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Kia Mau, Kia Ū

**Supporting the breastfeeding journey of Māori
women and their whānau in Taranaki**

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Masters in Public Health at Massey University, Wellington,
New Zealand**

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Karanga - Karakia – Mihimihi

He Karanga

Whakatau mai rā me te ūkaipōtanga eee!

He Karakia¹

Ko Rangi,
Ko Papa
Ka puta - ko Rongo,
ko Tāne Māhuta,
ko Tangaroa,
ko Tūmataurangi,
ko Haumiatiketike,
ko Tāwhirimātea
Tokona te rangi ki runga,
ko Papa ki raro
Ka puta te ira tangata
ki te whai ao, ki te ao mārama
E Rongo whakairia ake ki runga
kia tina - Tina!
Hui e! Tāiki e!

He Mihi

Tēnei te mihi kia rātou kua whetūrangitia, hoki atu ki te moenga roa. Huri noa ki a tātou te hunga ora, ngā mihi maioha. Ka mihi hoki kia tātou e mahi ana ki te hāpai i te hauora o tātou te iwi Māori, tēnā tātou katoa!

He mokopuna ahau o te maunga tītōhea. Ko Ngāti Mutunga te iwi.

Ko Marnie Reinfelds ahau.

Tihei Mouri Ora!

¹ This Karakia is titled Tātai Whakapapa, and is our creation story. It acknowledges our sky-father Ranginui and our earth-mother, our ūkaipō - Papatūanuku, and their children of whom we are descendants.

Abstract

The benefits of breastfeeding for maternal and infant health are well known to Māori. Yet inequities in breastfeeding rates between Māori and non-Māori exist. To understand some of the causes of these inequities, this qualitative study was designed to investigate some of the barriers to breastfeeding for wāhine Māori. It is grounded in Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine research methodologies as a way of ensuring that the experiences of Māori women were prioritised and to provide transformative outcomes for whānau, hapū and iwi. The aims were to:

- (1) Identify the barriers to full and exclusive breastfeeding for the recommended six months for wāhine Māori in Taranaki;
- (2) Identify ways to reduce these barriers; and
- (3) Understand how a breastfeeding culture can be enhanced within whānau Māori.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 Māori women and two whānau Māori living in Taranaki. Thematic analysis identified several intervention points to support breastfeeding: (1) access to high quality breastfeeding information (*Filling the kete*); (2) a compassionate and culturally-safe maternity healthcare workforce (*Health service support*); (3) active whānau involvement (*Whānau support*); (4) greater acceptance of breastfeeding by the wider community (*Hapori – supportive communities*); and (5) access to breastfeeding role models (*Role-modelling breastfeeding*). Partners and whānau provide important emotional and practical support to breastfeeding women (*The breastfeeding support role*) however the significance of this role needs to be acknowledged and encouraged (*Supporting the supporters*). Building whānau capacity and capabilities related to breastfeeding support must begin in the antenatal period (*Access to information*).

This thesis presents a Kaupapa Māori breastfeeding support framework that highlights two areas of action. *Tiakina Te Ūkaipō* describes the relationship between whānau and maternity providers and the ways in which they can protect the mother/infant dyad. It also offers a pathway for supporting Māori women in their breastfeeding aspirations. *Hāpai Te Tikanga Ūkaipō* describes the responsibilities of Government, the healthcare sector and the wider community to protect tikanga ūkaipō. Māori women aspire to breastfeed our babies, just as our tūpuna did. As this thesis clearly shows, achieving these aspirations will require a commitment and reorientation of the maternity healthcare system towards whānau ora.

Preface

My thesis has been a personal journey as well as an academic one. My interest in the kaupapa (topic) of my research began when I entered the realm of motherhood. My experiences of breastfeeding my first two children, my sons Ngāmotu Rongomai (born 2006) and Tiki Ngārangi (born 2007), did not meet my expectations.

As a Māori woman I felt it was important to breastfeed, to give our tamariki (children) the best start in life. I had always planned to breastfeed my own children. The ‘breast is best’ message had been well received and my goal when I was hapū with my first child was to breastfeed until at least 12 months. In the pre-natal period, formula feeding was never a consideration for me.

While breastfeeding initiation was successful with both my sons, my breastfeeding journey ended when my sons were six months old and five months old respectively. Breastfeeding my first child was interrupted with being pregnant with my second child. Sadly, the breastfeeding experience of my second child was greatly impacted on by the untimely death of my mother, my own ūkaipō (mother). Her passing was at a time when I needed her more than I felt I had needed her in the past, and the impact that had on me, my breastfeeding and mothering journey has been profound.

Motherhood for me time of huge transition and change. Dealing with the changes to my body and feelings about my body had an effect on my trust in it to sustain and nourish life. Ultimately, I made decisions on feeding my children based on the information I had at the time – unfortunately the information was not inclusive of the risks of not breastfeeding.

I had a three-year gap between the birth of my second and third child. During that time, I re-entered the paid workforce working for the Taranaki District Health Board’s Public Health Unit as a Health Promoter. As part of my professional development I enrolled in Massey University’s Post Graduate Diploma in Public Health.

Perhaps the guilt of not breastfeeding to the Ministry of Health's² recommendations, or my desire to learn more about breastfeeding to "get it right" for my next child, saw me undertake my major assignment and subsequent research paper on breastfeeding. Suffice to say the research into breastfeeding has certainly influenced my approach and attitude to infant feeding. My daughters Parekaiuru Tūturu o Te Atiawa (born 2010) and Te Waiaurere Mahinekura (born 2012) too have benefitted.

Learning about the importance of breastfeeding, the barriers women face (in particular Māori women) and the facilitators that enable a successful breastfeeding journey, has been empowering. In addition, looking at breastfeeding through a Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine lens has highlighted the particular challenges we face as a people in upholding our tikanga.

Consequently, through this learning I not only had a more positive breastfeeding experience with my daughters, I have felt more value and therefore empowered in my ūkaipō role as a mother and as a nurturer. The connection to Papatūānuku has been strengthened as I have placed trust my body to sustain life beyond the womb and now view my body as powerful for having done that.

It is my hope that my research and thesis will influence policy and funding streams and subsequently practice so that Māori women like myself, can be supported in their own breastfeeding journeys. That said, the stories shared by the participants of this research project are the real taonga of this mahi. They are inspirational and I hope that the stories create change at a systemic level and provide motivation at a personal level, for all of those who read this thesis.

² The Ministry of Health (2008) recommends exclusive breastfeeding until infants are around six months, and continuing breastfeeding for at least the first year of the infant's life, or beyond.

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By many, by thousands, the work will be accomplished.

This whakataukī encapsulates my thesis journey. I could not have done it without the many who have contributed to this work with their support and guidance. It is not possible to fully express the gratitude for the manaaki and tiaki that has been extended over the last couple of years during this journey. I am indebted to the many that have assisted in getting me to the finishing line.

Firstly, I must pay tribute to my tūpuna, to my ancestors whose deeds and actions have meant that I, their uri, can stand today. I feel my thesis is a continuation of their work, to challenge the status quo, to enable a better, more prosperous and just future for my future mokopuna. I also thank my mother, my own ūkaipō whose untimely passing has impacted on me in ways that I'm continuing to discover as I walk along this huarahi that is life. It was her research journey she undertook shortly before her passing that deepened my interest and sent me on this journey.

To the wāhine Māori and whānau Māori participants, I cannot thank you enough. It was an honour and a privilege to hear your kōrero. I marvel at being able to bear witness to the challenges you faced and to gain insight to the strength it takes to be Māori in a society that often trivializes haputanga and te ūkaipō. It is your stories that are the wero.

To my supervisor, Dr. Sarah-Jane Paine, ngā mihi maioha. Your commitment to seeing me finish this thesis has been beyond amazing. In amongst your own professional and whānau commitments you have continued to be a constant pou ārahi and pou tautoko. The long distance nature of our working relationship has come with its own challenges, but you have remained steadfast, always positive, responsive, critical when needed and you are just a genuinely awesome, caring, compassionate, Māori woman. Ka nui te aroha ki a koe, me tōu whānau hoki.

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framework of Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine theory, which explores the many, varied and diverse realities of Māori women. I am honoured to be a part of this movement.

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Glossary of Māori Language

A

Amorangi – Leader

Ao – World

Aroha – To love, feel concern for, feel compassion, empathise

Ara – Pathway

Atu – Away

Atua – God, supernatural being, ancestor with continuing influence

H

Hāpai – To lift up, rise, elevate

Hapū – Pregnant, kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Maori society

Hapūtanga – Pregnancy

Hauora – Health

Huarahi – Road

Hui – Meeting

Hutia – To pull out

I

I – A particle used before verbs and statives to indicate past

Iwi – Extended kinship group

K

Ka – A particle used before verbs indicate future

Kai – Food

Kaikaranga – Caller, the role of the making the ceremonial call the karanga

Kaikōrero – Speaker

Kaimahi – Worker, staff

Kanohi – Face

Karakia – Prayer, incantation

Kaupapa – Topic, policy, plan, purpose, agenda, proposal, theme

Kaua – Don't

Kete – Flax basket

Kete Aronui – Basket of knowledge of aroha, peace, and the arts and crafts which will benefit the Earth and all living things

Kete Tūātea – Basket of ancestral knowledge of mākutū and evil

Kete Tūāuri – Basket of sacred knowledge

Ki – To, into, towards

Kī – To say, speak, call, mention

Kia – To

Kitea – To see

Koha – Offering, contribution, acknowledgement

Kohia – Gather

Kō – To sing (of birds)

Kōmako – Bellbird

Kopae – A Taranaki specific terms for Kōhanga

Kore – Nothing

Kōrero – Talk, narrative, story, account

Kura – School

M

Mā – By way of

Mai – This way, from, since

Māhaki – Be inoffensive

Mahi – Work

Māku – For me

Mana – Prestige, authority, control, power

Manaaki(tanga) – Hospitality, kindness, support

Mānuka – Tea-tree

Māori – Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand

Māramatanga – Understanding, enlightenment

Mātauranga – Knowledge, information

Mau – To take up, carry, lay hold of

Mea – Thing

Mihimihi – Introduction, greeting

Mua – The front, in front of

Muri – The rear, behind, at the back of

N

Ngā – The (plural)

Nui – Big, large, important

O

O/ō – Of, belongs to, from, attached to

Ora – Well-being, health

Oti – Complete, finish

P

Pā Harakeke – Flax bush

Pango – Black

Papatūānuku – Earth mother

Parihaka – A community established in Taranaki in the late 1800s by Te Whiti o Rongamai and Tohu Kakahi is resistance to Crown oppression.

Pēpi – Baby

Pō – Night

Pou – Post, pillar, support

R

Rangahau – Research

Rangatira – Leader, chief

Reo – Language

Ringawera – Cooks, caterers

Rito – Centre/heart of the flax bush

Rourou – Food basket

Ruia – Cast away, throw away

T

Taitea – Whitewood, sapwood (in the context of “ruia te taitea” it can mean cast off the rubbish)

Takahia – Stamp, trample

Takoto – To lie down, to lay down

Taku – Mine

Tamaiti – Child

Tamariki – Children

TamaWāhine - Women

Tāne – Man, men/Atua of the forests and birds and for some iwi humans

Tāne-mahuta – Atua of the forests and birds and for some iwi humans

Tangata – Person

Tāngata – People

Taonga – Treasure

Tau - Your

Tautoko – To support

Te – The (singular)

Teina – Younger sibling of the same sex

Te Kohanga Reo – Early childhood immersion language movement

Tiaki – To look after, nurse, care, protect

Tika - Right

Tikanga – Custom, correct procedure

Titiro – Look

Tohunga – Expert, skilled person, healer

Tū – Stand

Tuakana – Elder sibling of the same sex

Tūpato – Be cautious, careful, wary

Tūpuna – Ancestor

Tōtika – Straight, correct, right

U

Ū – Breast (noun); to be firm, fixed, resolute, unyielding (verb)

Ūkaipō – Mother, source of sustenance, origin, real home

Ūkaipōtanga – Nurturing

W

Wā – Time

Waiata – Song

Wai ū – Breastmilk

Wāhine – Woman

Wānanga – Learning important knowledge or educational seminar, conference, forum

Wero – Challenge

Whaowhia – To fill

Whakarongo – Listen

Whakataukī – Proverb, saying

Whakawhānaungatanga – The process of establishing relationships

Whānau – Family

Whānaungatanga – Relationship, kinship, sense of family connection

Whāngai – To feed, nourish, nurture

Whea – Where

Whero – Red