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HE URUPOUNAMU E WHAKAHAERENGIA ANA E TE  
WHĀNAU

WHĀNAU DECISION PROCESSES

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public  
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## He Mihi<sup>1</sup>

*Karanga mai, karanga mai.*

*I te pō ki te rā, i te rā ki te pō, e mīmiti ana i te tai, e pupuhi ana i te hau, kei whea mai.  
Ka heke tonu ngā roimata me te hupe ma rātau kua whetūrangitia. Koia rātau e noho  
pūmau ana ki te puku o te whenua i te kōpū o te wahi ngaro, hoki wairua mai.*

*Huri noa ki te hunga ora. Ko koutou ērā ngā mata whānui e whai ana i ngā tapuwae o  
ngā mātua tīpuna, koutou hoki ngā puna mātauranga mo ā tātau kōhungahunga, ā tātau  
whakatipuranga kare ano kia tae mai, me koutou hoki ngā ahorangi i Te Kūnenga ki  
Pūrehuroa me te hunga wānanga i aki, tēnā tātau. Kua whakarangatira ahau i te  
aroha i a koutou.*

*Kāre aku mihi.*

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<sup>1</sup> A mihi is a greeting. The mihi contained in the examined copy of the thesis details my whakapapa (ancestry) from the beginning of the universe, according to the tribal traditions of Ngāi Tāmanuhiri. It describes my ancestral relationship to the people of each waka (Māori sailing vessel) that arrived to Aotearoa (New Zealand), as a tribute to key people who assisted me in the completion of this work. I did not provide an English translation of the mihi for examination because it is made up of the names of ancestors. I have deliberately removed my whakapapa for the purpose of public viewing of the thesis and a different mihi has been inserted on this page.



## Abstract

A whānau is a social construct of Māori society in Aotearoa/New Zealand that is likened to an extended family. This thesis describes principles and practice that whānau utilise in decision processes from the findings of a retrospective qualitative case study of three whānau, who decided to participate in genetic research into a medical condition affecting their health.

Four elements of whānau decision processes emerged from the data. Hui, rangatiratanga, manaakitanga and kotahitanga are Māori constructs that emphasise the collective nature of whānau decision making, and substantiate philosophical, theoretical and anecdotal evidence that Māori have distinctive ways of reaching decisions, underpinned by unique philosophical conventions.

The results of this research place greater significance on the process of decision making than actual decisions, an incidental finding that has not been articulated by previous studies of Māori health and whānau.

Contrary to western theoretical knowledge of decision making, whānau decision processes are collective activities. Individual decision making is closely linked to and depends on the collective, because individual identity manifests from the collective, and individual wellbeing is closely linked to that of the collective.

When decision processes are familiar to members of a whānau, they are more likely to engage in decision making because they have a greater sense of knowledge and thus control of the processes, and they feel more able to contribute meaningfully to achieving aspirations for their own health.

This thesis provides evidence that the New Zealand health sector, health legislation and policies are largely unfavourable for guaranteeing whānau engagement in decision processes. Yet, whānau decision making is an overall objective of the Government's Māori Health Strategy: *He Korowai Oranga*, to address inequalities in health between Māori and other New Zealanders that have unacceptably become the norm.



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## Glossary<sup>2</sup>

ahi kā	literally translated as ‘burning fire’ as a metaphor for home place, primary settlement or one’s land.
ako	learn
Aotearoa	translated as ‘land of the long white cloud’ and attributed to the sighting of a cloud by the canoe party captained by Kupe, which led to the discovery of land called New Zealand.
hapū	extended whānau, pregnant
hāruru	handshake
hau	wind, breathe
hauora	literally translated as ‘breath of life’ - hau meaning wind or breath and ora meaning life. Hauora is a metaphorical reference to wellbeing according to Māori philosophy, whereby hau implies the winds or components of wellbeing.
hōhā	frustrated, impatient, tired of.
hongī	act of two people gently resting their foreheads together momentarily to press their noses together as to exchange breaths.
Io	a reference to the beginning of Māori cosmology
iwi	tribal grouping
kaitiakitanga/kaitiekitanga	guardianship denoting custodial relationship
kaikaranga	caller
kainga	home
karakia	expression of gratitude, sometimes likened to a Christian prayer
karanga	invitation expressed as a wail
kawa	customs, practice, etiquette
kotahitanga	unity, collectivity, togetherness
kuia	elder woman/women
makutu	spiritual mark
marae	traditional settlement

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<sup>2</sup> All translations are my own.

Mauao	tribal name for a location in the Bay of Plenty, most commonly known as Mount Maunganui
mauri	essence of being
mihi	greeting, salutation
mihi whakatau	informal greeting to visitors
mokopuna	grandchild
Ngāi Tāmanuhiri	tribal group whose tribal area is located on the East Coast of New Zealand
Ngāi Te Rangihouhiri	tribal group located in the Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand named after their eponymous ancestor, Te Rangihouhiri I
noa	risk free
ora	life, alive, wellness
paepae tapu	place for formal oratory most attributed to traditional settings such as a marae.
pā harakeke	flax plantation sometimes used metaphorically to describe the interconnectedness of a social system
pākehā	non-Māori
papa kainga	traditional settlement
pakeke	elder
piki	climb, raise, ascend
pōwhiri	formal welcome ceremony
raru	concern or problem
Rongowhakaata	tribal group so named after their eponymous ancestor
take	topic, issue
take-utu-ea	refers to an issue that requires resolution
tangata whenua	indigenous people or people of the land
taonga tuku iho	heirloom,
tapu	restriction, condition
tauparapara	recitation of ancestral lines and events
te ao Māori	Māori world, Maori worldview
te reo Māori	Māori Language
te tūnga ki te tomokanga	waiting or to wait at the entrance
tikanga	etiquette, norm, tradition

tohu	sign, symbolic
tohunga	skilled person
Tūranganui-a-Kiwa	a tribal area located on the east coast of the north island of New Zealand
wairua	spirituality
wairuatanga	of spiritual being
waka	sailing vessel
whaikōrero	oratory
whakaeke	ascend
whakapapa	ancestry, genealogy
whāngai	to take care of
whare	house structure
whakataukī	proverb
whakawātea	closure to an event or ceremony
whānau	social unit likened to a family
whānau ora	collective wellbeing
whanaunga	a relative, not necessarily a blood relative, but may have a common connection e.g. pacific or indigenous whanaunga
whanaungatanga	relationship, process of strengthening relationship/s
whenua	land, placenta