The following section reports on the findings of the talanoa and is framed through the metaphor of the korowai hukahuka (tasselled cloak).

#### ***Korowai hukahuka***

Within this identity space, we clothe ourselves with the 'korowai hukahuka' of the whānau – the korowai that is woven with muka (fibre of the indigenous harakeke/flax plant), interspersed with colourful European woollen strands, adorned with woven muka tassels and feathers. When our tupuna arrived in Aotearoa, the traditional aute (paper mulberry) that had been used in the Pacific to make tapa garments did not thrive in the cooler climate. Early Māori developed a method of producing fine thread from muka (flax fibre), from which they wove kakahu (cloaks). A korowai is a style of prestigious cloak which has a plain muka (flax fibre) kaupapa (main body of the cloak). It is made of fine, hand-processed New Zealand harakeke (flax: *Phormium tenax*), and is an elegant drape with hukahuka (tassels) attached. Hukahuka were made by plying dyed black strands of dressed muka into a single cord that were attached to the kaupapa. Korowai take their name from korokoro (loose) and wai (water, or flowing). The distinctive hukahuka cascade down the garment, rippling and swaying with the wearer's every movement (Museum of NZ/Te Papa Collection, n.d.).

The korowai hukahuka made of traditional muka and decorated with muka, feathers and European wool is a metaphor for our mixed identities as a Māori/Fijian/Samoan/Pākēha whānau. During my father's tangi (funeral), a kaumatua (elder) stood and spoke eloquently of how 'Koro' would rest in the arms of his tupuna (ancestors), covered by the beautifully woven korowai of his life's work. Although he was perceived as a 'successful' man in the business world, the kaumatua was not speaking of his 'worldly successes' but of the richness of his heart. When he lay at the marae, he was covered by three ancestral whānau korowai: a

very old korowai muka (traditionally woven cloak), a kahu kiwi (kiwi feather cloak), and a korowai hukahuka of mixed Māori/European materials. Each represented who he was: the korowai muka representing his indigenous Māori values and identity, the kahu kiwi representing his unique mana through whakapapa and being, and the korowai hukahuka representing his ability to walk successfully in both worlds. In death, he went, covered by his korowai of aroha (love). Malcolm-Buchanan, Te Awakohatu and Nikora (2012) state that:

Korowai embody, as well as compel, both spatial and temporal connectivity, revealing aspects of liminality, which engage the past within the present, subsequently acting as the corporeal conduits of what the ethnologist Van Gennep (1997) called a tripartite process. That is to say that, in this context, while the tūpāpaku (body) is perceived as being in a state of “in-between here and there”, the korowai acts 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 tupuna from which the whānau descend.

(p. 55)



*Figure 5.1* My father as haka leader in Māwai Hakona



Figure 5.2 My father as Te Rauparaha in the 1972 film, wearing whānau korowai/kākahu

The korowai hukahuka is used as the frame around which the stories of the whānau are presented. The materials used to create the korowai are connected to the key themes surfacing in the data, and are presented below:

- 1 *Muka (Indigenous flax fibre)* – the base material used for weaving korowai, representing the worldviews held by whānau members, seeded in whakapapa (geneology), and whenua (land/place). Each muka thread is interwoven with another, so that the intertwined threads become one garment, expressing the melded and unique essence of the person.
- 2 *Whenu (the warp thread of the korowai)* – the structural vertical base of the korowai, representing childhood experiences and memories that were key to identity development, including the centrality of linguistic and cultural knowledge.
- 3 *Aho (the weft thread of the korowai)* – the interwoven horizontal threads of the korowai, representing educational experiences that impacted on identity.

- 4 *Whenu Tāpiri (the dyed thread on the outer border of the korowai)* – the colourful border in both dyed muka and European woollen threads, representing the mixed identities and current lived practices of whānau.
- 5 *Hukahuka (the dyed muka, woollen, and feather tassels adorning the korowai)*, representing aspirations of the whānau for their descendants' future – connected to the korowai, but moving synchronously with the wearer and the times.

This chapter reports on two of the surfacing themes in the whānau data: *Muka (Indigenous flax fibre)*, representing the worldviews held by whānau members, seeded in whakapapa (genealogy), and whenua (land/place) and *whenu (the warp thread of the korowai)*, representing childhood experiences and memories that were key to identity development, including the centrality of linguistic and cultural knowledge.

### ***Muka – worldview, whakapapa (genealogy) and whenua (land)***

All whānau members expressed that the values, beliefs and worldview that had been instilled in them in childhood by their parents and grandparents were central to their identity construction in adult life. The elder in the whānau, Dora, saw her identity as intrinsically tied to the land of her birth – Fiji. When asked how she identified herself, she stated: “*Fijian, as in land of my birth: Fiji.*” She talked about how her identity construction had changed as she had aged. It was apparent that whenua (land), or the ‘place’ where individual whānau members had lived their childhood lives, had a major impact on identity construction. Dora left Fiji as a 12-year-old in 1946, and had continued her schooling and life in New Zealand. As a result of having to carve out an identity as a member of a ‘minority group’ within a postcolonial space, she had come to see herself as predominantly Fijian, rather than as European.

The centrality of both whakapapa and place was also evident in the next generation’s talanoa, represented by two of my children, Samuelu and Aroha, as well as the spiritual values embedded within the immediate family. They saw themselves as all of their ethnicities (Māori, Fijian, Samoan, Pākehā), although for Samuelu, his Samoan identity was probably primary, due to his childhood in Samoa, and his knowledge of language and culture: “*Probably because I grew up in Samoa, and even in New Zealand; a majority of our local community are also Samoan. My knowledge of the Samoan language is greater than my Māori or Fijian.*” Both stated that their parents had influenced their identity formation, and that growing up in Samoa had had a major impact on their identities, even though they had returned to New Zealand in their teen years. Samuelu (who currently lives in American Samoa with his wife) stated that he saw himself as “*Samoan, Māori, Fijian, European New Zealander, predominately a Pacific Islander.*” Aroha stated that all of her ethnic identities were of primary importance to her:

*I feel that my identity is a mixture of all three ethnicities, which is unique to me, and my family/siblings. People in university, especially my fellow Māori and*

*Pasifika friends would tell me to choose which ethnicity I think I am more, but I always told them I can't do that because they are all equally important to me.*

Steph, my sister, who had the same NZ-based experiences as I did in childhood, reaffirmed the connection between worldview and whakapapa. She stated that knowledge of whakapapa enabled her to live as a strong Māori/Fijian woman. The connection between whakapapa, identity and place was central to who she was:

*Knowledge of whakapapa is central to my identity. From a Māori perspective whakapapa is the theory of everything; one thing gives birth to another . . . gravel gives birth to sand. Whakapapa (genealogy) and tupuna (ancestors) are central to identity and provide a sense of place, provide context in this time and space, impart a sense of belonging, of not being alone, of recognition and strength of self. I think the importance of whakapapa was instilled in me. The concept of relatedness or the belief that all elements of life are interconnected is fundamental to my beliefs, well-being, and personal and collective accountabilities with people and the environment. Few things remain constant, whakapapa (genealogy), like the land, remains. Whakapapa connects us to stories of particular times and places and gives us glimpses into old ways of perceiving and remembering.*

Steph also talked about the values that had been instilled in us as children and that this was one way that our parents connected a cultural worldview with practical, everyday life. Our father lived his values – for him, being Māori meant living a life with aroha (love) at the centre. He didn't think about it – it was just who he was:

*I think my identity is intrinsic to the values, beliefs; worldviews I hold. My identity shapes all aspects of my personal and my professional life. A key concept my parents instilled in us was the power of aroha. Meet people in aroha; be with people within the notion of aroha. Expectation is not part of this, just do it without wanting. Also manaaki – My father was almost generous to a fault! Where he was consistently doing anything and everything for others, this taught me about not only the importance and power of giving, but also about balance, giving without creating dependency, giving for the joy of giving not because you have expectations of others. My mother brought wonderful balance to my father in terms of this. She probably had more experience firsthand growing up in Fiji of the communal obligations of koha atu, koha mai, [giving/receiving], and recognition that this also can be restrictive. She demonstrated daily the importance of strength and independence as a woman.*

The centrality and importance of whenua/land/place in Māori and Pacific cultures was explained by Samuelu:

*I definitely think place plays a big part. Geographic points of 'place' form a large part of place in the Polynesian worldview. In Māori it's called one's*



*turangawaewae. In Tahiti every chief person has a marae (ceremonial grounds), outu (point of land), mou'a (mountain), similar to the Māori pep-eha. In Samoa there is the fa'alupega (a set of honorifics identifying the main chiefly titles, fine mat titles, kava cup titles, taupou titles and main families for each village and district). Understanding the geographical points of reference and points of hierarchical references in a society provide a sense of belonging. To not just know these points of place, but to have lived in them, to walk them and have your parents and grandparents explain them to you provides you with a sense of belonging and of having a right to those places.*

### ***Whenu – childhood experiences, linguistic, and cultural knowledge***

Childhood experiences and the influence of parents had a major impact on all participants' identity construction. When asked about what had influenced his identity construction, Samuelu stated:

*What has contributed to my identity formation is input from my parents throughout childhood in the cultures we come from, visiting or living in the lands and being immersed in the cultures we came from. My parents teaching me to celebrate the various cultures I come from. I have many fond memories of this: living in Samoa and helping Mum teach kapa haka to a Samoan village who were tasked with providing the halftime entertainment for a rugby test between Samoa and the NZ Māori teams at Apia Park; living in New Zealand and dancing in the Samoan dance group at my intermediate school, with my Dad getting teary eyed watching me dance; hearing stories about my Samoan, Māori, Scottish ancestors growing up and admiring what they accomplished.*

All whānau participants talked about the centrality of language in relation to identity, culture and worldview. For Dora, as a child growing up in 'colonial' Fiji, it was preferable for 'mixed European Fijians' to align themselves with their European identity, seen as a means of upward mobility in Fijian society at the time, despite family members preferring to communicate in Fijian rather than English. As an elder, Dora now saw things differently, with the centrality of language in relation to identity construction being reaffirmed: "over the years my identity has changed . . . language is the very essence of my identity. When I was a child I chose to speak the Fijian language, as it was easier for me to express myself in that language." The loss of 'minority' languages within mixed-ethnic whānau in Aotearoa/New Zealand was evident, with all of the NZ born participants expressing the desire to improve their language capability in both Te Reo Māori and in their Pacific languages. Samuelu and Aroha explained the strong connection between language, and understanding of culture:

*Samuelu: Language plays a huge part in identity. I believe a language contains the worldviews of any given culture or ethnicity. I wouldn't say I'm*



*completely fluent yet in Samoan or Māori, but I do understand a majority of these languages, I am continually learning more and do understand a great deal of cultural history, geography, proverbs and the worldviews they contain.*

*Aroha: It's very important – language relates so much to culture. There are certain words in Samoan/Māori that express what I mean so much better than when I try say it in English – basically the English translation is not adequate for some Samoan/Māori words. I wish I could fluently speak all the languages of my various ethnicities. Samoan is my best after English, then Te Reo Māori, then Fijian. Knowing your indigenous language – even a little – is a taonga [gift/treasure].*

Dora talked about her love of the Fijian culture and that it was still intrinsic to who she was. However, it was not just that Fijian culture was part of her identity, but that she actually treasured the specific cultural protocols that enabled a Fijian way of life:

*The Fijian culture is very important to me. I love the Fijian culture, the way of life, the ceremonies, the protocols for important occasions, the sevusevu [ceremony] when you visit a home for the first time, after a death, and all the different rituals with regard to death, the music and the dances.*

Others also talked about the importance of having cultural knowledge; that it affected the way they lived and behaved, enabling them to respond in culturally appropriate ways at family and community events. Whānau explained that cultural knowledge was often implicitly held and developed within the whānau context because of the practice of appropriate cultural norms, and did not always become explicit knowledge for individuals, until experiencing other cultural ways of being and interacting, as described by Aroha:

*It is very important to have cultural knowledge – it affects the way I live and behave in certain family functions. Most of the time you are brought up in those cultural protocols without even realizing until you go somewhere different and see the way other people do things. Knowing a little bit of your cultural history is very important – it gives added meaning when you do cultural practices as well.*

Samuelu talked about the strong connection between cultural knowledge and identity, and that cultural knowledge also gave him confidence to know how to respond within cultural contexts, but also within challenging situations faced in his daily life:

*Cultural knowledge informs every part of who I am. It tells me how to be respectful to any Samoan elders I might meet. It allows me to know the proper tikanga when I go to the marae. Cultural knowledge allows me to connect with the cultures I come from, to reconnect with the lands of my fathers, and gives*

*me confidence to face challenges today, knowing that my ancestors and peoples have faced greater challenges in the past.*

Samuelu described how his love of culture, and his conversations with family elders in relation to cultural history were poignant reminders of culture loss amongst many of his contemporaries. He talked about his experiences talking with cultural knowledge holders and elders, as formational in his identity development:

*I think spending time with many older relatives, family chiefs and grandparents had an impact on my identity. Talking about genealogies (whakapapa and gafa), family histories, their childhood stories, village traditions and the histories of our ancestors, warriors and kings. When I would ask elders about this cultural knowledge sometimes at the end they would just stare at me with what looked like hope or reassurance in their eyes. I think indigenous elders carry tremendous burdens, wondering if their cultural knowledge will be lost or passed on. If their people and their stories will be retained by future generations, or be lost to a globalizing foreign culture. I've had this experience with many elders and retainers of cultural knowledge throughout the Pacific, when you ask them to share their knowledge they give you this look, and it's like you've taken away some of that burden that they've been carrying. They have hope for the future.*

## Conclusion

This study has presented the voices of one extended Māori/Fijian/Samoan/Pākēha whānau represented by individual whānau members from three generations of the family. Their talanoa and woven storying presents a colourful korowai hukahuka (tasselled cloak) that is representative of the multiple melded identities, and cultural richness derived from the storied blending of linguistic and cultural identities. These narratives are represented through two parts of the korowai. Each *muka* thread representing the worldview held by whānau members, seeded in whakapapa (geneology), and whenua (land/place) was interwoven with another. The intertwined threads became one garment, expressive of the melded and unique essence of the person. The deep connection between whakapapa, land and identity was evident in all of the whānau narratives. Knowledge of the past enabled whānau members to develop their own sense of self-belief and self-efficacy. Land and place were central to the development of belonging and identity. The *whenu* representing childhood experiences, including the centrality of linguistic and cultural knowledge, were key to developing strong multimelded identities, a greater sense of self, and a sense of collective belonging within extended whānau and iwi. These were not reified forms of linguistic or cultural engagement but vibrant, connected and creative fusing of past, present and future identity realization.

The importance of knowing the past, in order to move into the future was highlighted by the whānau. The diversity of the family was strengthened through the

melding of cultural knowledge, with individuals choosing how they wished to define themselves. Their identity construction was often related to their position in the whānau, their connection to the land and their knowledge of language and culture. Their interwoven mixed identities and heritages were presented as a richly woven korowai and as a promise for the future.

*Kotahi te kohao o te ngira e kuhuna ai te miro ma, te miro pango, te miro whero.  
I muri, kia mau ki te aroha, ki te ture, ki te whakapono.*

*Through the eye of the needle pass the white threads, the black threads, and the red threads. Afterwards, looking to the past as you progress, hold firmly to your love, the law, and your faith.*

Whakatauki (proverb) by Potatau Te Wherowhero, the first Māori King, at the birth of the Kingitanga movement. He spoke of strength and beauty through both unity and diversity, by alluding to the beauty and the strength of woven tukutuku.

Individual threads are weak, but the process of weaving makes a strong fabric.

Individual colours tell no story, but woven together they are a beautifully woven tapestry.

Naa Potatau (1858)

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