

**TE KŌWHIRINGA PŌTI MĀORI:  
ME RĀRANGI MĀORI, ME RĀRANGI AURAKI RĀNEI?**

Exploring rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral option process:

A mixed-method approach

by

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## Abstract

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori voters have the option to sign up for one of two electoral rolls: the Māori roll or the general roll. This function of Indigenous political choice and representation occupies a unique place in Aotearoa New Zealand's constitutional arrangements.

While the Māori electorates have been around for over 150 years, the number of seats have grown from only four to seven in the New Zealand House of Parliament. Electoral roll populations determine the number of seats in Parliament, and provide a sole line of accountability to Māori communities for elected representatives. The Māori Electoral Option however, which provides voters the opportunity to change rolls, is only presented once every five years. In this thesis I identify three pervasive systemic barriers, as well as a number of other issues, present in the electoral roll option process.

This research contributes to the growing literature looking at rangatahi Māori experiences intersecting with identity, place, space and time. Through a Kaupapa Māori lens, this thesis uses interview findings and quantitative analysis to discuss the experiences of rangatahi navigating the Māori electoral roll choice. Here I explore the various influences and complexities which impact rangatahi Māori interaction with the electoral rolls as well as the broader socio-political landscape.



## Kōrero Tuku Iho

“Whakarongo atu ki ngā tai o Raukawa moana e pāpaki mai ra, ia ra, ia ra.

Mutunga kore, pāpaki tū ana ngā tai ki uta.<sup>1</sup>

I tēnei rā kua pāpaki mai ngā tai o te ao ki a Te Āti Awa

Pī kē pea te piki atu, rere haere ai ki runga i te kaha o te ao hurihuri;

Me kore pea te kitea he maramatanga ki ngā whakaritenga o te wā e tika ai tātou te iwi.

Nō reira, Whakarongotai o te moana, Whakarongotai o te wā.”<sup>2</sup>

*Nā, Wiremu Te Kākākura Parata*

*(Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai, Ngāti Toa Rangatira)*

*Leader, Activist, Lawyer*

*Member of Parliament for Western Māori 1871-1875*

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<sup>1</sup> “On such a full sea we are now afloat. And we must take the current when it serves or lose our ventures”. Reported as quoting Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar’, this excerpt is taken from a speech given by my ancestor Wiremu Te Kākākura Parata at Waikanae Parata Township in 1884 (Maclean and Maclean 2010, 50).

<sup>2</sup> This kōrero tuku iho serves as an important reminder that “As you listen to the tides of the ocean, so too must you listen to the tides of the time.” (Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai 2020, 6).

## Pepeha

*Waerea i runga, waerea i raro  
Waerea i roto, waerea i waho  
Ka waerea kia eke,  
Kia eke ki te taumata o Tuteremoana,  
Uhi, wero, tau mai te mauri  
Haumi e! Hui e! Taiki e!*

Ko Tokomaru te waka,  
Ko Waikanae te awa,  
Mai Kukutauaki ki Whareroa,  
Ko Kapakapanui te maunga,  
Ko Kapiti te motu.

Ko Te Puku Mahi Tamariki te whare,  
Ko Whakarongotai te marae.

Ko Ōtaraua rāua ko Puketapu ngā hapū.  
Ko Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai, Ngāti Raukawa ki te  
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*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini!*

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## Introduction

In Aotearoa<sup>3</sup> New Zealand, Māori voters are presented with the option to enrol on one of two electoral rolls: the Māori roll or the general roll. The Māori electorate seats were established over 150 years ago, with the option to choose electoral rolls being introduced 45 years ago. Electoral roll populations translate into seats in the New Zealand parliament with the current number of dedicated Māori seats standing at seven. However, the Māori electoral roll option is presented to voters only once every five years corresponding with the timing of the national census<sup>4</sup>. The Māori seats and electoral roll option both occupy a unique place in New Zealand's constitutional and political arrangements.

This thesis will explore the following question: “What insights can rangatahi Māori<sup>5</sup> experiences reveal about the Māori electoral roll option process?” In addressing this question, I analyse how complex, ever-shifting electoral system processes influence the decision-making capacity for rangatahi Māori engaging and enrolling to vote. I argue that the electoral system presents barriers that are unresponsive to rangatahi Māori aspirations and needs, and discuss these barriers which were highlighted through my interview findings with Māori participants. In this thesis, the term ‘rangatahi’ is defined through a local methodology and according to a Te Āti Awa context, which is further explained in my qualitative chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> Indigenous Māori name for the country known as New Zealand

<sup>4</sup> The New Zealand Census happens every five years. The most recent Census took place in 2018. The population census is a “universal tool of governance” and “essential for many functions that underpin democracy” (Kukutai and Cormack 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Māori youth, younger Māori generation, to be young

This thesis adopts a Kaupapa Māori mixed-method approach, blending qualitative and quantitative findings to illustrate the unique landscape that is ‘the Māori electoral roll option’. I contextualise these findings by beginning this thesis with the necessary background, context and literature overview to complement these themes and discussions.

In chapter three, I highlight the three key ‘barriers’ found through qualitative research and identified by my participants, these are the barriers of: ‘education access’, ‘the process of enrolling to vote’, and ‘the five yearly option’.

Qualitative research methods are used to explore rangatahi Māori roll choice. I present results and findings conducted through individual interviews. Key questions explored in this include:

- Are there systemic barriers that prevent Māori from equitable access to electoral rolls?
- What are the influences that affect movements across electoral rolls?

Quantitative research methods are used to provide observations on Census 2018 and Māori Electoral Option 2018 data related to Māori roll choice. Key questions explored in this include:

- What can big data observations reveal about Māori voter roll choice?
- What factors may influence voter choice in the electoral roll option?

This introduction has summarised the directions of this thesis to provide a ‘roadmap’ to the thinking and key questions that will be explored. Now, I will provide further thoughts on the ‘shaping’ of this thesis.

A key tension that prefaces this thesis is the narrative of low electoral engagement and participation by Māori, which is often problematised in comparison to Pākehā<sup>6</sup> (Bargh 2013). To address this, I follow the lead of Māori political scholars in contextualising contemporary political engagement within the historical disenfranchisement and marginalisation of traditional Māori political structures aided through discriminatory and suppressive laws (Walker 2004; Bargh 2013; Keane 2008). This research identifies the need for a better understanding of the barriers, influences and processes that affect rangatahi Māori experiences with the electoral roll option. Within a Kaupapa Māori framework, I prioritise lived experiences shared by my participants alongside quantitative data to provide unique insights into rangatahi Māori experiences navigating the electoral roll option. This thesis also acknowledges that Māori exercise political autonomy in many alternative avenues outside of New Zealand parliamentary politics, with voting, and the electoral option, being just one of those avenues (Bargh 2013).

This thesis focuses on ‘rangatahi Māori’ experiences. In chapter 3, where ‘rangatahi’ is defined, I contextualise my research method through a local context. In doing so, I acknowledge that rangatahi Māori perspectives and experiences are diverse and situated within their unique local context. This is in line with the suggestions of Māori health scholar Mason Durie to, acknowledge the “diverse realities” of Māori in contemporary society (1994, 10). I also

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<sup>6</sup> New Zealander of European descent, foreigner

recognise the role of wider whānau<sup>7</sup>, hapū<sup>8</sup>, iwi<sup>9</sup> and hāpori<sup>10</sup> networks as inextricably linked to collective decision making and aspirations (Mead 2016, 224).

My research can be placed within a two different spaces. The first being where my interviews were conducted, in Te Whanganui-ā-Tara (Wellington city) and the Kapiti coast, which locates the qualitative research findings within a specific area across the greater Wellington region of New Zealand. The second space is not defined by a single geographic region, rather it is defined by a key set of official national data and statistics which provide another angle through which the central thesis is explored. I identify different challenges and limitations within these perceived research spaces for the aims of this thesis.

This thesis is entitled: “Te Kōwhiringa Pōti Māori: Me Rārangi Māori, Me Rārangi Auraki Rānei? Exploring rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral option process: A mixed-method approach”. In this section I provide a description behind my chosen title. Te Kōwhiringa Pōti Māori is a translation for the Māori Electoral Option. Rārangi refers to the process of ‘lining up’ or ‘to list’, with Rārangi Māori representing the ‘Māori electoral roll’ and Rārangi Auraki referring to the ‘mainstream’ or ‘general’ electoral roll. Therefore, “Me Rārangi Māori, Me Rārangi Auraki rānei?” translates into the question: ‘Should one line up on the Māori Roll or General Roll?’. I explore rangatahi Māori experiences in this thesis to provide diverse perspectives related to that central question.

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<sup>7</sup> extended family, to be born

<sup>8</sup> clan, subtribe, to be pregnant

<sup>9</sup> tribe, nation, extended kinship

<sup>10</sup> section of a kinship group, society, community

## Background

In this section, I highlight how my passion ‘for the kaupapa’<sup>11</sup> has been shaped by many components: I am a descendant of Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai first. Ko ngā kōrero o ngā tūpuna, he taonga, he taonga, he taonga tuku iho. I am also a rangatahi Māori student studying Māori politics. I have gained immense and rich learnings from this university journey so far, which have contextualised my engagements in this research, especially in my approach which draws on the uniquely “by Māori, with Māori, for Māori” of Kaupapa Māori methodology (Cram 2001, 37).

*“Inā te Waikanaetanga, inā te rangatiratanga”*<sup>12</sup>. I was proud to see my iwi supporting its community through the incredibly tough and challenging situation of level 4 COVID-19 lockdown. Even in the face of these challenges, aunties, uncles, cousins, kaumātua, parents and grandparents have still given their time and resources to the rangatahi. My passion for this kaupapa stems from this revival of Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai ‘rangatahitanga’ and collective iwi identity, as we seek to honour the aspirations of our tūpuna.

My personal experience of voting can be considered a privileged one. I enrolled in 2015, during my final year of high school, and I chose the Māori roll. I voted for the first time during the local elections of 2016. And at my first general election in 2017, I organised the inaugural Te

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<sup>11</sup> ‘For the kaupapa’ is my expression as being for the purpose, plan and goal set out in this thesis.

<sup>12</sup> *“This is the embodiment of Waikanae; Look at the self-determination of its people.”* He kupu mō ngā rangatahi o Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai. He waiata whakamaumahara ki a koe, Amiria Rutu Eruini Griffiths. Nā ngā ‘cuzzies’ i tito i te tau 2017.

Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai Te Tai Hauāuru candidate's hui and voted on Whakarongotai Marae.

As a Māori student in Political Science, I wanted to do something that reflected my passion 'for the kaupapa'. I invited candidates to meet with the community on our whenua and according to our Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai tikanga and kawa. Whakarongotai Marae also opened as a polling booth during the advanced voting period two weeks after the hui took place and I cast my very first votes there with whānau and friends. This was the environment in which I participated from 2017-2020.

I recognise this privilege because of the struggles our people continue to experience at the polling booth. Even at the time I am writing the final words of this thesis, despite being only the first few days of advanced voting at the 2020 General Election, it is concerning that hopeful Māori voters have been met with obstacles (One News 2020a). And although there have been calls for the Electoral Commission to 'get it right this time' (Johnsen 2020a), concerns for Māori voter's rights and frustrations (Johnsen 2020b) do not appear to be met with the political or institutional will to commit to meaningful change (One New 2020b).

While conducting this research, I was inspired by the resiliency and agency of my community and the passion we have to create solutions for ourselves through both political and 'non-political' means. Although this thesis looks at political engagement in its specific manifestation in the 'electoral roll option', it is worth noting here the multitude of alternative ways iwi and whānau Māori are politically engaged in their communities (Bargh 2013).



There is a lot to reflect on over this journey and this thesis serves as a small reflection of that. This work is for the people of Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai; our ahi kaa and ahi tere, our ringawera, our knowledge holders, our kaumatua and our pēpi and the footsteps of those before. We have overcome so much this year together. And there is still more to do.

### *Chapter Overview*

I have identified the key questions, concepts and issues related to this research on the Māori electoral roll option. Here, I outline the chapters which form the six chapters in this thesis.

‘Chapter one: Thesis overview and introduction’ This chapter provides a historical background to the topic of the Māori electoral option. I begin by exploring Te Tiriti o Waitangi to contextualise the Māori struggle for political and constitutional power as manifesting in different spaces. The purpose of this chapter is to trace the significant changes and influences which have shaped Māori electoral representation in Parliament.

‘Chapter two: Methodologies’ I outline the methodologies that inform this mixed-method research. Guided by Kaupapa Māori and Indigenous research methodologies, this chapter also addresses the quantitative methods which shape this thesis. In this chapter, discussion of issues such as researcher positionality and Indigenous data sovereignty are considered.

‘Chapter three. Qualitative Approach’ The findings of this research are presented in the form of structural barriers identified through individual interviews. The barriers identified include ‘access to education’, ‘the enrolment process’ and ‘the five-yearly electoral roll option’. This chapter outlines the methodological steps taken within this research. I discuss the

considerations that shaped the individual interviews that explore rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori Electoral Option.

‘Chapter four. Quantitative Approach’ The results of this research are presented in a variety of different forms including graphs, charts and tables. The findings paint a picture of the landscape of the Māori electoral option to provide context for the previous qualitative research in this thesis. This chapter outlines the data methods and research aims involved and they key insights that arose through quantitative methods.

‘Chapter five. Conclusion: Weaving the mixed approach together’ This chapter provides discussion and analysis of the results and findings of this mixed-method approach to research. In providing concluding comments, I outline where further research and action would be beneficial for rangatahi Māori in this space.

## CHAPTER 1: Context of the Māori Electoral Option

### 1.1 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a living, foundational constitutional document and serves as the guideline for power-sharing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Established and signed as a partnership between Māori and the Crown in 1840, Te Tiriti o Waitangi affirmed “Te tino rangatiratanga o o ratou wenua o ratou kainga me o ratou taonga katoa” for Māori chiefs in its Second Article (Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840). Tino rangatiratanga is often translated into Māori self-determination or sovereignty (Durie, 1998; Walker, 2004). Thus, sovereignty over the land, water and taonga<sup>13</sup> including language, customs and fisheries was to be guaranteed and protected for Māori chiefs by the Crown whilst “providing the legitimate source of constitutional government in New Zealand to the British Crown” (Walker 2004, 98).

In his book, *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori Values*, Ngāti Awa, Tūwharetoa scholar Sir Hirini Moko Mead describes rangatiratanga as encompassing issues of iwi leadership, chieftainship and the ability for self-management [through the] assertion of ownership or control over our taonga and cultural practices” (Mead 2016, 70). Ngati Porou’s Donna Awatere defines Māori rangatiratanga and sovereignty as “the Māori ability to determine our own destiny” (Awatere 1984, 10). Te Whakatōhea scholar Ranginui Walker has written extensively on the endless Māori ‘struggle without end’ against an unjust social order at the hands of colonisation since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Walker 2004, 10).

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<sup>13</sup> treasures, goods, possession

Many scholars acknowledge different avenues towards realising Māori rangatiratanga in Aotearoa (Bargh 2007). Through research, Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith presents a decolonising methodology in which this can be realised (Smith 2012). As Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Porou lawyer Moana Jackson writes, Te Tiriti o Waitangi “affirms our right [as Māori] to conduct research that is by Māori, for Māori... [further] it affirms our rights to seek tools and processes we see appropriate for our people... and thus our rights to exercise tino rangatiratanga [within research]” (Cram, 2001, 38). This thesis honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Informed by a Kaupapa Māori approach, as well as analysing decolonising theories and methods related to academic research, my work can be seen as one small effort in the process of asserting and cementing Māori rangatiratanga as tangata whenua<sup>14</sup> in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This section has taken a specific focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its constitutional and political significance to Māori. In relation to the presence of the Māori electoral option, I highlight some points of contention across the 150-year life span of the Māori seats. In the next section I outline key historical moments in New Zealand political history to provide important context related to the Māori seats and beginnings of Māori representation in parliament.

## 1.2 Overview

This section provides important historical context related to Māori electoral participation. In tracing this history, I demonstrate the significant events which have consequently shaped New Zealand’s current electoral system: including the Māori Representation Act 1867, introduction

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<sup>14</sup> people born of the land, Indigenous people

of the Māori Electoral Option in 1975, and the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system adopted in 1996. Further, I look toward two seminal reports which have influenced discussion in this space: Royal Commission Report on the Electoral System 1986 and the Waitangi Tribunal Report on the Māori Electoral Option 1994. By tracing the history of the electoral system and a nearly 150-year presence of the Māori seats I provide an overview of New Zealand political history, and Māori electoral option within it, in order to further contextualise the role of my research thesis.

### *Early Māori Representation in New Zealand Parliament*

The previous section has outlined the constitutional significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a crucial instrument in determining political power structures of Aotearoa New Zealand. This section provides an historical overview of key events since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi that have shaped the landscape of Māori participation and representation through the electoral arrangements of New Zealand parliament. In this overview I contextualise this research, as well as my position within this research, as responsive to and continually influenced by these historical events.

The Māori electorate seats were established under the Māori Representation Act in 1867. The Act created four Māori seats which “provided for the division of the North Island into three electorates: one north of Auckland, the other two bisected by a line running down the centre of the island. [And] the whole of the South Island, Stewart Island and adjacent islands were included in the fourth seat” (Waitangi Tribunal 1994). They were called the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Māori seats, and would be superimposed over the then named European seats, as a dual-constituency system, within the New Zealand House of

Representatives/Parliament. The intended purpose of these seats was to provide minimal representation for Māori constituencies (Geddis 2006, 347). At the time, the franchise was made available to all land-owning males over the age of 21. However, this was only a possibility to those who had held freehold estate, thus largely disenfranchising Māori as they were unable to participate in elections (Waitangi Tribunal, 1994). The establishment of the Māori seats were thought to aid in the process of assimilation through the individualisation and alienation of Māori from their ancestral lands (New Zealand Royal Commission 1986). The seats were only intended to last five years as a temporary measure; however, they were granted permanency in 1876 (Walker 2004, 144).

### *One hundred years of neglect and racial discrimination*

In this section, I address the impacts of official neglect and prolonged racism by government administration on the efforts of leaders to increase the function and capacity of Māori within the electoral system. In the first hundred years of their life, the issue of the Māori electorate seats was the site of racial discrimination and official neglect (Walker 2004; Taonui 2020).

This section explores the discussed timeline further and outlines the developments throughout the late twentieth century which significantly shaped the electoral landscape and system for the Māori electoral option and Māori representation. In 1867, four Māori seats represented a population of 56,000 Māori, whereas the 72 European seats represented a population of approximately 171,000 people on the European roll (Wilson 2010). Examples of official neglect can be demonstrated in the disparities between the Māori and European seats across this early time period. Since its establishment votes in Māori seats were decided by a show of hands. The secret ballot was not introduced until the 1938 elections when the Electoral

Amendment Act 1937 legislated that be Māori ballots be counted by a returning officer. However, the mechanism of the secret ballot was introduced to the European seats almost seventy years earlier in 1870 (Walker 2004, 144). European seat voters enjoyed more access and privacy at elections compared to Māori through this process (Wilson 2010). Moreover, registering to vote was made compulsory for the European electoral roll in 1924. Electoral rolls for the four Māori seats were not even introduced until 1948 and registering on that roll was only made compulsory in 1956 (Wilson 2010). Up until 1975, enrolment across the electoral rolls was determined by “blood quantum” where only ‘half-castes’ (persons with one Māori and one European parent) could opt to vote in either a Māori seat or a general seat (Hill 2009, 163). From 1896, Māori (except half-castes) were not allowed to stand as candidates in general seats. The law was changed in 1967, but it was not until 1975 that Māori were successful in general electorates. This context highlights the origins of the Māori seats as a place of contention, neglect, marginalisation that set the tone for future Māori electoral engagements thereafter.

#### *Two Reports: The Waitangi Tribunal and Royal Commission Inquiries*

The Electoral Amendment Act introduced in 1975 provided the opportunity for all electors of Māori descent to choose between the Māori and General roll. The act defined Māori as “anyone who descended from a Māori” (Waitangi Tribunal 1994, 7). This reform allowed for the first Māori Electoral Option to take place at the following Census in 1976. The Waitangi Tribunal Report on the Māori Electoral Option further outlines significant developments during the implementation of this act, stating that,

*“There was another important change, long requested by Maori, which based the number of Maori seats on total population, calculated on the basis of all Maori on the Maori roll plus their children under 18. This meant that Maori electorates were to have a similar electoral population to the General electorates and left open the possibility of an increase - or a decrease - in the number of Maori seats. But following the change of government after the 1975 election, the number of Maori seats was pegged at four, irrespective of how Maori exercised their option after the 1976 census.” (Waitangi Tribunal 1994, 8).*

Therefore, the number of Māori electorate seats stood at four and would remain at that number until significant reform which would take place decades later.

The Royal Commission Report on the Electoral System, Towards a Better Democracy (1986), recommended a number of changes to the Māori seat arrangements as well as widespread electoral system reform such as the adoption of a mixed-member proportional (MMP) voting system; the government to hold a national referendum on the adoption of a mixed-member proportional (MMP) voting system; and to increase the number of members of Parliament to 120 (New Zealand Royal Commission 1986). The Royal Commission Report concluded on the status of Māori seats that –

*“Although they were not set up for this purpose, the Maori seats have nevertheless come to be regarded by Maori as an important concession to, and the principal expression of, their constitutional position under the Treaty of Waitangi. To many Maori, the seats are also a base for a continuing search for more appropriate constitutional and political forms through which Maori rights (mana Maori in particular) might be given effect. It is*



*because of this that many Maori who opt to go onto the General roll continue to support the retention of the Maori seats. It is in this context that Maori views concerning the seats should be understood.” (1986, 86)*

The Report recommended that should the proposed proportional representation system be adopted, then the Māori seats be abolished. The Royal Commission argued that Māori would achieve adequate representation through a proportional party-list system with the entry threshold lowered to 4 per cent specifically for Māori issue-based parties (New Zealand Royal Commission 1986). After holding a national referendum on the electoral system in 1992, the mixed-member proportional (MMP) voting system was adopted to be used for the first time at the 1996 New Zealand general election. In these reforms, the Māori seats would be determined by the population of electors on the Māori roll, with the number of seats either increasing or decreasing in a manner reflective of that population (New Zealand Royal Commission 1986). Thus, the Māori seats were envisioned to grow proportionally in a similar way the general seats had. The Waitangi Tribunal supported the position of the Royal Commission and acknowledged that if these seats indeed held constitutional significance for Māori tino rangatiratanga, then “at least [through the proposed reforms] they were accorded a degree of security and permanence” (Waitangi Tribunal 1994, 9). In a later chapter, I examine how Māori have responded to increasing tensions surrounding the impermanence of the Māori electoral seat arrangements.

After the provisions allowing for the increase of Māori seats were introduced, Māori voters migrated from the general electoral roll to the Māori roll across the Māori electoral option period. The election of 1996 saw the number of Māori electorate seats increase for the first time since their inception, from four to five. In 2002, two more Māori seats added to take the

total to seven (Bargh 2010). The disparities between the two-roll system are further exemplified through the current constitutional status since the Electoral Amendment Act 1996. The general electoral roll and seat provisions are entrenched, while the Māori seat provisions are not. This means that the Māori seats could be removed through a simple majority in Parliament (Electoral Amendment Act 1996).

The legacy of the two reports mentioned above have had major implications in the electoral system today. Especially in laying the foundation between Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Māori seats and the subsequent electoral roll option. These are relevant to the experiences and barriers outlined in this thesis.

#### *Māori rangatiratanga: Responses to the Māori electoral roll politics*

For generations, Māori rangatiratanga has been asserted in a multitude of ways to protest state power and assert Māori Mana Motuhake (Walker 2004; Harris 2004; Bargh 2007). Māori scholars posit that the framing of the current electoral system ought to be contextualised by the wider political history of New Zealand (Bargh 2010; Keane 2010). A conventional re-telling of the history of Māori seats in Parliament depicts just one view into Māori political interaction with Parliament. This section looks at how electoral reforms have been met by diverse responses and strategies from Māori leaders since the imposition of a Westminster style parliament in Aotearoa. I highlight significant events which demonstrate various Māori political responses to the Māori electorate seats and electoral option.

Ngāti Kahungunu scholar Basil Keane states that the historical circumstances under which the Māori electoral seats were established took place alongside growing sovereignty tensions

among Māori. The Kotahitanga movements, also known as the Māori Parliament, are an early example of high level political organisation and response among Māori (Keane 2010). The Kotahitanga Pāremata were set up across Aotearoa. Their objective was the unification of tribes during the period of colonisation where the British Colonial Parliament was alienating Māori land at alarming rates (Cox 1993). At Pāpāwai Marae, Wairarapa in 1897, the Kotahitanga Pāremata signed a petition to the Queen “requesting that five million acres [of land] – the remaining five million acres held by Māori – be reserved” (Keane 2010) The purpose of the Kotahitanga was to halt the “major land operation” being ruthlessly pursued through the actions of the Pākehā, New Zealand Parliament (Keane 2010). The Kotahitanga Pāremata examples serve as a principle expression of tino rangatiratanga in response to the actions and functions of a colonial system of governance imposed on Māori land. As this thesis aims to identify, the assertion of tino rangatiratanga over Māori land leads to political upheaval. The establishment of the Māori seats are one manifestation of this response from the New Zealand Parliament to quash and appease Māori political power.

Another early expression of dissatisfaction toward the function of the Māori seats from within parliament can be seen in the example of my ancestor Wiremu Te Kākākura Parata, elected Member of Parliament for Western Māori (1871-1875). In only the second national election to include the Māori seats, and first contested election for the Western Māori electorate, Wiremu Te Kākākura entered the house of representatives and was critical of the effectiveness of the seats. During his time in Parliament, Wiremu Te Kākākura supported an increased and extended function of the Māori seats, as well as improved Māori representation and participation in the Executive Council (Waitangi Tribunal 2019). Whilst still a Member of Parliament, Wiremu Te Kākākura remained critical of the ability of those to be truly representative of Māori issues through the seats. In the Report to the Waitangi Tribunal “The

Public and Political Life of Wiremu Te Kākākura Parata 1871-1906”, author researcher Walzl quotes Te Kākākura’s opinion on the seats as a challenge toward those “elected to the House [to be representatives] in positions of influence rather than merely languishing as marginalised Members of Parliament” (Waitangi Tribunal 2019, 120).

In 2017, the Electoral (Entrenchment of Māori Seats) Amendment Bill was presented to the House of Parliament by Rino Tirikatene Labour Party MP. The purpose of this bill was to entrench the provisions of the Electoral Act 1993 that relate to the Māori electorates. The bill would provide further safe guards to the Māori seats by requiring a 75 per cent majority vote to remove them from Parliament. However, it failed at the second reading and did not become law. The push for entrenching this mechanism took place in response to the increasing threat towards the Māori seats.

Above I have outlined some of the responses to Māori electoral roll politics, especially with regard to the issue of Māori rangatiratanga. This historical overview section has provided important context to the findings of this thesis and how Māori have engaged with the Māori electoral option since before its inception. The following chapters of this thesis will analyse and discuss rangatahi Māori engagements today and their experiences navigating the system perpetuated by the events and process outlined in this section. In doing so, I will argue that the electoral option process poses significant barriers to rangatahi Māori engagements today.

### 1.3 Literature

I look toward two significant empirical studies which have analysed contemporary Māori electoral roll choice in recent years. The first study utilises individual-level data (Greaves

2017), while the second study employs mesh-block group data (Riambau 2018) to explore a range of questions related to the Māori electoral roll option. I highlight this literature to provide further context for my approach to research through quantitative analysis.

Lara Greaves, Ngāti Kuri, Ngāpuhi and Pākehā scholar, provides a contemporary quantitative research analysis on the Māori electoral roll option in '*Identity and Demographics Predict Voter Enrolment on the Māori Electoral Roll: Findings from a National Sample*' (2017). Greaves et al. explore why Māori choose to be on the Māori or general roll. This research uses individual-level data and comprises of two studies addressing questions related to electoral roll choice. Greaves analyses Māori data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey Study as predictors of electoral enrolment among Māori ( $N=1,961$ ). They conclude that Māori roll enrolment is linked to younger Māori populations and higher levels of education (2017, 11). Greaves uses the revised Multidimensional Model of Māori Identity and Cultural Engagement (MMM-ICE2) to explore Māori cultural affinity as predictors of enrolment choice for voters ( $N=662$ ). Greaves concludes that the increased likelihood of being on the Māori roll is linked to a higher "Group Membership Evaluation" and higher "Socio-Political Consciousness" (2017, 11). Greaves frames this research within the broader context of Māori political participation and aspirations. They refer to the "importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi" and its relationship to Māori political rights in identifying these factors (2017, 14). Further, the authors introduce broader systemic issues which impact contemporary Māori roll choice through a personal experience shared by Lara Greaves.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The influencing factors identified in Greaves' personal experience (2017) include the functions of postal services in enrolment, the fact that Māori are a "more mobile population", and the five-yearly electoral option. These issues which I frame as systemic barriers are explored further in Chapter 4 through individual research participant experiences.

This text articulates a point that resonates closely with the aims of this thesis. While addressing the potential for quantitative analysis, Greaves et al. recognise the limitations of conducting ‘big data’ research into the Māori electoral roll option, stating that “by using a quantitative measure... [the researcher] may have missed some aspects of Māori identity that cannot be measured” (Greaves et al. 2017, 13).

In the text “*Māori in New Zealand: Voting with their Feet?*”, Guillem Riambau (2018) explores whether Māori electors switch rolls and vote according to where a seat race might appear close. The research uses mesh-block level data from the New Zealand Census 2006 and 2013. Riambau adopts a rational choice approach to quantitative theorising related to electoral roll choice. Rational choice theory “assumes that people act in ways which best secure their own goals” and that “these goals reflect their self-interest” (Hindmoor 2010, 42). This theory provides areas for criticism; such as the assumption around actors’ best interests and goals. It is because of this Hindmoor argues that “rational choice theory might usefully be seen as offering a complement to other political science approaches” (2010, 59).

Riambau’s analysis shows that there is no evidence which demonstrates the overwhelming influence of “close races” leading to strategic voting (2018). The reasons for this are clear; the five-yearly Māori electoral option presents a number of barriers to Māori voters.<sup>16</sup> Riambau present other findings instead, suggesting that the two most driving factors influencing Māori choice on the roll during the Māori Electoral Option are “cultural allegiance” and “socioeconomic status” (Riambau 2018, 14). Riambau claims that Māori in areas of low socio-

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<sup>16</sup> This is a key argument of my research. The five-yearly electoral option taking place outside the three year general election cycle means that voters cannot anticipate with certainty which candidates will be campaigning in which seats across any given cycle. These factors are explored further in Chapter 4 through individual participant experiences.

economic status are more likely to be on the Māori roll, and further that densely populated Māori communities with a closer affinity and exposure to Māori culture and language could feel a closer relationship to the Māori electoral seats (Riambau 2018). These findings are in part supportive of Greaves' claims.

One limitation identified within this research is the lack in understanding behind the motives and goals related to Māori enrolment choice. Riambau's text necessitates a more critical and creative study of the Māori electoral roll option. I argue that further research ought to contextualise Māori electoral roll choice through acknowledging contemporary Māori politics as diverse and broad; centring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principle of tino rangatiratanga; and, actively elevating Māori voices and experiences if researchers seek to define it. This is where the academic cannon on the Māori electoral option would benefit from my research thesis. I draw upon the strengths that Greaves et al. and Riambau demonstrate within their quantitative research methods. I offer both an individual level analysis (informed by Māori Electoral Option 2018 data) and mesh-block level analysis (informed by Census 2018 data) related to Māori electoral roll choice. Further, I provide qualitative research findings to speak to these analyses through the experiences and perspectives of rangatahi Māori.

## 1.4 Conclusion

Te Tiriti o Waitangi forms the base from which this research looking into the Māori electoral roll option will be contextualised. Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840, with the Māori seats being established 27 years after. However, I acknowledge that Māori political structures endured well before this era. This chapter has outlined how through the suppression, destruction and assimilation of traditional Māori political institutions by the state is important

context for understanding the modern electoral system evident today. The creation of the unique Māori seats is just one mechanism which composes New Zealand's constitutional political arrangements. Bargh states that "While some academic literature promotes the idea of Māori as inactive in 'national politics' and highlight the "problem" of Māori political participation in Aotearoa... Māori political "participation also takes place in other sites... [and] through alternative avenues" (2013, 445). Thus, is it important to conceptualise contemporary 'New Zealand' politics as taking place on Māori land, as opposed to Māori political structures finding a niche place within New Zealand politics.



## Chapter 2: Methodologies

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the methodologies which have informed my approach to research. I choose to ground this thesis in Kaupapa Māori methodology. As set forth in the introduction chapter, this research comprises both quantitative and qualitative studies. There are a number of considerations I take into account within this methodologies chapter. This approach acknowledges the harmful, reductive history of research and Māori communities. Kaupapa Māori is identified as being the most appropriate method and approach for myself, a Māori researcher, conducting Māori research among Māori communities. I explore this in the Kaupapa Māori methods section. Further, I address the tensions between aspects of quantitative research and Kaupapa Māori. I look to prominent theorists in Indigenous Data Sovereignty as a methodology to address these tensions within this thesis. I recognise that maintaining accountable relationships is an important aspect of conducting research with Māori communities, particularly for (but not limited to) social science research. I identify that this process encompasses understanding the positionality of the researcher to those communities, and the process of responsibility and accountability that shapes their research.

### 2.2 A history of Māori and research

In the very first words of the influential text *‘Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples’*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith states:

“From the vantage point of the colonized, ‘research’ is inextricably linked with European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary”. (Smith 2012, 1).

Ngāti Pahauwera (Kahungunu) scholar Fiona Cram states that an important part of the process of conducting Kaupapa Māori research is “understanding the social, historical and context ... and acknowledging the grief inflicted upon communities by previous research experiences” (2001, 40). Historically, Māori have been the ‘researched’. The history of non-Māori researchers putting Māori traditions, language, social and political organisation, material culture and mythology “under the microscope... [is akin to] the same way a scientist looks at an insect” (Merata Mita in Smith 2012, 61). Kaupapa Māori can be seen as “an attempt to retrieve space for Māori voices and perspectives” from these histories (Cram 2001, 40). Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Mahanga and Ngā Māhanga a Tairi scholar Leonie Pihama conceptualises Kaupapa Māori “as a foundation for theory and research [that] has grown from Māori struggles for tino rangatiratanga and mana Motuhake<sup>17</sup>... grounded within cultural frameworks and epistemologies” (Pihama 2010, 5).

As a critical theory, Kaupapa Māori possesses immense power and transformative opportunities (Cram 2001). It has the important role of analysing existing power structures and social inequalities with the purpose to make a positive difference for the researched (Smith 2012). These concepts remain crucial to me in conducting my research. My approach is underpinned by the discussions in the aforementioned paragraphs. These theories allow me to critically analyse my own approach to research; both through my collection of information and

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<sup>17</sup> autonomy, self-government, self-determination, independence, sovereignty, authority

analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. In the next section I talk further to the transformational potential of Kaupapa Māori theory in academic research.

## 2.3 Kaupapa Māori

“Our ancestors have always theorised about our world. The navigational expertise of our people highlights a deep understanding of a range of sciences related to building waka, tides and sea movement, distance navigation, cosmology and much more. Each of these skill and knowledge areas requires the development of frameworks for understanding and explaining the knowledge base that informs Kaupapa Māori. As such, Kaupapa Māori theory is based upon and informed by mātauranga Māori<sup>18</sup> that provides a cultural template, a philosophy that asserts that the theoretical framework being employed is culturally defined and determined.” (Pihama 2010, 5)

This section outlines Kaupapa Māori methodologies as a theory and practice. Kaupapa Māori is the appropriate foundation for my mixed-method approach to research. Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Tūwharetoa scholar Meegan Hall states that a Kaupapa Māori approach to research aims to provide a “grounding in Māori worldviews” including tikanga<sup>19</sup>, mātauranga<sup>20</sup>, and te reo Māori<sup>21</sup> (Hall 2014, 25). A grounding in Kaupapa Māori simply implies that the aforementioned aspects of diverse Māori worldviews are – expected, natural, accepted - they

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<sup>18</sup> knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill

<sup>19</sup> Customs, practice

<sup>20</sup> Indigenous Māori knowledge

<sup>21</sup> Māori language

are māori<sup>22</sup>. Smith identifies seven guiding practices for conducting Kaupapa Māori research (2012, 120). These are encapsulated as:

1. **Aroha ki te tangata** (a respect for people).
2. **Kanohi kitea** (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face).
3. **Titiro, whakarongo ... korero** (look, listen...speak).
4. **Manaaki ki te tangata** (share and host people, be generous).
5. **Kia tupato** (be cautious).
6. **Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata** (do not trample over the mana<sup>23</sup> of people).
7. **Kaua e mahaki** (don't flaunt your knowledge).

These principles provide both practice and theory for navigating the research space. Cram states that Kaupapa Māori research can be defined as “Māori research by, with and for Māori ... [that] is about regaining control over Māori knowledge and Māori resources” (2001, 43). In the introductory statements of *The Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Denzin and Lincoln state that the researcher, particularly if undertaking qualitative research, “must consider how his or her research benefits, as well as promotes, self-determination for research participants” (Smith, et al. 2001, 2). This thesis heeds that challenge posed by Kaupapa Māori researchers. In the published thesis, “*He iwi moke, he whanokē: Iwi social services, policy and practice*”, Ngati Porou's Taimania Rickard (2014) identifies the opportunity to use a ‘best fit’ Kaupapa Māori methodology in order to appropriately inform her research design and approach.

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<sup>22</sup> The word ‘māori’ can also mean to be usual or natural

<sup>23</sup> prestige, authority, influence, status

*“In developing a framework for this research, I have endeavoured to take the most appropriate aspects of relevant methodologies and methods and use them rather than simply choosing one approach and fitting the research.”* (Rickard 2014, 46).

Rickard’s approach to conducting Kaupapa Māori informed research speaks to my experience of crafting a mixed-method study. Here I recognise the importance of grounding my thesis in the principles of Kaupapa Māori, as well as acknowledging the history of research on Māori communities. I also identify that in conducting a mixed-method research project, additional and relevant methodologies lend themselves to the study appropriately. I outline these relevant methods and approaches and I why I have adopted them in the next section.

## 2.4 Indigenous Data Sovereignty

In the edited book chapter ‘Issues in Open Data’, scholars define Indigenous Data sovereignty as a critical theory concerned with the “assumptions of ownership, representation, and control in open data communities” (Raine et al. 2019, 300). Indigenous Data Sovereignty can be identified as “the right of Indigenous peoples to control data from and about their communities and lands, articulating both individual and collective rights to data access and to privacy” (Rainie et al. 2019, 300). Indigenous Data Sovereignty theory provides a culturally appropriate framework from which I view certain components of my own research. I recognise that certain processes involved with data based research were conducted outside of my control. I was not involved with its collection. I also did not determine the methods in which the data would be owned, stored and accessed – therefore critical Indigenous Data Sovereignty theory would seem counter to my research. However, the purpose of placing Indigenous Data Sovereignty theory within this section is to highlight the tension between methods within this thesis and to

help shape future research. This tension requires an analysis of the position of the quantitative data in relation to a Kaupapa Māori informed research.

A quantitative Indigenous Data Sovereignty informed approach to research challenges the deficit approach to data in areas such as Indigenous public and social policy, health outcomes (Walter and Anderson 2013). Further conversation around the agenda of Indigenous data sovereignty is highlighted in ‘Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an Agenda’ (2013). Kukutai and Taylor highlight the importance of collection, ownership, control and analysis over Indigenous data (2013). The authors identify the ‘Five D’s’ of data sovereignty as “deficit; disparity; disadvantage; dysfunction and difference” that contributes to the ongoing marginalisation of Indigenous communities (Kukutai and Taylor 2016, 7).

Through Indigenous Data Sovereignty theory, I challenge my approach to quantitative analysis. Shawn Wilson challenges ‘mainstream’ or dominant research approaches within political science. He argues that the axiology of scientific research does not align with Indigenous Research methods. Wilson defines axiology as the “ethics and morals [that guide] one’s search for knowledge” (2008, 34). Smith argues that Kaupapa Māori offers a counter-hegemonic approach to western forms of research imbued with positivism (Smith 2012). As an Indigenous researcher conducting a Kaupapa Māori informed quantitative analysis, this thesis provides data observations in order to contextualise the qualitative research interviews.

## 2.5 Ko wai au? Positionality to the research: Reflexivity

Whitinui emphasises the importance of recognising how numerous experiences inform all aspects of the researcher and thus the research process (2007, 57). In following Whitinui’s

approach to positionality, I will outline the following factors to demonstrate my position as a Māori researcher to this research:

I am a rangatahi Māori descendant of the Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai, Raukawa ki te Tonga and Toa Rangatira ART Confederation<sup>24</sup>.

I am a white-passing Māori, which means I have white-passing features and privilege which positions my close proximity to whiteness.

I am a cisgender male (pronouns: he/him).

I was born within, as well as have received a rich upbringing on, my Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai traditional tribal boundaries on the Kapiti Coast.

I have received a formal education, attending secondary school at Kapiti College and then higher-educational studies at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington, for the past five years.

In these five years I have worked in many roles; casual/part-time construction, hospitality jobs, research assistant and tutor contracts with the university, and for a Māori consultancy company.

I have been provided the time and space to complete the end of my Masters studies living at home with my grandparents in Waikanae.

In this environment I have been granted access to learn about my tribal tikanga, fisheries, karakia<sup>25</sup>, reo and whaikōrero<sup>26</sup> from elders and other local experts.

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<sup>24</sup> The ART Confederation is a long-standing tribal and political alliance between three iwi on the Kapiti Coast, Wellington. Those iwi are Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa.

<sup>25</sup> incantation, ritual chant, prayer

<sup>26</sup> traditional oratory practices

These are all factors which locate my position to this research, but also further to the wider social, cultural and political landscapes that I frequently navigate. I undoubtedly receive immense privileges and safety in these spaces from the points I have identified. It is important that these are established to not only give weight to the research but also accountability. It identifies ‘who am I to this research’ and therefore *how* I can be held accountable. This is also an important way of showing my limitations because it shapes the lens through which I see my participants and their experiences. It is important for me to define those so that I can be aware of my biases and do research to uncover how to counteract this bias. For example, by identifying my white privilege as white-passing, I have been able to specifically uncover how to expand knowledge I use to frame this research beyond my own experience.

I see it as important to shape my position within Māori research because I take caution to the words echoed by Mita mentioned earlier (Smith 2012). By showing how I am connected to others, I become accountable to Māori communities in a way that makes this a research relationship. In the next section I explore research relationships in Indigenous research, theory and practice.

#### Research relationships: Indigenous Theory and Practice

In establishing my positionality, it is next important to highlight the importance of the research relationship in Indigenous theory and practice. Accountability is also an important process. In this section I build from Kaupapa Māori theorists and Indigenous scholars. Indigenous Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson highlights the importance of fostering and maintaining relationships within Indigenous research. Wilson argues that where Indigenous researchers decide to build research relationships forms the basis as to where, and to whom,



they are held accountable (Wilson 2008, 5). He argues that the researcher needs to ensure respectful and reciprocal relationships are created and maintained in the field of research in order to elevate Indigenous voices and experiences (Wilson 2008, 79). Native American and First Nation scholar Yvette Running Horse Collin reinforces these principles. Collin prioritises fostering research relationships through ideas such as responsibility, respect, reciprocity and accountability (Collin 2017, 53). Further, Cram argues that one of the fundamental elements of conducting Māori research is to ‘not trample on the mana of the people’ (Cram 2001, 40). These Indigenous theories guide my approach to relationships within this thesis. In my research process I ensure that relationships are created, fostered and maintained in a mana-enhancing way.

In the context of this research, I prioritised maintaining relationships when engaging with my participants. As observed in Chapter 3, I identified interview participants within the research through pre-established relationships. Smith highlights the complexity of ‘insider research’:

“Insider research has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position. The outside ‘expert’ role has been and continues to be problematic for Indigenous communities. As non-Indigenous experts have claimed considerable acceptability amongst their own colleagues and peers, government officials and society on the basis of their research, Indigenous voices have been silenced or ‘Othered’ in the process. The role of an ‘official insider voice’ is also problematic. The comment, ‘She or he lives in it therefore they know’ certainly validates experience, but for

researchers to assume that their own experience is all that is required is arrogant”  
(Smith 2012, 213)

This excerpt speaks to some of the complexities of this relationship for me as a Māori researcher. It necessitated the prioritising of these existing relations. This meant that relationships with participants, and the stories shared, went beyond the interviews. Instead of ending with the individual interview, navigating the research relationship as both ‘insider’ and ‘researcher’ signified the beginning of a new relationship of accountability for myself through the research. In the next section I explore conducting ethical research through key concepts of responsibility.

#### Conducting ethical research: Responsibility and Accountability

“The ideas we have worked through together have led us to a (now) shared belief that decolonizing research ethics is ultimately about place, and position, and how those two things lay the groundwork for ethical relationships. Rather than treating research ethics protocols as events that take place within the institutional bounds of the university, we have come to think of research ethics as a process that develops based on the place that we come from, the land that we live on as individuals and as participants in institutions and communities, and the position that each of us holds, both in relationship to the land and to the community we are entering (or a part of).” (Smith, et al. 2019, 156).

The above section is from “Colonial Conventions: Institutionalized Research Relationships and Decolonizing Research Ethics”, a chapter in the edited book *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View* (2019). Nishnaabeg academic Madeline

Whetung and Sarah Wakefield present a conversation on issues with institutionalised research ethics and the importance of research relationships. This conversation demonstrates the importance of critiquing the processes that shape and inform ethics. The ethical research process goes beyond institutional boundaries in an Indigenous research context. I explore this ethical space further in the following chapters. First, in my interviews chapter under the qualitative methods section (Chapter 3). And secondly, in my data and statistics chapter under the ethical considerations section (Chapter 4). I look to Kaupapa Māori as an ethical framework for approaching and conducting research. I reflect on the following section on accountability from my position as a Māori researcher:

“The complexities of an insider research approach can be mediated by building support structures. One of the following chapters gives an example of whānau structures used by Maori researchers to ensure that relationships and issues, problems and strategies can be discussed and resolved.” (Smith 2012, 234)

I ensured that appropriate measures were taken throughout the research process, from beginning to end. Early accountability for me included opening space for dialogue and critique of my research topic from my iwi at a meeting held at Whakarongotai Marae, Waikanae in 2019. Here I took the opportunity to speak to my research topic and process. While I was talking about the research, I found my whānau members asking the ‘right’ questions of myself and providing future direction for the research. This included being asked by one kaumātua, “Moko, how will this benefit our people?”.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the theories which frame my approach to research. I identify Kaupapa Māori as an appropriate foundational methodology. Kaupapa Māori offers both theory and practice in conducting Māori research, for Māori, as a Māori researcher. Linda Tuhiwai Smith highlights the complexities of this relationship. The role of the ‘researcher’ in Aotearoa New Zealand is contextualised by the historical relationship between Māori and research. In recognising this, I have established my own positionality in order to establish links of accountability and responsibility between myself, the topic and my broader community.

Indigenous data sovereignty theory is identified as a theoretical lens through which I critique the quantitative research within this thesis. Indigenous data sovereignty provides a framework which shapes the processes concerned with the collection, storage and analysis of Indigenous data. I argue that future quantitative research involving Māori data prioritises Indigenous data sovereignty principles and theories.

## Chapter 3: Qualitative Approach (Research Interviews)

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral roll option through research interviews conducted with participants. The main purpose of this research is illustrated through the following question: ‘How is the ability of rangatahi Māori to navigate the ever-changing electoral system and its core functions; including the Māori seats, enrolling, voting and the periodic limited option for changing rolls, shaped by external factors?’ I argue that Rangatahi Māori ability to do so is significantly constrained by three systemic barriers. In this chapter I explore that answer and the influences that contribute to it, asking why Māori opt to change electoral rolls and how barriers impact rangatahi experiences of the electoral roll option. Through this research I pose the following questions:

- Are rangatahi Māori informed of their electoral roll options in Aotearoa New Zealand?  
And to what extent, if any, does access to education play a role?
- How does the process of enrolling to vote influence roll choice? If at all.
- How does the five yearly electoral option impact roll choice?

These questions were chosen as the framework for understanding rangatahi experiences. To explore these questions I frame this research in the historical disenfranchisement of Māori from the electoral system and the suppression of traditional Māori political structures (Chapter 1) . In this chapter, I integrate this historical analysis with an in depth exploration of the questions outlined above through the lens of the interviews conducted over the period of January and

June 2020. I unpack the themes and issues emphasised through six Māori participants. Building upon my methodologies chapter, I demonstrate how this approach is deeply grounded within Te Āti Awa Rangatahi framework and guided by Kaupapa Māori research methods.

## 3.2 Qualitative Research Methods

This section outlines the methods and procedures I have employed in conducting qualitative research. This study is grounded in the principles and approaches of Kaupapa Māori theory. I also outline the steps undertaken in this research including how I approached participants for research and conducted the individual interviews. To conclude this section of the chapter, I provide a reflective lens over my methods and approach, including identifying the limitations and discussing the findings of this study.

### *Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa Framework: One definition of 'Rangatahi'*

In this section I explore the framework for conceptualising rangatahi Māori through a Te Āti Awa framework. Rangatahi Māori are diverse. Rangatahi Māori are youthful. “Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi” is translated to say that “as the old net is worn out and discarded a new one takes its place” (Mead and Grove 2003, 181). This whakataukī<sup>27</sup> is a frequently used expression that speaks to the unbounding potential and possibilities of rangatahi. The lens through which I interpret what it is to ‘be’ a rangatahi Māori is purposeful. Rangatahi age range has the potential to extend from 13 to 40 years old (Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa website, n.d.). This framework for realising the creative potential of rangatahi is one I have come to

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<sup>27</sup> Māori proverb, saying

better understand since attending a rangatahi wānanga at Manukōrihi Ōwae Marae, Waitara in 2017<sup>28</sup>. The wānanga was organised by Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa – a group which stems from the over-arching tribal authority, Te Kotahitanga o Te Ātiawa. Through the process of conducting wānanga, Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa (n.d.) objectives include:

- Strengthen identity and sense of belonging
- Establish a stronger connection to the land and the people
- Be more informed of what is happening with Te Ātiawa, the hapū and the marae
- Share positive experiences
- Enhance understanding and knowledge of Te Ātiawa kawa and tikanga
- Increase awareness on wāhi tapu, history, and key events
- Strengthen pride of belonging to Te Ātiawa iwi

As a descendant of Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai and member of Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa, I have been privileged to strengthen my sense of belonging and share empowering experiences with other rangatahi through these avenues. The Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa Framework provides the inspiration behind the methodology in which I approach the term ‘rangatahi’ within the research. For the purposes of this study and its scope, I have reached out to rangatahi participants between 18 (the legal age to vote in New Zealand) and 40 years old – who identify as Māori. Although not all participants in this study are descendants from Te Āti Awa, four of the total six are. I have adopted Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa’s framework to “establish connection to the land” by acknowledging my research as taking place on Te Āti Awa/Taranaki Whānui and Ngāti Toa Rangatira land in Te Whanganui-ā-Tara and the Kapiti Coast. This methodological framework recognises local tribal authority, or mana whenua, and

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<sup>28</sup> For the youth to meet and discuss, deliberate, consider matters

importantly grounds the research within the ethos of Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa and their identifiers for tribal rangatahitanga. I refer to this framework throughout the research.

### *Kaupapa Māori Principles and Qualitative Research*

In heeding the calls from Kaupapa Māori researchers to conduct intentional and socially beneficial research, I aim to support participants' perspectives by elevating their voices and experiences within the wider research project, as well as in the broader context of Māori participation within in New Zealand political structures. As I have mentioned, where the quantitative study aims to provide a picture of the system, the purpose my qualitative study is to better understand the nuances of system through rangatahi perspectives. This aligns with the Kaupapa Māori theory of research, that research should work towards realising the goals and aspirations of Māori communities (Smith 2012).

### *Overview of interview process*

I conducted research interviews with six individual participants of diverse occupations, backgrounds and experiences. These ranged from 30-60 minutes, with the shortest being 30 minutes 30 seconds and the longest being 1 hour 12 minutes and 25 seconds. The research interviews were conducted in a variety of settings including from the kitchen table of a whānau homestead in Kapiti; Te Herenga Waka Marae at Victoria University of Wellington; and through ZOOM conference call (with three of them taking place on this forum during COVID-19 lockdown). I held interviews with five participants who were of rangatahi age at the time of interview – between 18 (the legal age to vote in New Zealand) and 40 years old. And one



participant who identified themselves as being outside of the rangatahi age range [of which I have specified and elaborated on in earlier sections].

### *Before the interviews: Approaching Participants*

As I identified at the end of my methodologies chapter, part of my accountability in conducting this research with and alongside my iwi included speaking with whānau at hui-ā-iwi and AGM's. In these settings, I discussed my broad research purpose and aims. The process of doing this also included encouraging iwi members with experiences relevant to the kaupapa of my research to further feel like they could share their story through a formalised interview. This was one avenue through which I sought some participants for my study. In identifying remaining participants for interviews, I contacted friends and colleagues with whom I had pre-existing relations. This means that across each individual interview I was managing friendships and relationships with participants, as well navigating the researcher-participant dynamic.

I do not see these relationships as negatively impacting my research. In fact, I see these connections as advantageous and beneficial to the research. In line with the aspirations of the Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa Framework and Kaupapa Māori principles this dynamic, I argue, facilitated a more comfortable and genuine environment for knowledge sharing. The purpose in mind is to create an environment safe for sharing, as well as asking about more personal experiences. I approached each participant with a prepared semi-structured plan and designed my interviews to have a relaxed and informal atmosphere. This was a decision to challenge the traditional notion of researcher-participant power dynamics according to my chosen guiding methodologies (Smith 2012; Fujii 2016).

### *Conducting the interviews*

Beyond the usual ethical steps involved in qualitative research such as applying to the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee for ethics approval (**Application I.D. 0000027657**), providing information sheets to participants and requiring consent forms before participation, I emphasised to my participants they had the agency to ask for and enforce their own boundaries on their desired participation in the research. For example, this included providing access to written transcripts and audio recordings from the interviews if they wanted. If participants did request copies of these documents, I made sure they knew they would be able to provide comments for feedback within a chosen time frame (usually two weeks). A majority of participants requested access to these documents, only two did not.

Before each interview I provided a list of general questions to participants, as well as prompts for myself, with the purpose of guiding our semi-structured interview. An important process of conducting my interviews was ensuring each person would have any questions of the research answered before or after the interview and that they were also aware of my positionality as the researcher – but also as their friend, colleague, acquaintance or whānau member. As Māori anthropologist Lily George states, research with Māori involved “incredible complexities and indelible tensions” (George 2018, 107). This means researching “with” rather than “for” my community and being accountable and receptive to their needs and goals foremost. Before I began recording, I started the interviews with a brief mihi acknowledgement to each participant with the purpose of recognising the inherent mana in their being, experiences, and whakapapa. It was important to me that the space (physical or virtual) felt free of judgement, relaxed and safe for my participants to share their experiences (Fujii 2016, 53). For the interviews I conducted face-to-face, I provided kai and drinks as well as an informal mihi to my interviewee

before I began recording. I initiated most of my ZOOM interviews in the evenings and I encouraged participants to make a hot beverage or snack while we had our korero.

I created a password-protected Microsoft Excel file to track the details of my qualitative research interviews. In this document I noted the participants' names and contact information. As well as outlining important details including the date, time and location of each interview; if the participant requested access to the audio file and/or transcript; the date I received feedback on finished transcripts from participants; and if participants requested to see final completed thesis report.

#### *Reflections on COVID-19: Limitations and Scope of the Research Method*

In my original research proposal I had planned to conduct both individual and focus group interviews. The intention of holding research focus group interviews being to reach diverse rangatahi participants within specified target groups. The purpose of holding Individual interviews was to engage with people who had experience in the electoral space, including professionals or advocates related to the Māori electoral roll.

However, plans to gather and hold space as a focus group together were stopped as we accelerated into level 4 lockdown during the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020. Due to this, I conducted the remainder of my research with participants over ZOOM instead of holding face-to-face interviews for health and safety reasons.

This revised approach produced new challenges to conducting research, one such example is particularly related to the Kaupapa Māori principle of meeting face-to-face. Despite

encountering these issues however, I argue that the culturally responsive, appropriate and pragmatic framework of 'Kaupapa Māori' equipped me with the tools to rise to the challenge.

### 3.3 Results and Findings

At the time of the interviews all six participants were enrolled. Further more, all were on the Māori electoral roll despite not all first enrolling on there. This section presents and explores the findings from individual research interviews conducted in my qualitative research. Of the total six, three participants engaged with the Māori electoral option to change rolls. The remaining three participants stayed on the electoral roll they first enrolled on. List 1 provides a summary overview of research participant roll status. Each participant individually shared various levels of difficulty in engaging with and understanding the electoral system. Issues encompass themes of education, misinformation, enrolment and roll choice. They are highlighted throughout my findings.

*List 1. Summary Overview of Research Participants*

Participant name	Status at initial enrolment	Roll status at previous general election (2017) <sup>29</sup>	Roll status at time of interview (2020)
<b>Rongo</b>	Māori roll	Voted on the Māori roll	Māori roll.
<b>Tangaroa</b>	Māori roll	Voted on the Māori roll	Māori roll.
<b>Papatūānuku</b>	Māori roll	Voted on the Māori roll	Māori roll.
<b>Ranginui</b>	General roll	Voted on the Māori roll*	Māori roll.
<b>Tāne</b>	General roll	Voted on the Māori roll*	Māori roll.
<b>Maru</b>	General roll	Voted on the general roll	Māori roll ( <b>changed at Māori Electoral Option 2018</b> ).

In this section I explore how rangatahi Māori decisions within the Māori Electoral Option are imbued with frustration and dissatisfaction toward, and in response to the inadequacies of, the electoral voting system. Despite their best efforts to keep themselves informed and up to date with the electoral rules and processes, participants noted that they found it difficult to make accurate decisions with the information they had within a complex system. I explore these key ideas further in this qualitative chapter.

The conceptualisation and study of barriers through social science research is relevant to the experiences of marginalised peoples navigating the education, health, electoral and justice

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<sup>29</sup> Note on Ranginui and Tāne: Despite both enrolling on the general roll, they changed rolls at an electoral option prior to the general election 2017 (date unknown). Their individual relationships to the Māori electoral roll option are explored further in this chapter.

systems. In the text, “Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusive Education”, Pivik et al. distinguish the differences between, physical and structural barriers for primary-aged school students with disabilities in the Canadian education system (2002). Physical barriers were identified as issues with the accessibility of the physical environment for students. While structural barriers (also referred to as systemic and institutional barriers) are identified through policies, practices or bureaucratic processes which emphasise unequal access and exclusion as opposed to “full participation” (Pivik et al. 2002, 98). These factors are often out of one’s control and reflect systemic inflexibility rather than individual failings. It is through this lens of conceptualising structural barriers that I explore rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral option. I have identified three prevalent systemic barriers that participants encountered while navigating the Māori electoral option and broader electoral system.

- i. The first barrier is education access
- ii. Next is the process of enrolling to vote
- iii. Final barrier is the five yearly electoral option

The barriers identified in this section are presented in this way to represent a linear logic of progression through the Māori electoral option process. What I mean by this is that I envision these barriers are likely to be encountered one after the other by rangatahi Māori. However this is not to be interpreted as being fixed to a linear scale or set of circumstances. For example, I acknowledge that the experience of enrolling to vote is not solely exclusive to rangatahi Māori who are 17 or 18 years of age. I also recognise that not everybody has the right to vote in

Aotearoa New Zealand<sup>30</sup>. The purpose of this research is to illuminate the issues of the electoral system related to the Māori electoral option. In highlighting these barriers through participant experiences I further explore the realities of rangatahi Māori.

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<sup>30</sup> In 2020, the Waitangi Tribunal released their report into Māori prisoner's voting rights, '*He Aha I Pērā Ai*'. The Tribunal found that Māori have been disproportionately affected by provisions of the Electoral Act which "has failed to actively protect Māori rights under the Treaty of Waitangi" (Waitangi Tribunal 2020). The Tribunal recommendations to the Crown included: removing the disqualification of all prisoners from voting, irrespective of sentence; enrolling all prisoners before the 2020 election; and ensuring Crown officials provide properly informed advice on the likely impact that any Bill, including members' Bills, will have on the Crown's Treaty of Waitangi obligations. (Waitangi Tribunal 2020, 54).

## THE FIRST BARRIER: EDUCATION ACCESS

From my interviews, I have identified that a common barrier to rangatahi wanting to change electoral rolls is the lack of access to education about the electoral system. Participants demonstrated how when they first enrolled to vote or opted to change electoral rolls they felt they could have been better informed about it. Issues of misinformation, confusion and self-directed education are also prevalent in this section.

The first barrier that participants encounter in relation to the topic of the Māori electoral option is access to education about enrolling on the two rolls and into the broader electoral system. In this section, interview and research findings highlight how different educational factors influence rangatahi experiences with the Māori electoral option. The first barrier highlights the importance of providing rangatahi with access to correct information and the educational tools needed in order to determine their own future decision-making on the topic. Participants expressed feelings of confusion, encounters with misinformation, and a desire to engage with comprehensive information on the topic. The fact that this was seldom made available to them, presented a number of issues. **Rongo** reflected on the discussions around the Māori roll that she would often come across, stating “I heard conversations about the Māori roll, [and] there was so much misinformation... that if you were on the Māori roll you could only vote for the Māori Party, or if that if you were on the Māori roll you could vote in both the general and Māori electorates.” Both of these claims are incorrect. Rongo provided these as examples of the kinds of ill-informed discussions she was hearing about the Māori electoral roll functions. **Tangaroa** shares her own experience of navigating conversations about voting as a young wahine Māori. She said:



*“I remember being told at [high] school that I would soon have to enrol [and] vote, but no further discussion followed that statement. With my mum, the conversation didn’t go further than ‘you need to make sure that you’re on the Māori roll.’ There was no discussion about how to vote, or how to decide who to vote for, or what that even really meant, or how important one vote was in the whole system”*

In the above passages, Rongo and Tangaroa both recount complex and confusing experiences, alongside the feeling of not having the information to properly understand the wider functions of, and an individual’s role within, the electoral system. Tangaroa went on to explain how these feelings were often further enforced through her own perceived misunderstandings of the system, saying “I do recall being so uninformed that I thought my mum was saying ‘Māori electric roll’. How’s that for misinformation?”.

During the 2017 election period, the Broadcasting Standards Authority upheld complaints against former Seven Sharp host Mike Hosking for peddling misinformation about the Māori electoral roll options and Māori Party (Broadcasting Standards Authority 2017). The host incorrectly claimed at the time that only those enrolled in a Māori electorate were able to vote for the Māori Party. When in fact, anybody who could vote at the time was able to cast their party vote and electorate vote (if candidates were running in that seat) toward the Māori Party. That fact is still true today. The Broadcasting Standards Authority stated at the time that “this was an important issue, particularly during the election period, and [it] had the potential to significantly affect voters’ understanding of the Māori roll and of New Zealand’s electoral system”. They added further that the “statements made by Hosking were presented at a critical time, when voters required accurate information to enable them to make informed voting

decisions” (Broadcasting Standards Authority 2017). This is just one example which shows how misinformation is spread and reinforced through mainstream media.

“I was always on the general roll... coming through school I just thought that was what you did. To be honest the way I voted probably aligned with how I felt at the time going through a mainstream, Pākehā style education system... If anything, I thought at the time *why is there a Māori roll?* My whakaaro was *why should Māori get their own roll?*”.

In the above excerpt, Ranginui reflects on his complex relationship with Māori identity and his mainstream primary and secondary school education. He recounted feeling like he was leaving school and going home “knowing nothing about politics and even less about New Zealand history”. He continues, “We didn’t go into New Zealand history at college, which in turn made me not understand our [politics and] history.” Ranginui demonstrated how this attitude was indicative of his schooling environment. He recounted a story talking to rangatahi Māori who attended kura kaupapa Māori<sup>31</sup> and wharekura<sup>32</sup>. Ranginui said:

*“I specifically remember arguing with friends who attended kura [kaupapa] asking them: ‘why did we [Māori] need these special privileges? What’s the value in it...?’ They were trying to explain it to me. But I was so entrenched in my belief system which was already formed... I thought that if everyone works hard then they can be successful. But I understand now that not everyone is given the same opportunity, there are massive barriers to that sort of stuff”.*

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<sup>31</sup> primary school operating under Māori custom and using Māori as the medium of instruction

<sup>32</sup> secondary school operating under Māori custom and Kaupapa Māori principles - these schools use Māori language as the medium of instruction

This experience indicates how access to different educational environments can provide vastly different understandings of the factors that shape and influence people's experiences. In this section, Ranginui's story is presented alongside the experience of **Maru**, who with the help of his peers was instrumental in driving electoral system education through an initiative at his high school. The purpose of Maru's initiative was to increase access to education and awareness on the topic of voting amongst his peers. I asked him about the background too, as well as his own involvement in the student-lead kaupapa. He began:

*"I've always been pretty political. And the point at which I started getting [politically] involved was probably around year 11 or 12 [at high school] ... I started figuring stuff out for myself... We made a push at school to do civics education. We tried to push a 'life-skills' module which was spear-headed by myself and the head student team. Part of that included trying to teach the other Year 13's about the electoral system and how it works. And doing so I learnt more about it."*

Maru talks about noticing a gap in civics education delivered by the school. This was further exacerbated through the desire for civics knowledge amongst his peers. In this passage, Maru and his group of student leaders addressed the issues and identified solutions. I asked him what influencing factors inspired this push for increased collective education. Maru explained:

*"It was an election year... And being election time, [voting] came up on our radar. Plus, we had a few political people in the head student team. So we spoke to management and said, 'Can we make a little series of informational videos about 'how to work the political system when you turn 18?'. And so we made a short series of*

*educational videos and sent some tools to all the Year 13 students, many of whom were turning 18 that year”*

I asked Maru if he was happy to share some of the information included in the initiative. He said, “We showed [students] the basics of Mixed-member proportional and voting... Yeah, all of the survival stuff for those who knew nothing... It wasn’t in-depth”. But for Maru it was enough. This initiative sparked a crucial beginning point as his first experience with the electoral system.

The first contact with the system (access point to education or the enrolment process) influences rangatahi experiences later down the track (during the Māori Electoral Option period). This section explores the many and complex environments that rangatahi Māori participants navigated in order to access information on the electoral system. From Rongo’s experience of being in conversations that were clearly incorrect and misleading, to Maru’s example of creating his own learning environment about electoral politics; these experiences speak to the failings of government in addressing institutional barriers to accessing education and misinformation. Further so, these experiences exemplify rangatahi Māori leadership in developing the tools to facilitate their own education. I argue that rangatahi groups, as well as whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori organisations need to be resourced to facilitate an appropriate learning environment.

## THE SECOND BARRIER: ENROLLING TO VOTE

The second barrier I have identified is the process of enrolling to vote. Although all voters in New Zealand have to encounter this process, this is significant to the research is because Māori are the only population in New Zealand who also have to choose electoral rolls. There are two opportunities where Māori voters get the option to choose between electoral rolls. The first opportunity to choose is at the initial process of enrolling to vote for the first time. The second is during the five-yearly Māori electoral option. This section explores the importance, influences and outcomes related to that first opportunity at the enrolment process.

I use interview findings to demonstrate participants' diverse perceptions toward the electoral rolls and their experiences of enrolling to vote. Although I frame the process of enrolling to vote through rangatahi participant experiences, I acknowledge that enrolling is not an event exclusive to 17 or 18 year olds.

All participants interviewed had enrolled to vote. Enrolment took place either when they were 18 or around the time of their first eligible election. Three participants enrolled on the Māori roll, with the remaining three enrolling on the general roll. This process places a high level of importance on the act of enrolling before the voting even takes place.

**Papatūānuku**<sup>33</sup> first enrolled at the around the age of 18 years old. She shared her reasoning for staying on the Māori roll throughout her whole adult life since enrolling. Issues of representation and Māori numbers in parliament were the rationale behind her passion for the Māori roll. Papatūānuku emphasised why it was important to her:

*“At the stage where I became really aware of the Māori option, I knew that [the Māori roll] was the best option for us to get more Māori representation into parliament. So when I became of age, I enrolled and have always been on the Māori roll since then.”*

It is important to contextualise the enrolment process as one that is shaped by various contemporary factors. Increasing numbers of advanced votes mean that many electors do not wait until election day to vote. Record numbers of advanced votes were cast at the 2017 general election, accounting for almost half (47%) of all votes across the election period. 1,240,740 people voted in total. This percentage is significantly higher than the 29% in 2014, and 15% in 2011 that cast advanced votes (Electoral Commission 2018a). This is compounded by the fact that recent legislative changes have enabled electors to enrol at the voting booth up until, and including, election day. Increasing environmental and external factors continue to significantly influence Māori voters exercising their electoral roll option during the voting period. In 2017, over 200,000 enrolments were processed by the Electoral Commission during the advance voting period (Electoral Commission 2018b). With over 94,000 being made in the last three days of the advance voting period (Ministry of Justice 2018).

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<sup>33</sup> Papatūānuku has an important standing as a leader within her iwi community. A passion for the Māori electoral roll led to her undertaking responsibilities within national electoral processes: such as advocating for rangatahi engagement at elections and working in the space of Māori electoral option.

During the period of the 2017 general election, Māori scholars Veronica Tawhai (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Uepohatu) and John James Carberry (Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairarapa, Ngāti Porou) identified a myriad of problems related to the enrolment and voting processes experienced by Māori voters. These problems included:

*“Voting booth staff being unaware of the existence of a Māori roll;  
Some voting booth venues not having a Māori roll on site; Staff  
being uninformed and providing voters incorrect information  
about Māori electorates; Voters enrolled in Māori electorates  
being given the wrong voting form, and sometimes being refused  
the correct form; and Māori enrolling during advanced voting  
being told by staff they must enrol on the General roll and vote in  
a General electorate as opposed to having the choice of the Māori  
roll and a Māori electorate.”* (Tāwhai and Carberry 2020)

The process of enrolling to vote can be a critical first insight into how the electoral system operates. For many rangatahi Māori, this could be their first engagement with the functions of the electoral system and rolls – as well as the individuals who make up the machinery of these processes. Papatūānuku reflected on an experience of providing services in cultural competency to Regional Managers for the purpose of upskilling would-be workers at the general election. She began:

*“We were training in Ōhariu<sup>34</sup> and I asked these workers, ‘Who can pronounce the name of this electorate?’. So they all go “Oh-ha-ree-roo”, and oh god it was driving me crazy! And I ask, ‘Who knows the whakapapa of this ingoa<sup>35</sup>?’ And they all go [stares blankly] ... I say, ‘Be careful how you pronounce this name because this rohe is named after someone, a rangatira<sup>36</sup>’. I challenged them to ‘Do some background research around this rohe and this name.’ ‘When you go out, whether that be in Pito-one or Kapiti, find out the area you’re in and the people you’ll be working with, the tangata whenua, and respond to them’.*

In order to contextualise the insights of Tawhai and Carberry and Papatūānuku, it is important to outline the process of enrolling to vote. The enrolment process requires electors to identify that they are of Māori descent. The next important decision they have to make is whether they decide to be on the Māori roll or the general roll. As demonstrated, the process of enrolling to vote requires electors to claim whakapapa Māori. Therefore, it is important to understand that the total official roll of Māori electors comprises people who self-identify as Māori. Some participants shared their experiences with claiming their Rangatahi Māori identity. **Tangaroa** explained her difficulties in engaging with this process. I asked about her experience with enrolling on the Māori roll and how she felt it related to her identity. Tangaroa shared:

*“I’m also Cook Islander, but [I’m] not really sure how that fits in to my own identity. [At the time, I was] kind of rejecting almost all of it... and not ready to claim any of it.*

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<sup>34</sup> General Electorate in the Northern Wellington suburbs.

<sup>35</sup> name

<sup>36</sup> to be of high rank, noble, chief



*You know, I wasn't claiming that I was queer... [that I was] a Cook Islander... that I was Māori... that I was even a political person!"*

Tangaroa's experience emphasises that the process of claiming one's Māori identity through the enrolment process is not always straightforward. Instead, this process could offer a young person, like Tangaroa, polarizing site for identity crises. In response, Tangaroa posed the same question back to me, stating "Do I think that colonisation has directly affected our ability to claim our identity as Māori people? And [therefore] our space on the Māori roll? Yes." Participants talked about some of the influencing factors that impacted their affinity to the different electoral rolls. In my interviews, I asked if these decisions reflected calculated strategy (or not), and how they felt about their initial roll choice afterwards.

Two participants, **Ranginui** and **Maru**, viewed their positions on the general roll as being a statement of resistance toward a particular set of goals. Ranginui explained the rationale behind his choice to be on the general roll as opposed to the Māori roll. He shared that his approach was "that if I [enrol and] stay on the general roll and vote for a Māori then that's even better! 'Why don't all Māori do that?' I thought". Maru shared a similar sentiment, saying "I thought that at least the Māori seat is guaranteed to go to a Māori person... [And] I should better focus my energies on electing a Māori person to the more contested [general] seat. That was the reason I went for the general [roll] first off... Yeah [pause], I changed that opinion pretty fast [laughs]". Maru reflected on this during the course of the interview, further stating that "my original strategy was that I considered those Māori seats to be safe and that would guarantee a Māori person to be in them"

Both Maru and Ranginui viewed their positions (as Māori electors on the general roll) as strategic ones, with the intention of increasing Māori representation. The participants thought they could get the best of both worlds by voting Māori candidates into general electorate seats. However, both participants shared how they later came to regret that decision. The Māori seats are not 'safe'. In thinking about this, Ranginui stated that "[this was me] not understanding that basically if no one uses the Māori roll [then the seats] start depleting. But because I didn't understand that I didn't switch over [rolls] at that stage". Maru reflected on and shared what prompted him to change to the Māori roll at the Māori Electoral Option 2018. He said:

*"following from the last election; the exit of the Māori Party and election of Jacinda Ardern's government, I came to realise that [the Māori seats] sort of exist as an 'extra' or that they're contested by major parties to pick up a few extra seats. And that the MP's who tend to inhabit those seats on a regular basis generally toe the party line and aren't particularly transformational."*

Maru elaborated further on the seats, "they're seen more as more of a 'bonus' or 'extra' [opposed to] an actual political battleground where transformational ideas take place." Maru expanded, thinking about his responsibility on the Māori roll. He stated, "I believe my role in this space is to ensure that those seats are held by people who are going to use them to make systemic change. No matter for whom I vote, that will be the guiding principle behind it." These two participant's experiences represent the complexities, functions and purpose of the electoral rolls. It highlights the repercussions of their decisions from the point of enrolment. Both participants shared their original strategies behind deciding to enrol on the general roll. Both came to regret that decision. However only one changed roll at the next electoral option, while the other missed that opportunity. Ranginui had to wait two full election cycles before

being on their preferred roll of choice. The critical function of the enrolment process, and the various factors leading to whether or not one regrets that decision, presents an opportunity for high margin of 'error'. The idea of potentially making the wrong decision is only further exacerbated by the final barrier explored which is explored within this chapter - the five-year Māori electoral option.

## THE FINAL BARRIER: FIVE YEARLY OPTION PERIOD

The third barrier identified through my research is the five yearly electoral option period that runs alongside the New Zealand Census. Across all interviews, this was continually raised as a common point of concern, confusion or annoyance. Of the six total participants, three had engaged with the Māori electoral option to change electoral rolls. All three opted to move from the general roll to the Māori roll. Two of those found the electoral option to be a difficult and long-winded process as they both stayed with their original choice across multiple elections and options (**Ranginui** and **Tāne**). The third participant who engaged with the electoral option, switched rolls at the first opportunity and did not mention the process as presenting any significant challenges or barriers (**Maru**). The remaining participants, while connecting with the ideas of the two electoral rolls at different stages, had not opted to change rolls through the option at the time of the interview. This section highlights the experiences of the three rangatahi who engaged with the process, whilst also sharing the perspectives of the other participants (**Rongo** and **Tangaroa**), in order to better understand the electoral option period as a barrier to rangatahi choosing their electoral rolls.

I have demonstrated how compounding factors such as education access and the enrolment process can adversely affect rangatahi Māori experiences through the electoral system. In this section I argue that the five yearly electoral option period presents another significant barrier to rangatahi Māori accessing their roll of choice. At the 2017 general election, 19,000 Māori requested to change rolls but could not. Further to that, the Electoral Commission has reported that an average of 6,000 Māori request to change electoral rolls every year. (Electoral Commission 2020). The issue of the five yearly electoral option barrier has been a point of contention in the public and political arena for decades (Waitangi Tribunal 1994).

**Tāne** reflected on an experience he had working in a professional capacity providing expert advice on the issue of the five yearly electoral option. A government group had sought Tāne’s opinion on the Māori electoral option “from the perspective of the Treaty principles”. In this experience Tāne talks to the professional frustration he felt within his role, he began:

*“So I met with these advisors, but before I could give them my advice, I actually had to educate them on what the Treaty principles were. And that was a whole lot of time educating them on that point. I guess that [speaks to] Māori capability within government, it’s just not quite there. And after a lot of conversations, just as a basic example for instance, I ended up looking at just the principle of Participation [which is] Māori being able to exercise the same rights and privileges as British subjects. Under the current [option Māori are] not able exercise that right. Ya know? [Māori are] not able to exercise a democratic right which everyone else has. So, in a simple sense like that’s how the current option isn’t in line with that principle... My advice was ‘well, if you want the option to be in accordance with Treaty principles, such as Participation, then you should consider Māori being able to exercise that right whenever they want”*

Since 2011 the Electoral Commission has proposed legislative changes which would address this issue, and in the 2017 Report on the General Election, they recommended “that voters of Māori descent be able to change roll type at any time [as this] would better meet the needs of Māori voters” (Electoral Commission 2018, 5). Tāne provided reflection on the legislative process and drive for electoral reform in that professional space:

“It begs the question... ‘How could [one] even start working on an alternative [to the current] Māori electoral option without having thought about the Treaty or its principles in the first place? [pause]” He continued, “I don’t think I had even articulated the question in that way at the time. But it’s definitely [clear] now, like yeah... How is [the Treaty] not your starting point?”

The five yearly option barrier presents significant hurdles to rangatahi Māori who want to have the choice between electoral rolls. Interview findings highlighting the experiences of rangatahi and the number of different issues related to the five yearly electoral option barrier are further explored in this section.

**Rongo** was one of the participants who did not engage with the Māori electoral option. However, she explained how the prospect of the five yearly option still influenced her decision to enrol on the Māori roll. Rongo over emphasised the significance of “the fact that it’s such a commitment”. She explained that:

*“you’re committing yourself to being on that roll for five years...” And continued, “Say you’ve enrolled just before an election, you’ve got to vote on that roll for two more elections. So that means I’ve got to vote twice... waste my electorate vote twice... on people who don’t know how to use that seat at all.”*

Here, Rongo speaks to some of the differences between the Māori and general seat contests. At the 2017 election, Waiariki and Hauraki-Waikato were just two examples of Māori electorates where only two parties ran candidates. The competition in the electorates, or lack thereof, in comparison to that in general electorates was a point that was raised. It came down

to the presence of one candidate at the 2017 election to confirm Rongo's decision, however. She explains, "I enrolled on the [Māori] roll ultimately because of all of the things that happened with Metiria Turei, Green Party candidate for Te Tai Tonga"<sup>37</sup>. This experience talks to the influence of party leadership and representation in the appeal of the Māori electoral roll to voters.

One participant, **Ranginui** talked about the timing of the electoral option period. Ranginui shares his experience of changing rolls during an option period despite his desires to move earlier. He mentions how even though he could not change earlier, he felt fortunate to be able change rolls when he did, stating "I moved from the general to the Māori roll before the [2017] election. But I probably would have changed rolls the election before had I known how the system actually works. I didn't really understand it [at the time]." Here Ranginui explained how though he had made up his mind on the rolls, he still had to spend at least one election cycle on the general roll before being able to change.

**Maru** talked about his experience with the 2018 Māori electoral option. He did not mention the process as presenting any significant barriers, but he provided some reflections. Maru describes the process as being simple and positive, responding to a letter in the mail from the Electoral Commission, saying "I sent in a form during the election option period". When he was talking about this process, however, Maru reflected on that fact that Māori had a limited opportunity to change electoral rolls, "It seems bizarre... I didn't really understand it [at the time]" he said.

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<sup>37</sup> Green Party Co-Leader, Metiria Turei MP stepped down from party leadership one month out from the 2017 general election (Radio NZ Matangireia 2020). As a candidate off the party list, her only avenue for re-entering parliament was through Māori electorate seat Te Tai Tonga.

**Tāne** talked about his experience wanting, and attempting, to change electoral rolls but finding out that he could not do so outside the option. He expressed how being on the wrong roll for him negatively impacted his participation with the elections. Tāne wanted to be on the Māori roll and because of this he felt it difficult to engage with the politics of his general electorate:

*“I guess I’m one of those people that were affected by the timing of the option not being in sync with the general election...”* Tāne talked about “not being able to exercise that right to vote on the Māori roll because I wasn’t able to change in time for the election...” saying at the time, “it was just another thing that’s annoying... another frustration that [I] kind of just have to deal with.”

This frustration was fuelling his desire to engage with the system. Tāne shared how he felt being on the general roll and having to wait. This experience highlights a prominent flaw in the five yearly electoral option. The idea of having to wait one or potentially two election cycles has the potential to turn Māori voters away from engaging with the system altogether. Tāne’s experience indicates that the presence of the five yearly option provides a limited opportunity for Māori voters to make their choice. As part of my interview schedule, I asked participants to share their experience with past Māori electoral option periods. I asked **Tangaroa** if they had heard about or engaged with the option in 2018, she said to me:

*“What you’re saying rings absolutely zero bells to me. I have no idea what you’re talking about!”*



The high number of Māori staying on their chosen roll during that period brings into question the effectiveness of the Māori electoral option campaign altogether. I believe knowledge around the electoral option campaign would benefit from further research exploring the purpose, outcomes and success of efforts toward increasing Māori engagement with the electoral option.

In conclusion, the five yearly option imposes the most significant barrier upon Māori seeking to change electoral rolls. In this section I have identified the main issues related to the option including the timing, effectiveness and frustration surrounding the event. In consideration of the next Māori Electoral Option 2024, the number of Māori requests to change rolls at the 2020 general election will be a determining factor in measuring the success of the Māori electoral option campaigns and broadly the effectiveness of the five-yearly option at all. I argue that the Māori electoral option period ought to be amended to present Māori with the option to change electoral rolls at any time.

### 3.4 Discussion

In this chapter I have outlined the methodological steps taken to conduct Kaupapa Māori informed qualitative interviews. I have also presented the results and findings according to three barriers identified as relating to the participants and their experiences. This section provides a discussion and some conclusions on this research.

It is important to note that none of the participants in the study had the experience of enrolling on the Māori electoral roll and changing to the general roll. Therefore, it could be hard to draw clear conclusions on this particularly unique experience. Participants have talked to issues that

may likely also affect those decisions: such as strategic roll placement and enrolment; the ‘quality’ or appeal of Māori candidates; and electorate boundary sizes as influences – I recommend further research in analysing why Māori voters switch from the Māori roll to the general roll.

I also think another important element to note is the geographical location and placement of research participants within this quantitative study. The scope of this study meant that research interviews took place within two areas: Te Whanganui-ā-Tara and Kapiti. With a broader scope and greater resources, I think this research could have benefitted from the additional perspectives of rangatahi Māori whose experiences took place outside of the identified areas. I address this point and the potential for it to provide more detailed findings in two parts, first in understanding the large size of Māori electorates, and secondly in the contestation of general electorates seats and their significance to Māori.

Two participants (**Rongo** and **Tangaroa**) lived in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington Central which is a part of the Te Tai Tonga Māori electorate (as well as Te Waipounamu/the South Island and Chatham Islands). The size of electorates could provide a factor for voters, which whether largely influential or not could, determine their feeling of perceived connection to the representative. The qualitative study cannot answer this conclusively due its scope. However it would be interesting to see how these factors impact electoral roll choice for voters in Tāmaki Makaurau for instance (which is significantly smaller than Te Tai Tonga).

Two participants (**Ranginui** and **Maru**) shared that their decision to be on the general roll and, to greater or lesser extents, were informed by their strategic intention to ‘increase Māori representation in that space’. This study cannot conclude that where contestation among Māori

in general seats is high, engagement of Māori on that roll is heightened. Both of these participants were in the general electorate of Ōtaki. It would be interesting to see how, if at all, this affects Māori voters in other general electorate seats. At the 2020 general election, three wāhine Māori candidates will be standing in the East Coast general electorate seat. This serves as an exciting example of this level of Māori contestation in the general seats.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Kiritapu Allen MP (Labour Party), Meredith Akuhata-Brown (Green Party) and Tania Tapsell (National Party) were ‘tipped as front runners’ for this general electorate seat at the 2020 election (One New 2020c).

### 3.5 Conclusion

“Our people are hōhā!”

PAPATŪĀNUKU

It is essential to remember that electoral participation is a basic right for Māori to exercise in New Zealand. This chapter is representative of research participants’ experiences of exercising that basic right. In exploring these experiences, I highlight three barriers in the Māori electoral option for rangatahi: education, enrolling to vote, and the five yearly electoral option. I identified participants in this qualitative research through a Te Kāhui Rangatahi o Te Āti Awa methodology and conducted individual interviews informed by Kaupapa Māori.

In exploring rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral option, it is clear that numerous structural barriers influence those experiences. In the case of six participants, access to education was a barrier. I argue that the first encounter of the electoral process for rangatahi Māori is a strong influence which shapes later experiences in Māori electoral roll option.

The process of enrolling to vote is another site which impacts rangatahi experiences with the Māori electoral option. At 17 years of age, rangatahi have the opportunity to enrol. I argue that enrolling to vote as a site of first electoral roll choice is an experience which can impact rangatahi Māori for years beyond.

The five yearly Māori electoral option poses a significant barrier to rangatahi Māori. Participants highlighted the tensions and frustrations that impacted their experience with the Māori electoral roll option. Even for those participants who remained on their roll of choice throughout the electoral option, the long-standing implications of that choice influenced that experience.

In this chapter I highlight barriers which reflect the realities that shape rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral roll option in Aotearoa New Zealand. The reality is that rangatahi Māori respond and react to these challenge sand deal with the frustrations of a failing electoral system. It is unfair that this is case. “Our people are hōhā!”. The system needs to change to reflect the aspirations of rangatahi Māori. Rangatahi Māori deserve to exercise these rights without being disadvantaged.

In the next chapter, I use quantitative analysis to provide broader national and regional context to the issue of the Māori electoral option.

## Chapter 4: Quantitative Approach (Data And Statistics)

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents observations from quantitative research utilising official statistics and data from the Māori Electoral Option 2018 and Census 2018. I outline the research aims and methods in order to provide context for using data to observe electoral roll choice among Māori populations in Aotearoa. The aim of this research is to observe movements and flows on and off the electoral rolls. The analysis provided in this chapter serves as a complimentary component alongside the qualitative research within this thesis. This study uses both individual-level and mesh-block group level data to provide a new perspective on Māori and the electoral roll option.

### 4.2 Research Aims

New Zealand's entire electronic electoral roll is available for social science research. A 'big data' approach to research is employed to understand trends of Māori movement across the electoral rolls. Big data research can be of high descriptive and observational value for quantitative, as well as for hypothesis theory testing (Ansolabehere and Hersh 2012; King et al. 1984). In this vain, I utilise use big data methods to 'paint a picture' of the current context of electoral roll choice for Māori in New Zealand. Keith Dowding states that while big data alone cannot substitute for theoretical analysis, it can help provide descriptions and observations of events (Dowding 2016, 179). I provide a number of different observations on the option to explore key questions related to the data:

1. Who is **staying on the General Roll**?
2. Who is **staying on the Māori Roll**?
3. Who is **new to the Māori roll**?
4. Who is **new to the General roll**?
5. Who is **moving electoral rolls**?

This chapter does not seek to make definitive claims to Māori experiences and actions. Instead, this study seeks to identify trends of significance and gaps in knowledge that would benefit from further research. In this research I explain why I have decided to locate specific variables within the data. In identifying these key points of interest, I include a discussion on these areas.

### 4.3 Quantitative Research Methods

This section outlines the method for conducting quantitative research related to the Māori Electoral Option 2018. I utilise official data and statistics in this research. The data is tied to the New Zealand Census 2018 and Māori Electoral Option 2018 where I was not involved during the collection process. The data has been made available to me from official Stats NZ<sup>39</sup> and Electoral Commission databases. Further, I address the ethical considerations involved with the methods of this research. The methods employed in this chapter provide a unique position from which I can provide a new perspective and analysis; I demonstrate how contents of the electoral roll (individual level data) when paired with the Census population (mesh-block group data) can reveal observations which intersect factors such as location, age and occupation.

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<sup>39</sup> Statistics New Zealand

### *Māori Electoral Option 2018: Individual Level Data*

In the following section I identify the significance of data collection in the context of this study. The recent Māori Electoral Option took place across four months from April to August in 2018. Over this period, electors of self-identified Māori descent were presented with the limited opportunity to either stay on their roll or change. The data obtained from this event is used to analyse movements across the electoral rolls over the 2018 option period. The Māori Electoral Option dataset includes information on nearly 500,000 electors of self-identified Māori descent. Using this data set I observe individual level roll shifts across a number of different factors including age and occupation.

### *Census 2018: Māori Population Group Data*

The recent New Zealand Census took place on 6 March 2018. In their journal article, Kukutai and Cormack analyse the constitutional implications from the “potentially unprecedented low response rate” at the Census 2018 for Māori Electoral roll populations (2018, 132). Issues related to the census campaign, such the accessibility of moving to online settings for many communities, are among a number of factors contributing to the Census 2018 response rate. Kukutai and Cormack define the purpose of census data as to “provide accurate population and dwelling counts nationally and for smaller geographic areas such as mesh-blocks” (2018, 134). This research uses Māori population data from the Census 2018. Mesh-block data does not allow for individual level analysis among electors at the same micro scale that the Māori Electoral Option 2018 provides. Using this data set I observe roll choice among Māori in a number of different factors including location and at the electorate district level.



## Ethical Considerations

This quantitative research falls under the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics approved Marsden project (Application I.D 0000026647) lead by Prof. Jack Vowles. One key ethical obligation in this study is to maintain the privacy and anonymity of those sampled from the rolls. This sample does not contain the names of anyone whose name is on the unpublished electoral roll. The unpublished roll is made available to individuals who may be concerned for personal or family safety if their data. This option requires that people request over the phone or in the mail (Electoral Commission 2018). Indigenous data sovereignty theory cautions the need to be conscious of the collection, storage and use of Māori data and the ethical responsibilities related to possessing this data (Kukutai and Taylor 2016, 5). In my methodologies chapter I outlined how Indigenous data sovereignty provides the ethical framework for this study.

## Storage and Confidentiality of Data and Use of STATA software

I ensured that the identities of those involved within the data remain confidential. During the course of writing this thesis, data was safely stored on a Victoria University staff computer in a locked office on campus. Confidentiality of the names and addresses of individuals were afforded to individuals after the initial processing of the data. Although these factors were required for various processes of the data preparation involved with matching, spatial-location and to estimate the characteristics of the household; they were removed from the working dataset. Individuals involved with the Marsden project are the only other researchers who have had access to the more sensitive data of those sampled. After I obtained the data from Prof. Vowles, I gained access to STATA. STATA is a data science software program and tool for

statistical analysis. I used this software to aid in the analysis of my quantitative research study within this thesis.

The ability to observe both individual level movements and mesh-block group data allows for research hitherto explored through quantitative analysis related to the Māori Electoral Option 2018. A big data approach can offer valuable insights through its spatial and temporal relevance, providing accuracy in locating individuals and their household characteristics on the roll. This allows me to better understand location related factors in analysing Māori electoral roll movements across address and electoral districts.<sup>40</sup> And aligns with the purpose of this study to understand observations and trends.

#### 4.4 Results and Findings

In this section I present results and findings from quantitative research on Māori and the electoral roll. The characteristic of the data allows for observations to take place before and after the Māori electoral roll option period of 2018. This allows for unique observations. Furthermore, populations in the data are also presented according to their address. I provide observations and findings exploring the relationship between voter location and electoral roll choice; as well as movements between the Māori electorates over the option. In this section I also draw from Statistics New Zealand data which demonstrate the geographic size (in square kilometres) of the Māori electorate districts. I present a number of key findings from the data.

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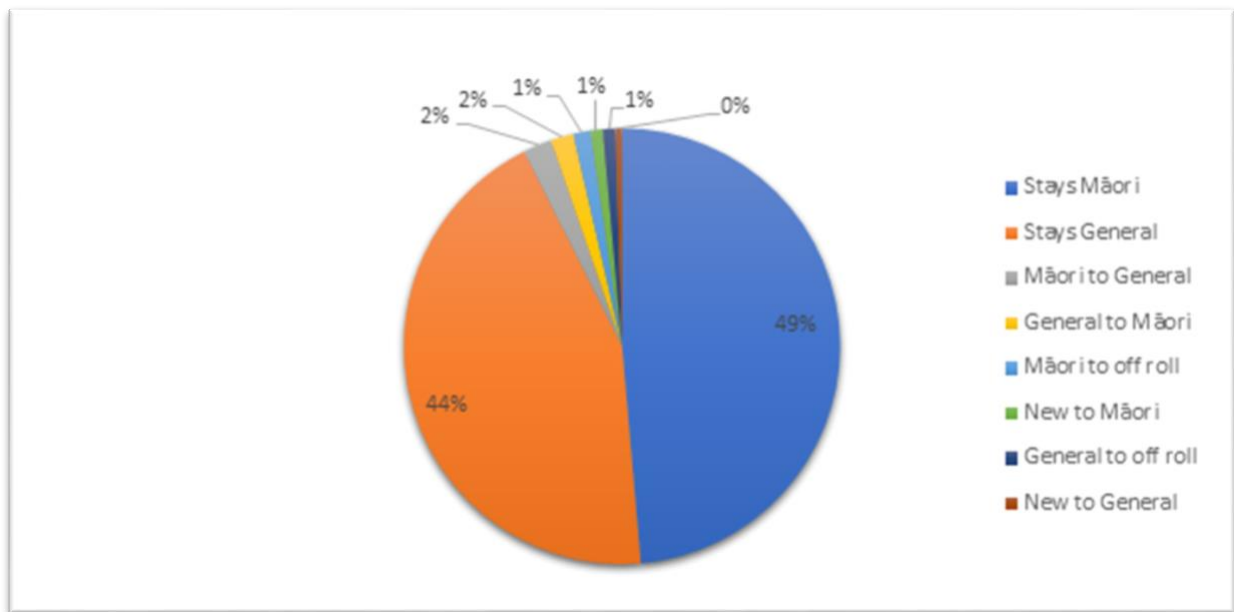
<sup>40</sup> In the New Zealand Census 2018 data, populations are located within general electorate districts. General electorate districts emulate the boundaries of general electorates whilst also incorporating both the Māori roll and general roll populations. For consistency, I will refer to general electorate districts as “electorate districts” or just “districts”.

The findings are organised and analysed according to various factors and indicators. I have identified the following factors as relevant to the broader research aims of this thesis: this includes age, location, district, concentration of Māori in space, and electorate boundary size. Dowding states that “interpretations of quantitative evidence are themselves a form of narrative” (2016, 97). Therefore, in presenting the findings of this research, I outline each factor and its significance to the research, and wider narrative of this Masters thesis.

## ELECTORAL ROLL CHOICE AND THE MĀORI ELECTORAL OPTION 2018

In this section I present results from the Māori Electoral Option 2018 based on official statistics ( $N=481,086$ ). This data set comprises of Māori who are enrolled on the electoral roll (both the Māori and general roll) before the option (April 2018) and after the option (August 2018). The ability to observe a population over the duration of the event provides a data set with multiple points of reference. This variable is presented first in the context of this research to observe the immediate results of the electoral option.

*Figure 1. Graph of Māori Electoral Option Results 2018 ( $N=481,086$ )*



*Figure 2. Overview of Māori Electoral Option Results 2018*

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Stay Māori Roll	233,923	48.62
Stay General Roll	211,580	43.98
Māori to General	10,185	2.12
General to Māori	8,127	1.69
New to Māori	4,404	0.92
New to General	2,314	0.48
Māori to off roll	6,122	1.27
General to off roll	4,431	0.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>481,086</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Results from the Māori Electoral Option 2018 demonstrate an overwhelming majority of voters staying on their original roll of choice (95%). Figures 1. and 2. demonstrate shifts and trends related to the electoral rolls in August after the 2018 electoral option. Electors opted to stay on the Māori roll with 233,923 remaining after the option (48.6%). Māori opted to stay on the General roll at high rates also with 211,580 remaining (43.98%). Analysis also shows a higher rate of movement from the Māori roll to the General roll, at 10,185 (2.12%), with slightly fewer moving from the General roll to the Māori roll, at 8,127 (1.69%).

Further observations show new enrolments took place in the Māori roll with 4,404 (0.92%). New Māori enrolments almost doubled that of new enrolments which took place on the general

roll with 2,314 (0.48%). These observations indicate a net increase of number to the Māori electoral roll after the option period. Data further shows movement off the electoral roll (total) takes place in the Māori roll more, 6,122 (1.27%), compared to the general roll, 4,431 (0.92). However, it is common for people moving off the electoral roll to resurface before elections due to them updating their address and other enrolment details. For this reason it would be beneficial to replicate this study comparing the rolls as of the 2017 and 2020 elections

#### [Roll Shifts and New Enrolments across Māori Electoral Option 2018](#)

Understanding the Māori Electoral Option 2018 from a broad perspective allows for the observation of more micro level changes taking place within the dataset. The following sections observe two trends: Electoral Roll Shifts and New Enrolments across the Electoral Roll over the period of the Māori Electoral Option 2018 according to different variables such as Occupational and Age Groups.

Figure 3. Probability of electors remaining on Māori roll by Occupational Group

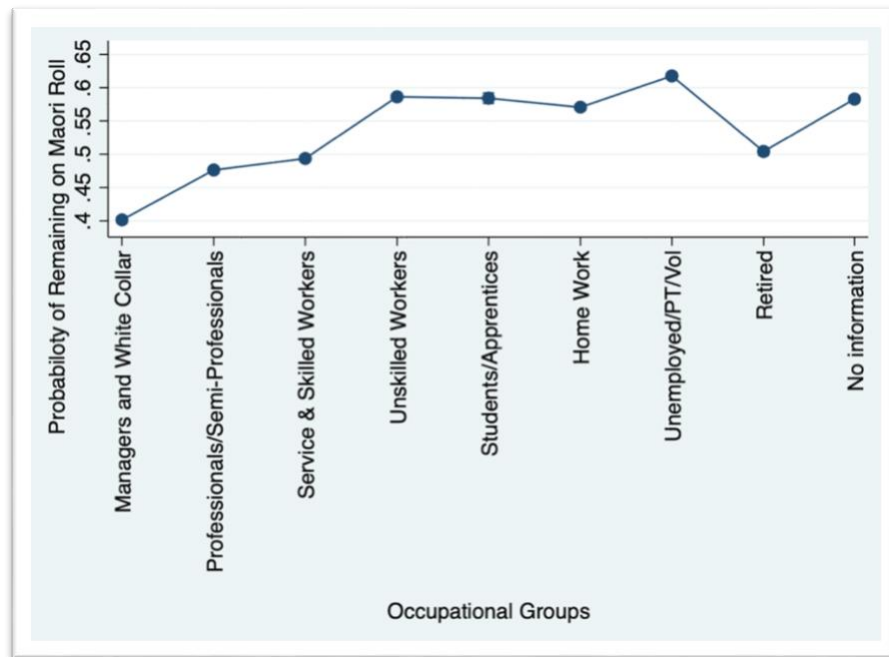


Figure 2. demonstrates the relationship between occupational status and whether electors remain on the Māori roll or the general roll. Occupational status in this data set is categorised into variable groups and observed through individual level data from the Māori Electoral Option 2018. Statistics however are not a “straightforward, objective snapshot of an underlying reality” (Walter and Andersen 2013, 8).

The relationship between electoral roll choice and occupation indicate that occupation indeed has an effect on the electoral option. Observations of this data set indicate that electors remaining on the Māori roll is linked with those who indicated their occupational status as being ‘Unemployed/Part Time’, ‘Home Work’, ‘Students’, ‘Apprentices’ and ‘Unskilled Workers’. While electors remaining on the general roll is linked with those who indicated their occupational status as being ‘Service & Skilled Workers’, ‘Professional/Semi-Professionals’, ‘Managers and White Collar’ and ‘Retired’. Occupation categories, as well as other population

signifiers defined in statistics, are not neutral though (Walter and Anderson 2013). Indigenous Data Sovereignty highlights how the collection of data and formulation of algorithms can often reflect people's own prejudices (Kukutai and Taylor 2016). Just as how socialised racial assumptions about 'unemployment' are grounded in 'anti-Māori' sentiments, this research does not represent an objective snapshot of reality (Kupu Taea 2014).



Figure 4. Probability of electors remaining on Māori roll by Age Group and Gender

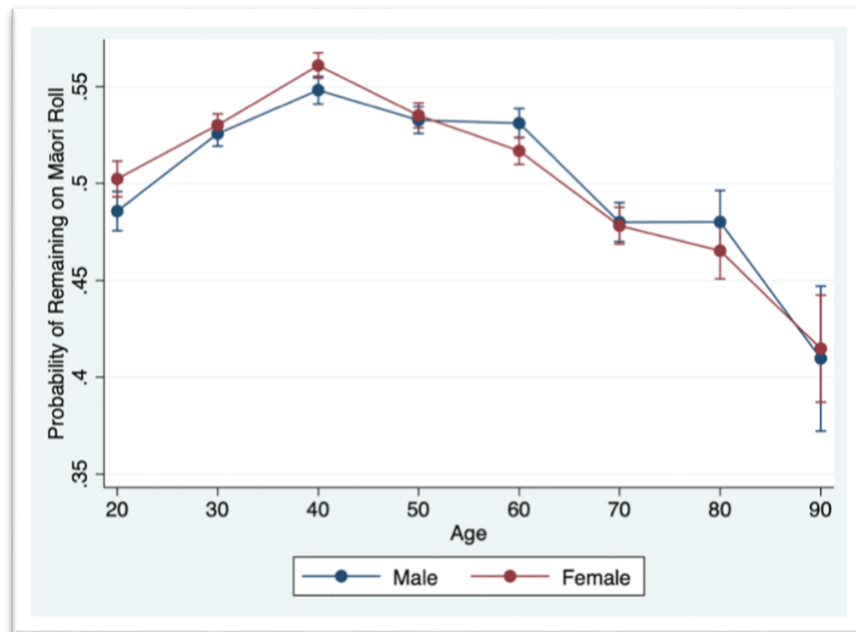


Figure 4. demonstrates the link between age group and gender in relation to whether electors stay on the Māori roll or the general roll. The gender variable, grouped into ‘Female’ and ‘Male’ categories, does not indicate any significant statistical difference within this figure. However, age shows a relationship with propensity to roll choice. Observations indicate a significant trend related to age and propensity to roll of choice. Analysis of this data shows that Māori electors within the 20-40 year old age range indicate a strong propensity to the Māori electoral roll, while 40 > years and beyond demonstrate a stronger relationship with the general roll. Another perspective on the relationship between age and electoral roll choice is demonstrated through the case of New Enrolments.

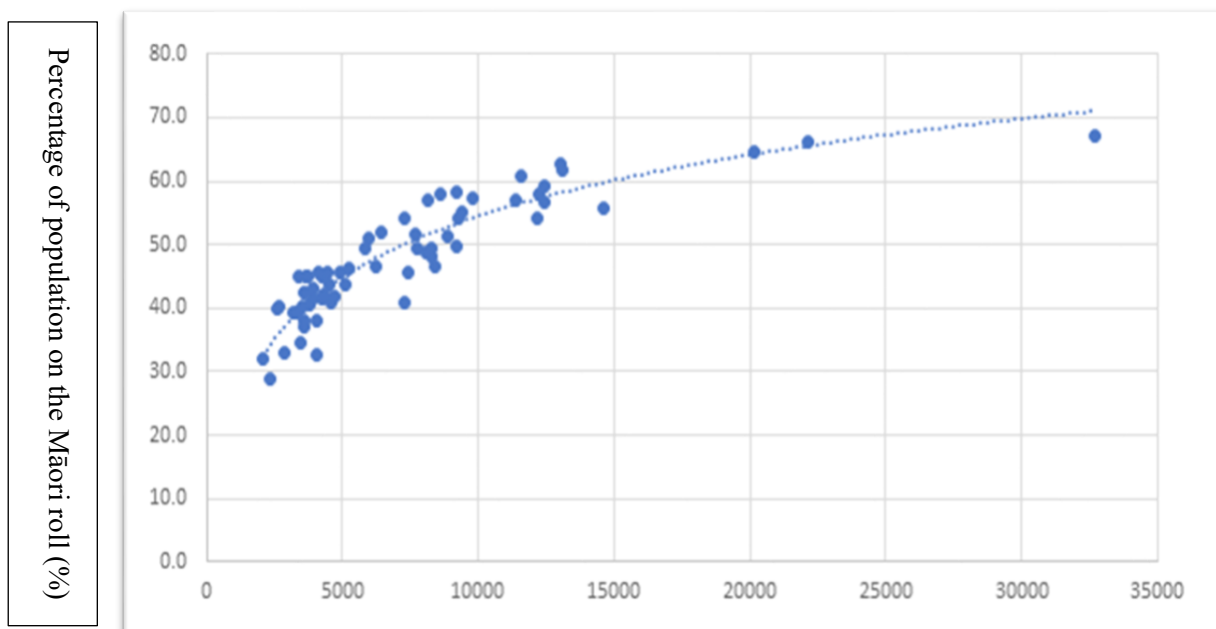
Figure 5. New enrolments by Age Group, < 41 years old (N=5,256)

Age Group	18-21	21-26	26-31	31-36	36-41	Total
New to general roll	1,126	226	196	148	123	1,819
	61.9%	12.42%	10.78%	8.14%	6.76%	
New to Maori roll	1,865	596	439	287	250	3,437
	54.26%	17.34%	12.77%	8.35%	7.27%	
Total	2,991	822	635	435	373	5,256
(%)	56.91%	15.64%	12.08%	8.28%	7.1%	

Figure 5. demonstrates the relationship between New electoral enrolments and roll choice among Age Groups younger than 41 years old. Electors are grouped by age into five-year age bands at the time of the Māori Electoral Option 2018 (i.e. one band represents electors who are 18-21 years, 21-26 years, and so on). The data displays a strong trend of New enrolments taking place among Māori electors at a younger age (18-21 years old). Over 56% of total new enrolments happened within that Age Group (2,991 total). The link between electoral roll choice and New Enrolments also presents clear findings.

A majority of New Enrolments took place on the Māori roll (3,437) in comparison to the new general roll enrolments (1,819). The data demonstrates a clear trend that New Enrolments in the Māori roll take place at a consistently higher level across all Age Groups under 45 years old.

Using New Zealand Census 2018 population mesh-block level data I observe electoral roll choice across a number of geographic variables. This section observes data related to electorate districts and electoral roll choice. I explore the relationship between Māori populations, geographic location and electoral roll choice (Figure 6). In this section I refer to the geographic size (Figure 7.) of Māori electorate districts (sq. km) to demonstrate a number of differences in comparison to that of general electorate sizes.



*Figure 6. Relationship between total Māori population and percentage on the Māori roll.*

Figure 6. depicts the relationship between total Māori population and the percentage on the Māori roll within electorate districts. Geographic analysis is made possible through Census 2018 mesh-block level data which locates electors according to their electorate district. The

data displays a clear relationship that higher concentrations of Māori populations are linked to a higher rate of enrolment on the Māori electoral roll.

*Figure 7. Total Area of Māori Electorates (sq. km)*

<b>Māori Electorate</b>	<b>Region/Area</b>	<b>Total Area (sq. km.)</b>
<b>Tāmaki Makaurau</b>	Auckland	1,368.37
<b>Hauraki-Waikato</b>	Waikato; Auckland	23,016.15
<b>Waiariki</b>	Bay of Plenty; Waikato	28,451.99
<b>Te Tai Tokerau</b>	Northland; Auckland	43,940.98
<b>Te Tai Hauāuru</b>	Taranaki; Waikato; Manawatu- Wanganui; Wellington	46,558.39
<b>Ikaroa-Rāwhiti</b>	Hawke's Bay; Gisborne; Manawatu- Wellington	49,783.032
<b>Te Tai Tonga</b>	South Island; Chatham Is. Wellington	235,640.98

Observations show that districts with a higher proportion of Māori tend to have a higher percentage of those on the Māori roll. The outlier districts with the highest percentage of Māori on the Māori electoral roll include East Coast (67.2%), Northland (66.1%), Rotorua (64.7%), Manurewa (62.8%), Tukituki (61.6%) and Waikato (60.8%). The aforementioned districts

represent among the top five most concentrated populations of Māori. These districts comprise of mainly rural areas and lands which span vast geographical distances. Northland is the largest general electorate district in Te Ika a Māui/North Island at 30,626.87 square kilometres. Followed by East Coast (25,132 sq. km) and Wairarapa (18,498 sq. km). The electorate district of Manurewa is a unique outlier in the fact that it is an urban electorate within the wider Auckland city area. In comparison to rural districts represented among this trend, Manurewa district covers a significantly smaller geographic area of 37.27 sq. km.

Districts with the lowest numbers of Māori population also tend to have a lower percentage of enrolment on the Māori roll. Observations of Figure 6. show that electorate districts with the lowest proportion of Māori have a closer propensity to the general roll. The districts with the lowest populations on the Māori roll are Epsom (29.0%), followed by East Coast Bays (31.9%), Rodney (32.7%), North Shore (33.1%), Waitaki (34.6%) and Selwyn (37.1%). These areas are mainly city/urban centres of tight geographical sizing. Epsom is the smallest electorate district by area with a total of 21.98 square kilometres, followed by Mt Roskill and Manukau East at 23.38 and 25.4 square kilometres respectively.

Figure 8. Relationship between roll choice and electorate districts (N=473,278)

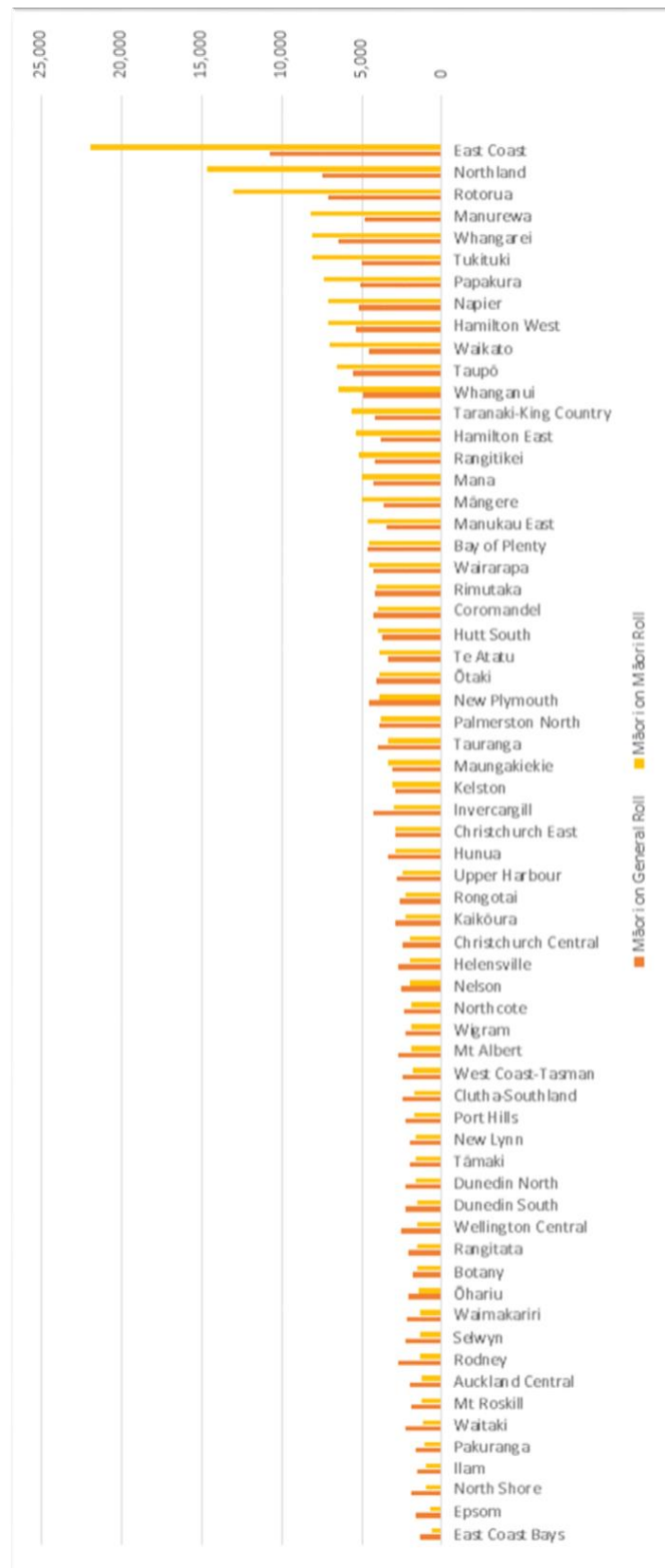
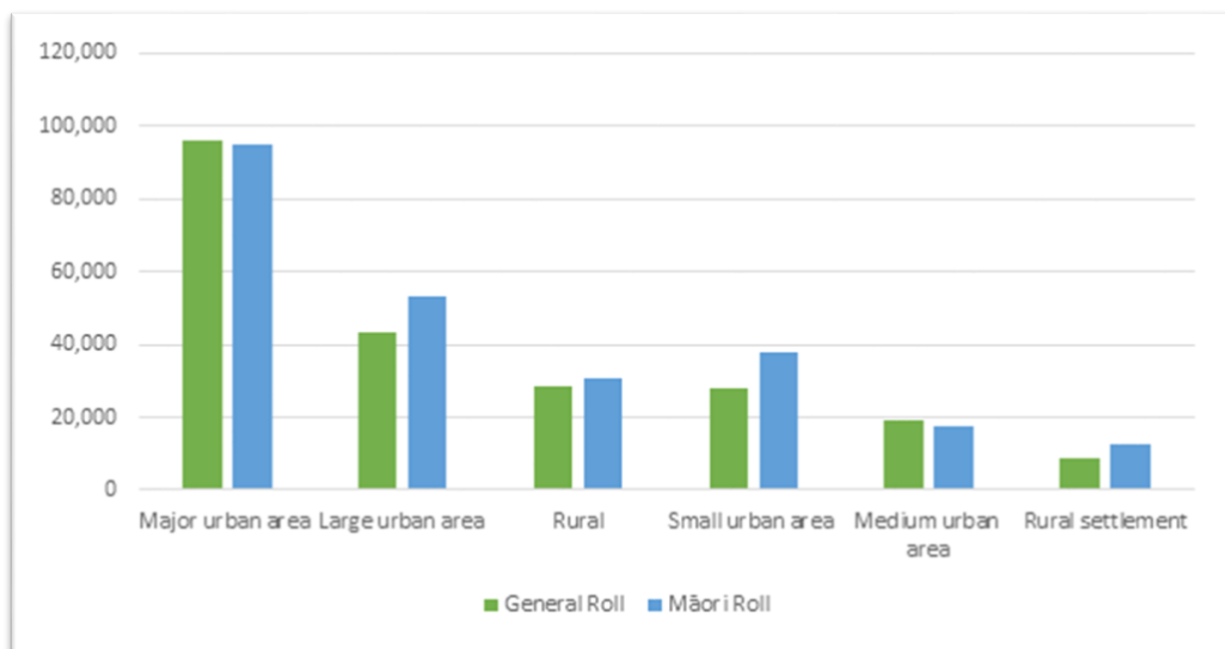


Figure 8. highlights the relationship between electoral roll choice and electorate districts. This visual provides further evidence to support the finding higher concentrations of Māori are linked to an increased likelihood of Māori electoral roll enrolment. In this figure, total Māori populations are displayed according to their electoral roll choice within their electorate district at the time of the Census 2018.

There is a clear trend between high Māori populations and propensity to the Māori electoral roll. The East Coast district has the highest population on the Māori roll (21,954) as well as the highest Māori population on the general roll (10,714). This is followed by Northland (14,639 compared to 7,497), Rotorua (13,025 to 7,118), Manurewa (8,171 to 4,833) and Whangarei (8,146 to 6,476).

In electorate districts where there is a small Māori population, electors are more likely to enrol in the general electoral roll. East Coast Bays, which has the lowest total Māori population (2,057), proportionally has a high number of Māori on the general roll (1,401). Epsom and North Shore nearly have triple and double the number of Māori on the general roll respectively within their electorate districts. Analyses of this trend could suggest that when Māori communities are more densely populated, they could feel a closer relationship to the Māori roll.

Figure 9. Roll choice across various location variables (N=470,522)



Figures 9. and 10. observe the relationship between geographic location and electoral roll choice for Māori electors. Geographic location variables Māori electors are assigned based on their home address according to mesh-block Census 2018 data.

The six identified variables span from rural settlements and other areas, to major and small urban areas. Observations of these location variables indicate that Māori electors are more likely to be on the Māori Roll if they are registered and enrolled in a rural settlement (58.56%), urban area (57.20%), Large urban area (55.11%) or Rural (51.87%). Electors are also likely to be enrolled into the general Roll if they are enrolled in Medium Urban Area (52.04% of total). Further observations show that there is a roughly 50/50 split of Māori enrolled in Major urban area (50.36% on the General Roll compared to that of the 49.64% on the Māori roll. 190,623 total). This section has observed electoral roll data before and after the electoral option in 2018.



Figure 10. Overview of roll choice across various location variables

Location Variable	General Roll	Māori Roll	Total
<b>Major urban area</b>	95,997	94,626	<b>190,623</b>
	50.36%	49.64%	
<b>Large urban area</b>	43,381	53,267	<b>96,648</b>
	44.89%	55.11%	
<b>Rural</b>	28,449	30,660	<b>59,109</b>
	48.13%	51.87%	
<b>Small urban area</b>	28,154	37,620	<b>65,774</b>
	42.80%	57.20%	
<b>Medium urban area</b>	19,171	17,671	<b>36,842</b>
	52.04%	47.96%	
<b>Rural settlement</b>	8,921	12,605	<b>21,526</b>
	41.44%	58.56%	
<b>Total</b> (%)	<b>224,073</b>	<b>246,449</b>	<b>470,522</b>
	47.62%	52.38%	

Figure 11. Māori population alongside total population within GE districts 2018

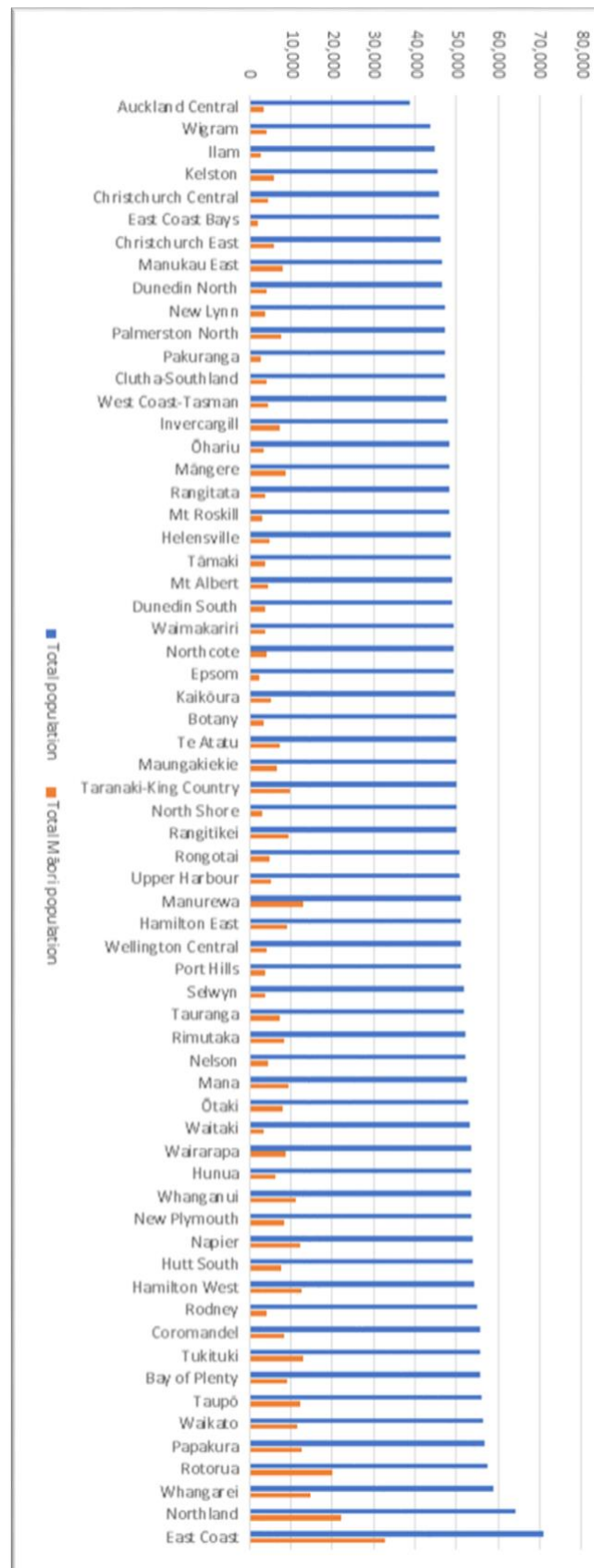


Figure 11. observes the relationship between Māori population alongside the total population within electorate districts according to mesh-block level data. Analysis shows that electorates with higher total populations tend to have a higher proportion of Māori living within their electorate districts. Observation shows that four electorate districts that have the **highest total populations** – East Coast (70,996), Northland (64,249), Whangarei (58,981) and Rotorua (57,513) also have the highest numbers of Māori within their districts. East Coast overwhelmingly has the highest Māori population (32,668), followed by Northland (22,136), Rotorua (20,143) and Whangarei (14,622). Though falls outside of the scope of my thesis, further research into the relationship between Māori and ‘total roll populations’ could provide insights into the under-representation of Māori across districts which present high concentrations of Māori.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This research has presented findings based on observations from individual-level electoral roll data and mesh-block group level census data related to the Māori Electoral Option 2018. There are two clear observations from this research. Individual level data suggests that factors such as Age and Occupation Group are variables which can, to some extent, predict electoral roll choice among New Enrolments, as well as those who change rolls at the option. The gender variable does not suggest any statistical significance in analysing these trends. Analysis suggests that Māori younger than 40 years of age are more likely to choose and remain on the Māori electoral roll. Māori older than 40 years indicate a stronger propensity to choose and remain on the general roll. Further, the relationship between roll choice and ‘Occupation Group’ is one that can frame discussion around the likelihood of electoral roll enrolment. While analysis of the data suggests that shifts in occupation and employment status among Māori

electors can influence roll choice, I encourage future research to be critical of the racialised assumptions that shape perceptions toward Māori and employment.

Mesh block data suggests that the Māori population number in any given electorate district is a significant factor in predicting rates of enrolment on the electoral roll. There is no apparent rural versus urban split between Māori electors and electoral roll choice, although some findings suggest a closer relationship in major urban settings. This framework for analysis benefited from the mesh-block data which locates electors within electorate districts. Districts with a high Māori population number lead to high rates of enrolment on the Māori roll. The purpose of the quantitative analysis provided in this chapter is to further the narrative provided in the qualitative research within this thesis. In the next chapter I draw links between this research and the qualitative interviews conducted in the previous chapter.

## Chapter 5: Whakamutunga “Now we can... so let us in!”

*“What we don’t know is by design... I don’t think it is an accident at all. It works better for those in power that we’re not informed...”*

*“The system was never designed for us. Māori were initially excluded from the right to vote because of [colonial laws related to] land and property ownership. This history has me thinking that the system was set up against Māori. It was more of an accident or a very begrudging concession to let Māori in to vote. It definitely doesn’t seem like that was the intention....”*

*“It’s almost as though Māori found loopholes in there, saying ‘well now we can vote, so let us in!’.*

TANGAROA

I use a quote from Tangaroa to conclude this thesis.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the course of my interview with her, Tangaroa reflected on her experiences of the electoral system as shaped by her unique rangatahi perspective. She locates this experience as being connected back to the confiscation and theft of Māori land, and the “design” of colonisation which facilitated the destruction of traditional structures central to Māori identity and political organisation. Tangaroa speaks to the efforts of leaders who have fought to break the harmful cycles of those processes across generations. But barriers remain and manifest in multiple ways within this system. Tangaroa’s kōrero outlines the context, the tensions and the aspirations which posit my research journey within this thesis. “Let us in!” she exclaims.

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<sup>41</sup> Whakamutunga - conclusion, end, last, final, finale

## 5.1 Conclusion

In this final chapter, I offer concluding thoughts on the key insights of this paper as well as future directions for research in this area. Further, I pose a challenge to researchers and professionals who may wish to explore rangatahi Māori experiences, and address some of the findings of this research in regards to the Māori electoral option. This research explores the numerous complexities that shape rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral option. Rangatahi Māori encounter significant barriers whilst navigating the electoral option system including access to education on the electoral system; roll choice in the initial enrolment process; and the five yearly Māori electoral option. In my quantitative approach to the central thesis, research reveals that enrolment on the Māori roll is more likely to take place in areas where there is a higher concentration of Māori. Furthermore, that age and occupation are variables which could indicate propensity to the Māori roll.

The Māori electoral roll option presents barriers for Rangatahi Māori that continue to shape and frame their experiences. Through this mixed method approach, in-depth rangatahi experiences provide a perspective through which quantitative data observation can be approached and assessed. And similarly, big data observation provide a picture through which rangatahi experiences can be contextualised. In my quantitative chapter, I sought to blend an additional approach in order to illustrate the ‘landscape’ of voter interactions and engagements in regards to the Māori electoral option. These finding contextualise the experiences and ‘barriers’ outlined in my qualitative findings.

Through a Kaupapa Māori lens and mixed-method approach, I have identified one key finding: that systemic barriers continue to impact rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral

option. But this begs the question - to what extent do these influences shape roll choice? In chapter three, I highlighted the three barriers of 'education access', 'enrolling to vote' and the 'five yearly electoral option'. It is clear that rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral option are diverse, but these barriers were considered pervasive in the experiences of my interview participants, and supported further by literature. Rangatahi Māori experiences of the Māori electoral option are shaped by their socio-political, local context. Further research exploring the relationship between rangatahi Māori experiences and the Māori electoral option has the potential to demand systemic change that acknowledges and prioritises Rangatahi Māori perspectives. My chosen methodology, which is specific to the tribal regions of Te Whanganui-ā-Tara and the Kapiti Coast, may not be suitable in another context however. Rangatahi Māori experiences are diverse and informed by their local context. Future research should be guided similarly by this.

The methodological implications of this research offer the 'Kaupapa Māori' approach as an impactful option for researching with rangatahi Māori in this space. By committing to a research process that is not harmful but uplifting for participants, by recognising their experiences within the framework of whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga, researchers can curate nuanced insights into the lived experiences of rangatahi Māori, based on an understanding of the relationships and trust involved in the process of researching with Māori. One of the hallmarks of Kaupapa Māori research involves ensuring aims and conclusions are in line with Māori needs and aspirations. In line with this, this research has offered a Māori critical perspective on the electoral roll option and key barriers that if addressed, would facilitate better outcomes for rangatahi Māori as well as create a fairer democratic process through increasing access.

This research explores the complexities which shape rangatahi experiences. There are a number of limitations within each research component however, especially when considering the limited scope of a Masters thesis. For example, a larger set of interviewees would have provided a more insights and support for my qualitative findings. This paper may serve as an introduction into some of the key insights of rangatahi Māori participation in the electoral roll option, and below I offer more suggestions for the implications of this research, that may follow on from the themes identified in this study.

Rangatahi Māori participant experiences identify deep flaws within the Māori electoral roll option. In line with these research findings, as well as the work many others are contributing to this discussion (Tawhai and Carberry 2020), I provide the following recommendations to the Electoral Commission, policy analysts, Māori politicians, electoral lawyers, and rangatahi Māori:

1. “Our people are hōhā!” The five-yearly Māori Electoral Option needs to change from what is currently the status quo. Any decision-making processes should be guided by, and reflective of, the diverse aspirations of tangata whenua.
2. Resource Rangatahi Māori groups, as well as whānau, hapū, iwi, and wider Māori community organisations to deliver culturally appropriate educational programs targeted toward Rangatahi Māori political literacy.
3. “Now let us lead!” A Māori strategy can only be realised and administered through an independent entity tasked with delivering the goals and aspirations of tangata whenua.



### *Personal Reflections and Concluding Thoughts*

I revisit the kōrero tuku iho that opened this thesis and look to my tīpuna Wīremu Te Kākākura Parata. “*Whakarongotai o te moana, Whakarongotai o te wā*”. Here I offer this wero<sup>42</sup> to readers, “*listen to the tides of change*” and take heed of the knowledge shared by our young people to weave new and better futures. “*Ka pū te ruha, Ka hao te rangatahi*”.

These whakatauki speak to the unique opportunity that the insights highlighted in this thesis offer. That is, to recognise the continuous struggle for Māori rangatiratanga that was paved by Māori leaders and to take advantage of this new knowledge as a way to move forward for the kaupapa. This is a challenge to the policy makers, public service leaders and other professionals to work to address these barriers and acknowledge the lived experiences of rangatahi Māori within the system.

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<sup>42</sup> challenge

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## Glossary

Ahi-kā	burning fires, rights to land by tribal occupation
Ahi-tere	flickering fire, unstable fire
Aotearoa	Indigenous Māori name for the country known as New Zealand
Hapori	section of a kinship group, society, community
Hapū	subtribe, to be pregnant
Ingoa	name
Iwi	tribe, nation, extended kinship
Karakia	incantation, ritual chant, prayer
Kaumātua	adult, elder, elderly person of status within the whānau
Kaupapa Māori	Māori customary practice, principles, ideology
Kawa	marae customs and protocols
Kāwanatanga	government, governorship
Kōrero Tuku Iho	history, stories of the past, traditions, oral tradition
Kura kaupapa Māori	primary school operating under Māori custom and using Māori as the medium of instruction
Mana	prestige, authority, influence, status
Mana Motuhake	autonomy, self-government, self-determination, independence, sovereignty, authority
Mana whenua	territorial rights, power from the land, authority over land or territory
Manaakitanga	hospitality, kindness, generosity, support
māori	to be usual, natural, normal
Māori	Indigenous person of Aotearoa New Zealand
Mātauranga	knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent, foreigner



Pēpi	baby, babies
Rangatahi	to be young, youth, younger generation
Rangatira	to be of high rank, noble, chief
Ringawera	workers in the kitchen essential to the marae
Tangata Whenua	people born of the land, Indigenous people
Taonga	property, goods, possession
Taonga tuku iho	treasure handed down, cultural property, heritage
Te Reo Māori	Māori language
Tikanga	custom, correct, right
Tino Rangatiratanga	self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government
Utu	balance, reciprocity, compensation, reparation, cost
Wānanga	to meet and discuss, deliberate, consider
Wero	challenge
Whaikōrero	traditional oratory practices
Whakamutunga	conclusion, end, last, concluding, final, finale
Whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, descent
Whakawhanaungatanga	process of establishing relationships, relating well to others
Whānau	extended family, to be born  secondary school operating under Māori custom and Kaupapa Māori principles - these schools use Māori language as the medium of
Wharekura	instruction
Whenua	earth, land, placenta

