# TE MANAWAROA ME WHAKAKAHA I TE MĀTAURANGA O NGĀ TAUIRA

## (EXPERIENCES AND STRENGTHS OF INDIGENOUS STUDENT RESILIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION)

BY

DARREN LEE HENDRICKS

A thesis

submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington

in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Science, Cross-Cultural Psychology

Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington

2022

*Na te waewae i kimi*

By the feet it was sought

# Contents

# List of Tables

# List of Figures

**Mihi**

*'te timatanga te Kupu, i te Atua te Kupu, ko te Atua ano te Kupu.*

*I te Atua ano tenei Kupu i te timatanga. Nana nga mea katoa i hanga; kahore hoki tetahi*

*mea i kore te hanga e ia o nga mea i hanga. I a ia te ora; ko te ora te marama mo nga*

*tangata. I roto i te pouri te marama e whiti ana; heoi kihai i mau i te pouri.'*

*1 John 1:1-5*

<u>Te Reo Māori</u>

Ko te mihi tuatahi, ka mihi ki ngā ātua.

Ko Ranginui, Ko Papatuanuku me a rāua tamariki hoki, kei waho ra.

Ko te mihi tuarua ki te hunga mate kua wheturangitia. Moe mai ra, moe mai ra, moe mai ra.

Ko te mihi tuatoru, ngā ki ngā tangata whenua. Te mana whenua o Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara, Te Atiawa, me Taranaki Whanui. Tēnei te mihi atu ki a koutou, kei te mihi.

Ko te mihi tuawha, ki ng`a tangata kua whai wāhi i te rangahau nei. He tino taonga o koutou kōrero.

Ko te mihi tuarima, he mihi ki nga pou o tenei rangahau. Mō te tautoko, te tiaki me te aroha. kei te mihi.

Ko te mihi whakamutunga, ki a koutou e ngā kaipa`nui. Ko te tumanako, ka whakapiki tēnei tuhinga i o koutou māramatanga o ngā mahi me ng`a haerenga o ngā tauira Māori.

*'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*John 1:1-5*

<u>English</u>

Firstly, I acknowledge the gods. Ranginui, Papatuanuku and their children endure, endure, endure.

Secondly, I acknowledge those who have passed. Rest well, rest well, rest well.

Thirdly, I acknowledge the people of the land. The protectors of Wellington, Te Atiawa and Taranaki Whanui. I acknowledge you, I acknowledge you, I acknowledge you.

Fourthly, I acknowledge the participants of this research. I treasure your stories. I acknowledge you, I acknowledge you, I acknowledge you.

Fifthly, I acknowledge those that have supported this research. For the support, the caring and the love. I acknowledge you, I acknowledge you, I acknowledge you.

Finally, I acknowledge you the readers. My hope is that this will lift your understanding of Māori students' journeys.

**Pepeha**

<u>Te reo Māori</u>                                                                    <u>English</u>

Ko Table Mountain tōku maunga

Ko Atlantic Ocean me Indian Ocean ōku
moana

He tangata whenau au o Āwhirika ki te
tonga

Ko Hendricks me Isaac ōku ingoa
whānau

Ko Wilma tōku whaea

Ko Bertram tōku matua


I whānau mai ahau ki Āwherika ki te
Tonga

Ko Kēpa Tāone toku ūkaipō

E noho ana au kei Te Awakairangi

Kei Wainuiomata tōku kainga


Ko Dean tāku tēina

Ko Darren tōku ingoa

Table Mountain is my mountain

The Atlantic and Indian Oceans are my
oceans

I am part of the Coloured people of
South Africa

I am a part of the Hendricks and Isaac
families

Wilma is my mother

Bertram is my father


I was born in South Africa

Cape Town is where I grew up

I live in Lower Hutt

My home is in Wainuiomata


Dean is my younger brother

I am Darren

**Acknowledgement**

The completion of this thesis required hard work, long hours, and careful attention to detail. However, despite all the effort, I have put in, it would not be completed if it were not for many of the individuals below who have in their own ways worked hard to get me to this stage. Their guidance, support, and trust have been critical to this achievement and therefore I would like to specially acknowledge them as a small token of my appreciation.

To my supervisors Dr. Tia Neha, who throughout my degree has guided me with immense support. Your gentle but firm approach has shaped the thesis from the tiny idea to the work that it is today. Despite all of this you have gone through your own challenges and have embodied the definition of *manawanui* (resilience). To Professor Colleen Ward if Wonder Woman was born in New Orleans and lived in New Zealand, I would swear you are her, you have been a superhero figure who flew in and saved me and this work from impending disaster. Your experience, patience and support have been invaluable and for that, I am truly grateful.

To all my fellow Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research (CACR) peers (Inkuk, Luisa, Johannes, Torven, Nuzha, Luisa, Ben, Chevelle, and all the rest) that has shared this journey with me, thank you for your help and for making this experience more enjoyable.  To my cohorts (Nan, Kai [Zayana], Anna, and Tram), thank you for journeying with me, sharing in the frustrations, the highs and lows that come with doing a master's degree, the long chats, and sporting moments. Thank you for all the outings, the dinners, proofreading and celebrations, I hope there are many more to come (celebrations, less so for the proofreading). Anna, thank you for all that you have done, for your support, encouragement, and all the fun and laughter you bring thanks. Tram, thank you for your help and just being a sense of joy throughout all that we do. Tyle, thank you for being a mentor figure during this journey, you

do not understand the level of appreciation I have for all the time you have put into helping me. Fin, thank you for your support, encouragement in te ao *Māori* and for holding me accountable to the *Kaupapa* of my work.

To the lab groups that gave played a huge part in this development progress and completion of this work, CACR (Maree, Dr. Rita McNamara), Te Whānau Lab, and the MiC lab (Lauren) thank you for all your shared knowledge and experience that as gone into getting the thesis to its completed stage.

To Tin, thank you for being you, and for all the support that you have given me throughout this journey. Thank you for being that person who is constantly forcing me to work hard despite my own reluctance at times, to do my work. Sophie thank you for all the dinner evenings and hangouts and for sticking around over all these years, thank you for being you and for letting me be me.

To Aunty Jessy and Uncle Sonny thank you for your warm welcome and always opening your home and pots, and for keeping me true to my South African self. Your shared knowledge of gardening has provided a stimulative reprieve from the journal articles and data that I constantly live in.

To my Hills family thank you for your constant support, encouragement, and leadership over the many years that I have been on this journey, it has been a true blessing. You have aided me in outwalking God's plan and purpose for my life, and for that, I am truly grateful.

To my Whānau; mommy, daddy, Dean, Sam, Marvin and all of you, thank you, for your support and guidance. For giving me the space to study, for encouraging me when I needed encouragement, for financially supporting me, and for loving me in the many ways that you all have, Thank you.

To all those that have in many ways aided in getting this thesis to its completed state, thank you. To those at Āwhina, the *Marae*, the *Māori* research office, and Alby Tibble, that have all put in time not required of them, thank you. To Dr McLachlan, your work has always been a great inspiration to me, so thank you for entrusting me with your resource and I sincerely hope that I have remained true to the *kaupapa* of WT-VCS. Paul Edwards Thank you for all your support and help with this project, your willingness to help has truly lifted the quality of this research.

To all my participants who gave their time to openly and willingly share their experiences with me, thank you. As none of this work would have been possible without your willingness to share, my hope is that other students yet to come to university would be empowered by your experiences.

To everyone else who has played a role on this journey thank you, while I cannot name everyone you have all aided in getting me to where I am family, friends, church members, fellow students (past and present), work colleagues, travel buddies, *wānanga nga tauira* (peers and staff at the *wānanga*), friendly vendors I have met along this journey, and university staff, thank you.

Last but most certainly not least I would like to acknowledge and thank Nga Atua; te Matua, o te Tama, o te Wairua tapu (Heavenly Father, Son and Holy Spirit). None of this would be possible without your love, guidance, and protection. You have carried me throughout my life, helping me overcome obstacles and circumstances which I would not be able to achieve alone. Therefore, this thesis is a testimony not of my hand but of your unfailing love and support.

**Abstract**

To better address and understand *Māori* students' retention rates at university, this thesis adopted a *kaupapa Māori*-inspired approach to explore the resilience strategies *Māori* students utilise for success. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews that incorporated the use of a novel cultural tool, the *Whai Tikanga* value card sort, which utilises *Māori* values to explore relevant topics. Twelve *Māori* students (age range: 18-44 years) participated in interviews that explored the challenges faced and the strengths used to navigate the university environment. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The results shed light on the continued challenges *Māori* students face in tertiary education, such as navigating cultural conflict, financial issues, and overcoming discouragement. Findings revealed several resilience strategies that *Māori* students utilise by drawing on personal, interpersonal, and institutional resources, such as family, friends, and a range of intrapersonal traits. These are discussed in relation to traditional *Māori* values, which emphasise the recognition of *Māori* concepts as important protective and motivational coping strategies. The research is significant not only because it highlights the challenges *Māori* students continue to face, but also, more importantly, because it identifies and elaborates resilient strategies for *Māori* success.

# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| Aotearoa | Māori name for New Zealand |
| Aroha | to love, feel pity, feel concern for, feel compassion, empathise. |
| āwhina | to assist, help, support, benefit |
| ehara I te aha | least important |
| hira | important |
| iwi | extended kinship group, tribe, |
| kai | food |
| kaitiakitanga | guardianship, stewardship, trusteeship, trustee |
| kanohi | face, countenance |
| kanohi ki te kanohi | face to face, in person, in the flesh |
| karakia | incantation, ritual chant, pray |
| karakia timatanga | beginning / starting prayer |
| karakia whakamutunga | ending / finishing prayer |
| kaumatua | adult, elder, elderly man, elderly woman, old ma |
| kaupapa | topic, policy, matter for discussion |
| kāwanatanga | government, dominion, rule, authority, governorship |
| Kīngitanga | King Movement - a movement which developed in the 1850s |
| koha | gift, present, offering, donation, contribution |
| kōrero | speech |
| Kaupapa Māori | Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology |
| kupu | word |
| mahi | to work, do, perform, make, accomplish |

| | |
|---|---|
| mahi tahi | to work together, collaborate, cooperate. |
| mana | prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma |
| manawaroa | stamina, doggedness, grit, staying power, endurance, resilience, fortitude. |
| manawanui | perseverance, determination, persistence, dedication. |
| Māori | indigenous person of Aotearoa/New Zealand |
| mātauranga | knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill |
| mauri | life principle, life force, vital essence, special nature |
| mihi | speech of greeting |
| moemoea | to have a dream, have a vision |
| Pākehā | New Zealander of European descent |
| pōua | old person, elderly man |
| rangatahi | younger generation, youth. |
| rangatiratanga | chieftainship, right to exercise authority |
| reo | language |
| Take pū | value |
| tangata whenua | local people, hosts, indigenous people |
| taonga | treasure, anything prized |
| tauira | student, pupil, |
| te ao Māori | Māori world |
| te reo Māori | Māori language |
| Te whānau lab | indigenous research lab at Victoria Universities school of psychology |
| Tiaki | to look after, nurse, care, protect |
| tika | to be correct, true, upright |
| tikanga | correct procedure, custom, habit, lore |
| tino rangatiratanga | self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy |

| | |
|---|---|
| tīpuna | ancestors, grandparents |
| Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi. |
| wairua | spirit, soul |
| wairuatanga | spirituality |
| Waitangi | area in New Zealand |
| wānanga | tertiary institution that caters for Māori learning needs, to meet and discuss, deliberate, consider |
| whai tikanga cards | Māori card sort developed By Dr. McLachlan |
| whai wāhi | to participate, take part, have a par |
| whakaaro | thought, opinion, plan, understanding, idea, intention, gift, conscience. |
| whakahirahira | very important |
| Whakaoranga | relief, redress, revival, recovery, restoration |
| whakapapa | genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent |
| whakataukī | proverb, significant saying |
| whānau | extended family, family group |
| whenua | land |

# Te Manawaroa mō te Mātauranga

Trials and tribulations are part of everyday life, and it is how we face those ordeals that determines whether we will be successful in triumphing over adversity. One of the ways that we can achieve success is by being resilient, through having a range of resources that can assist us when needed. It should therefore come as no surprise that resilience can aid in protecting against challenging situations, including those that may arise in the tertiary education sector.

Within indigenous communities, those who wish to attend tertiary education face additional challenges (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2011). Lack of access to resources, financial issues, and barriers due to institutional and systemic racism are common for students joining the tertiary sector, and disproportionately affect indigenous students. These challenges are evident in the statistics around the world which compare indigenous groups to their non-indigenous peers, especially evident in the completion gap of degrees between these groups (Schofield et al., 2013).

Within this thesis, we aim to explore resilience strategies of *Māori* students at university. By using semi structured interviews and a culturally relevant card sorting tool, we will explore the challenges students experience and the strengths they draw on to navigate those challenging experiences. Through these interviews, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the resilience strategies *Māori* students adopt.

To lay the foundation for this work we will start by looking at resilience and resilience theory. Next we will explore the relationship between resilience and culture, starting with various cultures through to indigenous perspectives of resilience. Subsequently, we will explore resilience in education before exploring research in New Zealand with a focus on working with *Māori*.

**Resilience and Resilience Theory**

Resilience over recent years has gained traction as a means by which individuals can overcome adversity. Due to its flexibility, it has been applied to a variety of different sectors from aiding immigrants needing to overcome the challenges of adapting to a new country (Albuquerque & Bueno, 2020) to dealing with various challenges including development al issues(Herman, 2011).

To better understand and provide mechanisms to address the gaps in degree completion within the tertiary sector, previous research has examined theories around resilience. Resilience can loosely be defined as 'how well you react to unexpected challenges and conflicts' (Jackson & Watkin, 2004, p.13) or 'the capacity of an individual to do well in spite of exposure to acute trauma or sustained adversity' (Liebenberg, p. 219, as cited by Grossman, 2013). Although these descriptions capture the phenomenon of resilience, there is no formal definition of the construct, and it is generally agreed that there is a range of interpretations, largely focusing around two defining features: challenges or an adverse situation, and the ability to overcome them (Cicchetti, 2010; Grossman, 2013).

Early research on resilience predominantly focused on risk factors (Morales, 2014). More current literature moves away from looking at problems and focuses predominantly on strengths and emphasizing positive factors that contribute to success. The development of the resilience literature has been described as three waves of resilience inquiry.

Over recent years there have been substantial advancements in resilience research. Richardson (2002) describes these as the three waves of resilience inquiry. The first wave attempted to identify the varying traits that lead to individuals succeeding despite adversity and continues to be an important area of resilience research. The second wave explored the mechanism behind how resilience traits are developed, and the third wave attempted to

identify the motivational forces that spurred individuals or groups to pursue the development of these traits (Richardson, 2002).

One model of resilience, the Resilience Model by Richardson (2002), addresses the complex nature of resilience. The model suggests that our mind, body, and spirit adapt due to ever-present stresses in the environment. According to the model an individual's level of functioning rests at an optimal level of homeostasis. This level is reduced or impaired due to a stressor, and the ability of the individual to then return to homeostasis is what makes them resilient. This model provides space for a more nuanced interpretation of resilience, as it allows for a plethora of ways an individual could return to homeostasis. This return is scaffolded by several traits or protective factors, with previous studies identifying several characteristics that individuals who are resilient display. These include, but are not limited to, having goals, a sense of humour, and being optimistic (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

In attempts to better measure resilience, several resilience scales have been developed. These include the Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA) (Friborg et al., 2003), the Scale of Protective Factors (Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015), the Ego Resilience Scale (Block & Kremen, 1996), the Academic Resilience Scale (Cassidy, 2016) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Each of these scales measures similar components, but either at different stages of development or for different contextual purposes. At a general level, they all focus on abilities, such as being able to adapt to change and being optimistic. Some measures touch on different Western-style relationships, such as, personal relationships, social relationships, and family relations. The most widely used scale is the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003).

These varying scales all try to capture resilience as a construct; however, they vary in the weight they attribute to various factors as well as the intended purposes. For example, the CD-RISC places importance on several trait building aspects. Some of these are: the ability to

adapt to change, seeing the humorous side of things, not easily being discouraged by failure and pride in your achievements (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Other scales focus more on specific environments such as educational settings (Cassidy, 2016). Still, others place greater importance on specific aspects of resilience, such as protective factors, or are designed for particular age groups (Friborg et al., 2003; Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015). Although many researchers acknowledge the impact of factors such as culture, age and spirituality, many scales do not take this into account, and most have a predominantly Western view on faith-based aspects.

Early research on resilience has typically focused on young children (Hiew et al., 2000; Masten et al., 1999), mental health and stress-coping (Connor & Davidson, 2003). These studies have predominantly focused on identifying traits that make an individual resilient. However, the scope has now evolved, expanding to include additional factors, as relationship and upbringing. One longitudinal study by Werner and Smith (1992) explored risk and protective factors in young children. They found a range of factors that they deemed protective for overcoming trauma, including having effective coping strategies and parental support (Werner & Smith, 1992). Early studies that aimed to identify traits and protective factors of resilience have informed many of the previously mentioned resilience scales.

It was this research in the field of developmental psychology that highlighted the effects of protective factors on developmental outcomes for young children. Garmezy (1991) highlighted the impact of protective factors on the outcome of disadvantaged children, and how those factors lead to an increased likelihood of overcoming life's difficulties. Early research that explored these protective factors found that parenting quality, social support and intellectual functioning lead to increased competency in overcoming adversity (Garmezy, 1991; Masten et al., 1999).

The impact of these protective factors was not just noticeable in the early stages of childhood but extends through to adolescence and adulthood. One longitudinal study that explored the maladaptive and protective factors across the life span of 505 individuals from the prenatal stage to adulthood highlighted the influence of these protective factors (Werner & Smith, 2019). These protective factors played a pivotal role in how some individuals navigated their way through a difficult upbringing and helped scaffold recovery from situations impacting early life (Werner & Smith, 2019).

This highlights the importance of social support across the lifespan; different factors have varying degrees of success depending on upbringing, socio-economic status and culture, each of these factors exerting influences across the lifespan affecting individuals' abilities to overcome challenges and develop a sense of resilience.

The process of identifying relevant traits continues to be an important area of resilience research, with more recent studies venturing to less studied groups or area-specific environments to identify relevant traits of resilience. An example of this is a qualitative study by Wortham (2014) that aimed to uncover the resilience strategies of African American women victims/survivors of intimate partner violence. Using semi structured interviews, Worthman (2014) interviewed ten health professionals from relevant fields and uncovered five key aspects of resilience: hope, family influence, self-concept, empowering and turning points.

Expanding on this, recent research has been extended to other domains such as health (Panter-Brick, 2014b; Tugade et al., 2004; Waxman et al., 2003). This has led to a broader conceptualisation of resilience, with additional resilience factors being identified concerning age, culture, and history. For instance, Giesbrecht et al. (2015) was interested in socio-environmental factors that would bolster resilience within palliative caregivers in Canada. Using semi-structured interviews, ethnographic field notes and case studies, they identified

six factors that assisted in building resilience. Among these factors were access to social networks (family networks), employment status, stage of life, and location of residences (Giesbrecht et al., 2015).

### *Culture and Resilience*

Although the concept of Western resilience has been well established in the literature, it is predominately based on research that has developed in and on WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Developed) populations. This has led to resilience being described as highly individualistic in nature, as the construct tends to focus on the individual and their success. However, even the meaning of the term 'success' can differ across cultures. Taking this into account, concepts of resilience could then also relate to moral values and social aspirations (Ungar, 2006) and extends beyond being wealthy and successful. Thus, there are growing realisations that resilience outside of the Western environment may not necessarily draw from the same individualistic resources (Andersson, 2008).

This is predominantly due to the personal and cultural differences between WEIRD and non-WEIRD countries. Non-WEIRD countries tend to have different values, priorities, and ways of viewing the world. These are expressed or manifested in different ways, most notably is in how countries vary on Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2005). For example, the highly competitive nature to outperform peers is considered a positive trait in WEIRD countries, while in non-WEIRD countries it is viewed as more important to work together for the success and improvement of many (Triandis, 1988). These differences are similarly reiterated albeit in a different manner in cultural distance measures (Muthukrishna et al., 2020).

Ungar (2008) has identified two issues with the narrow conceptualisation of resilience in much of the resilience literature. The first is that the concepts are based around Western values or understandings of what defines healthy functioning, attachments, and goals. The

second is the lack of sensitivity and acknowledgement given to cultural values. These include cultural, contextual, and community factors and how different groups define or manifest them. Therefore, despite the large body of literature on resilience, there is still much that is unknown about non-Western views of resilience.

As researchers acknowledge the influence of culture on resilience, more and more studies are being done to identify resilience factors in non-Western communities. These studies have led to a range of varying cultural views around what encompasses resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2011) and how resilience is interpreted (Grossman, 2013).  For example, in Afghanistan, resilience is related to loyalty and family ties in comparison to respect and money in some cities in the United States (Panter-Brick, 2014a).

Other studies that have explored resilience in varying cultural groups have revealed a stronger connection between resilience and social and societal factors. One notable study by Perez et al. (2009), which explored resilience in 110 Latino youth, aimed to identify the protective factors that buffer against potential risk. Their study examined a range of factors, including family size, document status, risk factors, bilingual and academic outcomes. The researchers found that despite having higher risk, Latino students performed better academically when they had greater personal and environmental resources. In addition to this, resilient students had greater parental valuing of education, extracurricular participation, and volunteering (Perez et al., 2009).

Studies such as these have a broader and deeper understanding of the concept of resilience, demonstrating that variables not necessarily acknowledged or utilised in WEIRD countries are still important. As the research expands into other cultures, so does the parameters of what defines an adverse situation. This expansion has acknowledged situations, such as the need to navigate systems of oppression, unequal opportunities for economic growth, additional educational challenges and marginalisation of groups, as adverse for some

groups of people and difficult to navigate (Panter-Brick, 2014a). However, the limited range of studies across different cultural groups suggests that there is still plenty of research that is needed to explore cultural factors that enhance and impede resilience.

### *Indigenous Perspectives of Resilience*

The field of resilience research is now expanding to attempt to understand, among other things, indigenous concepts of resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2011). One way that indigenous concepts of resilience differ from Western concepts, is indigenous resilience often draws from a larger pool of resources and tends to prioritise the use of strategies differently.

Examples of types of resources available for indigenous peoples are relations to land, language, ritual, and culture. In Native American culture, HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) identified several native and cultural factors that were key to individuals' success. Their research with prevention specialists who work with native groups identified several cultural factors that they deemed essential protective mechanisms against substance abuse. Some of these included family strengths, oral traditions, and ceremonial rituals (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Although some resilience theories do consider social connections as resources, indigenous resilience tends to prioritise social resources over others.

Furthermore, indigenous resilience goes a step further to draw on resources that are overlooked in Western theories. For example, in Canada, the Inuit culture draws on strength from the land as well as their native language (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Similarly, the Métis' have a concept of 'débrouillardise' (resourcefulness), which encapsulates aspects of independence, and relates to the physical, psychological, and spiritual way of being, unique to their culture (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Other indigenous cultures also express the utilisation of concepts unique to either own culture. In exploring an African concept of resilience, Theron et al. (2013) analysed qualitative data (focus group discussions, written narratives, and symbolic drawings) of 11 South African Basotho youth. They found several different

layers or concepts that encapsulates an Afro-centric type of resilience, e.g., experiencing acceptance, being value driven, and having active support systems. The youth also illustrated the uniquely African concept of ubuntu as key to resilience (Theron et al., 2013).

Another way that indigenous resilience differs, is in the way in which indigenous people define the construct. Anderson (2008) suggests that the aspect of resilience that focuses on bouncing back from adversity is not in line with the indigenous world views, as this aspect takes a more deficit approach. Rather, indigenous views are more positively focused and strength based. Without entirely dismissing adversity as a precursor to resilience, indigenous peoples place greater emphasis on the strengths-based concepts such as common sense, wisdom, and a sense of direction (Anderson, 2008).

To date, there have been few studies that have specifically explored indigenous *Māori* views on resilience. However, the few studies that have been conducted provide beneficial insight into *Māori* understandings and experiences. One of these is by Penehira and colleagues (2014), who, in line with other indigenous researchers, highlighted the disparity between the Western understanding of resilience and the *Māori* view of resilience. The authors argue that resilience theories from a Western perspective are centred around an individual's acknowledgement and acceptance of their adverse situations. In contrast, they suggest that a *Māori* concept of resilience would be more in line with a semantic understanding of resistance, a form of pushing back against adverse resisting situations rather than accepting them (Penehira et al., 2014). This is predicated on the understanding that the origins of *Māori* disadvantage are rooted in colonisation.

Additional evidence can be found in a study by Theodore et al. (2017), which looked at the resources that *Māori* used to excel in academia. They found a preferred preference for resources that were predominately based around relationships with family and friends

(Theodore et al., 2017). This provides some evidence to suggest that the resilience factors that *Māori* draw on differ from those of their Western counterparts.

To summarise, indigenous conceptions of resilience draw from a broader range of cultural resources and a stronger strengths-based approach. For this reason, indigenous resilience can differ from the traditional Western form in both definition and practice. Therefore, similar to other indigenous communities, *Māori* views and definitions of resilience should differ from traditional Western concepts.

### *Resilience in the Education Environment*

A good education provides a range of positive outcomes that are integral to tackling issues such as unemployment, crime, and poverty. The positive outcomes extend from high school graduation to degree completion. Successful high school completion has been shown to result in increased employability (Hahn et al., 2015). Similarly, degree completion leads to better housing affordability, job opportunities and medical affordability (Milne et al., 2016). Furthermore, Murray's (2009) review of the wider benefits of higher education points to significant social outcomes, including a reduction in criminal behaviour, a positive shift in parenting strategies, and increased social capital.

Despite these benefits, education is not a catchall solution, but it does play a part in addressing many of the social gaps that indigenous communities face. This is especially true in tertiary education (Perna, 2005). This is the reason why many countries and researchers around the world are looking for ways to retain indigenous students and communities in education (Borman & Overman, 2004; Cora-Bramble, 2006; Cotton et al., 2017; Shield, 2004). One of the ways that this can be achieved is through resilience by ensuring those who take up study have the resources to effectively navigate potential challenges that arise (Brewer et al., 2019).

The literature on resilience in education focuses on ensuring students have access to resources that would support resilience and are afforded the space to utilise relevant protective factors in the academic space. However, as we have previously identified, resilience traits or mechanism that individuals rely on would ideally depend on a range of factors that would include their cultural background. The identification of specific traits and protective factors relevant to enhancing educational performance and retention despite adversity is known as academic resilience (Morales, 2008).

Academic resilience has a long and diverse history in the psychological literature, exploring factors that aid academic success across a range of different cultural and minority groups (Morales, 2008; Morales 2013). One study that examined academic resilience of Mexican American High School students highlighted several significant predictors of resilience. The study surveyed 2169 Mexican students across three schools in California (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). The survey measured constructs including self-esteem, delinquency, stressful life events, school bonding, parental involvement, peer values and a variety of other variables. Findings illustrated that both support and a sense of belonging yielded a significant difference in achievement between resilient and non-resilient students. Identified variables included peer and family support, teacher support, motivation and peer belonging, positives ties to the school and valuing their position at the school (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997).

Similarly, other studies have explored and identified factors that assist in resilience across the tertiary sector. A scoping review of academic resilience by Brewer et al. (2019), which analysed 72 papers across 12 countries, identified factors that impede academic performance, but also enhance resilience. Brewer et al. (2019) identified a range of strategies across the different studies with social media, peer support, mindfulness, values, counselling, identity and spirituality amongst the strategies deemed important.

Although the history of resilience is vast, there is still much on the construct that we have yet to understand. Research to date has determined that culture does have an impact on resilience. However, mechanisms that underpin resilience in different cultures are not fully understood. Furthermore, there are limited number of studies that have explored Māori strategies in university. Additionally, the literature review points words resilience as utilising certain strengths (strategies, traits, social connections) based resources as ways to overcome challenges. This study seeks to obtain data which will aid in understanding resilience of Māori students at University, via interviews around strengths and challenges.

**The Aotearoa, New Zealand Context**

Since this study will focus on the experience of *Māori* tertiary students in *Aotearoa* (New Zealand), this section will explore the New Zealand context and the research approach adopted when working with members of the *Māori* community.

*Te Tiriti o Waitangi*

An important aspect of the New Zealand context is the acknowledgement and recognition of the Treaty of *Waitangi* and the myriad of breaches that have contributed to the disadvantage of *Māori*. The Treaty is regarded as New Zealand's founding document and lays out rights between *Māori* and the Crown (Hudson & Russell, 2009). It acknowledges *Māori* as *tangata whenua* (people of the land/first people) of *Aotearoa* and attempts to ensure equal rights and protection for both *Māori* and European settlers. The document was signed in 1840 by many *Māori* chiefs and representatives of the crown at *Waitangi* (Ministry of Culture & Heritage, 2017). It intended to ensure that both *Māori* and the European settlers were afforded equal protection under the law, while also allowing *Māori* to retain sovereignty.

The treaty is comprised of three articles. The articles cover autonomy, governorship, the retention of lands, protections of *taonga* (treasure), and rights and protections; however,

two versions of the treaty were written - one in English and the other in *te reo Māori*. The two versions were intended to be translations of each other; however, there are significant discrepancies between the content of the two translations. These discrepancies have, in part, led to the failure of the state to uphold many aspects of the treaty. Acknowledging the failures of honouring the treaty, the 1975 Treaty of Waitangi Act was passed. This saw the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal while also restoring the treaty's legal authority. The Waitangi Tribunal allowed *Māori* to legally address claims in relation to Treaty of Waitangi breaches. These ranged from the illegal confiscation of land to the preservation of language and intellectual property (Hudson & Russel, 2009).

The treaty covers a range of principles that underline the three articles. Some of these include *tino rangatiratanga* (autonomy), *kaitiakitanga* (protection), *whakaoranga* (redress), w*hai wāhi* (participation), *mahi tahi* (partnership), *kāwanatanga* (governance), *kōwhiringa* (options), and *rite tahi* (equality) (Victoria University of Wellington, 2019). These have been summarised as partnership, protection and participation in the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988). By following or adhering to these principles we can inevitably ensure indigenous systems and knowledge are protected.

Failure in the past to protect indigenous ways is noticeable in the blasé way researchers have treated indigenous knowledge in the past (Cochran et al., 2008). The importance of the Treaty to protect *Māori* knowledge, culture, and treasures are integral (Hudson & Russell, 2009). The authors suggest that the principles in the treaty can be enacted in research through careful planning and activation of the three overarching themes of Protection, Partnership, and Participation (Hudson & Russell, 2009). It is via the implementation of these principles that researchers can align their studies with the treaty. This can be achieved through careful planning, robust consultation, and the implementation of *kaupapa Māori* principles and practices. A detailed outline of the process undertaken in

this thesis will be discussed below. This ensures that when doing research, you are true to the experiences of participants and are not misinterpreting views, causing harm to their culture, or perpetuating harmful fallacies.

### *The positioning of Māori*

Since the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal, there has been substantial progress made in reducing inequalities between *Māori* and other ethnic groups; however, there is still much more that needs to be achieved. *Māori* continue to find themselves at the wrong end of New Zealand's statistics across a range of social, economic and health domains.

Breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi along with institutionalised and systematic racism have continued to perpetuate the inequalities experienced by *Māori*. These include poor health outcomes, lower economic status, lower levels of academic success and high rates of crime and incarceration (Statistics New Zealand, 2013; Corrections New Zealand, 2019). Most of these statistics are a by-product of institutionalised inequalities and colonisation. One way that issues such as these can be addressed is through increased focus on equity through education.

## Conducting Research with Māori

### *Kaupapa Māori Methodology*

*Kaupapa Māori* is a method of indigenous research centred around *Māori* values and culture. It moves away from traditional Western views of research and refocuses on *Māori* world views and knowledge systems (Smith & Reid, 2000). The term *kaupapa Māori* can be defined as 'the *Māori* way or agenda' (Henry & Pene, 2001, p. 235) and comprises a range of principles and practices. It is rooted in traditional *Māori* ways of doing, being and thinking. In its purest form, *kaupapa* can be summarised as research with *Māori*, for *Māori* and by *Māori* (Smith & Reid, 2000).

Some principles that *Māori* have identified that define *kaupapa Māori* research are: research that is culturally safe, usually guided by a *kaumātua* (elder), a desire to uncover and reinstate *mātauranga Māori*, and the ability to address *Māori* needs while recognising *Māori* culture (Henry & Pene, 2001). From a *kaupapa* position, this includes *Aroha ki te tangata* (respect for people), *Kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face), and *Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (not trampling over the mana of the people) (Cram, 2009; Jones et al., 2010). In other words, this can be described as research that respects, acknowledges, and protects *Māori*.

One of the aforementioned principles is the use of *mātauranga Māori* (*Māori* knowledge systems). *Mātauranga Māori* refers to the use of *Māori* knowledge and includes all aspects of *te ao Māori*. It recognises traditional *Māori* ways of how knowledge is recorded and communicated, e.g., through oral traditions, and encompasses cultural values, beliefs, and customs (Hikuroa, 2017). This line of research generally takes on a more participant-centred and qualitative approach (Penehira & Doherty, 2013; Te Morenga et al., 2018).

A fundamental aspect of *kaupapa Māori* research is the identity of the researcher. Rewi (2014) highlights the importance of being an insider, as the researcher holds unique knowledge and understanding of the culture, which is important in the interpreting and understanding of the data. Despite emphasising the importance of this, Rewi (2014) does not advocate a specific *Māori* only position, acknowledging that there may be researchers of non-*Māori* descent who will engage in research with *Māori*. In these situations, Rewi recommends a strong support system and guidance from *Māori* academics or leaders from within the community. This support aids the researcher in understanding and interpreting the data in a culturally appropriate way Rewi (2014).

Previous research by *Māori* academics exemplifies how a *kaupapa Māori* approach to research looks. A *kaupapa Māori* research approach incorporates several principles and methods that embodies a *kaupapa* perspective. For example, a study by Jones and colleagues

that examined *whānau* health incorporated more than the Western psychological method of structured interviews. Their multiple methods included photovoice (a method using photographs and images to explore experience) and drawings, as these techniques would capture greater depth of *whānau* experiences (Jones et al., 2010). This approach, also, allowed the researchers to step away from written surveys and questions and to focus on oral and visual methods.

Another example of *kaupapa Māori* principles in practice is through the work of Rewi (2014), who reflects on the principles incorporated in her work with the *Kīngitanga*. Here Rewi reflects on the incorporation of *tikanga* in the form of *karakia* before and after researcher interviews. This acknowledges the ways that traditional *Māori* have conducted *hui* by clearing the way for discussions and subsequently lifting the heaviness of those discussions at its conclusion (Rewi, 2014).

The *kaupapa Māori* approach extends beyond simple 'what and how' research is conducted. Although the approach includes certain practices, it can be considered more of a paradigm, or methodological strategy that challenges certain political positions to bring transformation for *Māori* (Smith & Reid, 2000). In essence, the research challenges the *Pākehā* narrative to bring about change that culminates in social balance. Smith and Reid (2000) describe this change as less about retribution, but rather about the restoration of *mana*.

Another aspect that is important in k*aupapa Māori* research is the concept of *tika* or *tikanga*, which can be described as doing what is right (Māori Dictionary, 2019). This pertains to certain cultural practices that are important when communicating in a cultural space, including the incorporation of *karakia*, mihi, and *te reo Māori. Karakia* are prayers/incantations that should be used to safely opening or space to have constructive dialogue. Similarly, its used to close a space and clearing the path ahead (Rewi, 2014). The

*mihi*, a traditional *Māori* way of introducing yourself, where you come from and your ancestors, builds connections people, by acknowledging and honouring their *whakapapa*.

In addition, qualitative interview is an example of a research method that would align with the *kaupapa Māori* framework. Here qualitative interviews aligned with *kaupapa Māori* research as they give meaningful voice to the experiences of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This method allows for *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face) research and allows the research to incorporate cultural practices and knowledge, treating all information shared as important and acceptable data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

### Challenges for Non-Māori

As previously highlighted, a challenge for non-Māori researchers conducting research with *Māori* is the ethnic identity of the researcher, which may limit non-Māori researchers from being able to perform *kaupapa Māori* research in its purest form. This limitation is predominantly due to the potential lack of understanding that a non-Māori researcher may have around the *Māori* culture. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that non-Māori researchers cannot conduct research with *Māori*, but rather that additional support may be needed. One direction that researchers of non-Māori ethnicity can take is known as the *Tiaki*, whereby researchers work under the supervision of a guardian who is of *Māori* descent (Smith, 1992).

### Reflexivity and Positioning

A key aspect that needs to be considered in working with indigenous communities is the positioning of the researcher in relation to the research. This is important as it reveals underlying assumptions and views held by the researcher and the impact they may have on the data gathering process (Hollard, 1999). This takes on both the epistemological and methodological approaches. It is therefore important that researchers are aware of the impact

and influence that they bring to the project across the research design, data gathering and data analysis phases of the study.

**The Present Study**

*Aims and Objectives*

This study aims to address the current issues faced by *Māori* students at university by shifting from a deficit to a strengths-based approach, using *kaupapa Māori* principles. It adds to the literature in both the challenges and strengths aspects by shedding light on situations that *Māori* students continue to face in the tertiary sector and identifies a set of resources that *Māori* students have used successfully.

The study aims to achieve this by exploring challenges that *Māori* students encounter and the strengths and strategies they use to overcome these challenges to be successful. Due to the very strong and varying views that *Māori* researchers have on the topic, this study will be defined as a *kaupapa Māori* inspired approach rather than being defined as a *kaupapa Māori* research project. The research will be designed to incorporate as many *kaupapa Māori* principles as possible, under the guidance of a *Māori* researcher. We set out to achieve this by taking a strong *kaupapa Māori* inspired approach using methods and practice in keeping with *te ao Māori*, which utilised and incorporated cultural knowledge and materials. This included *kōrero* (interviews) and a form of value card sort designed around the *Māori* world view. From this study, we will gain insight into the experiences of *rangatahi Māori* and the skills they employ to overcome adversity and achieve. Furthermore, the tools and approaches used make a significant contribution to the field while also adding a practical tool for future researchers.

To summarise our approach, we will be using semi-structured qualitative interviews and the *Whai Tikanga* Value Card Sort (WT-VCS), to incorporate *Māori* knowledge systems and appropriate cultural practices to better anchor this research project to a strong *kaupapa*

approach. In addition to this, we will incorporate a comprehensive consultation process to firmly integrate principles that uphold the Treaty of Waitangi. By using values and practices that pertain to the culture of the participant, we anticipate richer and more robust data.

*Methodology*

This study drew from the principles of a *kaupapa Māori* approach by incorporating *mātauranga Māori*. This is achieved by using a research tool that is based on and incorporates *Māori* knowledge. The tool used is the *Whai Tikanga*-value cards sort (WT-VCS), developed by Dr McLachlan and colleagues (McLachlan et al., 2017). The WT-VCS integrates the use of both *take pū* (*Māori* values) and *Whakatauki* (traditional sayings/proverbs). Initially developed to aid in the treatment and wellbeing of *Māori*, the WT-VCS is part of a broader set of resources known as *He Puna Whakaata* (McLachlan et al., 2019), which was designed for the purpose of working towards positive outcomes for *Māori*. We chose this resource as it allows for the incorporation of *Māori* knowledge and better aligns with the world view of participants.

Over and above the incorporation of *kaupapa Māori* principles, this study was also strongly aligned to the principles outlined in the Treaty of Waitangi as mentioned above. This was achieved through the incorporation of each of Hudson and Russell's (2009) three principles: protection, partnership, and participation. This was achieved through careful partnership with different members of the *Māori* community through feedback and consultation. These groups included my supervisor, young *Māori* students/academics, connected parties, *Māori* groups on the Victoria University of Wellington campus, and research participants.

Protection was achieved by working with individuals such as my supervisor and members from the *Māori* research office; in addition, interested parties played a pivotal role in ensuring that the decisions made were in line with *Māori tikanga*, appropriate and

culturally safe. Feedback and assistance were also sought from the creator of WT-VCS, to ensure that the tool was used correctly. This was to protect the participants, the culture, and the researcher.

Partnership was achieved by the careful work that was done with a range of different groups. One of these groups was the *whānau* lab, a research group consisting of young *Māori* and *Pākehā* students who were doing psychological research with *Māori*. This group provided advice and feedback on several aspects of the research design, both prior to and during the research stages of this study. Furthermore, consultation was also sought from the *Māori* research office on constructing the study in a way that is appropriate for *Māori*. This principle was also closely aligned with that of participation, as we worked with the research participants to ensure that the transcripts and findings reflected their experiences.

Participation was implemented through relationships with the participants, as well as other groups on campus. With the participants there was care to arrange a suitable time for meeting, and they were provided opportunities for feedback and clarification on completed transcripts. This was to ensure that the information recorded was true to the experiences they shared. Another way participation was fostered was by taking the findings back to participants and other groups such as *Āwhina*, to receive feedback and guidance on the results and interpretation. Although I have separated these actions into one of the three principles, the consultation process was across all the different stages of the study, with the aforementioned groups, and all worked in tandem to ensure the principles of protection, participation and partnership are achieved.

The WT-VCS draws inspiration from the traditional value card sort activity, which aims to help individuals identify the values that are important in their lives either in general or within a specific context. For example, if an individual was interested in exploring the values that were important to a specific context such as university education, then the card

sort would aid the participants in unpacking their values for that context. However, the traditional form of card sort is highly does not capture *Māori* Values (McLachlan et al., 2019) centric and therefore does not necessarily fit well with non-Western groups or cultures. The WT-VCS addresses this by adapting the technique for *Māori* by replacing Western values with values derived from *te ao Māori*. It goes a step further by incorporating *Māori whakataukī* (sayings and proverbs) to aid in the understanding of the values. The values are printed in *te reo Māori* and English translations are provided for the *whakataukī.*

Although, the WT-VCS tool is yet to be used for research purposes, it should demonstrate the benefits of using a culturally appropriate tool when working with *Māori*, and the effectiveness of the tool in doing qualitative research. From this, we will provide a set of strength-based factors that could assist *Māori* students in completing their degrees. Also, we opted to use semi-structured interviews, as this allowed participants to voice their lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It also provided us with the space to incorporate the WT-VCS into the interview process, as well as a range of other *tikanga* practises as described above. As discussed previously, semi-structured interviews have been used as a data collection method that aligns with *kaupapa Māori* theory (Jones et al., 2010; Rewi, 2014; Hollis-English, 2015;).

### *Perspective and Positioning*

As far as my positioning as a researcher is concerned, I am a middle-aged man of colour, who has been raised in a multi-racial society, who immigrated to and now lives in, New Zealand. This positioning raises two points. The first is concerning similarity. I have found living in New Zealand that there are many similarities between my own South African culture and the *Māori* culture. This is evident in relation to values, but also with issues around marginalisation, which both cultures grapple with which is rooted in colonisation in New Zealand and apartheid in South Africa (Adhikari, 2005). The second point is that despite

these similarities, I am not a member of the *Māori* culture and therefore need to be careful of the assumptions and understandings that I bring to the research, regardless of those similarities. Based on this positioning, four points deserve special attention: careful consideration on the research design; a robust consultation process; reflection on the decisions and positions relating to the interviews; and the use of *tikanga* and *te reo Māori*.

Given these points, stated above, I am of the understanding that despite the similarities of my own culture to the *Māori* culture, my lived experiences generally differ from *Māori* living in New Zealand. Moreover, my understanding of the *Māori* culture is very much an outsider's view. Thus, I have positioned myself as a guest in the culture and am privileged to be entrusted with the experiences of others. As a guest in the culture, I am less familiar to the concepts and experiences shared and should seek clarity when concepts are discussed and examples are shared, rather than assuming I understand. It is imperative that this *mahi* allows for the lived experiences of *Māori tauira* to be heard in the data, with minimal influence and impact from the researcher.

Due to my position the decision was made to enrol at a local *wānanga* in Wellington to study *te reo Māori* and *tikanga*, to enhance this research. This assisted in appropriately understanding and navigating space that will be shared with participants, as well as understanding the cultural practices and content that will be used in this study. My studies ensured that cultural practices such as *karakia* and *mihi* were understood and were conducted in *te reo*. It also provided a foundational understanding of the *take pū* and ensured the correct pronunciation of *take pū* was used.

**Method**

The aim of this study was to explore the factors that contribute to the resilience of *Māori* students who are successful at university. To conduct this explorative study, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were adopted. This qualitative method offers an effective way to explore the lived experiences of students. A major benefit of this approach is that it gives a voice to the participants and better aligns with *kaupapa Māori* methodology (Graham & Smith, 1999).

However, due to Covid-19, all interviews were conducted online. It was decided that the best way to maintain face-to-face interviews in a safe manner was to use Zoom (an online video conferencing program). On moving the interviews to zoom, conversations were held with the Whānau Lab on what this would look like. The outcomes resulted in: starting and finishing with *karakia*, providing the participants with the opportunity to lead the *karakia*, spending time on *whakawhanaungatanga* by the sharing of our *mihi*, and acknowledging *Māori* as *Tangata Whenua* (people of the land). These aspects were incorporated throughout the process as described below. In addition to this, it was ensured that participants' details were collected in order to send out a *koha* for their participation.

Other qualitative options, such as focus groups were also considered. Focus groups would have allowed for the collection of data from a greater number of participants in a shorter time frame. Furthermore, the nature of focus groups would provide participants with a form of social support for their experiences. However, limitations of this method are that participants have less time to unpack their experiences, may be reluctant to express opposing viewpoints and a group card sort would prove challenging on Zoom. The interviews allowed for greater depth and detail in participants' responses. Furthermore, face-to-face research was effectively halted due to Covid-19, and online interviews were safer and more efficient for data collection.

.

Another advantage of doing interviews is that it better aligns with *kaupapa Māori* methodology (Graham & Smith, 1999). As previously mentioned, we opted to use a *kaupapa Māori* inspired approach. This meant that as many *kaupapa* and *Mātauranga Māori* principles that could be included, were incorporated. These consisted of using materials that have been made by *Māori* for *Māori*, incorporating tikanga such as *karakia timatanga* and *karakia whakamutunga* (opening and closing pray/traditional chant), *mihi*, *koha*, and use of *Te Reo Māori* where possible (Graham & Smith, 1999).

This research was also guided by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and *Mātauranga* approaches. As mentioned above, the principles of partnership, protection and participation were carefully considered and implemented in a variety of ways throughout the stages of the research. The methodology including having thorough and regular communication and consultation with *Māori* students, academic staff, and the research participants. These communications enabled me to continually incorporate feedback and adjust my positionality as a researcher as required. This research was approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee (Ethics Application: 0000027483).

**Procedure**

This section discusses the design, recruitment, debrief and feedback processes. To assess the overall interview, an exercise was conducted with members of the *Whānau lab*, a Victoria University of Wellington research group. This was done using the adapted questions and served as the final form of feedback on the research design and methodology. From the exercise and feedback additional changes were made to ensure that the research interviews could be conducted in an appropriate time frame.

*Recruitment*

Participants were recruited online via social media platforms (Social Media Advertisement, Appendix A), snowballing and word of mouth. Participants needed to self-identify as *Māori* and have completed at least one trimester of academic study, with the advertisement asking 'are you *Māori* and have completed 1 trimester of academic study'. All participants' *iwi* affiliation were recorded in Table 1. Participants expressed their interest to take part in the study via an online registration form. Once participants had registered their interest, contact was made via email to arrange a suitable time to conduct the interview. All interviews were conducted online via Zoom (video conferencing software). The duration of interviews varied, ranging in time from 60 minutes 120 minutes.

*Debrief and Feedback*

Once all the activities of the interview were completed, the participant was debriefed (see Appendix E) and sent a final feedback questionnaire within 24 hours. This allowed participants the opportunity to stay informed and involved with the ongoing process of the research and gave them the opportunity to add any additional comments.  For participating and completing the interview, participants were mailed a *koha* ($20 grocery voucher) to thank them for their time.

**Participants**

Twelve participants (three males, eight females, and one gender diverse) took part in the study. The higher ration of females to males we see in this study is typically found in universities across New Zealand where there tends to be a higher ratio of females to males. New Zealand's tertiary education statistics corroborate this trend, showing in 2020 200,400 females, 129,135 males and 595 other gendered students enrolled (Tertiary Participation, 2022). The ages of participants varied been 18 years and 44 years, with six between 18-24, three between 25-34 and three between 35-44 years. Eligibility criteria required individuals to

have completed one trimester of academic education at tertiary level. The sample size for this study was based on the research Guest et al. (2006), who identified 12 as an appropriate sample size to reach saturation, for qualitative interviews. Saturation is defined as the point where no new codes could be derived from the data collection process (Guest et al., 2006). As Guest et al. (2009) identified this as the number of where the majority of interviews studies reached saturation. Additional demographic information regarding participants' year of study, area of habitation, and *Iwi* affiliation, which was recorded during the interview, are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographic Information*

| Participant | Gender | Year | Age | City | Iwi/Tribal affiliation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TOM | F | 4 | 18-24 | Napier | Ngāti te rangi, Ngāti Ranginui |
| BRW | F | 2 | 18-24 | Wainuiomata | Ngati Porou |
| MMH | F | PG | 35-44 | Hawkes Bay | Nga Puhi, Rangitane Ki Waurau |
| MAF | F | 1 | 18-24 | Wainuiomata | Tainui, Ngaati Raukawa, Nagt Haua, Te Arawa |
| SHF | F | PG | 35-44 | Hastings | Ngati Kahungunu |
| DAM | GD | 3 | 25-34 | Manawatu | Ngati Ruanui, Rongomaiwahine |
| MAW | F | 4 | 18-24 | Wellington | Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa |
| HAM | M | C | 25-34 | Wellington | Ngāti Ruanui |
| LUM | F | 4 | 35-44 | Wellington | Ngati Porou |
| WAF | M | 1 | 18-24 | Nelson | Ngāti Koata, Kai Tahu |
| ASA | M | 4 | 18-24 | Wainuiomata | Ngati Porou |
| SSA | F | C | 25-34 | Wellington | Ngapuhi |

*Note.* Year=Year of study, City=Area/region/city/town participants have spent the most time in,

PG=Postgraduate, C=Completed, F=Female, M=Male, GD= Gender Diverse

*Interviews*

At the start of the interview, participants were informed of the purpose and content of the interview, their rights as a research participant and the consent procedure. This was done by discussing the study's information sheet and consent form, included in Appendix B and Appendix C respectively. Once participants agreed verbally to participate, they were asked to provide consent via email. Once the consent was received, the interview began. Recording only commenced once consent was received.

**Traditional Interviews.** To ensure as many consistencies with *kaupapa Māori* methodology as possible, all interviews commenced with a *karakia* (opening prayer) and a *mihi* (traditional introduction). Participants were invited to perform the *karakia* if they wished. If they chose not to, the researcher performed a *karakia*. Once the *karakia* was said, both the researcher and the participant did their *mihi*, in either English, *Te Reo Māori* or both. After the introductions, the researcher started with the first open-ended question.

The interviews were split into two parts. The first consisted of an interview where the researcher used semi-structured questions to gain understanding of participants' perspectives, firstly of their challenges in their academic sphere, and secondly of the strategies they used to overcome these challenges. The second part consisted of the *Whai Tikanga* Value card sort (WT-VCS) which contained two parts, the activity and discussion (as detailed below).

Interview prompts followed a semi-structured approach where the researcher provided open-ended questions, and participants responded as they saw fit. The purpose of the interview was to capture participants' experiences that were both tumultuous and efficacious. The researcher utilised several probing techniques as defined by Clark (2009) to elicit information. These included the silent probe, encouragement, elaboration and clarification, and retrospective elaboration and clarification. This allowed the researcher to

further explore ideas that were raised in the interview in order to gain further insights. Due to the positioning of the researcher, as an outsider, the probing techniques of elaboration and exhaustion were frequently used. This was to ensure a proper understanding of the participants' ideas and to provide plenty of opportunity for additional information.

**Card Sort.** The WT-VCS card sort (McLachlan et al., 2017) after the participants had completed the challenges and strengths part of the interview. The responses were completed online, using Qualtrics. Once participants completed the traditional interview, they were subsequently sent a link to the Qualtrics survey. The survey contained a brief information sheet about the activity, which was discussed with the participants, followed by a short set of demographic questions. The card sort consisted of three sections. In the first section, participants were asked to sort all 40 *take pū* cards into one of three categories: *whakahirahira* (very important), *hira* (important) and *ehara I te aha* (least important). In the second section, they were asked to narrow down the *whakahirahira* cards to the ten most important and in the final section, they narrowed down the remaining ten *take pū* to five and ranked them based on what was most relevant to their academic success. Once completed, the participants' top three values were further explored using the adapted question prompts. These questions are found in Appendix D.

**Materials**

Interview questions were designed following Braun and Clark's (2007) recommended procedures for creating interview questions. In line with previous research, we examined two aspects of resilience in academic settings: strategies and adversity. We aimed to take a strengths-based approach in this research; however, also exploring challenges provided insight into the effective strategies used by participants.

Effort was placed on ensuring the questions were clear and concise, but also open enough to evoke a range of responses. Once the questions were drafted, further consultation

was done, with students, scholars and staff to refine the research materials. This list of final questions made up the first two sections of the interviews and can be found in Appendix D.

The third section of the interview was based on the WT-VCS card sort (McLachlan, et al, 2017). The card sort was adapted using Qualtrics and the questions used to explore participants' responses were adapted from *He Puna Whakaata* (McLachlan et al., 2019)[1].

*Traditional Interview*

The first block of Interview questions elicited information around the challenges that the participants experienced while at university. This block was designed to provide insight into the experiences that *Māori* students face and need to overcome. Examples of questions are: 1. What are the challenges that you have faced that have made studying harder for you? 2. As a student of *Māori* descent, what challenges do you feel you face that are unique to being *Māori*? A full list of questions and probes can be found in Appendix D.

The second block of interview questions elicited information on how participants navigated university and overcame these challenges. This block provides insight into the various ways, methods, strategies, and resources participants used to navigate university and prevail over challenging experiences. Examples of the interview questions were: 1. What are some of the strategies that you have used to overcome these challenges? 2. What are some of the resources you have utilised to help you? A full list of the questions and probes can be found in Appendix D.

Participants were also provided with an example of a strategy or strength. The example provided was: 'The *Whānau lab,* a group of students who work together and support

---

[1] Prior to the adapting and converting of the activity, the researcher travelled to attend training by Dr McLachlan, to ensure a proper understanding of how to use the WT-VCS resource and understand the *kaupapa* behind it. Feedback on the adapted questions and the online activity was provided by Dr McLachlan, and further adaptions were made based on his feedback.

one another to navigate challenging experiences at university.' Furthermore, it was made

clear that the terms 'strategies' and 'strengths' could include anything that participants felt

has helped them overcome challenges or get ahead at university.

### Card Sort

The final block of the interview was based around the WT-VCS *card* sort activity.

This consisted of a set of 40 cards developed by McLachlan et al. (2017). These cards each

contained a *take pū* (*Māori* value) and a *whakataukī* (*Māori* proverb). An example of a card

can be found in Figure 1. All of the cards were digitally duplicated and incorporated into an

online survey using Qualtrics. Participants were required to narrow down the set of cards

until only five of the values that they felt were most relevant to their academic success were

left. These top five values were then ranked by participants, with one being the most

important of the five and five being the least important of the five. These values were further

explored in the interview through a set of questions adapted from the *He Puna Whakaata*

(McLachlan et al., 2019), which can be found in Appendix D.

**Figure 1**

*An Adapted Online version of a WT-VCS Card*
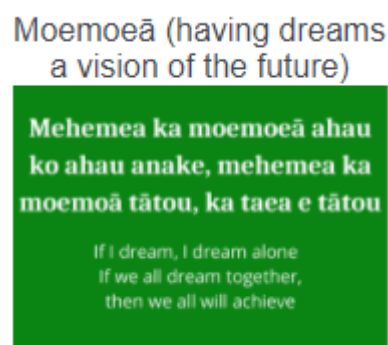


*Note*. Top section of the image (black on white) contains the *take pū* with English
translation. The lower section (white on green) contains the relevant *Whakatauki* with
English translation

**Table 2**

*Rank Order of Participants Top 5 Values*

| Participant | RANK | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TOM | Moemoeā | Kaitiakitanga | Aroha | Rongo | Manawanui |
| WAF | Aroha | Whanaungatanga | Noho puku | Whakaaro pai* | Moemoeā |
| LUM | Whakapapa | Toiora | Humarie | Manawanui | Pukumahi |
| HAM | Kotahitanga | Whanaungatanga | Whakapono | Whakapapa | Manaakitanga |
| MAW | - Respe | Moemoeā | Whanaungatanga | Ako | Manawanui |
| DAM | Whakapapa | Manaakitanga | Whanaungatanga | Maia | Mana |
| SHF | Moemoeā | Hoa | Pukumahi | Manawanui | Manakitanga |
| MAF | Whakapono | Whakapapa | Whakaoho mauri | Moemoeā | Manawanui |
| MMH | Manawanui | Whanaungatanga | Ako | Pou Whirinaki | Whakakata |
| BRW | Moemoeā | Ako | Manawanui | Tumanko | Whakakata |
| ASA | Manawanui | Pakari ai te tinana | Pukumahi | Hoa | Moemoeā |
| SSA | Hoa tāpui | Mana | Hūmārie | Whakaoha mauri | Noho Puku |

*Note*: A Replica table with English translation can be found in Appendix G; *Whakaaro pai mōku ake

*Equipment*

All interviews were done online using the Zoom video conference software. Each of the participants used their own device with video and audio equipment. The researcher used an HP Pavillon laptop with built-in webcam and a Blue Microphones Snowball iCE microphone. All interviews were recorded on Zoom and saved securely offline.

**Analytical Plan**

A thematic analysis (TA) was employed to analyse the data. This method of analysis is used to identify themes and patterns of data within a data set. This study employed Braun and Clark's (2013) method, which allows for a focus on the participants' experiences and how they make sense of the world.

*Transcription*

All transcripts were transcribed using the orthographic transcription style, which focuses on the recording of spoken words and sound of both the researcher and the participant (Braun & Clark, 2013). This was completed utilising parts of Braun and Clark's (2013) transcription notation system adapted from Jefferson (2004). Two computer programs - Microsoft word, for text, and Audacity, for audio - were used to transcribe. Once the transcripts were completed, they were reread, and all identifiable information was removed or changed in order in to protect the identities of participants. This was done where the information shared by the participant could lead to identification, which included, but was not limited to, workplaces, names, schools and suburbs. The transcripts were then emailed to participants, giving them the opportunity to check through the transcripts to provide clarification or correction. In the case of removal or change of identifiable information, comments were left in the transcripts for participants to check to ensure that any changes that were made did not alter the intended meaning of the information shared.

Once the transcripts were completed each one was printed for reading and note taking purposes. This was done in accordance with Braun and Clark's (2007) process of familiarisation. This is an important part of the transcribing section and allows researchers to become familiar with dataset by immersing themselves in the data.

*Coding*

The process of identifying and recording parts of the data was done using NVivo (Version 12). The complete coding approach was used, where all data deemed relevant to the research question were coded. A total of 540 references were recorded.

Using the complete coding method as described by Braun and Clark (2013) the entire data set was systematically worked through and coded. This involved identifying large to small chunks of data of anything and everything that may be of relevance to the research question. Each chunck of data was allocated a code that refelected the semantic content of the relevant chunk of data, also known as data-derieved or semantic coding. Once all the data coding was completed, all codes were collated and codes with similar semantic meanings were merged.

Once the process of coding was completed, the process of identifying patterns in the data began. This process started by reviewing codes to better capture the data they represent and grouping themes based on similarity. Codes were grouped based on topic similarity, concepts, or issues. Based on this analysis seven initial candidate themes emerged from the challenges data and four initial candidate themes emerged from the strengths data. The candidate themes were further revised and reviewed iteratively until the final themes and subthemes emerged (see Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4). The final stage of the analysis was identifying the patterns between the themes and how the themes of both the challenges and strength sections interact with one another.

**Figure 2**

*Thematic Map of Strengths and Challenges*
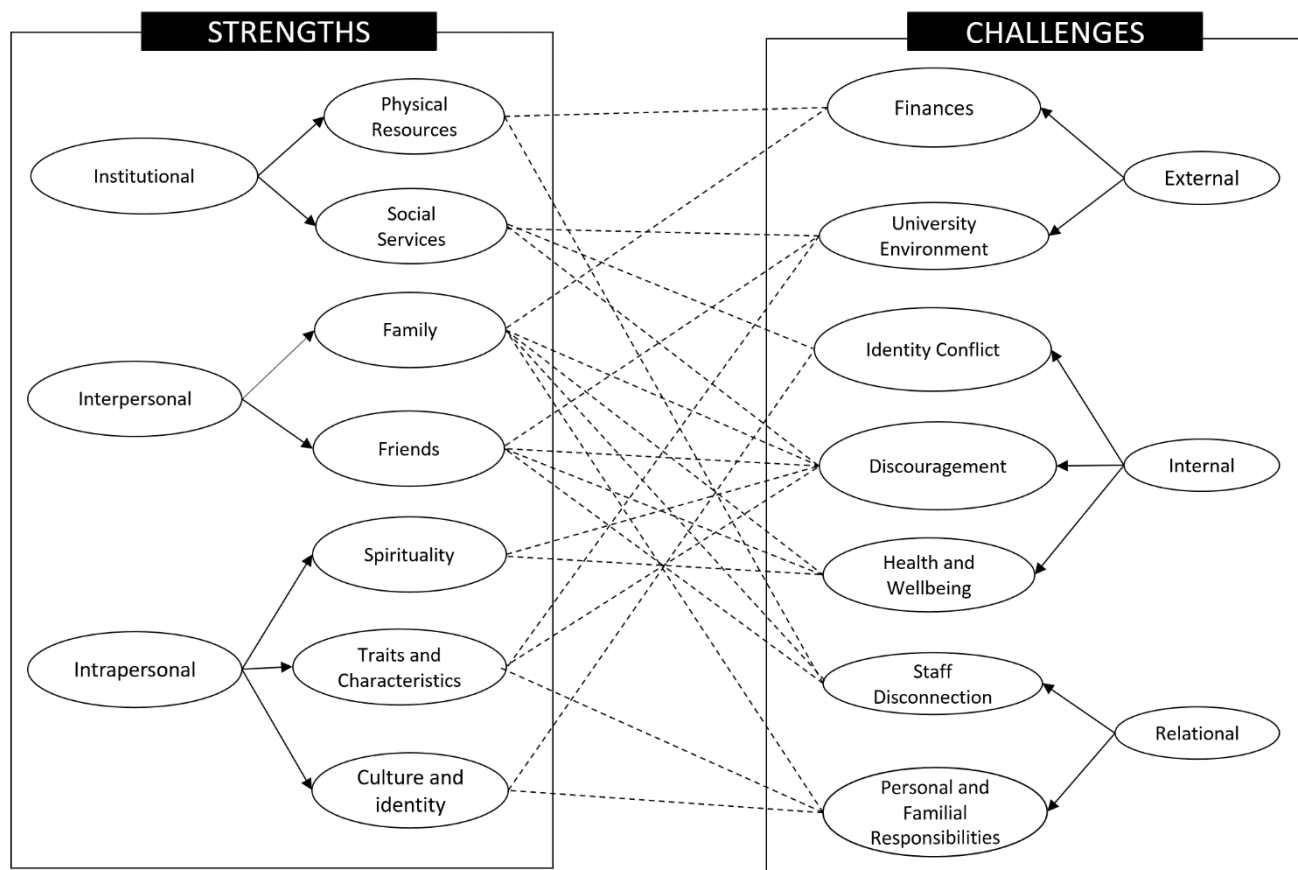


*Note*. Broken lines depict inter-related relationships between strengths and challenges

## Results and Discussions

Prior to finalizing the results of this study, further consultation was sought in accordance with *kaupapa Māori* methodology. This included meeting with *Māori* staff, and *Māori* students. The consultation related to the key findings and the method of dissemination. From these meetings six key recommendations were made and incorporated into the thesis. The list of recommendations with additional rational can be found in Appendix F. The results of this study are grouped into the two overarching themes of Challenges and Strengths.

## Challenges

Three distinct themes emerged in the discussion of challenges. These were: External (subthemes: University Environment and Finances), Internal (subthemes: Identity Conflict, Health and Wellbeing, and Discouragement), Relational (subthemes: Staff Disconnection, and Familial Responsibilities). A breakdown of the prevalence of themes and subthemes can be found in Table 3 with the thematic map in Figure 3.

### *External*

The External theme is the most prominent and salient theme in the challenges section, accounting for 45% of the total challenges codes. It encompasses contextual and situational challenges and comprises of two subthemes: University Environment (36.67%) and Financial (8.33%). Eleven of the twelve participants experienced challenges that fall into this theme.

**Table 3**

*Prevalence and Percentages of Themes and Subthemes for Challenges*

| Theme | Subtheme | References | | Total (%) | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. External | | 81 | | 45 | |
| | University Environmental | | 66 | | 36.67 |
| | Financial | | 15 | | 8.33 |
| 2. Internal | | 68 | | 37.78 | |
| | Identity Conflict | | 30 | | 16.67 |
| | Health and Wellbeing | | 19 | | 10.56 |
| | Discouragement | | 19 | | 10.56 |
| 3. Relational | | 31 | | 17.22 | |
| | Staff Disconnection | | 16 | | 8.89 |
| | Personal and Personal and Familial Responsibilities | | 15 | | 8.33 |

**Figure 3**

*Thematic Map of Challenges*
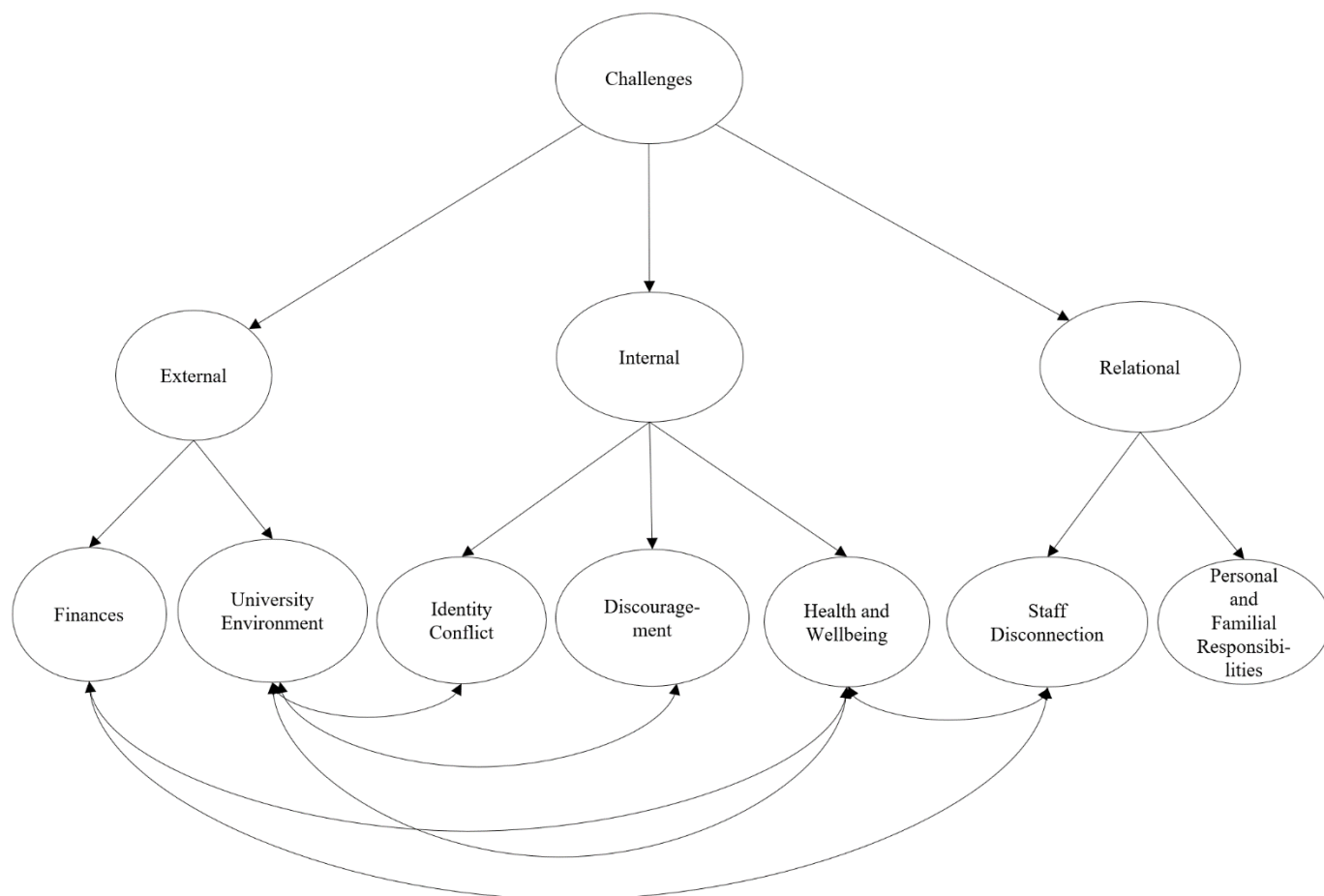


*Note.* Double-headed arrows represent a bi-directional relationship between subthemes.

**University Environment.** This subtheme covered challenges participants faced that related to the university setting. It included needing to manage themselves in the university environment both in connection with the pervading atmosphere and resource-specific issues. The university environment was an issue for participants as many found the atmosphere to be negative and foreign. On top of this, resources were described as limited and competition for

those resources was high. This is depicted in participants' experiences expressed below, one participant expressed simply finding her place or how she fit into the institution as vexing.

(MAW) '*think one of the biggest challenges for me uhm was kind of figuring out how to navigate my um experience within the University as an institution and that / where I kind of fit in with the institution*'.

Another described the atmosphere of the institution as hopeless, which had a negative effect on his overall experience at the university.

(HAM) '*there was a real spirit of hopelessness uhm yeah uhm it just felt really tangible to me as I kind of walked through walked through you know the corridors and sat in classes that uhm yeah there was just something about the institution as a whole that made me think this is quite a hopeless place like the environment is not very positive*'.

The negative feeling that participants expressed about the university is further illustrated by another participant who described the atmosphere as being foreign. The foreign nature of the environment is highlighted by the differences between the university space and the spaces familiar to her. In the extract below, we see the participant struggling with the cold atmosphere, as it is foreign to her own experiences of shared spaces. She highlights the disparities between the warm, cheerful, family environment, which she is accustomed to, and the cold and draining university setting, which she is required to navigate. Similarly, in the second extract below this is depicted in how the participant feels the environment differs from what he is used to, such as the differences in humour between his high school and the university:

(MAF) '*I have a lot of Māori family uhm whenever we together uhm it's just like a very like family kind of environment so everyone's like very talkative and very uhm*

*yeah very close and then when I'm in my environment at school or in class it's just uhm it's just not there like it just feels a bit cold yeah'.*

(ASA) *'people don't look like me and like id tried to crack jokes and they couldn't land because like they would only work on brown crowds and so I started to realize quick that my jokes are not even working I'm not even funny here'*

This finding aligns with results of other studies on indigenous communities at university. Themes such as the internal struggle of negative perceptions and the need to navigate the environment emerged as challenges expressed by *Māori* and other indigenous groups described by Schofield et al. (2013). Their findings highlight cultural conflict as one of the most pressing challenges that indigenous students faced when entering the tertiary sector.

Over and above the atmosphere of the environment, participants also expressed challenges around the limited resources that were available. Participants had to compete for limited space and resources, such as computers and study rooms in the university. For some this was particularly challenging due to additional existing personal issues, such as anxiety, which further impaired their ability to find spaces suitable for their academic needs. Below a participant describes one participant trying to find a suitable space to work; however, her need for a quiet place with fewer students makes this especially difficult as it further limits the spaces available. As a result of this, she spends a great amount of time searching for a suitable space.

(BRW) '*I'll end up wandering trying to find proper study spaces outside of like the library were its super crowded or where the hub area if there's a lot of people'.*

**Finances.** The second subtheme was financial struggles. This related to a range of monetary issues that the participants faced. Finances was also a recurring theme among

participants. Some participants needed to work either several jobs and difficult hours or were forced to stretch their limited income. This resulted in secondary effects such as poor mental health and limited time available to focus on academic content.

In accordance with findings by Theodore et al. (2017), limited financial resources tended to exacerbate other challenges. This is exemplified below where participants describe their financial position and the impact it had on other situations. In the extract we can identify a domino-effect, whereby, the financial situation caused mental and physical health issues which further impeded academic performance. Likewise, we can see how the financial impacts limited the participants access to social resources which in turn affected their well-being. It is noteworthy that the findings extend beyond simple monetary implications and highlights the importance of financial support, a finding supported by Guillory and Wolverton (2008).

> (MAF) *'for me I'm a very I uhm I need to interact with people uhm every now and then just to uhm to kind of be sane and because I don't have a like enough money to be able to go and socialise even with my family uhm like I can't do that so money is a really huge challenge for me being able to survive like mentally physically like the whole thing it's just yeah it's really difficult'.*

The extracts below highlight both the challenge these individuals faced navigating their financial situation but also the secondary effects they experienced. Here we can see how the financial situation affected their levels of stress. One participant exemplifies this when he did not have sufficient funds to repair his vehicle and how this lack of funded caused additional stress. Another describes his living environment where he is not able to afford and find accommodation, therefore needing to live in his vehicle.

(WAF) '*I remember there were times when I was like falling apart uhm yeah just no money in the bank was stressing out my car was breaking down multiple times which then hindered my financial income which the hindered my physical health which the hindered my studies'.*

(ASA) '*it was like real shit I liked moved out like four times in the past three years at one point I was like homeless it was shit this was like my third year at uni I had nowhere to go I was sleeping in my car for the whole 2nd trimester'*

This undoubtably would have impacted their academic performances. In addition, we also see another participant unable to socialise with her family. She discusses socialising as a form of strategy, which is important for her wellbeing. However, her ability to use this is impeded due to her financial position. This shows the importance of the financial support that institutions provide and the accessibility of that support for *Māori* students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

### *Internal*

The second theme that emerged from the data is labelled as Internal (37.78% of Challenges codes). This encompasses experiences that relate to the individual's inner self. This consisted of thoughts, emotions, identity and wellbeing; the essence of the Internal theme is captured in the three subthemes of Identity Conflict (16.67%), Health and Wellbeing (10.56%), and Discouragement (10.56%). For some this meant needing to navigate their *Māori* identity while also navigating a Western-based institution such as the university. For others this involved encountering identity challenges arising from the negative stereotypes attributed to *Māori* in a post-colonial era.

**Identity Conflict.** Nine out of the twelve participants identified challenges that were related to their own identity. One of these challenges was the need to navigate what it means

to be *Māori*, particularly in spaces that amplified negative stereotypes. This also covered the cultural aspects of the identity, which included needing to discover and find themselves but also navigating the university setting as a *Māori* student. This finding alignes with Ehret et al. (2015) who highlights frequent levels of self critism as being related negative outcomes. While self compassion is associated with higher resilience scores (Olsen et al., 2015).

This internal struggle is most notable in one participant's experience of needing to resolve his own ambivalence of what it means to be *Māori*. His abrasive views towards his own culture is derived from previous experiences, as well as negative connotations that are associated with *Māori*. Example of these connotations are ideas around *Māori* being poor and struggling with alcohol and drug use. Most of these internalized issues can be linked to the negative stereotypes of racism, as seen in the excerpt below.

> (WAF) *'internalized racism which is uhm something along the lines of the person*
>
> *Uhm is like taught to not value their own race or like culture or something like that*
>
> *[pause] so I definitely harboured internalized racism growing up in a community uhm*
>
> *predominantly of like that had had a lot of like Māori in poor socioeconomic*
>
> *situations'.*

In addition to this, some had to navigate what it means to be *Māori,* which impacted the way they viewed themselves within the institution. This was often due to extraneous experiences, unrelated to university, which led to participants questioning or battling with whether they qualified as *Māori*. Their upbringing (whether raised in the Māori culture or not) and their *te reo Māori* proficiency were among the issues they grappled with. This made some participants question whether they were *Māori* enough, not feeling as if they were, while at the same time not being *Pākehā*. Because of this the students questioned their position at the institution and even disqualified themselves from being able to utilise

resources that were established for their benefit. They found they felt unable to use or access *Māori* spaces because they did not feel comfortable. The following two extracts exemplify this struggle.

(MAW) '*that was the kind of thing that I had to dismantle over the past few years and where I sit with that and what that means for my identity uhm I think a challenge that I faced within the University is that not feeling like quite Māori enough to engage with maybe some of the support or opportunities that might have been available for me and not engaging with Māori support earlier but yeah it's just something that I wanted to note as well cause that obviously affects my experience as a Māori student*'.

(SHF) '*guess feeling about myself and my culture and who I was kind of uhm was a challenge of me accepting that whether I was worthy enough to be in there so uhm for example I guess it was an identity shock so looking uhm Māori on the outside but not feeling Māori*'.

Participants described that being aware that they were one of only a few *Māori* or the only *Māori* student in the class affected their concentration. The minority environment made them socially anxious, hypervigilant to the class dynamics and at times uncomfortable. This aspect of the identity and culture also relates to the University Environment subtheme above, as it portrays that the environment is not only hopeless but is also not receptive to diversity.

(MAF) '*it's literally just me and one other person who are Māori and I guess I kind of feel intimidated I don't know why because I don't yeah I I don't know why it's late it's just um I don't feel 100% comfortable I guess cause I feel like I stand out and like people stare at me sort of thing*'.

(ASA) *'like I've never liked directly felt like a minority like I've never actually like I've always known I'm a minority in my own country but I've never felt like it…. challenge for me was just the fact that there was a huge culture shock a huge culture shock'*

**Health and Wellbeing.** The second subtheme related to challenges experienced around living a healthy lifestyle. This subtheme was inclusive of any mental health and social wellbeing issues experienced. Previous extracts in relation to the university environment, financial issues and social aspects have already typified the challenges participants face regarding health and wellbeing. Although the above examples were not aimed at explaining health and wellbeing, they do illustrate the negative impact other challenges have on participants physical and mental health. This is further illustrated by the extracts below.

(WAF) '*when I was working in my previous years of study one of those would suffer if I had to work then either my health or my studies would suffer and vice versa*'

(MAF) '*I also have to look after my own mental health as well uhm so like I get paid about 270 and then my rent is 225 and then my power and things like that and it's like about 20 bucks a week so I'm left with very little to survive*'

(MAW) '*with my study because it's all being so related in terms of my wairua where it wasn't quite wasn't quite right in the first few years of study and I didn't succeed really*'

These above extracts depict the struggles participants navigate in terms of their wellbeing and health. They also highlight the influence of other challenges on students' wellbeing. These examples each depict a situation that has led to wellbeing and health issues for participants, the first showing how the lack of financial stability impacted their mental health, in such that they needed to navigate certain responsibilities without finances. The

other depicts the effects of being over worked and how this did not just impact their mental health but also their academic performance.

**Discouragement.** This made up the final subtheme in this theme. It included any experience or encounter that participants described as having depreciated their confidence or enthusiasm to engage or apply themselves. Despite it including a range of experiences the most salient was related to the negative experiences in lectures and academic outcomes. For instance, one participant described how staff responses would discourage him from participating in discussions, while another said she had lost interest in her academic performance as she never felt that her grades were a true reflection of her work and ability.

(DAM) *'if it's coming from lecturer or tutor if they're not quite understanding where you're coming from or respecting / it's kinda like that power dynamic so that would affect maybe my confidence within the paper or when a lecturer may be talking about a topic that could be quite sensitive to me personally but then not addressing / that might not be a consequence or a risk of the topic that we might be discussing and how yeah that's a challenge for me because then the consequence of that is I might not want to engage with the material or may not want to engage with course as much if I'm feeling a certain way about a topic'.*

(MAF) *'it's quite a linear thing you either pass or you fail and you get however many points out of 100 and if you don't have a lecturer or tutor who is understanding or can relate to some things that might have, may have impacted your performance in this particular assignment or something like that then you grade may not necessarily reflect your true ability and that's something that can also affect your confidence in the student when you feel like you could have / you feel like your grades aren't the true reflection'*

The findings that emerged from the analysis are not that surprising (Bartram, 2009; Stone & O'shea, 2013; Moore et al., 2021), as it reveals challenges that many students face regardless of ethnicity. It shows that *Māori* are not immune to the general challenges that accompanies being a student. Many of the challenges that participants described fall within typical challenges generally experienced by students at university. As mentioned in the literature review, challenges such as health and wellbeing, discouragement and financial issues are generally experienced by students regardless of their cultural background (Soet & Sevig, 2006). Many students balance a heavy workload and deal with poor academic grades (Moreles, 2014), and *Māori* students are not exempt from these challenges (Theodore et al., 2017); however, *Māori* students have to navigate these challenges over and above the other challenges highlighted in these findings.

### *Relational*

The final theme was Relational and consisted of two subthemes: Staff Disconnection and Personal and Familial Responsibilities. This category encapsulated challenges that arose from connections with key individuals while students progressed on the academic journey and consisted of 17.22% of the challenge's codes. Of the two, Staff Disconnection accounted for 8.89% of all the subcategories while Personal and Familial Responsibilities was one of the smallest subcategories accounting for only 8.33% of the codes.

**Staff Disconnection**. This subcategory incorporates challenges participants experienced that were associated with any relationship, connection or encounter with an employed individual or organisation working for the university. These include, but are not limited to, relationships with the university teaching staff (lecturers/professors, tutors) and administration staff.

The first two extracts illustrate the participants' views and responses to some members of staff. One participant describes feeling unwilling or unsafe to approach staff, while another describes the reactions towards her compared to the reactions to other students as disheartening. The final extract illustrates an interaction with administration staff that left the participant feeling unsupported and almost as if the staff member was rooting for her failure.

(HAM) *'in retrospect I probably just didn't feel safe to approach them uhm I think and this is probably something you've heard quite a bit like academics aren't always the most relationally minded people so yeah'.*

(MAF) *'it's just like prejudice because like a couple of my tutors uhm like kind of lean to them a bit more and its kind of makes me feel like I am not good enough or like I am too dumb to be part of this certain conversation or something like that',*

(MMH) *'you literally just took the survey I did that looked at some basic details and went op she doing too many papers she should drop but then you I don't even know what to call it because now it's race based and I was like man you're the Māori support services and you're going around telling people to drop out of their courses [INTER: Yip] so it was just I was so incensed by it I had to sit there and think it through because now it was just one thing after another for me but then I finally contacted you know support services / and actually the course director was mortified cause I said if that had gone to every student I wouldn't have cared it wouldn't have bothered me [INTER: Yeah] and then she said well it would have bother me because she said one that information is incorrect where our course operates on different time schedules so that date has long past so not only that they sending incorrect information to incorrect students but now you're telling me she goes ahh it can't be*

*race based and I said I just contacted three Pākehā students they never got it and the*

*other five Māori students got it'*

**Personal and Familial Responsibilities.** The subcategory of Personal and Familial Responsibilitiesis related to challenges they experienced around certain obligations they held, acquired, and any changes to those obligations as well as the workloads and psychological pressures that they included. This is also the smallest of the themes and includes things such as family responsibilities and personal issues. It consists of challenges that were both common and rare, such as looking after loved ones to going through divorces as expressed on the following quote.

(LUM) '*I was married for 20 something years and so we separated last year and at the time I don't think I realised how uhm how that affected my studies ... but it still had an impact on my studies you uhm and I guess I didn't realise it at the time I thought I was just coping'.*

While this subtheme has been included in this analysis, it is important to note that the experiences within this theme are different in comparison to the others. While they pose a challenge for some students in needing to navigate certain experiences, they were not always described as being a challenge. Although, some participants, acknowledged this as a situation they needed to navigate, they also expressed that they would not label these as challenges, due to the family dynamics, and many expressed they were more than happy and privileged to be able to care for or assist their *whānau*.

(MAW) *I have a very tight knit family so uhm we would meet like wider family extended whānau we would meet probably every week maybe Sunday dinners at my grandparents' house uhm and I would see wider whānau regularly uhm also during high school I had uhm I played a lot of sports so I just had a lot of uhm a lot of people*

*were around me all the time so when I moved from home to Palmerston I'd never*

*been away from home uhm I found it extremely difficult'.*

These results support similar findings by Theodore et al. (2017) who identified 16 types of challenges that *Māori* students face. Some of the challenges were employment lack of support and personal factors. Family responsibilities, health, students' personals factors, university related factors, finances and lack of support where among the challenges described in this study that were also found in previous literature (Theodore et al. 2017).

**Table 4**

*Comparison of Theodore et al. 16 Factors that Hindered Māori University Graduates, Alongside Challenges Identified in this Thesis*

| Theodore et al. | Current Thesis Challenges |
| --- | --- |
| Family Responsibilities | External – University Environment |
| Student or Personal Factors | External Financial |
| Health | Internal – Identity conflict |
| Financial | Internal – health and Wellbeing |
| Employment | Internal - Discouragement |
| University-Academic | Relational – Staff Disconnection |
| University-Other | Relational – Personal and Familial |
| | Responsibilities |
| Bereavement | |
| Natural Disasters or weather* | |
| Time Pressure* | |
| Lack of Support | |
| Pregnancy or birth | |

Residence

Interpersonal relationships

Miscellaneous*

Unclear*

*Note.* * Indicated factors that are not represented in the currents thesis challenges section with an independent/dedicated subtheme

Although all students who pursue a degree will experience challenges, it would be interesting to explore whether the experiences highlighted in this study are disproportionately experienced by *Māori* students. Stereotypical ideas of student challenges range from effects of lack of sleep to poor finances; however, the challenges described by participants in this study extends beyond these typical challenges. Without diminishing the struggles of general students, the data of this study shed light on the disparate challenges that students of *Māori* ethnicity continue to face.

The challenges that participants described in this study exhibited a complex relationship of interconnected experiences. In this regard it is not one or two situations, but rather a range of different experiences and factors all compounding an already challenging environment. Furthermore, as noticeable in Figure 3, double-headed arrows exemplify a relationship between subthemes where one challenge has knock-on effects on another challange. For example, financial challenges would impair the ability to socialise and negatively affect wellbeing. Most participants dealt with multiple issues, both personal and institutional, and were required to find ways to overcome each challenges in multiple domains. The prevalence and shared nature of these experiences *Māori* students continue to face hinder their academic performance. The challenges section of this thesis highlights the necessity for action to address inequalities that are still prevalent.

**Strengths**

In addition to challenges, the second overarching theme is Strengths. Strengths encompass strategies participants use and the resources they draw on to effectively manage the university environment and to weather the adversities they experience. From the data three themes emerged which were classified as Intrapersonal (subtheme: Culture and Identity, Traits and Characteristics, and Spirituality), Interpersonal (Subthemes: Family and Friends), and Institutional (Subthemes: Social Support and Physical Resources). A full breakdown of the data codes and their prevalence can be found in Table 4.

**Table 5**

*Prevalence and Percentages of Themes and Subthemes for Strengths*

| Theme | Subtheme | References | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Intrapersonal | | 194 | 53.89 |
| | Culture and Identity | 47 | 13.06 |
| | Traits and Characteristics | 115 | 31.94 |
| | Spirituality | 32 | 8.89 |
| 2. Interpersonal | | 108 | 30 |
| | Family | 54 | 14.44 |
| | Friends | 56 | 15.56 |
| 3. Institutional | | 58 | 16.11 |
| | Support Services | 39 | 10.83 |
| | Physical Resources | 19 | 5.28 |

**Figure 4**

*Thematic Map of Strength*
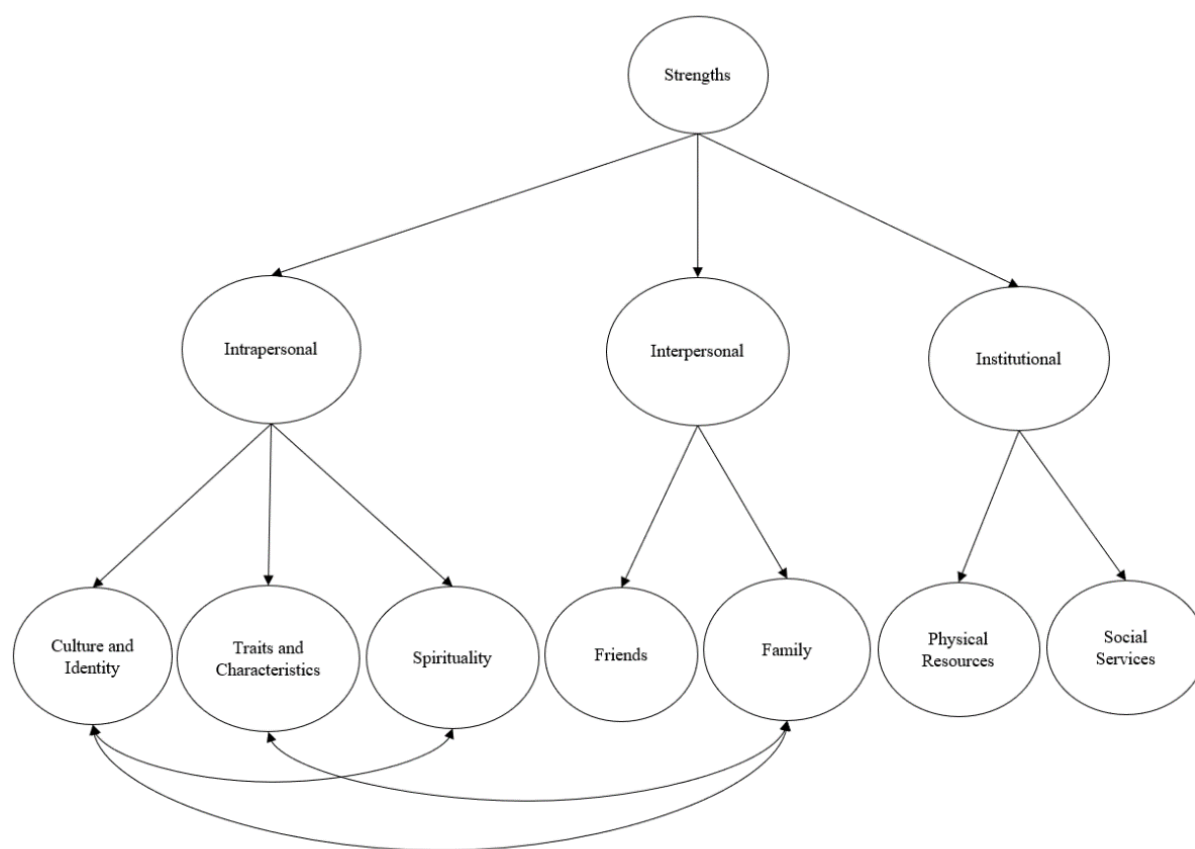


*Note.* Double-headed arrows represent a bi-directional relationship between subthemes.

### *Intrapersonal*

The first theme relates to participants' inner self. It includes believes that individuals have about who they are and what they are capable of, their cultural background, and their skills and abilities. It accounts for 53.89% of the strengths codes and includes three subthemes: Culture and Identity (13.06%), Traits and Characteristics (31.94%), and Spirituality (8.89%).

**Culture and Identity.** This subtheme comprises of codes that relate to participants' perceptions of themselves and their culture. This includes the way that they define themselves

in relation to their lived experiences, culture, and social dynamic and specifically, how these aspects have been a source of strength for them on their journey. One participant explained that he initially struggled with her identity and culture, but he had managed to overcome this by being exposed to other *Māori* individuals who were doing great things. They connected this experience to *whānaungatanga* and the connections he had made, highlighting the importance of this for his identity.

> (WAF) *'if you would like to connect with the Māori whānau in the community come to this room at this time and I was like mean this is exactly what I need so I turned up there and they had food they were preparing food And I familiar with the kind of culture I sat down with the rest of everybody else that was preparing the food and was able to bond with him that way um and just create a sense of belonging and family in the school environment ....that's one way that whanaungatanga has enhanced my academic success'*

Another participant described the impact of how she found her place, which gave her a sense of belonging. This unlocked an invaluable source of encouragement and motivation.

> (MMH) *'that sense of belonging uhm belonging is about connecting and feeling like you fit in and and I think that's massive for me because I felt like for so long I didn't fit in when I first went to uni and when I did feel like fitted in then things .. I think you feel comfortable a sense of belonging means like yeah I can be here and I can do this and you're not alone in it as well so you sit up you you know that's why I was saying (pause) you know I found my people and so now I feel like I can get through this because I have people who have a common goal as well and we can share their burdens together yeah'*

Furthermore, we can see how another participant draws her strength from her *whakapapa*. This allows her to get a deeper appreciation and understanding for herself and her culture. She draws strength from her *whenua* and has a greater awareness and appreciation for their inherited strength of their *tīpuna* (Ancestors*)*. Her *whakapapa* did not just provide her with strength and understanding of her identity but also grounded her in the university environment. The importance of identity to *Māori* is very much supported by previous studies, which not only highlight the importance of identity, but also the effects that it has on their wellbeing (Fox et al., 2018; Wexler, 2009).

> (LUM) *'Whakapapa is really important to me it means uhm  it gives me  uhm its sort of that inherit understanding of myself and I feel like it's important to know you know there is that saying you got to know who you are or where you're from before you know where you are going so for me …I think whakapapa for me it has helped me to stay grounded and why I'm at University'*

The importance of cultural identify for indigenous groups is strongly supported in previous literature. Highlighting that a strong connection to their culture for *Māori* (Williams et al., 2018) and other indigenous groups (Pu et al., 2013) buffer against harmful outcomes. These harmful outcomes includes but is not limited to protecting against suicide, and depression. In addition to this, previous literature supports the idea of a strong cultural identity being important for supporting resilience (Wexler, 2009).

The Culture and Identity subtheme highlights the importance of indigenous aspects of the culture and how these pertain to resilience. Ungar (2008) noted that a Western perspective does not capture the broader cultural dynamic. Here we see an example of this with identity, aspects of the *Māori* culture and the importance of these aspects on *Māori* identity is critical (Lilley, 2012). This supports the idea that these cultural concepts, such as *whakapapa, aroha,*

*whanaungatanga and wairuatanga* are vitally important when it comes to resilience within indigenous communities (Ungar, 2008), as is true to other indigenous groups as well (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2008).

**Traits and Characteristics.** The second subtheme Traits and Characteristics refers to skills, traits and behaviours learnt or developed. In this subtheme, participants utilised their skills and attributes to help navigate the academic setting. Participants found that certain skills they had were critical in how they managed their time at university. Skills such as being organized, diligent and punctual were identified as important.

(MAW) *'keeping a balance between all things like being social and hang out with friends but also making sure I am knuckling done and getting my assignments done'.*

In addition to this, others drew on other abilities such as their creativity and time management. One participant expressed that she had struggled with learning concepts and content and would create songs or draw pictures to help her learn. This strategy worked for her, as explained below. This also included different behaviours and activities that brought a sense of joy, as depicted in the extract below.

(MAF) *'so for me even just to remember things I make up little songs like if I had to remember parts of the musculoskeletal system then I would make up a song about that'.*

(ASA) *'yeah playing guitar hobbies finding things that work for you like it could be anything but yeah im just glad that I know what makes me happy'*

The results of the traits and characteristic subtheme are very much in line with previous literature, in regard to identifying different traits that aid in developing resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2008). Traits such as optimism and humour were identified as

important when dealing with challenges students experienced regardless of culture or ethnicity (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). Furthermore, many of the early resilience literature focused on personality and individual traits (Brewer et al. 2019; Morales, 2008).

**Spirituality**. The last of the three subthemes, is related to participants' religious and cultural belief systems and how these systems shape their response to challenges. The use of both religious and cultural systems was described by participants as being a source of encouragement during difficult times, with many participants portraying this as one of the most important strategies used during their time at university.

Those who identified religion as pivotal expressed an enhanced endurance for adversity. This was supported by the belief that they need not face challenges alone; God would not have placed them in situations that they were unable to navigate. Additionally, for situations that they deemed challenging, God could carry them through those adversities. This increased their sense of fortitude and allowed them to overcome and push through arduous situations. As expressed by one participant:

> (MAF) '*so I really find that uhm like without God I actually wouldn't be able to do any of this … for me it just means it's knowing that I can do anything like literally I can do anything uhm through this through my spiritual beliefs uhm yeah I guess that would just sum it out I can literally do anything an I I will always have the support uhm even if I feel like I have no one that will always be there to help me yeah*'

Furthermore, religion provided a sense of connection to broader support networks. This included a wider network of friends and community leaders and a shared sense of connection to an organisation whose purpose was not associated with academia. This support network offered a break from the university and provided motivational and encouraging support.

(BRW) *so I do have a uhm church family that I uhm definitely connect with that share a lot about their stories and help me navigate my faith and how that can like the tools practical tools that I can apply when it comes to my everyday life'.*

For those who did not have a strong religious identity, their cultural belief system played a similar role. These participants described their cultural beliefs and a sense of spirituality as important to being *Māori*. This was linked to the importance for participants to take time and connect with the natural environment. This connection to the earth or nature was necessary for replenishing and restoring their *mauri*. In the extracts below one participant highlights spiritual awareness and nature as important in navigating university. The other expresses the deep connection between them and the environment, and the importance of this connection. Not only do we see cultural values and ideas as important from these extracts, but we also gain insight into participants needing to keep these connections strong, as it provides motivation and grounding that contributed to resilience.

(TOM) *'I found that listening to my instincts and the environment and how how spiritual awareness as a Māori has helped me at University'.*

(MAF) *'it all connects emotional spiritual it should all connect to make you who you are so for me I I often take the time to just re-connect myself using nature I have a I have a huge connection with nature with the ocean uhm with the bush and I think they might be a huge cultural thing as well for me because a lot of my my Māori family do as well have the same we share the same whakaaro on that yeah'*

(HAM) *'It kind of goes back to something I was saying earlier around the University being so secular uhm I think there's Māori are a spiritual people uhm like their spirituality is not like an optional extra it's an intrinsic part of who they'*

Unsurprisingly, the spiritual aspect within this study has shown to be quite significant. This has less to do with the resilience literature but predominantly due to the importance of *wairua* within the *Māori* culture (Smith, 2000). One model of *Māori* wellbeing '*Te Whare Tapa Wha'* by Mason Durie describes *wairua* as one of the four walls or fundamental aspects of *Māori* health and wellbeing (Rochford, 2004). This shows the importance of *wairua* to *Māori* wellbeing, and in turn to resilience.

### *Interpersonal*

The second theme was made up of different types of relationships and the impact they had on participants, it accounted for 30% of the strength codes. From the data, two distinct subthemes relating to different types of relationships were identified. These were: Family (14.44%) and Friends (15.56%). It was the most diverse of the strengths, having the broadest range of influence on participants challenges (see Figure 4). A third relational theme also emerged, based on the relationships or interactions between students and university staff (Professors, Tutors, and administration staff). However, after the consultation process this was moved to the Institutional theme and recoded as Support Services (Refer to Appendix F for detail of consultation outcome and rational).

**Family**. Emerging as one of the two subthemes, Family, was one of the larger subthemes, with the broadest amount of influence. Showing an impact on a range of challenges (see Figure 2). This subtheme included any support from any family ranging from but not limited to grandparents to cousins. One example of this is the effect that family relationships had on students' financial positions. While few expressed having received direct financial or monetary income, the family support they received abated their financial burden. One participant shared how her parents had taken up more of her financial responsibility, for

example the rent. This meant that the participant did not have to worry about stretching her limited income or needing to get a second job.

> (BRW) '*during study I have been really reliant on them obviously because I'm not working so they're really taken on the load of paying off the bills that I would have paid and stuff like that*'

Other than the financial implications, family also had a positive influence on morale. Participants expressed that when they were feeling down, their family's encouragement, support and advice was crucial. Family members also acted as role models, modelling traits such as being hardworking and resilient.

> (LUM) '*I'm grateful because I have a lot of support from my whānau as well and and my ex-husband husband*'

**Friends**. The second subtheme, Friends, was just as important and provided a similar but novel type of support. This included relationships that were established either before or during university. This category included individuals who were close, but not related, to the participants. Similarly to family, these connections impacted on resources and often helped in the financial aspect. In other words, friends assisted in ways that mitigated the financial pressure many students faced.

One example of this was a participant's experience of having moved cities to begin his academic study. He expressed that the move to university was quite costly; however, he could rely on friends and connections that he had previously established to alleviate some of the financial pressure. In the extract below, assistance to move flats was offered. Other than the physical help of moving furniture, his friends managed to acquire discounts at their workplaces for trailer hire, which alleviated some of the financial pressure he was experiencing.

(WAF) *'.and I am fortunate that I also had mates from high school who are down here who uhm like worked so they like my mate got like a whole bunch of his mates to get their moms car and like get a trailer from work to help me like move stuff if I didn't have those connections then what the f\*#k was I going to do'*.

Other students indicated that having friends who shared the university experience or struggle was helpful. This allowed for a shared understanding of barriers that family members simply did not understand. Thus, friends and peers provided a different type of motivational support when needed. This also included motivation when participants were struggling to study, encouraging them when they received disappointing grades, and providing a break from work when needed.

(BRW) *'I think [pause] because if you / specially students / I would say they understand what you're going through'*

The support of friends extended beyond that of motivational support. They also provided a form of academic support as well. Friends provided an additional means for understanding course content. Participants spoke about instances in class where they did not understand content but would not want to ask for clarification. This could be because they were too shy and did not think anyone else in the class was having the same issue- or that their question would be perceived as stupid. In these cases, asking friends or classmates to clarify content and explain things in a way that they understood, was extremely helpful.

(SSA)*'just people to talk to about stuff you know when you have questions but it might not be the kind of thing that you would wanna email a lecturer about you could just discuss it with other people and if no one knows the maybe we should ask about this and uhm yeah it's a lot easier to work through things with other people you know you do the work on your own but just little questions that hold you up that aren't /*

*they not huge things but they can be like little hurdles that slow you right down and the just not a thing when you have got other people that you can ask'*

(BRW) *'you could ask those the kind of stupid questions that you probably wouldn't ask in a lecture room and stuff and you probably get a lot of replies in that way'*

Similarly, classmates also provided a form of springboard for ideas and concepts. Here the aid of friends allowed for the expansion of ideas or concepts to create novel content. This was achieved through talking to peers about their ideas and the concepts related to assignments and essays. Also, some expressed that just talking about content with their peers provided them with greater clarity on content which helped them to realise when they had misunderstood a concept or helped them solidify what had been taught.

(MMH)*'you'd be surprised of uhm how easily you can miss or misinterpret a concept and then for them to help you get a better understanding by simply having a conversation, which I really don't I really don't engage in [laughing] I even like class discussions and stuff I [pause] even that I would say that's / what I mean by the whole learning and thing more like engaging in those type of conversations actually help you with your learning*

The importance of family and friends as a strategy is not surprising. As this finding is consistent with the literature on social resources, particularly relating to minority, non-WEIRD and indigenous groups (Panter-Brick, 2014a; Rochford, 2004; Theron et al., 2013). Previous cross-cultural research found social support to be one of the strongest protective factors for academic resilience (Perez et al., 2009; Chua et al., 2019). Although this study did not make any comparisons between the strengths of the social support, this was one of the most used and important strategies that participants discussed. Social support acted as both a protective factor and also as a coping strategy to manage impending challenges.

Furthermore, family and friends were identified by the majority of the sample regardless of age as being important. This highlights the importance of the family and social connections not just as a support system, but as an important motivational resource. These relationships may be explained by the importance of family and friends in the *Māori* context (Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Penehira et al., 2014). These findings are consistent with results from Perez et al. (2009) who similarly identified social support and Li (2017) who identified family as being an important factors in sustaining resilience.

### *Institutional*

The third theme detailed experiences relating to resources provided in some form by the university or another secondary organisation. It included two subthemes of Physical Resources (5.28%) and Support Services (10.83%). Physical resources included spaces, materials (e.g., computers), financial awards and services provided. Support Services was comprised of connections or communications with members employed by the university. This theme accounted for 16.11% of the codes.

**Physical Resources.** Participants expressed that having access to university resources such as the library website was a huge benefit for them. This is because it gave participants access to journal articles needed to complete assignments. Additionally, others expressed having access to spaces where they could work on projects quietly, collaboratively or after hours was hugely beneficial. This provided not only a place to concentrate and do work but was also used to build and establish relationships.

> (HAM) *'to be honest the afterhours room at in is it the Old Kirk building I found that enormously helpful uhm I'd often spend evenings there doing work uhm'.*

> (SSA) *'I used the study rooms a lot when I started to get to know people we would book a room and we wouldn't always study in them (laughing) you know just having a*

*space and uhm you know being able to enjoy being at uni you having your little*

*private zone but you know having a space to work in was nice'*

**Support Services**. The second subtheme encapsulates the relationship between the participants and those employed at the university. Professional resources such as Student Services, *Māori* Support and the ability to see counsellors was pivotal for learning how to navigate the space. One participant expressed gratitude at the *Māori* support services for the social support and mentoring which they provide. The mentoring they received better equipped them to manage areas that they previously expressed as being challenging. This alleviated the struggles that the student had previously faced. However, others, needed counselling support to help navigate their mental health.

> (LUM) *'so the things that have impacted me negatively in my study at universities has probably just being in the last year and I sort of turned that around and it's been through there really awesome support I've heard from my counsellor at student health services'.*

> (BRW) '*Āwhina at uni And I have talked to them and they have been they have been really awesome because they've asked like what specifically do I want or need like they asked for if I needed mentorship and [pause] I think that was really cool for them to even look at maybe helping me with the time management side of things and really plan out a schedule [pause] yeah'.*

There was a motivational effect that some staff members had on participants. One participant explained the impact as 'invaluable'. This was related to staff who inspired participants. They referred to tutors who were passionate about their content. This was especially impactful if the tutor was of *Māori* descent.

(SHF) *'I had a few young Māori tutors that were (pause) I think there were two of them they were amazing and very inspiring uhm and I just remember going to one of our uhm contact courses and uhm just the way one of these tutors the way she spoke the way she held herself uhm was just lovely to see and I think if they had more of that for Māori students uhm I don't know It just gives you a different I don't know how to explain uhm it's quite inspiring I think when you see ... strong ... Māori ... people uhm and listening to their thoughts and around anything yeah it was just very cool ... very motivating for wanting me too I think she was teaching something about the government principles around the government made me want to get into politics [laughing] just for that short short time yeah I rekcon that's important'.*

Overall, these findings support the importance of relationships within *te ao Māori.* Similarly, to how *wairua* is important to *Māori, whānau* and *whanaungatang*a are just as important. This concept represents another of the four walls of *Māori* wellbeing as described in the wellbeing model of *te whare tapa wha* (Rochford, 2004).

Several aspects of resilience were identified as important, some were general while others were culturally unique for *Māori* (Theodore et al., 2017). A comparison of strengths identified in this thesis alongside strengths identified by Theodore et al. (2017) can be found in Table ##. These were points of difference between these findings and previous literature. For instance, participants identified many aspects and concepts that are unique to the *Māori* culture. This includes *whakapapa* which related to the ancestral heritage of the *whenua* (connection to the land). Both exemplified culturally relevant traits that are unique to the *Māori* culture. In this way it is not uncommon that culturally relevant traits can be lost when discussing broader concepts.

**Table 6**

*Comparison of Theodore et al. 16 Factors that Helped Māori University Graduates,*

*Alongside Strengths Identified in this Thesis*

| Theodore et al. | Current Thesis Strengths |
| --- | --- |
| Family | Institutional – Physical Resources |
| University-Academic | Institutional – Social Services |
| Student/personal Factors | Interpersonal – Family |
| Friends | Interpersonal - Friends |
| University-other | Intrapersonal – Spiritual |
| Peer support | Intrapersonal – Traits and characteristics |
| Financial | Intrapersonal – Culture and Identity |
| Other Support* | |
| Partner | |
| Employment | |
| Childcare | |
| Religion | |
| Therapy | |
| Residence | |
| Miscellaneous * | |
| Unclear* | |

*Note.* * Indicates factors that are not represented in the current thesis strength section with an independent/dedicated sub theme

The results show a worrying trend in the development of the resilience literature, in

that many aspects and concepts lose the indigenous nuance when watered down to Western

concepts. For example, *Māori* identity encompasses aspects of *whakapapa* and *whenua,* but this is not necessary captured simply by the term identity. This is not uncommon when exploring cultural factors. For instance, a study conducted in South Africa identified Ubuntu as a key factor in resilience (Theron, 2013), but this is masked by social support. Therefore, similarly to how the social support aspect of resilience would be different from a non-African sample, so does the identity concept look different for *Māori* students and non-*Māori* students. While these traits may be unique to *Māori,* the notion that indigenous groups have culture-specific characteristics is a common assertion in the broader literature (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Kirmayer et al., 2011).

It would seem that there is a range of strategies available to assist participants in navigating the varying challenges that they face in a tertiary setting. While similar to traditional resilience, these include a range of intrapersonal characteristics. However, despite the use of these personal approaches participants in the study seem to draw from a larger range of resources over and above relying on their own personal or individualistic resources.

More specifically, it would seem that resilience in *Māori* students is very much a product of the values handed down to them from their family and ancestors (e.g., family relationships). Family members have modelled these values and demonstrated their effects, illustrating how traditional values and worldviews lead to positive and successful outcomes for students and those around them. On the whole, for *Māori* there seems to be a greater reliance on strategies that are not in the traditional resilience toolkit, notably those connected to the *whenua* and the *whakapapa.*

These findings above identify three distinctive themes of strategies (personal, institutional and interpersonal). These interconnect with one another, creating a set of support systems and tools that help students navigate challenges. Each strategy strengthens the use of

the other, in such a way that participants utilise a range of approaches depending on the situation that they are facing. Similar to how some challenges exacerbate others, so some strengths reinforce others.

**Whai Tikanga**

One of the novel aspects of this research was the use of the WT-VCS (McLachlan et al., 2017). As previously stated, the WT-VCS is a tool that derives from *Te Ao Māori*, making it a tool relevant to the *Māori* culture. As a culturally relevant tool, it allows participants to explore values and experiences in ways not captured by the *Pākehā* perspective or vocabulary. Thus, it was anticipated that the use of the WT-VCS would enhance the data by providing the participants with an opportunity to elaborate on their experiences through the use of *Māori* values and *Tikanga*. These concepts, beliefs and views are not generally represented in the Western world view or captured by the English language. Therefore, this approach provides a richer and deeper understanding of the chosen strategies that participants utilise, over and above that of the interview questions. It also provides insight into the values that inform *Māori* resilience strategies. While no data were gathered on the response of participants to a South African doing this mahi, many expressed appreciation of the level of commitment that the researcher had undertaken by studying their language and culture.

*Results*

**Ranked Take Pū.** Results of participants' rank values can be found in Table 2. The table includes the top five ranked *take pū* (values) from all participants with one representing the values they classed as most important and five representing the fifth most important values.  Most of the values that participants have identified as important relate in some form

to social aspects. Of the ranked values the *take pū* that appeared most frequently regardless of the ranked order were: *whanaungatanga* (5), *manawanui* (4), and *moemoeā* (4).

*Whanaungatanga*, which covers building relationships, encompasses the different relationships that participants relied or drew on while at university. These included their *whānau*, the friends they made at university, and professional relationships. This *take pū* and participant experience were previously discussed in the Interpersonal and Institutional-Relational sections above (see strengths section of results).

*Manawanui*, which falls in line with the interpretation of resilience, was also very important for participants. This represented the need for participants to push through difficult situations. Although on the surface level this seems very much like an individualistic value, when participants described the importance of this, they spoke about family members and loved ones who helped them develop resilience. This included different people in their lives and how they encouraged them to be resilient. Encouragement occurred in the form of inspiration being drawn from *whānau*, friends, and peers who themselves where in difficult situations and managed to navigate through them. Participants described some of these individuals as having been in situations that were overwhelming in comparison to the challenges they themselves face at university, which put their situation in context. Despite the value seeming to be individualistic in nature, for these participants this very much reflected a socially constructed perspective.

> (MMH) *'yes they've had a really really difficult sort of childhood and I think…. And I think man if they can do what they've done in their lives then this is a walk through the park essentially'*

The value *moemoeā,* which translates as 'having dreams a vision of the future', is one of the values that participants identified as being important to their academic success in both

the traditional interview and the WT-VCS sections. This was highly salient in participants'

ranked values. Participants described the importance of needing to have a vision as it was

instrumental in navigating negative moments. Again, similarly to the value of *manawanui,*

when translated this can sometimes be seen by those who do not fully understand the concept,

as an individualistic value. However, for the participants who spoke about this, their vision

was less about themselves achieving and more about the outcomes and the impact their

achievements would have on the *whānau*. In other words, participants' descriptions of

*moemoeā* were more in line with a collective value rather than an individualistic one.

> (ASA) *'like for I see my sisters as having a real sh\*tt#r start in life and like what I wanna do is like be the one that can say hey you started sh\*t but like hopefully if I work hard enough then we can end this on a good note'*

When evaluating participants' highest ranked values, not surprisingly *moemoeā* and

*manawanui* where the most frequent. However, other *take pū* sometimes appear highest in

participants' ranking but less frequent throughout the overall list. This is because participants

used these *take pū* as overarching value. For example, one participant described the value

*whakapapa* as a value that encompasses all their family, cultural, spiritual and heritage

connections. Thus, they did not feel the need to rank related values highly as they were

already represented in the concept of *whakapapa*.

**Table 7**

*Frequencies of participants' top 5 values*

| Item | Frequency | Item | Frequency |
|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| Manawanui | 8 | Whakakata | 2 |
| Moemoeā | 7 | Hūmārie | 2 |
| Whanaungatanga | 5 | Kaitiakitanga | 1 |
| Whakapapa | 4 | Rongo | 1 |
| Pukumahi | 3 | Maia | 1 |
| Noho puku | 2 | Toiora | 1 |
| Ako | 3 | Whakaaro pai | 1 |
| Manaakitanga | 3 | Tumanko | 1 |
| Aroha | 2 | Pakari ai te tinana | 1 |
| Whakapono | 2 | Kotahitanga | 1 |
| Mana | 2 | Pou Whirinaki | 1 |
| Hoa | 2 | Taurite | 1 |
| Whakaoha mauri | 2 | | |

*Note.* A full list participants ranked order values can be found in Table 2

**Quality of Data.** The WT-VCS allowed for deeper extraction of experiences that on the surface may not have seemed relevant to the initial questions. This method provided participants with opportunities to reflect on aspects that they may have previously not deemed relevant or captured by the *Pākehā* vocabulary. Additionally, it allowed for the exploration of underlining and foundational aspects behind the choice of strategies used.

An example of how this approach allowed for greater discussion on their strategies, is noticeable with the value of *Moemoeā*. Here, greater depth can be seen in participants' responses during the card sort than what was apparent in the interviews. During this activity participants explored the relationship with their family and elders and how these key figures helped shaped and establish their dreams. The information found in the following quote did not present itself during the interview.

> (MAW) '*My pōua every time I'd see him, he would drill in this idea that how important education is ... and all this stuff um so yeah I think yeah a vision for the future is really important*'

A second example of how these values provided an avenue for more nuanced data is through participants' exploration of the importance of and their exposure to these values. Many participants shared that they learnt these values from their grandparents and family, who had exemplified the importance of these values through their own lives. Regarding *pukumahi*, one participant explained how hard her grandfather worked by way of having to put in extra hours to provide and then still be able to make events such as sporting games. This became the example to her of what it means to be hardworking. Again, this level of information was only achieved through the WT-VCS.

> (SHF)'*he is a very hard working man uhm uhm did labour jobs hes whole life very intelligent man uhm he would work crazy hours [holding back tears] at times going*

*to work at 4:00 in the morning uhm finishing around 9:00 ish or at a time maybe half an hour before uhm any of my sports game so that he could come watch me and then without me knowing go back to work after that so that he can get his hours in uhm [teary] My father so his son and he's two other sons and his daughters but mainly hes sons are very hard working as well uhm yeah and they kind of shown us that you don't get things given to you you've gotta work hard to get that whether it be earning respect uhm or earning your tohu uhm yeah for me they exemplify a hard worker they do stupid things like uhm work through they'd rather go without lunch'*

In addition, some participants spoke about their own lived experience, what these values mean to them and how the values shaped their academic journey. One participant who highly valued *whanaungatanga* (A sense of connection and belonging) described how this value displayed by him helping prepare food for an event, aided him in establishing relationships at university. He described arriving early at an event he attended at university. When he arrived, the hosts were still in the process of setting up and preparing. Being accustomed to the culture he got involved by assisting in the food preparation and setting up. He associated this experience with *whanaungatanga* and emphasised that the value and the connections that he had made were important.

Furthermore, he expressed that *whanaungatanga* played a pivotal role in enhancing the opportunities available to him. Through relationships that he had, he was presented with opportunities or encouraged to pursue directions that would have a significant impact in his life. The *whanaungatanga* that had afforded him opportunity to grow had also allowed him to forge new relationships that continues to have positive impacts on his life. In addition, he had the opportunity to dismantle negative stereotypes of what it means to be *Māori*.

(WAF)'*I wanted to create um or find my whānau or create connections within the University so on the email that the University had posted out about the the itinerary I guess for the welcoming day uhm there was a part that said if you if you would like to connect with the Māori whānau in the community come to this room at this time and I was like mean this is exactly what I need so I turned up there and they had food they were preparing food and I familiar with the kind of culture I sat down with the rest of everybody else that was preparing the food and was able to bond with him that way um and just create a sense of belonging and family in the school environment*'

The first outcome of the use of the WT-VCS was the incorporation of ideas and concepts unique to the *Māori* culture. This included concepts such *whakapapa* and *te whenua*, providing new data which complemented the previous results, and reflected meaningful indigenous perspectives. The activity allowed these concepts and others to be included as genuine sources of data. This is an important aspect of working with *Māori* as previous researchers have identified these concepts as critical to the *kaupapa Māori* (Hutchings & Lee, 2016). There are words such as *aroha* and *kaitiakitanga* that are commonly embedded in New Zealand discourse, which can be rudimentarily translated as love and caring for others, these translations often lose their range of meaning in *Māori*. Accordingly, the WT-VCS method ensures space for a more nuanced understanding of these indigenous concepts.

The second research outcome was the noticeable amount of additional material participants shared when discussing the relevant values. These findings suggest this technique had a high level of engagement by participants, thus providing richer and higher quality data, which is critical when doing qualitative work. Qualitative research focuses not necessarily on the quantity of information but on richness of the data itself (Braun & Clark, 2013). Overall, the depth of the data extracted was surprising. A possible explanation for this might be that

cards allowed for concepts that have greater meaning in *te ao Māori* to be included. Therefore, participant responses captured the depth of the concept (Lilley, 2012).

The result of this study has undoubtedly justified the use of the WT-VCS (*Whai Tikanga*-Value Card Sort) as a culturally appropriate tool for research with *Māori*. Two notable outcomes of using WT-VCS are the inclusion of topic-specific variables related to the *Māori* culture and the respectful acknowledgement of participants' cultural world views. The technique provided richer and nuanced data that enhanced the quality of this research. It stimulated deeper discussions around key values that underpin participants' worldviews and provided a deeper and more nuanced understanding of strengths and challenges in the university context. This resulted in richer data in comparison to what was shared during the traditional interview section of the research. It also provided a more valid approach for gathering qualitative data and a more culturally appropriate way of conducting research with *Māori* compared to the "conventional" tools used in psychological research.

**General Discussion**

Adopting a *kaupapa Māori* inspired approach, the study set out to examine *Māori* students' experiences in academia with the primary aim of exploring resilience strategies utilised for academic success. The secondary aim was to assess the challenges that *Māori* students encounter. These aims were achieved through semi-structured interviews and the use of the Whai Tikanga Value Card Sort tool, which involved sorting through *Māori* values. The results revealed that students drew on a range of individual, interpersonal, and cultural resources in coping with adversity. Key findings shed light on *Māori* students' resilience strategies as well as the challenges they continue to face. The main themes highlighted the intrapersonal traits they utilise (e.g., humour, creativity, working hard), the interpersonal relationships they rely on (Family and friends), and the institutional resources they use (*Māori* support services, Counselling, library website and after hour study spaces). In addition to these findings, the challenges experienced by *Māori* students related to an additional three themes: Internal, External, and Relational issues (Schofield et al., 2013; Shield, 2004). This included needing to navigate cultural shock, financial challenges, and separation from important relationships.

These results highlight the relationship between culture and resilience, which align with previous literature (Ungar, 2008), in such that culture influences the choice of strategy that *Māori* students prefer to use. For example, the reliance on certain relationships to cope with adversity is not a specific cultural approach. Rather it is the importance of that relationship to the cultural group and how that group defines the relationship dynamics which determine whether individual within the culture draws support from the relationship. In this regard *Māori* students showed a preference for social support, a trend that is in line with other indigenous and minority groups (Andersson, 2008; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Perez et al, 2009). This may be due to cultural learning, as indigenous groups historically relied on their

tribal structures for political, educational, subsistence and social needs (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). This importance of relationships is captured in the *Māori* value of *whanaungatanga*. These structures reinforce the importance of supporting one another, and therefore build an ingroup understanding of the need to support, look after and care for each other.

Similarly*,* there are a range of indigenous concepts or values that occupy a central position in *Māori* culture. For example, *Whakapapa, whenua,* and *wairua* hold integral positions within *te ao Māori* (Smith & Reid, 2000) and can be seen to impact identity and wellbeing. This does not imply that these type of concepts as mentioned above are only relevant to *Māori.* For example, the natural environment may be important across cultures but *whenua* which encompass one's relationship to the natural environment may have a different level of importance to *Māori*. This would be due to the different way cultures conceptualised differently values. As previous studies have shown, nature-based intervention methods (methods which revolve around connecting with the environment/*whenua*) are successful in promoting resilience in both indigenous and non-indigenous groups (Neill & Dias, 2001; Ritchie et al., 2014). However, it is important to acknowledge that some of these core values which shape *Māori* responses to adversity in this study*,* such as connection to the land and spirituality are also in some degree acknowledged as important to other indigenous groups (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003).

This suggests that what makes individuals resilient is not necessarily the number of 'resilient' protective factors, traits, and strategies which they can draw on or utilise, but rather that resilience is determined by the approach that best fits with their  cultural world view (Ugar, 2013). For example, if an individual is part of a culture which values nature, they may find that spending time outside aids in alleviating negative feelings brought about by an adverse situation, because this behaviour or action (nature, and spending time in nature) is in line with their cultural values this would be a more constructive resilient approach. What the

individual values as an important strategy or concept is determined by their culture.

Therefore, it is critical that young people are equipped with resources that are consistent with

their cultural world view, as these resources and approaches of dealing with situations would

best resonate with them and result in better outcomes (Navrady et al., 2018; Ugar, 2013).

The findings can be better understood through the analogy of *wao* (forest) of

*kahikatea* (Dacrycarpus dacrydioides: a native tree). These trees are interesting as they tend

to grow in swampy or wetland areas and are resistant to high winds. This is because the roots

of the *kahikatea* grow and stretch out in different directions connecting with other *kahikatea*

trees in the area, strengthening and supporting one another despite the swampy environment

and high winds. Similarly, despite the challenging situations, *Māori* students spread their

roots and rely on a range of different support structures in their lives, in addition to drawing

on their own resources.

**Figure 5**

*Image depicting the strength in the form of wao (forest)*
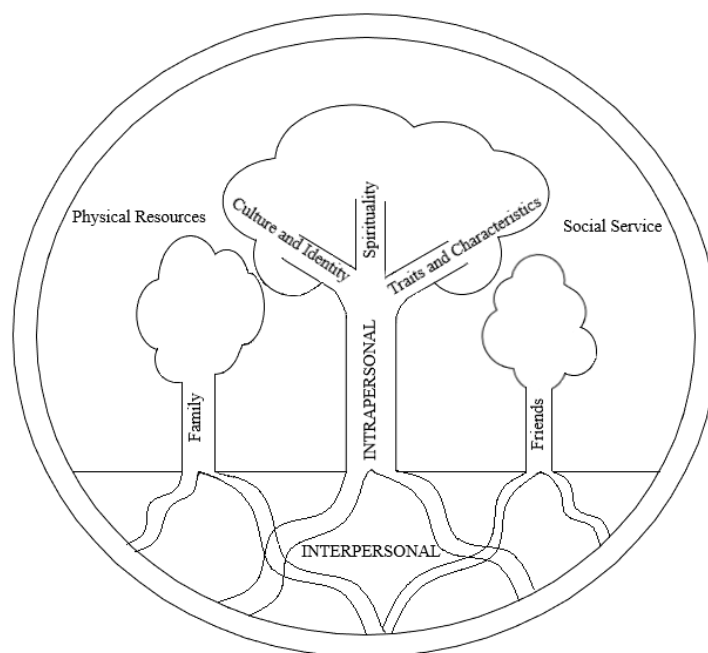
Furthermore, it suggests that there is a more complex relationship between the challenge's student experience and the way they choose to navigate those challenges. The strategies that students used tended to be dependent on the challenges that they experienced. For example, if a student was struggling with understanding academic concepts, they would more likely seek support from a peer than a family member. However, their approach and the way they navigated challenges was not always based around solving the situation. In some case certain strategies were motivational. For example, parental support would not necessarily be able to aid in facilitating ideas for an essay but would be able to encourage the individual to not give up or encourage them to reach out to additional support. Similarly, a student may see the humorous side of a situation, and this might aid in how they navigate the particular circumstance - laughing at your predicament might make you feel better, but it would not in itself remedy the problem. Therefore, depending on the nature of the situation, students would rely on multiple coping strategies. This was also due to the interconnected nature of the challenges. As described above, one issue may aggravate or lead to other issues resulting in a situation where several strategies may need to be used.

As previously identified, resilience is a complex construct that has large benefits for individuals (Andersson, 2008; Brewer et al., 2019). The findings of this study by and large highlight the challenge the broader literature faces in attempting to identify varying traits and behaviours that underpin resilience for individuals from non-WERD populations. Individuals tend to prefer traits that are relevant to their own culture, which would suggest that the strategies that would have greater impact in growing resilience are dependent on the individual's culture. For instance, for cultures that highly value social support, social support would then positively influence resilience (Theron et al., 2013), where for others who value self-reliance, being highly autonomous is likely to impact resilience (Connor & Davidson,

2003). Suggesting a broader approach in helping student devlope resilience also highlighted by Lui (2021).

The outcome of this study provides support for the idea of non- *Māori* researchers being able to navigate research with *Māori*; however, this study is not a straight endorsement for those who wish to do research with *Māori*. Rather, it provides additional support for the position supported by *Māori* researchers that suggest that this is achievable with a robust and clear research plan under the guidance of a *Māori* researcher (Rewi, 2014). This can be achieved through a variety of ways, which brings its own strengths and limitations to the research project.

One of the approaches than can be incorporated is by having a robust consultation process across the different stages (design, research, interpretation) of the project. By having a consultation through different stages of the research the study can incorporate a co-design model to assist in building the research project in a collaborative way (Rogers, 2000; Jones et al., 2010). This ensures that the research is coded,  interpreted and reported in ways that are true to the data (Hudson & Russell, 2009). This provides additional guidance over and above that provided by a research student's supervisor.

One could also employ methods or materials that are culturally relevant or sensitive (Baker, 2009). In this case we incorporated the use of the WT-VCS. This tool allowed for the use and incorporation of *Māori tikanga* and knowledge systems as a way to explore relevant topics (Baker, 2009; Smith & Reid, 2000). Although this study is the first to use this tool to gather data in this way, it proved to be highly effective in engaging students in a way that captured rich qualitative data. The design of the tool also meant that it could be used by non-Māori researchers, as long as they have done the relevant training to understand the use and *kaupapa* of the tool.

Despite these approaches, there are a few constraints a researcher needs to consider. Firstly, the researcher still needs to consider the impact they themselves have on the research process and the influence they bring to interpreting the findings (Holland, 1999). Although the robust consultation process will mitigate their influence, one should not be ignorant in thinking this is entirely subverted. Secondly, the process entailed in crossing cultural boundaries requires more time than conducting research within one's own cultural group. Finding members to assist in the consultation process, returning to the consultation and spending time learning about the cultural group are time-consuming, labour-intensive processes.

In addition to this, as an outsider to the group there is still much depth of the culture that will not be understood in the same way as an insider would. This is important to acknowledge as no amount of education or training will yield the same level of understanding of someone who has been raised or immersed within the culture. It is important to understand this as it protects against misinterpretation of data. Active consultation throughout the research stages can aid in addressing this issue. These processes ensure the integrity of the research project and protect the cultural group you are working alongside. In my experience on this project the stages and steps have aided rather than impeded this work. The processes outlined above have been critical in my understanding and developing of the project.

Despite the additional cost and extensive processes, these steps, positions, and considerations are essential when conducting research across cultural groups. These processes ensure the integrity of the research project and protect the cultural group you are working alongside. In my experience on this project, the stages and steps have aided rather than impeded this work. The processes outlined above have been critical in my understanding and developing of the project.

**Implications and Applications**

The results of this research indicate that culture has a significant impact on resilience research. This is in line with other studies that suggest culture is important to and impacts on resilience. This finding however seems to suggest that culture shapes the behavioural response to the different challenges. Rather than culture directly impacting resilience, culture informs the choices of how we navigate various challenges. The way cultural groups define resilience and the values that they hold are important and will shape the strategies the individuals chose to use.

In addition to this, the study has raised important questions about the challenges *Māori* students continue to face. The study highlights the myriad of challenges ranging from financial difficulties, separation from relationships that are culturally important to them, and needing to navigate the unique and foreign university environment. This poses the question as to whether *Māori* students have equal opportunity to succeed at university as many of these challenges have impacts on their wellbeing, availability, and productivity. This impacted on their academic performance, or would require them to work harder in order to achieve.

Although this study focuses on resilience, the findings may have a bearing on tertiary institutions as it highlights challenges university environments create as well as the impacts these challenges have on students. For instance, the challenges results suggest that the university environment is not inclusive or diverse, and this lack of diversity is hindering *Māori* students. This poses the question as to whether institutions are doing enough to support students that choose to study at their institution. The strengths findings should allow tertiary institutions to better target support to empower students with culturally appropriate resources.

To address these issues, it is important to highlight universities' general responsibilities to all students including *Māori*, as well as their specific commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. These commitments should entail providing equal access to educational opportunities and should encompass access to: resources, opportunities for success, and culturally inclusive environments. At present there are several ways in which institutions are attempting to address issues facing *Māori* students. These are notable in the number of scholarships that are available for *Māori* students. Furthermore, there are several institutions and groups such as *Āwhina*, which provides support and mentoring programmes for *Māori* students. In addition to this, many institutions have strategic plans that emphasises their commitments to the Treaty (Adds & Hall, 2016). However, more needs to be done to address the issues highlighted in this thesis.

Progress can be made by hiring new staff or by upskilling current staff in cultural competency and to understand their position within the university in relation to the Treaty, including the role they play in upholding Treaty principles. Furthermore, staff should be providing a culturally-inclusive environment for all students that adopts a flexible perspective on how students can express themselves. In addition to this, scholarships, networking, and personal development opportunities provide some means to mitigate and protect against challenges which would better the education experience and outcomes of *Māori*. These practices should be enacted across different levels within institutions. Faculties and schools should have policies for student support with measurable outcomes and offer resources that are easily assessable. They should structure courses to incorporate different learning styles and provide multiple ways of completing assessments.

In addition to this, this research highlights a range of strategies that *Māori* students have identified as aiding them to navigate university. The findings should serve as reference for future *Māori* students on strategies that could aid them at university. Further, the WT-

VCS offers a *kaupapa Māori* research tool and can provide an additional and appropriate research method.

Finally, findings provide insight into the continued challenges of indigenous students in New Zealand. While currently there is a lot that New Zealand tertiary institutions are doing in relation to scholarships and resources, there are still significant barries that *Māori* students face. These barriers include the university culture, and lack of diversity, these challenges identified in this study are consistent with previous research on the challenges *Māori* students face (Theodore et al., 2017).

**Strengths and Limitations**

There were several strengths displayed in this research. Most notable is the careful attention to detail employed in using the *kaupapa Māori* principles, which was achieved by having a strong partnership with *Māori* (participants, staff members, and peers) who aided in the design, recruitment and results sections of the research. Similarly, a lot of consideration was given to incorporating *Māori tikanga*. This was achieved through the inclusion of the *Māori* cultural resource (WT-VCS) and the incorporation of practices such as *karakia* and *mihi*, which required researcher training.

In addition to these strengths, the study had good ecological validity. The findings reflected the lived experiences of the participants. Furthermore, the project gathered data from an adequate number of participants and reached thematic saturation. Thus, the outcome was a strong research project with robust findings, supported by participants.

There were several limitations that arose during the research process. One was the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which affected the way in which research was conducted. For example, we aimed to conduct research based on a strong *kaupapa Māori* inspired approach. This called for *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face) research with the

inclusion of *kai*. However due to the pandemic and national health orders the study was forced to move online. Although this was a compromise that allowed the research project to continue, the social *whanaungatanga* dynamic would have been impeded by being behind a screen rather than face to face. Another is its transferability. As all participants were enrolled in universities, the extent to which the findings, particularly those subthemes relating to the University Environment, Physical Resources and social support, will generalise is unknown. New Zealand has a range of different types of tertiary institutions, with different dynamics and ways of learning, that could result in different challenges. Future studies may wish to address this by extending into other forms of tertiary institutions. Other limitations that may have impacted the results were the small sample size, selection bias, and lack of any outcome measure. Similarly, the identity of the researcher may have impacted the way participants responded to questions. Several ideas of future research options are discussed below.

While being an outsider provides additional challenges in doing research of this nature, several strategies and approaches can be put in place to help mitigate these challenges. These included having a working group/panel of *Māori* individuals who could meet on regular basis to discuss and inform the progress of the research as it develops. This provides a stable and constant input that would aid substantially when challenges arise. This would need to be done in addition to the consultation with participants, various *Māori* groups, and experts. Furthermore, additional learning and development through the culture that you are working with can be highly beneficial. In this instance attending the *wānanga* rather than a Western institution to learn and grow provided greater insight into the culture. In my experience, this has expanded my understanding of the culture and its concepts that would be harder to achieve when going through some Western institutions.

An additional uncontrolled factor was the possibility that the current COVID-19 climate may have accentuated certain challenges for the research participants. The national

lockdown was a unique experience for all of *Aotearoa*. This meant many students were forced to study at home, where they may not have had suitable study spaces and resources such as good internet. They also had to cope with the concerns and stressors that accompanied the virus circulating across *Aotearoa*. Under these conditions it is possible that challenges such as maintaining positive mental health, ensuring accessibility to resources, and having adequate finances were exacerbated. Based on this situation one should approach the findings with caution.

Furthermore, when considered in the context of the larger research literature, it illustrates the impact of culture (Koni et al., 2019; Ungar et al., 2005; Ungar, 2006; Wexler, 2014). As previously mentioned, culture is complex and is integral to the identity of the individual. Moreover, as displayed in this finding, culture informs or impacts the behaviour and choices of the members of the culture. Different cultural groups hold different values, beliefs and traditions that informs the actions of members. For example, a culture that values kinship ties would rely on and support family members, making the reliance of family a suitable approach to dealing with challenges. In contrast a culture that values individual success may feel less comfortable on relying on others and prefer to approach their challenges based on their own abilities. This has implications for both indigenous and minority groups (Edwards et al., 2016; Rojas, 2015; van de Meer et al., 2010; Shield, 2004).

**Future Directions**

Key findings of this research are the prevalence around the types of ways students choose to navigate challenges. Relational and cultural resources emerged as important factors in addition to traits and characteristics. This suggests that culture does seem to have an impact on the preferred choice of strategies young *Māori* students employ, with results indicating a preference for social strategies.

Future studies may wish to broaden the scope of this thesis, by extending data collection into other institutions. This study predominantly focused on university students, however, the tertiary sector in New Zealand encompasses a range of institutions including Universities, Polytechnics, *Wānanga*, Private Training Establishment (PTE) and Industry Training Organisations (ITO). These institutions are based across New Zealand in urban areas and rural areas. In addition to ensuring demographic diversity, the researcher may wish to employ longitudinal methods or use other qualitative techniques, such as diary studies or photovoice. Results from a study of this nature could determine whether challenges *Māori* students encounter vary depending on institution and area. I predict the results of a study such as this would find that students enrolled in different institutions would experience different challenges depending on the type of institution and where the institution is situated. However, I would predict that the choice strategies, such as the importance of relationships, culture and identity would mirror the findings of this study.

An additional idea would be to conduct a study similar to this thesis but in a broader context, extending beyond tertiary education. This would determine whether these findings are applicable to the broader demographic of *Māori* and not only to the academic setting. This could be achieved by replicating the methods of this study (qualitative interviews and the use of the WT-VCS) and extending to additional materials and demographics. The demographics should be extended to include *Māori kaumātua* (elders) and *Māori* from the wider public. This should also include analysis of other materials such as *Māori* knowledge, *waiata*, *whakatauki,* and *Pūrākau* (*Māori* myths and legends), this would be important as these aspects of *Māori* culture are embedded with *Māori* history and knowledge (Hikuroa, 2017). The focus of a project of this nature should revolve around what is *Māori* resilience and their experiences of overcoming adversity. In a study such as this we predict that participants would describe a much broader range of challenges; however, they would utilise

most of the same strategies identified in this study. Based on findings from studies such as these, researchers should then go towards the creation of a new *Māori* resilience scale that acknowledges and accounts for *Māori* knowledge, culture, and the *Māori* world view.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides insight into the strategies and protective factors that *Māori* use to better navigate challenges they face while in tertiary education. In addition to this it also highlights the role of culture in shaping the resilience strategies individuals employ. Furthermore, the study suggests that there is still much that is needed to be done in tackling the challenges that *Māori* students face in the tertiary sector. Over and above these findings the research also solidifies the *Whai Tikanga* Value Card Sort as a suitable research tool. Tertiary institutions should be able to utilise these findings by promoting and supporting strategies that *Māori* students have used successfully, including social and environmental strategies that aid in *Māori* success and retention. This will allow for institutions to better implement Treaty principles, move towards addressing social and educational inequalities and have outcomes that benefit *Māori*. These types of benefits, while supporting *Māori*, would extend to supporting other students regardless of ethnicity.

**References**

Adds, P., & Hall, M. (2016). *Treaty of Waitangi at Victoria = Te Tiriti of Waitangi ki te Whare Wānagna o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*. Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui.

Adhikari, M. (2005). Contending approaches to coloured identity and the history of the coloured people of South Africa. *History Compass, 3*(1), 1−16. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2005.00177.x

Andersson, N. (2008). Affirmative challenges in indigenous resilience research. *Pimatisiwin, 6*(2), 3.

Bartram, B. (2009). Student support in higher education: Understandings, implications and challenges. *Higher Education Quarterly, 63*(3), 308−314. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2008.00420.x

Block, J., & Kremen, A. M. (1996). IQ and ego-resiliency: Conceptual and empirical connections and separateness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*(2), 349−361. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.2.349

Borman, G. D., & Overman, L. T. J. (2004). Academic resilience in mathematics among poor and minority students. *The Elementary School Journal, 104*(3), 177−195. https://doi.org/10.1086/499748

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research : a practical guide for beginners*. London: SAGE.

Brewer, M. L., Van Kessel, G., Sanderson, B., Naumann, F., Lane, M., Reubenson, A., & Carter, A. (2019). Resilience in higher education students: A scoping review. *Higher Education Research & Development, 38*(6), 1105−1120. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1626810

Cassidy, S. (2016). The academic resilience scale (ARS-30): A new multidimensional

    construct measure. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 1787.

    https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01787

Chua, R. Y., Kadirvelu, A., Yasin, S., Choudhry, F. R., & Park, M. S. A. (2019). The

    cultural, family and community factors for resilience in southeast asian indigenous

    communities: A systematic review. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 47, 1750 –

    1771. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22224

Cicchetti, D. (2010). Resilience under conditions of extreme stress: a multilevel

    perspective. *World Psychiatry*, *9*(3), 145–154. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-

    5545.2010.tb00297.x

Cochran, P. A., Marshall, C. A., Garcia-Downing, C., Kendall, E., Cook, D., McCubbin, L.,

    & Gover, R. M. S. (2008). Indigenous ways of knowing: Implications for

    participatory research and community. *American Journal of Public Health, 98*(1),

    22−27. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2006.093641

Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The

    Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety, 18*(2),

    76−82. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/da.10113

Cora-Bramble, D. (2006). Minority faculty recruitment, retention and advancement:

    Applications of a resilience-based theoretical framework. *Journal of Health Care for

    the Poor, 17*(2), 251−255. https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2006.0057

Cotton, D. R., Nash, T., & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional

    students in higher education using a resilience framework. *European Educational

    Research Journal, 16*(1), 62−79. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116652629

Cram, F. (2009). Maintaining indigenous voices. *The handbook of social research ethics*,

    308-322. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483348971.n20

Edwards, T., Catling, J. C., & Parry, E. (2016). Identifying predictors of resilience in
students. *Psychology teaching review, 22*(1), 26−34.

Ehret, J., & Berking, M. (2015). Examining risk and resilience factors for depression: The
role of self-criticism and self-compassion. *Cognition and Emotion*, *29*(8), 1496–1504.
https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2014.992394

Fox, R., Neha, T., & Jose, P. E. (2018). Tū Māori mai: Māori cultural embeddeness improves
adaptive coping and wellbeing for Māori adolescents. *New Zealand Journal of
Psychology, 47*(2), 14−24. https://doi.org/10.1037/t75591-000

Friborg, O., Hjemdal, O., Rosenvinge, J. H., & Martinussen, M. (2003). A new rating scale
for adult resilience: what are the central protective resources behind healthy
adjustment? *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research, 12*(2), 65−76.
https://doi.org/10.1002/mpr.143

Garmezy, N. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes
associated with poverty. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, *34*(4), 416–430.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764291034004003

Giesbrecht, M., Wolse, F., Crooks, V. A., & Stajduhar, K. (2015). Identifying socio-
environmental factors that facilitate resilience among Canadian palliative family
caregivers: a qualitative case study. *Palliative & Supportive Care, 13*(3), 555.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951513001028

Gonzalez, R., & Padilla, A. M. (1997). The academic resilience of Mexican American high
school students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 19*(3), 301−317.
https://doi.org/10.1177/07399863970193004

Grossman, M. (2013). Prognosis critical: resilience and multiculturalism in contemporary
Australia. *The Journal of Media and Culture, 16*(5), 1−1.
https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.699

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59−82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Guillory, R. M., & Wolverton, M. (2008). It's about family: Native American student persistence in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus), 79*(1), 58−87. 10.1353/jhe.2008.0001

Hahn, R. A., Knopf, J. A., Wilson, S. J., Truman, B. I., Milstein, B., Johnson, R. L., . . . Fullilove, M. T. (2015). Programs to increase high school completion: a community guide systematic health equity review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 48*(5), 599−608. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2014.12.005

HeavyRunner, I., & Marshall, K. (2003). Miracle survivors' promoting resilience in Indian students. *Tribal College, 14*(4), 15.

Henry, E., & Pene, H. (2001). Kaupapa Maori: Locating indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodology in the academy. *Organization, 8*(2), 234−242. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508401082009

Hiew, C. C., Mori, T., Shimizu, M., & Tominaga, M. (2000). Measurement of resilience development: Preliminary results with a State-Trait resilience inventory. *Journal of Learning and Curriculum Development, 1*, 111−117.

Hikuroa, D. (2017). Mātauranga Māori—the ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand, 47*(1), 5-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/03036758.2016.1252407

Hjemdal, O., Friborg, O., Stiles, T. C., Martinussen, M., & Rosenvinge, J. H. (2006). A new scale for adolescent resilience: Grasping the central protective resources behind healthy development. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 39*(2), 84-96. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481756.2006.11909791

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (Vol. 2): Mcgraw−hill New York.

Hollis-English, A. (2015). Theories in Māori social work: Indigenous approaches to working with and for indigenous people. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work, 27*(4), 5−15. https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol27iss4id432

Hudson, M. L., & Russell, K. (2009). The Treaty of Waitangi and research ethics in Aotearoa. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry, 6*(1), 61−68. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-008-9127-0

Hutchings, J., & Lee, J. (2016). *Decolonisation in Aotearoa : education, research and practice*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.

Jackson, R., & Watkin, C. (2004). The resilience inventory: Seven essential skills for overcoming life's obstacles and determining happiness. *Selection & Development Review, 20*(6), 13−17.

Jones, B., Ingham, T., Davies, C., & Cram, F. (2010). Whānau Tuatahi: Māori community partnership research using a Kaupapa Māori methodology. *MAI review, 3*, 1−14.

Kēpa, M., & Manu'atu, L. (2011). An indigenous and migrant critique of principles and innovation in education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *International Review of Education, 57*(5), 617−630. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-011-9249-1

Kirmayer, L. J., Dandeneau, S., Marshall, E., Phillips, M. K., & Williamson, K. J. (2011). Rethinking resilience from indigenous perspectives. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 56*(2), 84−91. https://doi.org/10.1177/070674371105600203

Koni, E., Moradi, S., Arahanga-Doyle, H., Neha, T., Hayhurst, J. G., Boyes, M., . . . Scarf, D. (2019). Promoting resilience in adolescents: A new social identity benefits those who need it most. *PloS one, 14*(1), https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0210521

Li, H., Martin, A. J., & Yeung, W. J. J. (2017). Academic risk and resilience for children and young people in Asia. Educational Psychology (Dorchester-on-Thames), 37(8), 921–929. https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2017.1331973

Lilley, S. (2012). The impact of cultural values on Maori information behaviour. *Libri, 62*(4), 377−388. https://doi.org/10.1515/libri-2012-0029

Liu, Q., Jiang, M., Li, S., & Yang, Y. (2021). Social support, resilience, and self-esteem protect against common mental health problems in early adolescence A nonrecursive analysis from a two-year longitudinal study. Medicine (Baltimore), 100(4), e24334–e24334. https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.0000000000024334

Masten, A.S., Hubbard, J. J., Gest, S. D., Tellegen, A., Garmezy, N., & Ramirez, M. (1999). Competence in the context of adversity: Pathways to resilience and maladaptation from childhood to late adolescence. *Development and Psychopathology*, *11*(1), 143–169. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579499001996

McLachlan, A. D., Wirihana, R., & Huriwai, T. (2017). Whai tikanga: The application of a culturally relevant value centred approach. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 46*(3), 46.

McLachlan, A. D., Huriwai, T., & Kinred, S. (2019). *He puna whakaata: Theraputic activities to guid change II*. Wellington: Te Rau Ora

Milne, T., Creedy, D. K., & West, R. (2016). Integrated systematic review on educational strategies that promote academic success and resilience in undergraduate indigenous students. *Nurse Education Today, 36*, 387−394. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2015.10.008

Moeke-Pickering, T. M. (1996). Maori identity within whanau: A review of literature.

Moore, A., Nguyen, A., Rivas, S., Bany-Mohammed, A., Majeika, J., & Martinez, L. (2021). A qualitative examination of the impacts of financial stress on college students' well-

being: Insights from a large, private institution. *SAGE Open Medicine, 9*,

https://doi.org/10.1177/20503121211018122

Morales, E. E. (2008). Academic resilience in retrospect: Following up a decade later. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 7*(3), 228−248. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192708317119

Morales, E. E. (2014). Learning from success: How original research on academic resilience informs what college faculty can do to increase the retention of low socioeconomic status students. *International Journal of Higher Education, 3*(3), 92−102. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v3n3p92

Murray, J. (2009). The wider social benefits of higher education: What do we know about them? *Australian Journal of Education, 53*(3), 230−244. https://doi.org/10.1177/000494410905300303

Muthukrishna, M., Bell, A. V., Henrich, J., Curtin, C. M., Gedranovich, A., McInerney, J., & Thue, B. (2020). Beyond Western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) psychology: Measuring and mapping scales of cultural and psychological distance. *Psychological Science, 31*(6), 678−701. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797620916782

Navrady, L., B., Zeng, Y., Clarke, T.-K., Adams, M. J., Howard, D. M., Deary, I. J., & McIntosh, A. M. (2018). Genetic and environmental contributions to psychological resilience and coping. Wellcome Open Research, 3, 12–. https://doi.org/10.12688/wellcomeopenres.13854.1

Neill, J. T., & Dias, K. L. (2001). Adventure education and resilience: The double-edged sword. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 1*(2), 35−42. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729670185200061

Olson, K., Kemper, K. J., & Mahan, J. D. (2015). What Factors Promote Resilience and Protect Against Burnout in First-Year Pediatric and Medicine-Pediatric Residents? *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine*, *20*(3), 192–198. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156587214568894

Panter-Brick, C. (2014a). Culture and Resilience: Next Steps for theory and practice. In (pp. 233−244). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9415-2_17

Panter-Brick, C. (2014b). Health, risk, and resilience: Interdisciplinary concepts and applications. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 43*, 431−448. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-025944

Penehira, M., & Doherty, L. (2013). Tu mai te oriori, nau mai te hauora! A Kaupapa Māori approach to infant mental health: Adapting mellow parenting for Māori mothers in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *Pimatisiwin, 10*(3), 367.

Penehira, M., Green, A., Smith, L. T., & Aspin, C. (2014). Māori and indigenous views on R and R: Resistance and Resilience. *MAI journal*.

Perez, W., Espinoza, R., Ramos, K., Coronado, H. M., & Cortes, R. (2009). Academic resilience among undocumented Latino students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 31*(2), 149−181. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986309333020

Perna, L. W. (2005). The benefits of higher education: Sex, racial/ethnic, and socioeconomic group differences. *Review of Higher Education, 29*(1), 23−52. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2005.0073

Ponce-Garcia, E., Madewell, A. N., & Kennison, S. M. (2015). The development of the scale of protective factors: Resilience in a violent trauma sample. *Violence and Victims, 30*(5), 735−755. https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-14-00163

Pu, J., Chewning, B., Clair, I. D. S., Kokotailo, P. K., Lacourt, J., & Wilson, D. (2013). Protective factors in American Indian communities and adolescent violence. *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 17*(7), 1199−1207. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-012-1111-y

Rewi, T. (2014). Utilising kaupapa Mäori approaches to initiate research. *MAI Journal, 3*(3), 242−254.

Richardson, G. E. (2002). The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58*(3), 307−321. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.10020

Ritchie, S. D., Wabano, M. J., Russell, K., Enosse, L., & Young, N. L. (2014). Promoting resilience and wellbeing through an outdoor intervention designed for Aboriginal adolescents. *Rural Remote Health, 14*, 2523. https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH2523

Rochford, T. (2004). Whare Tapa Wha: A Mäori model of a unified theory of health. *Journal of Primary Prevention, 25*(1), 41−57. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOPP.0000039938.39574.9e

Rogers, M. R. (2000). Examining the cultural context of consultation. *School Psychology Review, 29*(3), 414−418. https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2000.12086025

Rojas, L. F. (2015). Factors affecting academic resilience in middle school students: A case study. *Gist: Education and Learning Research Journal,* (11), 63−78. https://doi.org/10.26817/16925777.286

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing : the art of hearing data* (3rd ed. ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE.

Schofield, T., O'Brien, R., & Gilroy, J. (2013). Indigenous higher education: Overcoming barriers to participation in research higher degree programs. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*(2), 13−28.

Shield, R. W. (2004). The retention of indigenous students in higher education: Historical issues, federal policy, and indigenous resilience. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 6*(1), 111−127. https://doi.org/10.2190/HWKH-8LC1-WP90-45K0

Smith, L. T., & Reid, P. (2000). *Kaupapa Māori principles and practices a literature review*.

Soet, J., & Sevig, T. (2006). Mental health issues facing a diverse sample of college students: Results from the College Student Mental Health Survey. *NASPA Journal, 43*(3), 410−431. https://doi.org/10.2202/0027-6014.1676

Stone, C., & O'shea, S. (2013). Time, money, leisure and guilt-the gendered challenges of higher education for mature-age students. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 53*(1), 90−110.

Te Morenga, L., Pekepo, C., Corrigan, C., Matoe, L., Mules, R., Goodwin, D., . . . Humphrey, G. (2018). Co-designing an mHealth tool in the New Zealand Māori community with a "Kaupapa Māori" approach. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, 14*(1), 90−99. https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117753169

Tertiary Participation (2022). Educationcounts. Retrieved May 3, 2022 from https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-participation

Theodore, R., Gollop, M., Tustin, K., Taylor, N., Kiro, C., Taumoepeau, M., . . . Poulton, R. (2017). Māori University success: what helps and hinders qualification completion. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, 13*(2), 122−130. https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117700799

Theron, L. C., Theron, A. M. C., & Malindi, M. J. (2013). Toward an African definition of resilience: A rural South African community's view of resilient Basotho youth. *Journal of Black Psychology, 39*(1), 63−87. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798412454675

Triandis, H. (1988). Collectivism v. individualism: A reconceptualisation of a basic concept in cross-cultural social psychology. In *Cross-cultural Studies of Personality, Attitudes and Cognition* (pp. 60−95). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-08120-2_3

Tugade, M. M., Fredrickson, B. L., & Feldman Barrett, L. (2004). Psychological resilience and positive emotional granularity: Examining the benefits of positive emotions on coping and health. *Journal of Personality, 72*(6), 1161−1190. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2004.00294.x

Ungar, M. (2006). Resilience across cultures. *The British Journal of Social Work, 38*(2), 218−235. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcl343

Ungar, M. (2008). Resilience across cultures. *The British Journal of Social Work, 38*(2), 218−235. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcl343

Ungar. (2013). Resilience, Trauma, Context, and Culture. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *14*(3), 255–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838013487805

Ungar, M., Clark, S. E., Kwong, W.-M., Makhnach, A., & Cameron, C. A. (2005). Studying resilience across cultures. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work: Innovation in Theory, Research & Practice, 14*(3-4), 1−19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J051v14n03_01

van der Meer, J., Scott, S., & Neha, T. (2010). Retention of first-year Māori students at university. *MAI Review, 2*(1), 1−14.

Waxman, H. C., Gray, J. P., & Padron, Y. N. (2003). Review of Research on Educational Resilience. Retrieved from http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/7x695885

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1992). The Resilient Children in Adulthood. In *Overcoming the Odds* (pp. 55−81). https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501711992

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (2019). *Overcoming the Odds : High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*. Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501711992

Wexler, L. (2009). The importance of identity, history, and culture in the wellbeing of

    indigenous youth. *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth, 2*(2), 267−276.

    https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.0.0055

Wexler, L. (2014). Looking across three generations of Alaska Natives to explore how

    culture fosters indigenous resilience. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 51*(1), 73−92.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461513497417

Williams, A. D., Clark, T. C., & Lewycka, S. (2018). The associations between cultural

    identity and mental health outcomes for indigenous Māori youth in New Zealand.

    *Frontiers in Public Health, 6*, 319. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2018.00319

Wortham, T. T. (2014). Intimate partner violence: Building resilience with families and

    children. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 23*(2), 58.

**Appendix A**

Social Media Advert

**Appendix B**

Participant Information Sheet



# Te Manawaroa mō te Mātauranga, Tuatahi

**INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWS**

You are invited to take part in this research.  Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part.  If you decide to participate, thank you.  If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

### Who am I?

Kia Ora, my name is Darren Hendricks, I am a master's student in the School of Psychology's Centre for Applied Cross Cultural Research at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

### What is the aim of the project?

This project will explore some of the strengths that Māori students utilise while completing tertiary education, by exploring some of the values they use and challenges they navigate in order to excel at university. The results of this study will be used to inform an additional study with the same purpose. Your participation will support this research which endeavours to highlight strategies that support Māori students towards their academic success. This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee [#0000027483].

### How can you help?

You have been invited to participate because you are a student of Māori ethnicity who has successfully completed at least one trimester of academic study. If you agree to participate you will take part in a virtual interview via Zoom. You may choose a setting and time that is most comfortable for to virtually join the interview.  I will ask you questions about your academic experience, values and strengths that you have drawn on to overcome challenges. The Interview will take approximately 1-2 hours and will include a brief survey. With your permission the interview will be audio and video recorded. The audio recording will be transcribed and only the transcript will be incorporated into my thesis.

You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time before 15 June 2020.  If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

**What will happen to the information you give?**

This research is confidential[*]. This means that the researchers named below will be aware of your identity but the research data will be combined and your identity will not
be revealed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation.

Only myself and my supervisor, the transcriber (who will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement) will read the notes or transcript of the focus group. The focus group transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed on 31/12/2022.

**What will the project produce?**

The information from the research will be used in my Masters thesis and future academic publications and conferences.

**If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?**

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

• choose not to answer any question;
• ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
• withdraw from the study before 25 Feb 2021;
• ask any questions about the study at any time;
• request a copy of your interview recording;
• request a copy of your interview transcript;
• read over and comment on the transcript of your interview;
• be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

**If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?**
If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

| Student: | Supervisor: |
|---|---|
| Name: Darren Hendricks | Name: Dr. Tia Neha |
| Email: | Role: Supervisor |

---

[*] Confidentiality will be preserved except where you disclose something that causes me to be concerned about a risk of harm to yourself and/or others.

darren.hendricks@vuw.ac.nz                    School: Te Kura Mātai Hinengaro

Email: tia.neha@vuw.ac.nz

**Human Ethics Committee information**

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University of Wellington HEC Convenor: Associate Professor Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

**Appendix C**

Consent form

## Te Manawaroa mō te Mātauranga, Tuatahi
**[Strengths of Indigenous Resilience in Higher Education]**

**CONSENT TO INTERVIEW**

This consent form will be held for a minimum of five years.

Researcher:    Darren Hendricks, School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington.

• I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.

• I agree to take part in a video and audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

• I may withdraw from this study at any point before 25/02/2021, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.

• The identifiable information I have provided will be destroyed on 01/03/2027.

• Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.

• I understand that the observation notes and recordings will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor and the transcriber.

• I understand that the observation notes and recordings will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor and the transcriber.

• My name will not be used in reports and utmost care will be taken not to disclose any information that would identify me.

• I would like a copy of the recording of my interview:              Yes ☐    No ☐

•  I would like a copy of the transcript of my interview:              Yes ☐    No ☐

-       like to be kept informed on the progress of the study and be a part of the ongoing feedback process. I have included my email below.    Yes ☐   No ☐

-       I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below.    Yes ☐   No ☐

Signature of participant:       _____

Name of participant:       _____

Date:       _____

Contact details:       _____

**Appendix D**

Interview Guide, Questions, Prompt Information

## Guiding Questions

## Introductions

## Part 1: Challenges

*This section is to get participants thinking and discoursing about some of the challenges they needed to overcome while being enrolled in academic studies. This could involve anything they feel has in any way disadvantaged them from their non-Māori counterparts. These may range from minor disadvantages such as: having to travel long hours to get to university, to more challenging situations such as need to attend a tangi but not being able to receive an extension.*

1. What are the challenges that you have faced that have made studying harder for you.

a. As a student of Māori decent what challenges do you feel you face that is unique to Māori

b. Which ways, if any do you feel others, non-Māori may have an advantage over you.

## Part 2: Strategies and Strengths

*Provide a description of a whakataukī as an example of a potential strength-based strategy that could be used Ex. Vision: mehemea ka moemoeā ahau ko ahau anake, mehemea ka moemoeā a tatou.*

*Have participants discuss how they managed to navigate the challenges that they have faced. These can range from staying late at university, staying over at a friend or a family member's home.*

1. What are some of the strategies that you have used to overcome these challenges. [Example of strategies or strength: Te *Whānau labs* support for one another]
2. What are some of the resources you have utilised to help you.
a. These could be your own resources
b. Academic resources: resources provided by the university.
Additional question: To whom/what can/do you attribute your academic success to.

Ranking
• Generate and rank your top 3 strategies/strengths that you feel are most relevant to your and academic success.
• As a group share your 3 and together rank the groups strengths/strategies in order that you feel is most relevant to Māori students.

**Part 3: Whai Tikanga Card Q-Sort**

- Here are 40 take pū (Māori values), as a group go through the cards and sort the cards into 3 groups "very important, important and not important"
- Now choose the 5 most relevant
- Arrange them from the most relevant least to relevant in order to attain academic success.
- Discuss the top 5 values
    - What does these values mean to you (explain your understanding of these Take pū)?
    - Who in your life exemplifies/exemplified these values to you?
    - How/do these take pū tautoko (help) your academic performance?
    - Are they important in guiding you in your studies?
    - Do you have space to live out these take pū at university? If you did how do you feel this would affect your academic studies?

## Closing

Do you have any other views and thoughts that you would like to share?

These could be additional feedback questions optional for after the focus group.
Additional: Can you tell me why you decided to participate in this focus group?
       What has it felt like to participate in this focus group?
       Is what you expected?
       If not, what did you expect?

**Appendix E**

Debriefing Statement



# Te Manawaroa mō te Mātauranga, Tuatahi
**[Strengths of Indigenous Resilience in Higher Education]**

Ethics Application: 0000027483

**DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

Thank you for participating in this research.

The purpose of this research was to investigate strength-based strategies and resources that Māori use to succeed at university. Much of the research based on resilience strategies is mainly from a Pākehā or Western perspective. With this research, we wanted to hear the voices that are not often expressed through the psychological publications in this area.

We wanted to investigate these views through focus groups and interviews, to allow those participating to express their own thoughts and experience which they feel are relevant- this may include any thoughts, feelings, past experiences, cultural knowledge, perspectives and worldviews. Please remember that identifiable information shared is confidential, so make sure you do not share any identifiable information from these sessions with others.

From this project, we wanted to learn about how Māori can best excel at university. Additionally, we want to be able to provide information that will support Māori students who either are or will be taking up academic studies. We also acknowledge that Māori are the tangata whenua of Aotearoa, and have views on resilience, values and strategies that may be different to those of other cultural groups in New Zealand.


If you are interested in the research findings, please contact me.

Thank you again for participating in this study.

Darren Hendricks
School of Psychology
Victoria University of Wellington
Darren.hendricks@vuw.ac.nz

**Appendix F**

Outcome and Rational of Consultation of the Results

| # | Description | Rational |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Consider renaming some themes | Some themes should be relooked at to avoid confusion for example: the environment theme is to closely relate to the natural environment and could be confusing, adding university will make this clearer. |
| 2 | Include Māori translations for the themes and subthemes | A list of Māori words where presented that best encapsuled the ideas discussed in during the consultation |
| 3 | Move and recode the theme relating to university staff from social to institutional | By moving the subtheme, you are placing emphasis on the university to employ or train staff rather than on the student to build relationships |
| 4 | To create a broad analogy to articulate the findings | In line with kaupapa methodology an analogy to illustrate the findings this should be used. This should be simple and not overly complex. The version of the forest of interconnect roots supporting each other works nicely |
| 5 | To hold a talk to disseminate key findings in a way to give back to the community | In line with kaupapa methodology there should be a way to give back to the community this could be in the form a presentation, broacher, or poster |

# Appendix G

## English version of tikanga values

| Participant | RANK | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| T0M | Having dreams a vision of the future | Maintaining our relationships with our taiao (natural re-sources) | Giving and receiving love and respect | Listening to our senses | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience |
| WAF | Giving and receiving love and respect | A sense of connection and belonging | To reflect and restore balance | To feel good about myself | Having dreams a vision of the future |
| LUM | Knowing who I come from | To be physically well and healthy | Reflective, peaceful, and calm | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience | To be hardworking |
| HAM | Joining for a common purpose | A sense of connection and belonging | To engage spirit and have faith | Knowing who I come from | To care for and be cared for |
| MAW | Balance and harmony | Having dreams a vision of the future | A sense of connection and belonging | Learning and sharing | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DAM | Knowing who I come from | To care for and be cared for | A sense of connection and belonging | Standing strong | Empower, authority and common good |
| SHF | Having dreams a vision of the future | To have close friends and confidants | To be hardworking | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience | To care for and be cared for |
| MAF | To engage spirit and have faith | Knowing who I come from | To awaken your vibrant life force/energy | Having dreams a vision of the future | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience |
| MMH | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience | A sense of connection and belonging | Learning and sharing | To be reliable and trustworthy | To see the humorous side of things |
| BRW | Having dreams a vision of the future | Learning and sharing | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience | Being optimistic | To see the humorous side of things |
| ASA | Keep going during hard times, to have perseverance and resilience | To be physically fit and strong | To be hardworking | To have close friends and confidants | Having dreams a vision of the future |

| SSA | To be in close relationship | Empower, authority and common good | Reflective, peaceful, and calm | To awaken your vibrant life force/energy | To reflect and restore balance |

*Note*: The original table with Māori Values can be found in Table 2; All translations are taken from *He Puna Whaka*