Te Ara Matihiko: Exploring affirmative social media use among rangatahi Māori

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Abstract

Social media is now a salient aspect of the contemporary realities faced by rangatahi Māori (young Indigenous people of New Zealand) in Aotearoa (New Zealand). It's use has grown exponentially over the past twenty years, however the use of social media by rangatahi Māori is not well understood. While some research in the area has been conducted among rangatahi Māori, it is an extremely under-researched topic for Māori. The present study aims to fill this gap by using a culturally appropriate research framework, that centres the voices of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities, in order to gain a deeper understanding of their practices and experiences on social media. This is a qualitative Kaupapa Māori study that drew on Co-operative Inquiry to explore the social media practices and experiences of two purposively sampled friendship groups (seven participants in total). All participants self-identified as having strong Māori identities. Four wānanga were held with each group over two months (eight wānanga in total). Wānanga were conducted in both Te Reo Māori and English. Phenomenological Thematic Analysis informed an analysis that produced rich insights into participants experiences. Two main themes were generated in the analysis process. Theme one, '*He Ara Whakaoranga:* Enhancing wellbeing' illustrated how participants leveraged different affordances of social media through affirmative practices to enhance different aspects of their lives. Theme two, '*He Ara Taumaha:* The struggles of social media', illustrated the key challenges faced by rangatahi and the strategies they implemented to navigate these challenges. This study identified the potential for social media to enhance rangatahi wellbeing, through numerous affordances and affirmative practices. Racism and managing time spent on social media were identified as key challenges for participants, despite efforts to navigate them. By highlighting these experiences, the study identified capitalist and prejudiced structures that undermined the self-agency of rangatahi. These must be addressed. The study concludes with important directions for future research, and outlines the implications of these findings for parents, educators, health services, and policy makers.

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Tables and Figures

Key Terms

ako	to learn
ao	world
Aotearoa	New Zealand
aroha	love
hapū	kinship group within wider tribal groupings
hauora	health, wellbeing
iwi	tribal groupings
kāinga	home
kaitiakitanga	environmental stewardship
kanohi ki te kanohi	face-to-face interaction
kaumātua	elderly
kaupapa	topic, agenda, cause, issue, initiative
kawa	guidelines for customary protocols
koha	offering
kōhanga reo	Māori language early childhood centres
kōrero	discussion, talk

kōtahitanga	unity
kupu	word, words
kura kaupapa Māori	Māori language immersion schools
mana	power, authority, prestige, charisma
	refers to the power or status accrued through ones
mana tangata	leadership talents, characteristics, mana
manaakitanga	care, reciprocitiy
Māori	Indigenous people to New Zealand
Māoritanga	Māori identitiy
marae	tribal meeting place
mātanga Reo	Māori language expert
mātauranga Māori	customary Māori knowledge
matihiko	digital
mihi mihi	introductions
oranga	lives, wellbeing
Pākehā	non-Māori
pakeke	adults

pūkenga	skills, expertise
pūtea	money
rangatahi	youth
rangatiratanga	self-determination
raruraru	concerns, disagreements, conflict
rauemi	resources
rautaki	strategies
taha hinengaro	mental and emotional wellbeing
taha tinana	physical wellbeing
taha wairua	spiritual wellbeing
taha whanau	social and family wellbeing
taiohi	adolescents
tamariki	children
tangata	person
tangihanga	funerals
tāonga tuku iho	heirloom, cultural treasures

te ao Māori	the Māori world
te reo Māori	the Māori language
Te Tiriti ō Waitangi	An agreement made in 1840 between the British Crown and Māori, New Zealand's founding document
Te Whare Tapa Whā	A Māori health model, literally translates to "A house with four sides"
tika	to be correct, appropriate, fair
tikanga	customary protocols
tino-rangatiratanga	self-determination
tirohanga	outlook, perspectives
wahine, wāhine	wahine, women
wānanga	to meet and discuss, deliberate, consider
whakaaro	thoughts, to think
whakapapa	heritage, lineage
whakatauāki	proverbial saying
whakatinana	to embody
whakawātea	to clear, to free, to release

whanake/tanga development/al

whānau family

whanaungatanga the process of forming, sustaining and strengthening relationships

List of Abbreviations

CI	Co-operative Inquiry
KMR	Kaupapa Māori Research
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PTA	Phenomenological Thematic Analysis

Preface

Ko Ruahine te maunga

Ko Oroua te awa

Ko Tainui te waka

Ko Ngāti Kauwhata te iwi

Ko Tāhuriwakanui te hapū

Ko Aorangi te marae

Ko Maniaihu te whare tupuna

Ko Tarakeha te maunga

Ko Opepe te awa

Ko Mataatua te waka

Ko Te Whakatōhea te iwi

Ko Ngai Tamahaua te hapū

Ko Opape te marae

Ko Muriwai te whare tipuna

The inspiration for this rangahau (research) has stemmed from my passions, dreams and responsibilities associated with the numerous roles I have held and continue to hold throughout my life. My first and most important role is a māmā (mother) to my two beautiful tamariki (children), Māiana and Mason. My dreams for them are to grow into confident and compassionate people, with an unquestionable connection to their identity as Māori, and for them to live in a world where they are enabled to reach their full potential.

Whakatauāki

E tipu e rea mō ngā rā ō tou ao;

Ko tō ringaringa ki ngā rākau a te Pākeha, hei oranga mō tou tinana;

Ko tō ngākau ki ngā taonga a o tīpuna, hei tikitiki mō to māhunga;

Ko tō wairua ki te atua, nāna nei ngā mea katoa.

Thrive in the days destined for you,

your hand to the tools of the Pākehā to provide physical sustenance,

your heart to the treasures of your ancestors to adorn your head,

your soul to God to whom all things belong.

– Sir Apirana Ngata

Chapter 1: Introduction to Māori Wellbeing and Contemporary Realities

This chapter aims to give context to the study by providing an overview of various issues pertaining to Māori wellbeing and realities in contemporary Aotearoa (New Zealand). Firstly, it overviews Māori wellbeing in Aotearoa today, and the impacts colonisation has had and continues to have on this. Secondly, it describes Māori understandings of health and wellbeing and the ongoing relevance of these frameworks in contemporary times. Lastly, it discusses some of the contemporary Māori realities for rangatahi Māori, highlighting the importance of understanding social media use among rangatahi Māori.

Māori Health in Aotearoa

The colonisation of Aotearoa (New Zealand) saw the systematic dispossession and disconnection of Māori (Indigenous people of Aotearoa) from their land, culture, spirituality, knowledge systems, and social structures (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). The ongoing impacts of this today are reflected in the persistent health, social, educational and economic disparities that exist between Māori and non-Māori. Rangatahi Māori (Māori youth) make up a substantial proportion of the Māori population, and generally experience poorer health and social outcomes compared to their Pākehā (non-Māori/New Zealand European) counterparts. These include lower rates of educational attainment, higher rates of mental health concerns, and more than double the rates of suicide than Pākeha youth (Wikaere et al., 2022). A report published by Te Whatu Ora (Wikaere et al., 2022) suggested these disparities are likely exacerbated by a continued reliance on universalist 'evidence-based' approaches that reflect international best practice, but lack focus on and with Indigenous peoples and are devoid of Indigenous input, participation or leadership (Wikaere et al., 2022). In this regard, mainstream approaches have failed and continue to fail to deliver any significant improvements in Māori wellbeing. Thus, persistent health inequities experienced by Māori continue to be upheld by colonial institutions, service systems, and sociocultural contexts that favour Western world views, values and notions of wellbeing. These perspectives are often based on notions of the self as autonomous and separate units, bearing no resemblance to the inherently holistic and relational world view of Māori (Durie, 2001). This has resulted in the development of Māori approaches to wellbeing grounded in Māori worldviews that produce more culturally appropriate and meaningful pathways to wellbeing for Māori.

Understanding Māori Wellbeing

For Māori, people are inherently connected to social, spiritual, and natural environments they are located within, making their wellbeing dependent on a good balance across these domains (Durie, 2001). The Māori world view is not dissimilar to other Indigenous groups globally. This holistic and relational worldview is reflected in numerous Māori health models, one of the most cited models being Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985). Te Whare Tapa Whā frames wellbeing as achieved through balance across four domains: te taha tinana (physical wellbeing), te taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing), te taha whānau (family and social wellbeing), and te taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing). While Western notions of wellbeing typically privilege bio-medical perspectives, Māori notions of wellbeing emphasise the interconnection between all four of the above domains. Through such models, there is also an assumption that an individual can be better understood by understanding the contexts within which they find themselves in, rather than by dissecting and compartmentalising individual behaviour as isolated from the socio-cultural contexts they exist – something that is common in Western scientific frameworks (Durie, 2001). Reframing understandings of health and wellbeing within Māori knowledge and understandings of the world has allowed more culturally relevant and responsive approaches to improving Māori wellbeing, and thus has significantly contributed to improving Māori wellbeing. Such frameworks also demonstrate the continued relevance of Mātauranga Māori (customary Māori knowledge) to contemporary realities today.

Māori world views, bodies of knowledge, and customary practices have long been deemed by the Western world as invalid and irrelevant in contemporary Aotearoa. However, this is far from the truth, and many Māori academics, activists, and other leaders continue to demonstrate the relevance of this knowledge today. Despite strong Western influences on Māori identity as an impact of colonization, cultural heritage nevertheless continues to shape people's ideas, attitudes, and reactions, particularly in times of illness (Durie, 1998). Durie (2001, p. 87) illustrated how understandings of customary protocols on the marae (traditional Māori meeting spaces) highlight characteristic ways of viewing the world and locating the self, giving pointers to understanding the philosophical and psychological constructs which typify Māori experiences". For example, *kawa* are customary protocols embedded in ancient Māori knowledge systems. The values within kawa reflect Māori world views and values that place significance on the relationships between people, and between people and the natural environment (Durie, 2011). Durie (2011) argued that understanding and applying *kawa* provides a useful values-based approach to understanding encounters of the modern world and an enabling process that can enhance performance, generate cohesion, inspire achievement and provide a measure of certainty (Durie, 2011). Durie argued that while maintaining customary values in environments where Māori world views are not the prevailing norm may have its challenges, there are still advantages of introducing cultural protocols into pursuits more usually regarded as being outside the reach of indigenous frameworks. A particular salient aspect of contemporary Māori realities that has received attention by Durie and other Māori scholars as sitting outside Māori frameworks, has been the use of social media and other digital technologies by young Māori (Keegan & Sciascia, 2018; Lyons et al., 2017; O'Carroll, 2013).

Rangatahi Māori and Contemporary Realities

A rise in Māori-led, Māori frameworks and initiatives that centre Māori cultural understandings has contributed to significant gains in the health of young Māori in the past 100 years, including improved life expectancy, lowered mortality rates, improved educational participation and Māori language acquisition (Durie, 2003; Tomlins-Jahnke & Mulholland, 2011). The establishment of Kaupapa Māori initiatives like kōhanga reo Māori (Māori language early childhood centres) and Kura Kaupapa Māori in 1985 are a key example of this, having provided a crucial pathway for young Māori to reconnect with Māori culture and to strengthen Māori cultural identities (Durie, 2003; Tamati et al., 2021). A strong sense of cultural identity cultivated through cultural and social connection also provides a positive foundation for wellbeing that is a protective factor from many of the health issues Māori are typically overrepresented in (Durie, 2001). It is a grounding force that enables one to bounce back from adversity better, as well as navigate the challenges of contemporary society more resiliently (Durie, 2001; Durie, 2011; Tassell-Matamua. et al., 2021). Durie (2001) also reminds us that culture is not static and any analysis of culture must be influenced by the contemporary environment. Rangatahi Māori have distinct characteristics and values derived from their experiences and realities as Māori, as well as youth living in the 21st century (Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010). As a result of globalisation and an ever-advancing digitalised world, rangatahi can now easily draw on both local and global influences to be integrated in their diverse realities. Nor are they limited to traditional social groupings or previous stereotypes, they now can and do associate with many different Māori and non-Māori social, cultural and political organisations (Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010). However as I have already noted, rangatahi Māori's engagement in contemporary spaces like social media is an extremely under-researched area, and further understanding of their engagement and potential implications of this is needed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following chapter provides an overview of the literature pertaining to different areas of social media use. The first section ‘A Social Media Age’ describes the development of social media and its use over the past twenty years, and highlights key issues these developments have raised in the literature. This includes key concerns regarding social media on the impact of young people’s wellbeing through deficit-oriented frameworks, and the justification for shifting to more affirmative research approaches in this area. The second section ‘Indigenous Social Media Use’ reviews the literature pertaining to Indigenous people’s use of social media, highlighting various ways that Indigenous groups globally have reappropriated the internet to their own ends. The third section ‘Māori Social Media Use’ reviews the small body of literature that has focused specifically on Māori uses of social media and digital technologies more broadly. The final sections hen overview the rationale for the present study based on the literature, and the overall research objectives. This chapter illustrates a need for more affirmative research grounded in culturally grounded frameworks to explore social media use among rangatahi Māori.

A Social Media Age

The SAGE Handbook of Social Media, Burgess et al. (2018, p. 1) define social media as “digital platforms, services and apps built around the convergence of content sharing, public communication and interpersonal communication”. Social media has been described as an ‘information high-way’, providing users with instant and current information and data on a broad range of topics concerning the user (O’Carroll, 2013). The potential to connect with others globally has massively transformed the way we experience our worlds, including how we relate to and communicate with one another, how we share and access information, how we express ourselves, and how we understand ourselves, others, and society more broadly (Carlson & Frazer, 2021). Access to these platforms is becoming increasingly achievable, making the use of social media a popular and intertwined part of young people’s social lives globally.

The Social media landscape has developed drastically over the past twenty years. Platforms have moved from largely single-sited web spaces that could only be accessed by often-fixed computers, to now multi-sited, cross-platform spaces spread across the web and accessible from most people’s pockets (Sujon, 2021). Examples of some of the most popular social media apps globally today include Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, and Twitter (Kemp, 2022). According to Kemp (2022), an estimated 62.5 percent of the world's total population have access to the internet, with the largest group being aged 16-24 years old. For social media, approximately 59.4 percent of the global population use social media. In New Zealand, 94.9 percent of the country's total population have internet access, and 89.2 percent of the total population actively use social media. The number of people using social media in New Zealand has grown from 1.5 million users in 2012, to just over 4.6 million users in 2022, and trends in use show this number continues to grow each year. The average time being spent on social media daily in NZ is an estimated 2 hours 27 minutes, and the largest user group are aged between 20-29 years old. For Māori, data from 2019 showed that an estimated 85.05 percent of Māori versus 90.98 percent of Pākehā students now had access to the internet, and that over 70 percent of Māori youth and adult internet users frequented social media platforms (Houkamau et al., 2021). Despite rangatahi Māori making up part of the largest user group of social media in New Zealand, and as a generation who has grown up in the age of the smartphone and digital spaces such as social media, research exploring social media use among rangatahi Māori remains scant.

A Discourse of Risk and Harm

While this relatively new and constantly evolving phenomena has brought many new and exciting opportunities to our lives, it has also brought with it many concerns from worried parents, researchers and other adult professionals. This has resulted in an abundance of deficit-focused causative research that links numerous social and psychological harms with social media use. Some of the most commonly cited harms include excessive use and addiction to social media (Jericho & Elliott, 2020; Keen & Gainsbury, 2021; Larson, 2021), the development of depression, low self-esteem and poor body image (de Vries et al., 2018; Spitzer et al., 2022; Taylor & Nichter, 2021), the development of undesirable personality traits like narcissism (Zia & Malik, 2019), Cyberbullying (Houkamau et al., 2021; Magis-Weinberg et al., 2021), and other privacy and surveillance concerns (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Houkamau et al., 2021; O'Carroll, 2013). These are often framed within risk and protection frameworks that centre the perspective of adult 'outsiders'. Under such frameworks, young people are perceived as requiring protection from online spaces and that adults and professionals are best equipped to achieve this for them. Solutions offered to reduce online harm under these frameworks have included increasing monitoring of young people online, educating young people about online harms, or restricting young people’s use of these technologies (Jericho & Elliott, 2020; Larson, 2021; Magis-Weinberg et al., 2021; Zia & Malik, 2019). However, the abundance of deficit-focused research has also resulted in young people being framed as reckless, passive consumers of the internet who lack self-agency, self-determination, or any concern for their own wellbeing, and their expertise and self-agency on social media undermined. Furthermore, these approaches place responsibility for online harm on social media users, with little consideration of the design and structural features of social media platforms and other offline factors that shape social media users’ behaviour – critical factors that will be explored shortly.

While there is significant speculation on the risks and harms of social media use, conclusive evidence is limited. Ferguson (2021) explored several social issues that have been linked causally to social media, including political polarization, depression, suicide, aggression and cyberbullying. They concluded that causal relationships between social media and such phenomena were difficult to establish, and that these relationships were often complex and nuanced and depended partly on the individual user themselves, as well as wider social and cultural influences. This is supported by Keen and Gainsbury (2021) who conducted a qualitative study investigating the perspectives of adult professionals on the perceived impacts of excessive and problematic technology use among the Australian youth they worked with. Some of the impacts identified included a range of perceived social, psychological, physiological, educational and vocational harms, including but not limited to a lack of meaningful connection with peers and family, conflict with peers and parents, body image issues and low self-esteem, not attending school or other important commitments, and sleep disturbances. However, participants noted it was rare for excessive and problematic technology use to occur in isolation and that there were almost always confounding factors in young people’s lives that contributed to impaired wellbeing. Technology-related problems were more so perceived as by-products or indicators of broader underlying issues and dynamics in young people’s lives, suggesting those already experiencing disadvantage or poor health were more likely to develop technology-related problems, while those prospering and with adequate social support, family life, and peer relationships were described as more resilient to problems and therefore able to capitalise on the advantages of technology.

In this way, social media can be seen as *re*producing (rather than producing) offline inequities, reflecting broader dynamics of marginalisation based on race, gender, class, sexuality, religion (Brough et al., 2020). While social media may seem to amplify social problems, it has not radically changed these behaviours but has made these dynamics more visible (boyd, 2014). However social media can often be used as a scapegoat for larger, more complex social problems, and a continued focus on social media (or its users) as producing such negative health and social impacts, fails to comprehensively address the broader underlying issues of structural, institutional, and social inequities. Understanding social media use in the context of wider societal issues influencing online practices and experiences is therefore imperative, and can provide opportunities to better understand both young people's practices and experiences, as well as the contexts that shape those experiences.

An Embedded Part of Contemporary Life

The extent to which online and offline worlds are congruent with each other has been contentious in the literature, with earlier research distinguishing between online and offline identities and behaviour (Bargh et al., 2002). For example, in an experiment on New York University (NYU) undergraduate students, Bargh et al. (2002) explored self-multiplicity by comparing how people express qualities of their 'true self' and 'actual self' both online and offline. The 'true self' referring to the desired, identity-important qualities of ourselves that are not often or easily expressed to others, as opposed to the 'actual self', referring to the qualities one actually possesses and expresses to others at present. The study found that participants were more likely to express qualities associated with their 'true self' with interactions with partners over the internet compared to face-to-face interactions, and that qualities of the 'actual self' were more likely to be expressed during face-to-face interactions. They suggested the relative anonymity afforded by the internet removes the burden of expectations and constraints placed on us by people we know, and reduces the risk of potential negative repercussions for what we say or do. This suggests the ability to better present, and have aspects of their 'true selves' online accepted by others with limited negative repercussions, is a key motivation to assume online identities that have little connection to offline lives. In contrast, Davis (2011) argued that despite opportunities to fashion multiple identities online, and while online environments may encourage distinct forms of self-expression that are not exact reproductions of offline identities, online identities are both consistent with and largely dependent upon offline contexts.

Understanding online identities as deeply rooted in offline contexts further suggests that knowledge of those offline contexts is required in order for online identities to be interpreted.

Furthermore, Larrain et al. (2007) argued that self-multiplicity is not viable if the different personalities cannot communicate with each other and that a healthy identity depends on the ability to coordinate ones multiple facets of identity into one coherent – a self-coherence that is essential for psychological wellbeing and moral integrity. They further suggested that individuals whose multiple selves are not bound by an organizing influence that does not undergo transformation from one context to the next, such as cultural principles or values, are less likely to feel a sense of responsibility for their online actions. This may suggest that those who possess a strong sense of self, bound by wider cultural values and influences, may express themselves and experience online spaces more affirmatively. Therefore an analysis that takes into account organising influences (such as culture) may lead to more nuanced understandings of people's online identities and practices. This has particular relevance for understanding the online experiences of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities.

Affordances of Social Media

While engagement in social media may seem radically different to onlooking adults familiar with more traditional forms of communication, some argue the underlying processes and motivations behind online practices are relatively unchanged. boyd (2014) highlighted the similarities and differences between social media and traditional public spaces in relation to four particular affordances: *persistence* (the durability of online expressions and content); *visibility* (the potential audience who can bear witness); *spreadability* (the ease with which content can be shared; and *searchability* (the ability to find content). For example, people can easily share and access information with wider audiences and from greater distances, meaning the potential *visibility* of content or messages online is increased. Unlike interactions in traditional public spaces where more effort is required to gain attention in public, visibility on social media is often public by default and private by effort. Relatedly, the *spreadability* of information on social media is increased through explicitly or implicitly encouraging people to share links, images and text in just a few clicks. This *spreadability* can be both powerful and problematic depending on what is shared and how. Furthermore, while this *searchability* can make it easier to access information that might not have been possible through offline interactions, these tools are often designed to eliminate contextual cues meaning that the chances of the information being taken out of context is hugely increased, which can have individual and societal implications. While these particular features in and of themselves are not new, the way these tools are used helps to create new social dynamics that may appear to be radically different to earlier generations of young people, but merely provide new ways for young people to be seen and find a sense of belonging in the world, and to situate themselves as part of a broader collective community (boyd, 2014). These particular affordances of social media create both new opportunities and challenges, so understanding how and why young people leverage or resist these affordances is essential in understanding young people's worlds.

Some argue that because the extant literature has over-emphasised the direct relationship between Internet and technology use and wellbeing, important mechanisms underlying the relationship between internet use and wellbeing have been neglected (Chan, 2015; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). Earlier theories suggest social interactions become less intimate and emotionally satisfying through mobile technologies as the visual and non-visual cues that facilitate emotion are removed, suggesting texting is less "rich" than face to face communication, and less effective in eliciting emotion (Daft & Lengel, 1986). However other theories suggest that fewer cues and less demand for spontaneity gives users more time to craft messages and engage in "partner idealisation", which overtime can result in far more intimate connections than face-to-face communication (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). This is supported by (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009) who found in a longitudinal quantitative study of instant messaging among young people that they tended to be more comfortable self-disclosing feelings to others online than in face-to-face social interactions. This increased self-disclosure led to quickly developing and maintaining more intimate relationships, therefore increasing the perceived quality of relationships and consequently life satisfaction and subjective wellbeing. Contrary to research suggesting social media may come at the expense of social interactions, for generations who have grown up in a social media age it may instead enhance their social interactions, experiences and subsequent subjective wellbeing (Chan, 2018).

The benefits of mobile technologies, including social media, in maintaining different types of social capital has also been recognised in the literature (Chan, 2015; Kavanaugh et al., 2005; Wei & Lo, 2006). Social capital is the idea that “an individual’s relationships with others provides embedded resources that can be accessed, mobilised and utilised for actions that lead to economic and non-economic gains.” (Chan, 2018, p. 100). This implies that the more socially connected people are, the more potential resources they have to mobilise for the benefit of self and others. Some found that mobile phones allow relationships with friends and family to be strengthened by helping to sustain regular contact and close bonds (Wei & Lo, 2006). These connections can be drawn on as resources when in need, for example for emotional and material support. Others argue mobile phones are just as important for creating and maintaining connections with weaker ties, for example work colleagues or acquaintances (Kavanaugh et al., 2005). These relationships are considered just as important for subjective wellbeing as they can be the course of new ideas and information, and provide opportunities to participate in community activities with people from different backgrounds and interests. The maintenance of different types of social capital afforded by social media therefore has the potential to significantly improve individual subjective wellbeing.

Some research suggests that impacts on subjective wellbeing are complex and dependant on differential use of technology, and that different affordances of technology may be related to diverse perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioural outcomes. Using an affordance-based analysis (as opposed to a causative analysis), Chan (2018) found using a survey study among Hong Kong adults that mobile technologies positively influenced subjective wellbeing by bonding social capital with strong ties, and bridging social capital with weak ties. However, the study also found links between information seeking and time-passing activities and negative effects, suggesting excessive non-communicative uses of mobile technologies may have negative emotional consequences. This aligns with a literature review conducted by Thomas et al. (2021), who argued that the affordances of social media can provide therapeutic benefits for those with lived experiences of self-harm and suicide ideation, however chronic device use when alone may inhibit identity development and other psychosocial developmental tasks. This may suggest that in order for the benefits of social media to be maximised, it must be accompanied with moderated use of social media for non-communicative, time-passing activities that are also a key function of social media platforms.

Platform Design: Shaping User Behaviour

A continued focus on individual behaviour in the literature has resulted in missed opportunities to understand how user behaviour is shaped by the design and features of social media platforms. In a study exploring how young adults engage in social media, Gangneux (2019) found that participants felt “locked in” to social media and employed numerous tactics to negotiate social expectations of connection and to limit time spent online. Tactics to regain control of time spent on social media included restricting use to certain times of the day or deleting or deactivating social media accounts altogether. However, because platforms were considered essential for managing day-to-day life and being included in social activities, some tactics were only temporary as permanent removal was considered unsustainable and unrealistic. Relatedly, feeling pressured to be constantly available online could be managed by bypassing ‘read-receipts’ in Facebook Messenger using the ‘preview’ function, allowing the first lines of a message to be seen without notifying the sender. This was a way of temporarily suspending connection in order to avoid upsetting peers by appearing to ignore them. This suggests that although young adults managed engagement on social media on an individual level by employing numerous tactics to manage social media use, their understandings and negotiations of the platforms were significantly shaped by the platforms designs and features. This also illustrates a key paradox young people find themselves in whereby they are encouraged and expected to limit their time on social media, but simultaneously socially obligated to use it.

Furthermore, the interests and ideologies of social media corporations underpinning platform design and features are also important to consider when understanding young people’s social media use. Of particular interest in this area have been the concepts of *platform capitalism* and *limbic capitalism* (Gangneux, 2019; Lyons et al., 2022)*. Platform capitalism* refers to the commercial strategies of data-mining and exploitation used by social media platforms in order to organise markets and influence users’ behaviour and consumption patterns (Gangneux, 2019; Lyons et al., 2022). *Limbic capitalism* refers to “the purposive design, production and marketing of products that stimulate embodied, pleasurable affective responses to maximise profit” (Lyons et al., 2022, p. 2). The intertwining of *platform capitalism* with *limbic* capitalism on social media has been explored under what Lyons et al. (2022, p. 2) *limbic platform capitalism* – the use of limbic processes designed specifically to generate, analyse and apply social media users’ data in order to direct tailored online content to users, therefore capturing their time and attention, influencing their feelings, moods, emotions and desires with the ultimate aim of increasing profits. Lyons et al. (2022) argue that while social media are central to young people's lives in many ways and young people actively appropriate social media to their own ends, they are simultaneously recruited as consumers and specifically targeted by producers through such features designed to intentionally keep users engaged in watching, responding to, producing, and scrolling online content. Therefore this invites us to a) hold people's agency in the foreground while also considering the intensified commercial context and profit-imperatives of these systems; and b) acknowledge that users have insight and knowledge around the way digital platforms operate on their compulsions, habits and so forth; and c) take note of what forms of agency, navigation, creativity, resistance looks like within these (Lyons et al., 2022).

Gangneux (2019, p. 1054) also argued that young people's use and understandings of social media must also sit within "a wider context of changes in the education and labour market in Western countries characterised by the rise of non-standard and precarious forms of employment as well as by the exacerbation of neoliberal policies and subjectivities". These changes affect young people's relationships by making it harder to synchronise timetables with significant others, making mobile technologies and social media necessary coordinating devices by allowing young people to manage the everyday, spontaneously arrange meetings, and maintain connections. Gangneux also argued that these technologies favour the blurring of work and non-work time and rely on neoliberal discourses that encourage people to develop entrepreneurial and management skills and to always be available. Understanding young people's use of social media in relation to such platform design, underpinning ideologies and social expectations of participation, allows the focus to shift from person-centred interventions towards platform-centred interventions to promote wellbeing.

Despite the processes underpinning social media design features, users continue to co-opt online spaces in ways unintended by designers, therefore demonstrating personal agency through appropriating structural features of online spaces for their own personal use (Davis, 2011). Therefore rather than positioning people as unthinking, disengaged, and unknowingly 'datafied' and commodified, they should be seen as active agents who actively interpret complex meanings and negotiate numerous elements of media including technical infrastructures, relations of production, and frameworks of knowledge with meaning structures around content (Sujon, 2021). Framing social media use within these perspectives allows our focus to shift from person-centred interventions designed to change user behaviour, towards platform-centred interventions that can inform policymakers' decisions concerning the processes underpinning social media platforms.

Young People's Lived Experiences of Social Media

Despite the abundance of risk focused research in this area, there is a growing body of affirmative, youth-centred approaches to research that highlight the intentional, creative and sophisticated ways in which young people use social media, and young people's own perspectives on these. These approaches demonstrate the value of seeking knowledge of social media use that is grounded in young people's own accounts of their experiences, practices, preferences, and concerns regarding social media. For example, boyd (2014) offered an account of how young people make sense of privacy within an increasingly digitally mediated environment, and found young people were experts of online privacy who are capable of developing sophisticated practices and techniques to manage online content. Young people's knowledge and expertise in social media may be better developed than adult researchers sometimes assume, so youth-centred approaches have the potential to contribute significantly towards our understanding of this area (Gibson & Trnka, 2020).

The value of these perspectives can be seen in their application to understanding how young people negotiate privacy on social media. For example, some have suggested that young people may not fully consider the implications of their online practices, raising concerns about undesirable impacts on employment opportunities, acceptance into educational institutions, and family and peer relationships (O'Carroll, 2013). In contrast, Melton et al. (2021) explored young people's own reflections on their social media practices in the context of Cyber-vetting (the review of job applicants social media accounts), and found that most young people were confident that the content of their Facebook pages was appropriate for prospective employers, while most Twitter users concluded their content may be questionable. However, when asked about the prospect of changing posting behaviour, most young people were open to implementing change. Similarly, Berriman and Thomson (2014) found through young people's reflections on their online practices, that young people reflect on both their own visibility in online spaces, and particularly how they weigh up the risks and opportunities of increased visibility. Both studies therefore suggest that young people’s considerations of privacy may be more considered than originally thought, and that providing opportunities for young people to reflect on their online practices can be beneficial. Therefore further research that centres young people’s own experiences, preferences and reflections is warranted.

Another example of the sophisticated online practices used by young people can be seen in how they use social media to seek and give emotional support (Gibson & Trnka, 2020). Gibson and Trnka (2020) explored how young people in New Zealand seek and give emotional support online. They found that social media gives young people access to an informal peer support network where they can give and receive support amongst privately established communities, and that the unique features of online communication enabled more open expression of emotion among young people. Participants were skilled at reading emotional cues from social media communication in the same way that one might recognise and respond to non-verbal indications of distress. Furthermore, the immediacy of social media made it easier to talk about distress in the moment of experiencing it, and being able to reach out directly to friends or trusted others is easily facilitated through social media, and support can easily be given in return. Given the difficulties young people may have in communicating distress offline, the study shows that social media may provide an important channel through which they can seek and give emotional support when distressed. It also suggests that their ability to make sense of digital cultural cues and negotiate social norms may be a particular skill of a generation that has grown up in the digital age. While the participant sample in this study was young New Zealanders and including some rangatahi Māori, it did not focus specifically on rangatahi Māori. There is currently no research in this area exploring this phenomena among rangatahi Māori.

Relatedly, Ito et al. (2009) noted that “Rather than conceptualize everyday media engagement as “consumption” by “audiences,” the term *networked publics* foregrounds the active participation of a distributed social network in the production and circulation of culture and knowledge”. These perspectives highlight the need to frame young people as not just passive consumers of the internet, but as active participants who actively contribute to their socialised worlds, wellbeing, and in producing, circulating, and shaping culture and knowledge. These frameworks help us understand how social media provides new opportunities for young people to shape and navigate their social worlds, make sense of cultural cues, grapple with social norms, explore new interests and forms of self-expression and identity, and enhance their technological skills. In this way, social media can be understood as fixtures of youth culture that provide a platform for self-directed learning, autonomy, bolstering technical skills, and refining socio-emotional skills that enable young people to fully participate in contemporary society (Edwards, 2017).

Indigenous Social Media Use

Internet and technology studies involving Indigenous populations globally have often included discussion on what has been termed as the ‘digital divide’, in which Indigenous peoples are understood as lacking both the access to digital tools and the skills needed to use them proficiently (Carlson & Frazer, 2021). This rhetoric has been criticised as reinforcing deficit-oriented narratives by pointing to the idea that Indigenous people are considered somehow technologically ‘deficient’ and incapable of engaging in the digital world (Carlson & Frazer, 2021). However, researchers have found that Indigenous communities in many countries, especially youth, have regular access to a smartphone, are well-informed on how to use these technologies, and actively adopt digital technologies in their daily lives (Keegan & Sciascia, 2018; Li & Brar, 2022). Therefore while “the digital divide” may be relevant in countries in which stark socio-economic differences exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, many suggest this digital divide may be becoming less relevant for some Indigenous populations. While affirmative indigenous perspectives exploring social media use among youth is limited, a body of research has developed that recognises how Indigenous groups globally are now reappropriating the internet to their own ends through a range of practices that are future-oriented, and work towards building better relations, communities and worlds.

Indigenous Health and Wellbeing

There is an increasing body of research that explores how Indigenous people around the world are using the internet for various health-related reasons (Carlson et al., 2015; Hefler et al., 2018; Li & Brar, 2022; Walker et al., 2021). For example, Walker et al. (2021) found young Indigenous Australians were using social media to access information pertaining to positive health behaviours, such as exercise and healthy eating, and that this gave them a sense of personal agency over their health and wellbeing. However, conflicting and vague information online often meant that young people also sought additional support and consensus from family and communities (both online and offline) to inform and guide decisions around health-behaviour changes. The study also found other environmental constraints, such as proximity, ease and affordability of fast-food and alcohol were recognised by young people as hindering eating healthily. Similarly, Hefler et al. (2018) found that while a range of content related to various determinants of health were being accessed by Australian Indigenous people, some were more effective than others. This included content and messaging that took into account the importance of culture and identity, that projected positive narratives around Indigeneity, and that built on social capital generated by supportive online environments. Together these findings point to the potential of social media to promote Indigenous wellbeing through exposure to new and diverse information online, the potential for this information to have sustainable impacts offline depends on the cultural relevance of the content and messaging, positive social support both online and offline, as well as changes to their environments.

Relatedly, the potential for social media to support mental and emotional wellbeing among Indigenous communities has also been recognised (Carlson et al., 2015). Carlson et al. (2015) explored how Australian aboriginals, who experience some of the highest suicide rates in the world, were using Facebook to both seek and offer help for issues relating to suicide and self-harm. They found that seeking help on social media was a less daunting way of seeking informal help from peers. It also presented opportunities to offer help to those who appeared to be in distress, through strategies ranging from light emotional support between peers or acquaintances, to direct suicide intervention involving health services. In stark contrast to the large body of literature discussed earlier suggesting social media leads to declines in mental health, this research suggests that social media may be a key and critical outlet for those in mental distress. Indigenous understandings of these strategies can be leveraged to inform effective and appropriate suicide prevention and wider health promotion programs for Indigenous communities. Findings from this research may be highly applicable to rangatahi Māori who also experience some of the highest suicide rates in the world (Wikaere et al., 2022), however to my knowledge, no such research with rangatahi Māori exists.

Affirming Indigeneity

Many Indigenous researchers have also illustrated how Indigenous people have begun to reaffirm their Indigeneity through using social media (Carlson & Frazer, 2021; Keegan &

Sciascia, 2018; Muhamad-Brandner, 2010; O'Carroll, 2013; Virtanen, 2015). For example, Carlson (2013) explored how Aboriginal Australians were using Facebook to build, display and perform Aboriginal identities and thus seeking new ways to represent and identify themselves to others. This was considered especially valuable in relation to wider debates in contemporary Australia around what or who qualifies as being Aboriginal; a direct legacy of colonial discourse designed to undermine the legitimacy of Aboriginal peoples that are echoed in other colonised countries. In this way, affirming ones Indigeneity on social media was extremely empowering. Virtanen (2015) produced similar findings among Indigenous individuals in Southwestern Amazonia, who crafted intentional Facebook profiles that affirming their indigeneity as a way of controlling how others saw them as members of a particular Indigenous group, allowing them to establish their own ethnic identity and autonomy. Another perceived benefit was the ability to share content relating to Indigenous spirituality, festivities, and ritual practices was identified a projecting a fresh image of Amazonian contemporary indigenous lives. These kinds of practices were seen as increasing their agency in relation to how their cultures and identities were (re)create and experienced, while simultaneously increasing their visibility and affirming their Indigeneity in Amazonia and beyond. Similar to the findings above by Carlson, the potential to reaffirm ones Indigeneity gave Indigenous participants both a sense of self-agency and empowerment, and this was extremely valuable.

Colonialism and Indigenous Resistance

The ability to increase Indigenous visibility on social media has also resulted in its use as a key site of political resistance for Indigenous peoples globally (Duarte, 2017; Fredericks et al., 2022; Waitoa et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2017). For example, Waitoa et al. (2015) illustrated how Facebook was being used by 'The Mana Party' to increase Māori political engagement by raising awareness of political issues. This was especially important as Māori typically have lower rates of political engagement than non-Māori in New Zealand. Other studies like Duarte (2017) explored the use of digital tactics in various social and political campaigns led by Native Americans, focusing specifically on three case studies: EZLN, Idle No More, and the Rio Yaqui water rights movement. She found that Indigenous social media users employed deliberate digital tactics and strategies to increase visibility on these movements and to cultivate solidarity amongst Indigenous peoples. These tactics were important mechanisms to enforce trust and Treaty obligations by dominant governments, and to remind many of the ongoing colonial injustices against

Indigenous peoples. Both studies illustrate how this ability for Indigenous people to mobilise political action both online and offline can contribute to significant benefits for their communities.

Racial discrimination against Indigenous peoples on social media is another area of key concern to Indigenous researchers. Carlson et al. (2017) explored how Indigenous Australian's individually and collectively respond to racial vilification on social media as a form of resistance. They discuss the #IndigenousDads campaign that developed in response to a racist cartoon in *The Australian* depicting an Aboriginal boy being returned by police to his father, insinuating that the incarceration of Indigenous youth was a direct consequence of neglectful, alcoholic parents. This fuelled collective experiences of a sense of anger and frustration nationwide, and Aboriginal Australians responded by flooding social media posts with the hashtag #IndigenousDads, where Indigenous children and parents posted images documenting how their fathers had raised them and how their families had inspired them. These directly contrasted colonial stereotypes of Indigenous parents while also promoting cultural pride. Other strategies of resistance to racism were highlighted by Fredericks et al. (2022) who noted other practices included educating non-Indigenous users, calling out ostracism, or simply affirming ones Indigeneity through the use of comments, reactions, or sharing of links. These practices enabled them to amplify Indigenous perspectives and voices, to declare their opposition to racial stereotyping and harmful discourses, and to assert their Indigeneity as a form of resistance. Unlike mainstream media which has a history of misrepresenting Indigenous peoples through constant deficit narratives written by predominantly white authors, social media enables Indigenous peoples to fill this void and reach new and diverse audiences by inserting their voices on current and pressing issues on their own terms (Fredericks et al., 2022).

Recent attention has been brought to the role that social media corporations play in amplifying these racist and colonial discourses. Fredericks et al. (2022) explored how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are increasingly turning to social media to disrupt oppressive colonial discourses that are exacerbated online. They use the term "colonial algorithms" to describe how social media algorithms amplify racism online when the content a person views, comments on, or accesses generates further exposure to similar content, thus propelling a matrix of negativity. However, (Fredericks et al., 2022) also highlighted how the structures set in place to monitor racist content, as well as the algorithms programmed to produce, collect and sell users' data are informed by the biases held by its predominantly white capitalist gatekeepers that rely on the maintenance of colonial hierarchies (Fredericks et al., 2022). Social media corporations capitalise on the reinforcement of these discriminatory social norms online that maintain these social hierarchies, meaning there is little economic incentive to address the structural racism embedded within these colonial systems and algorithms. So while Indigenous people globally are using various tactics to resist and disrupt ongoing colonial violence, their efforts continue to be undermined by structures and corporations that benefit from maintaining the structures that oppress them.

While social media has provided another channel for Indigenous people to directly counter colonial violence, Carlson et al. (2017) nevertheless drew attention to the negative impacts racism can have on indigenous wellbeing including internalised racism, as well as other psychological and physiological impacts caused by traumatic experiences. However, they also note that traumatization occurs only when internal and external resources are perceived as inadequate to cope with external threat. That is, the ability to cope with the effects of racism depends on the individual's own mind and body response to the experience, in combination with the unique response of the group/community within which the individual belongs. Therefore the research suggesting the psychological resilience of an individual coupled with strong social support networks may buffer against the negative impacts of racism online. As strong cultural identities have been linked to increased psychological resilience (Durie, 2001), this may suggest that Indigenous people with strong cultural identities may be more resilient to online racism, however there is a lack of research exploring this. However, it also shows the importance of viewing and treating online racism as not just as a social or structural issue, but as a key problematic health issue that risks diminishing Indigenous wellbeing, and this must be addressed.

Māori Social Media Use

Research exploring Māori social media use is limited. However, the existing literature nevertheless identifies some of key ways Māori have leveraged both social media and the internet in general. Research also indicates that a range of Māori people, groups and institutions are using social media including rangatahi, kaumātua (elderly), marae, hapū, iwi and members of the Māori diaspora (Keegan & Sciascia, 2018). In this way, social media has been conceptualised as a type of 'Digital Marae' that serves as a key space in which users can connect and to Māori culture, people and places (Green, 2020; Muhamad-Brandner, 2010; O'Carroll, 2013).

Reclaiming Māori Knowledge and Identities

For Māori, the internet in general has become a useful medium to promote Māori culture and identity, and to provide spaces for Māori cultural preservation and learning where Māori are able to connect, engage and communicate in culturally meaningful ways (Keegan & Sciascia, 2018). For example, in the context of language revitalisation, Keegan and Cunliffe (2014) noted that social media had significant potential to encourage increased use of te reo Māori by making it more visible, thus promote the widespread use of te reo Māori online, and thereby secure some ongoing health for the language. However, an analysis of te reo Māori tweets on Twitter between 2007 and 2020 by Trye et al. (2022) found that te reo Māori was being used on Twitter, but that the number of tweets peaked in 2014, and in subsequent years continued to decline. This data would suggest that contrary to what Keegan and Cunliffe (2014) suggested, the use of te reo Māori on social media is not as prevalent as was hoped. However, these findings are purely based on one platform. Similar types of analyses on other social media platforms, and considering other methods simply asking people about their use of te reo Māori on social media may also produce new insights in this area.

The benefits of being able to reconnect with Māori knowledge on social media for rangatahi have been explored in relation to how Māori identity can be expressed, articulated, and formed online (Green, 2020; Keegan & Sciascia, 2018; Muhamad-Brandner, 2010). For example, Muhamad-Brandner (2010) explored how online spaces influenced Māori offline-identities. The study used mixed-methods combining an analysis of the content and language used on online sites, online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with Māori users of internet sites. It found that social media sites provide a wide range of content pertinent to Māoridom that Māori are able to draw on to develop their identities as Māori. The study also found social media provided opportunities to connect with other Māori that might not have otherwise been possible without the internet, and this has been paramount for those who are discovering or asserting their identity as Māori (Muhamad-Brandner, 2010). However, the study also found that online content concerning Māori cultural knowledge was limited in depth. This suggests the benefits of developing Māori identities on social media may be more relevant as a starting point for those wishing to explore and strengthen their Māori identities.

Relatedly, Green (2020) took a digital ethnographic approach to understand how rangatahi Māori on Instagram explored their Indigeneity. Following a political occupation of Ihumātao in 2019, Green illustrated how herself and other influential rangatahi Māori on Instagram leveraged social media to rally support for the occupation and to discuss their personal and collective identities as Māori. She also illustrated how relationships with the land were facilitated through digital practices of environmental activism that she termed 'e-*kaitiakitanga*', which were seen as enabling rangatahi to virtually participate in customary practices that they could not participate in physically. This was seen as critical for rangatahi Māori who were still reconnecting with their Māori identities and had limited access to Māori spaces. These studies therefore suggest that for rangatahi Māori who, as an ongoing impact of colonization, have been disconnected from their ancestral heritage and lack access to cultural places such as marae, social media can become a gateway to these spaces. However, nuanced understandings of the relevance of social media in the lives of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities is non-existent. Therefore research exploring this is extremely warranted.

Whanaungatanga

In line with other social media literature, the use of social media by young Māori to connect with others has been highlighted as a key benefit for young people. O'Carroll (2013) explored how young Māori used social media to both sustain and strengthen existing relationships with family and friends, as well as to create new connections. She described this in relation to the Māori concept of *whanaungatanga* – the process of forming and negotiating meaningful relationships with others that is an important concept in Māori culture. She used the term "virtual *whanaungatanga*" to conceptualise how customary notions of *whanaungatanga* (and its underpinning values are practiced and applied on social media by young Māori. She suggested that virtual whanaungatanga offers a framework and process guided by values that enable relationships to be formed, strengthened, and maintained in culturally recognisable ways (O'Carroll, 2013). Without this the myriad social interactions that constitute contemporary Maōri community life would suffer. The concept of "e-*whanaungatanga*" was also used by Waitoa et al. (2015) to show how *whanaungatanga* online could encourage political engagement and participation among Māori offline, ultimately leading to political empowerment. For young Māori, this active participation in society through social media practices therefore can enhance young people's sense of power and self-determination over their own lives, while also having the potential to enhance community wellbeing through unique opportunities to exert influence on public opinion or key decision-makers via digital platforms. However, despite the benefits of social media for facilitating *whanaungatanga,* concerns have been raised around the implications of virtualising customary practices.

Tikanga (Customary Practices and Protocols)

As noted earlier, the connection between social media and Māori values and tikanga Māori (customary protocols) has been an area of interest for Māori researchers, specifically how Māori are faced with rethinking and refining how cultural practices are acted on and maintained online (Durie, 2011; Keegan & Sciascia, 2018; O'Carroll, 2013). For example, O'Carroll (2013) suggested that the potential to connect online may reduce the likelihood of rangatahi prioritising kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face to face interactions), thus disincentivising rangatahi to return physically to marae. She also raised concerns about virtualising culturally sacred protocols such as tangihanga (funerals). Research shows rituals associated with tangihanga are shared on Facebook, including notifications of death, details of the tangihanga, and videos and images of the tūpāpaku (casket). Participants expressed concern about these types of media being shared in these spaces and could sometimes be perceived as disrespectful or insensitive, while kaumātua (Māori elders) questioned the application of tapu (a state of restriction) to virtual spaces and whether this could be done appropriately online. Similar concerns have been raised by Durie (2011) who discussed online engagement in terms of kawa (protocols) which in traditional settings (like marae) provide clear expectations around behaviour, purpose and motivations. He argues that given the recent emergence of the internet, there has been insufficient time to establish such rules for participation or prepare guidelines for appropriate and safe behaviour in online encounters. While such concerns are indeed valid, both studies are outdated and given the significant developments in both the social media landscape and digital literacy over the past decade, more recent research in the area is required to determine the relevance of these concerns today.

Despite these concerns, social media nevertheless holds great potential to positively contribute to Māori wellbeing. However, while much of the research on indigenous social media use, Māori in particular, looks at reclaiming and building cultural identity through social media, there is less focus on how culture might shape how young Māori and other Indigenous youth use and experience social media. Furthermore, we know that a strong cultural identity creates resilience and leads to more positive wellbeing outcomes for rangatahi Māori across numerous settings (Durie, 2001; Durie, 2011)(Durie, 2001; Durie, 2011). As the literature suggests social media is inherently intertwined with young people's lives, and for Māori is a key part of contemporary realities that can influence wellbeing across multiple domains. As a key space being occupied by rangatahi Māori, we must seek to better understand social media platforms and the practices and understandings of it and its role in the lives of rangatahi.

Rationale for the Present Study

Despite some consistent findings across the literature, understandings of social media use among rangatahi Māori is an extremely under-researched area. While still in its infancy, there are significant gaps remaining in understanding how rangatahi Māori with strong cultural identities experience and navigate social media in day-to-day life. While the Māori literature notes Māori language and identity reclamation as a key part of Māori experiences of social media, as the research suggests this may be have less relevance for those who already have strong ties to these things. Furthermore, the specific focus of the literature on identity reclamation connecting to others through virtual *whanaungatanga* leaves a significant gap in understanding the everyday use of social media among rangatahi Māori. This makes understanding the day-to-day social media use of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities an important topic. Furthermore, only one new study in exploring social media use among rangatahi Māori has being conducted in the past 5 years. Given the rate at which technologies are developing, more up to date knowledge in the area is required.

As identified in the literature review, affirmative youth-centred research approaches have been able to provide nuanced insight in to what young people have to say about their own practices and experiences, and what it feels like to have those experiences. This shows that research methods that ask young people what it is like to be them, and that try to see things from their perspectives can offer valuable insight into young people's social media practices and experiences. Therefore, research methods that produce rich, detailed accounts of rangatahi social media experiences would both add significant value to literature in this area not only for rangatahi Māori, but for young people in general.

There are also gaps in understanding how young people's social media practices and experiences are influenced by wider cultural, societal, and structural factors. As illustrated in the literature review, young people's practices have largely been considered in individualistic, objective ways that centre the concerns of researchers and other worried adults. However, the literature identifies numerous factors as influencing young people's social media use and its impacts, showing it is a complex and multifaceted phenomena that is not limited by the individual psyche. There is also clear evidence that features of social media features heavily shape how young people use and experience social media (Fredericks et al., 2022; Gangneux, 2019; Lyons et al., 2022), which allude to wider issues around the role of capitalism in young people's lives. Collectively, these findings illustrate not only that social media use is a complex phenomenon, but it is one that cannot be understood in relation to the contexts young people find themselves in. This provides the rationale for further research to be conducted that both centre young people's own accounts, preferences and concerns, while also considering these in relation to the contexts they are in.

Finally, the Indigenous body of literature highlighted the importance of cultural perspectives when exploring Indigenous people's experiences of social media. This includes not only understanding the cultural influences on Indigenous people's line practices, but also includes the value of research methods that are grounded within cultural frameworks. Various studies highlighted the valuable insight that can be gained through nuanced, culturally grounded understandings, however I only identified two studies in the Māori literature as taking this approach (Green, 2020; O'Carroll, 2013). Therefore there is a significant gap in culturally grounded understandings of rangatahi Māori social media use.

Despite social media being a salient aspect of contemporary life globally, little research has been conducted exploring the day-to-day use of social media by rangatahi Māori. There is also little known about how their environments may influence practices and experiences, and there is currently no research that considers how their social media use is shaped by the affordances and features of social media platforms. Apart from one ethnographic study (Green, 2020), there was no other literature that centred the perspectives, concerns, or preferences of rangatahi Māori pertaining to social media. There is also little known about the experiences of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities. In light of this gap and the knowledge from previous literature, the present study explored affirmative social media use among rangatahi Māori, with a particular focus on the experiences of those with strong Māori identities. No such research has been conducted on this topic before, making it the first of its kind and providing a significant contribution to the literature. The primary research question and research aims of this study are outlined below.

Research Question

- How do rangatahi Māori, who have a secure Māori identity, use and experience social media?

Research Aims

By addressing this research question the study aims to meet the following objectives:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of the social media practices and experiences of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities.
2. Gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives, preferences and concerns of participants pertaining to their social media use.
3. Explore culturally grounded understandings of the online practices and experiences of participants.
4. Identify other potential social, cultural and structural influences on rangatahi experiences of social media.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research design, and how those have been applied in practice. First, I outline the three theoretical frameworks that inform the research, the key principles behind each, and how these were integrated to inform the research design. Secondly, it describes the research design and how I applied principles of theoretical frameworks to the study. Thirdly, it describes the procedures involved in participant selection and recruitment, and describes the participant sample. Thirdly, it outlines the data collection process, including the methods and structure of data collection, and the focus of the inquiry in this study. Fourthly, I outline the analytic approach and procedures, followed by an overview of the ethical considerations for this study and how these were addressed. Lastly, I provide my own reflections on the methodology and methods including the perceived strengths and weaknesses of these methods and difficulties encountered throughout the process.

Theoretical Frameworks

The study was informed by three overarching theoretical frameworks: Kaupapa Māori Theory (KMT), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and Co-operative Inquiry (CI) as a form of PAR. These frameworks integrate to produce a culturally grounded and responsive approach that centred participants perspectives and lived experiences, while producing both intellectual knowledge and practical outcomes. In the context of social media research, this is especially important as young people are often researched *on* and not *with*, and consequently their voices on their own lives disregarded; undermining their knowledge and expertise. For rangatahi Māori, the intersectionality of being both young and Māori has resulted in their perspectives and experiences being particularly marginalised and overlooked in psychological literature. Therefore, the methods integrated into this study provide a strengths-based approach that 1) recognises rangatahi as the experts in their own lives by privileging their voices and lived experiences, 2) produces research that is conceptualised, conducted and documented in ways that benefit and make sense to Māori, and 3) challenges the idea of qualitative research being to simply gather knowledge, but to also leverage the research process itself as a practical learning and problem-solving opportunity for all involved.

Kaupapa Māori Theory

The colonization of Aotearoa saw the dispossession of Māori land and oppression of Māori language, traditions and practices through the imposition of Pākehā values, and ways of knowing and doing, on Māori society (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). The development of Western scientific thought and it’s perceived positional superiority over Indigenous ways of being and knowing aided the exploration and ‘discovery’ of other worlds by Europeans, and provided the scientific rationale for the systematic colonization of Indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Colonial research practices served as instruments to legitimize various colonial practices such as the invasion and occupation of Indigenous land, and oppression of Indigenous ways of being (Pihama, 2016). The validity of Indigenous knowledge became as much of a commodity of colonial exploitation as other natural resources (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Despite claims of Western science being ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’, our experiences as Māori suggests otherwise and that research is not neutral, nor is it objective, but it is culturally, socially, economically and politically bound (Pihama, 2016).

Māori, and other Indigenous peoples, have long been subjected to colonial research practices (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Our experiences of colonial research as Māori have largely been dominated by being the ‘object’ or ‘other’, whose entire being has been collected, classified and then represented back to the world and ourselves, through paradigms that bear no resemblance to the ways in which we would explain and understand ourselves (Pihama, 2016; Smith, 2012). These practices and paradigms have misrepresented and undervalued Māori knowledge, practices and experiences by simplifying, conglomerating and commodifying Māori knowledge for consumption by colonisers (Bishop, 2011). As a further consequence, New Zealand has seen the development of a social pathology research approach that has implied in all phases of the research process the inability of Māori to cope with human problems (Bishop, 2011). Thus, Māori are ultimately pathologised, problematised, and responsibilised for their own impoverishment, poor health and perceived failing. In doing so, colonial research perpetuates colonial power imbalances, thereby denying Māori agency, authority, authenticity and voice (Bishop, 2011).

Fuelled by a growing dissatisfaction of colonial research practices and their impact on Māori, Kaupapa Māori Theory and Research emerged as part of a broader cultural revitalisation movement, as a way of 'researching back' against the dominant hegemony of colonial research (Walker et al., 2006a). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) describes Kaupapa Māori Theory as related to being Māori; being connected to Māori philosophies and principles; taking for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori knowledge, language and culture; and being concerned with the struggle for autonomy over Māori cultural wellbeing. Kaupapa Māori Research is underpinned by Kaupapa Maori Theory, and is a way for Māori to claim intellectual and academic legitimacy to produce knowledge about ourselves on our own terms by reclaiming Māori knowledge as valid, and by reasserting Māori authority and control over our own research and futures in ways that are grounded in a Māori world view (Curtis, 2016). Kaupapa Māori Research often takes a strength-based approach to produce more affirmative, constructive research that benefits Māori (Thompson & Barnett, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), avoiding deficit frameworks often used in Western psychological research and rejects hegemonic belittling "Māori can't cope" discourses (Bishop, 2011). Kaupapa Māori thus works from a Māori foundation, seeks positive outcomes for Māori, recognises the holistic makeup of Māori both as individuals and as collective members of a community, and works towards advancing both individual and collective wellbeing (Mane, 2009).

Kaupapa Māori Theory is underpinned by six key principles (Smith, 2003, pp. 6-10). *Tino rangatiratanga* (the principle of self-determination), is concerned with dynamics of power and ensuring that power and control rest with Māori cultural understandings, practices, and people, and that the issues and needs of Māori are the focus and outcomes of research (Walker et al., 2006a). *Taonga tuku iho* (the principle of cultural aspirations), is concerned with validating and legitimising cultural aspirations and identity. Once the right to control research is established, Māori worldviews and ways of doing become the accepted, legitimate norm. *Ako Māori* (the principle of culturally preferred pedagogy), is concerned with using teaching and learning settings and practices that closely and effectively connect with the cultural backgrounds and life circumstances of Māori communities. *Kia piki ake I ngā raruraru o te kāinga* (the principle of socio-economic mediation), is concerned with alleviating the impact of potentially debilitating socio-economic circumstances. *Whānau* (the principle of extended family structures), is concerned with the incorporation of cultural structures which emphasise the collective rather than the individual. Providing collective and shared support structures can alleviate and mediate socio-economic difficulties, as well as others. Lastly, *kaupapa* (the principle of collective philosophy) provides guidelines for excellence in Māori education or in this case, research (i.e. what good Māori research should look like) as well as acknowledging Pākehā culture and skills required by Māori to participate in fully at every level in modern New Zealand society. While not a definitive list, these principles have contributed and continue to see the success of schooling, education and other Kaupapa Māori initiatives in Aotearoa.

Central to the principles of Kaupapa Māori approaches are Māori cultural values, such as whanaungatanga (establishing meaningful relationships), manaakitanga (care and reciprocity), kotahitanga (unity, collective action), and ako (reciprocal learning). Such values shape research that is aligned with Māori values and ways of doing things, in order to produce culturally responsive and culturally safe research (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Another important consideration, although not a requirement, is the elevation of Te Reo Māori (the Māori language). Walker et al. (2006) suggest that the use of te reo Māori within Kaupapa Māori research (where appropriate) can be vital in providing access to the histories, values, and beliefs of Māori people. Therefore the ideal is to conduct research in te reo Māori to gain information and perspectives that otherwise would not be possible. However, the reality is that many Māori are not fluent in te reo Māori, so while a mix of English and Māori may be used, Kaupapa Māori research nevertheless aims to encourage the revitalisation of te reo Māori.

Another important requirement for Kaupapa Māori research, although this is sometimes debated, is that the researcher be Māori. However, whakapapa Māori is not the only pre-requisite for conducting Kaupapa Māori research, as it has been suggested that not all Māori researchers will automatically conduct research in a culturally appropriate manner when researching their own communities (Bishop, 2011). It is suggested that Kaupapa Māori researchers also be competent in things Māori, have some knowledge of te reo Māori, and have the ability and intention to conduct high-quality research with Māori in a way that upholds *Te Tiriti ō Waitangi* (Walker et al., 2006). At the same time, a lack of available and suitable Māori researchers calls for both the training of new Māori researchers as well as some non-Māori involvement, so long as non-Māori do not define, control, or dictate the research (Walker et al., 2006). Pākehā involvement in Kaupapa Māori research can be understood in terms of the Treaty in that as treaty partners they have obligations to share their skills and knowledge in ways that benefit both Māori and Pākeha (Walker et al., 2006).

At the same time, Kaupapa Māori Research is not limited to the use of specific frameworks or methodologies. While Māori approaches to research adopt a uniquely Māori perspective, they may draw on a wide range of methodologies, methods and tools; both Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Jahnke & Taiapa, 2003). The specific methods used do not determine whether or not research is characterised as Kaupapa Māori research, rather it is the interplay between the methods and paradigm and the extent to which those methods are congruent with a Māori worldview (Ware et al., 2018). The manner in which Kaupapa Māori principles are applied to research has tended to vary, according to the positioning and expertise of the researcher(s) as well as the nature or design of the research study (Paine et al., 2022). Drawing on multiple methodologies and methods creates a platform to research in culturally inspired ways, while ensuring it is culturally ethical, meaningful, and can produce useful outcomes for those involved (Ware et al., 2018).

Kaupapa Māori approaches have grown over the past two decades as a preferred research methodology amongst Māori scholars. Graham Smith (1997) describes Kaupapa Māori as both a theory and transformative practice. The action of social transformation is associated with Māori self-development, and the theory of structural analysis reflects a critique of the social order and how capitalism and colonization have impacted negatively on Māori (Curtis, 2016). If research is not transformative, if it does not seek to create positive outcomes for Māori, if it does not seek to address existing inequalities and power relations or produce knowledge and outcomes relevant to what we consider important, then that research is of little consequence (Pihama, 2016). The decolonizing and empowering aspects of kaupapa Māori theory and research have also been found significant by other indigenous and minority scholars around the world seeking meaningful ways of articulating their own truths and realities within the western dominant structures of the academy (Mahuika, 2008). When research is developed abiding by the guiding principles of Kaupapa Māori, ethical and nuanced approaches emerge to uplift communities that are generally silenced. In this regard, Kaupapa Māori aligns with collaborate research approaches such as Participatory Action Research.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) aligns with Kaupapa Māori Research in that it seeks to centre the voices of those involved in the research and concerned with issues of power and has been recognized by Indigenous scholars as a potentially key methodology for decolonization (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). The argument for action research is that it is not possible to have a true 'science of persons' unless the inquiry engages with humans *as* persons through a collaborative approach (Riley & Reason, 2015). It recognises that the world does not consist of separate things but of relationships which we co-author, and that humans must be seen as co-creating their worlds. PAR recognises participants as autonomous humans who are actively engaged in the research process, bringing with them their intelligence, their intentionality, their ability to reflect on experience and to enter relations with others, as well as of course their capacity for self-deception, for rationalization, or even perhaps for refusal to see the obvious. Riley and Reason (2015) note that as all humans are capable of making sense of their own behaviour, rendering the traditional hierarchical nature of top down knowledge creation between researcher and participant inappropriate. The approach acknowledges the capital of all involved. This process is termed by Paulo Friere (1970) as concisousness-raising or *conscientizacao*, and is described as a process of self-awareness through collective self-inquiry and reflection. This perspective asks us to both be situated and reflexive, to be explicit about the perspective from which knowledge is created, to see inquiry as a process of coming to know, serving the democratic, practical ethos of action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, pp. 6-7 as cited by Riley & Reason, 2015).

A goal of PAR is to redress power imbalances in favour of poor and marginalized communities by empowering people at a deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge, restoring their capacities for self-reliance and the ability to manage their own lives (Riley & Reason, 2015). It does this by emphasising collaboration between researchers and participants to address issues of shared concern, where the lines between "researchers" and "the researched" that are usually held in traditional research are blurred (Riley & Reason, 2015). Rather than decision-making power in research resting entirely with the researcher, power is shared with those being studied who actively contribute to research decisions and actions. Similar to Kaupapa Māori Research, PAR therefore emphasises the political nature of knowledge production whereby making minorities the authorised representatives of the knowledge produced, their own experiences and concerns are brought to the forefront of the research and consequently applied to resolve problems they collectively define as significant (Bishop, 2011; Riley & Reason, 2015).

The purpose of PAR is not to uncover some objective truth, as other more traditional or quantitative research methods might do. A major goal of PAR is to solve practical problems in a community by producing knowledge directly useful to a group of people through research, adult education and socio-political action. PAR embraces a ‘postmodern’ sentiment in attempting to move us beyond grand narratives towards localized, pragmatic and constructed practical knowledge that is based on the experiences and action of those engaged in the research (Riley & Reason, 2015).

Bradbury and Reason (2003)outline three broad approaches to action research inquiries, and that action research that integrates at least two of these is best positioned to lead to work that creates meaningful impact. *First-person action research/practice* skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to their own life, to act with awareness and intention, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. This is considered to be the foundation for all good action research. *Second-person action research/practice* addresses our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern end engage productively with others. This is considered to be the area where there is the most opportunity for impact on practice to occur. *Third-person research/practice* builds on first and second-person practices to create a wider community of inquiry involving a whole organization or community (p. 159). This is said to be the most important, as it affects the conditions which shape the future context in which first and second person work can take place. An approach that has the potential to integrate first, second and third-person inquiry is that of co-operative inquiry.

Co-operative Inquiry

Co-operative Inquiry (CI) is a form of participative, person-centred inquiry that emphasises the collaboration principle of action research through small group inquiry (Heron, 1996). More specifically, it involves learning through cycles of action and reflection with a small group of people, in order to produce knowledge and action that is directly useful to that group of people, about a topic or issue that is of mutual concern (Riley & Reason, 2015). CI places emphasis on first-person research/practice in the context of supportive and critical second-person relationships, while having the potential to reach out towards third-person practice is that of co-operative inquiry (Riley & Reason, 2015). It is therefore is considered to be a meaningful, multi-dimensional action research approach.

As a type of action research, a key argument of CI is that you cannot inquire into the human condition from the outside by controlling the parameters for other people and then seeing what happens to them. Rather, CI suggests the human condition can only be known by insider knowledge where you must actively participate and co-operate with those with whom you choose to share the experience with (Heron, 1996). It is only by being totally immersed in face-to-face interactions with others similarly immersed, that you have insider access to the human condition (Heron, 1996). Therefore researchers and participants are both actively involved and immersed in the research process through small group inquiry.

Riley and Reason (2015) outline four stages of action and reflection that a co-operative inquiry moves through. These are:

- Stage One: The first reflection phase. Researchers and participants come together to explore an agreed issue of concern to the group. Together, tentative questions or propositions they wish to explore are developed, actions to undertake to contribute to this exploration are agreed upon, and set procedures by which they will observe and record their own and each other's experiences are also agreed upon.

- Stage Two: The first action phase. Co-researchers engage in the agreed actions and observe and record the outcomes of their own and each other's experiences.

- Stage Three: Full immersion in stage 2. Co-researchers become fully immersed and engaged with their experience. This phase may involve deepening understandings of their experiences or developing new understandings

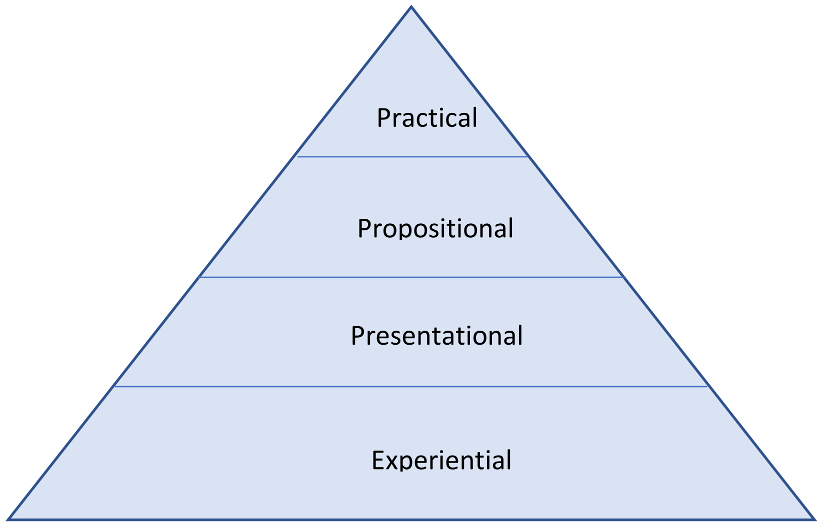
- Stage Four: The second reflection phase. After an agreed period in phases two and three, co-researchers reassemble to consider their original propositions and questions in light of their new experiences. As a result, they may choose to modify, develop or reframe them, or reject them and pose new questions. They may choose for the next cycle of action to focus on the same thing or on different aspects of the overall inquiry. The cycle repeats several times until more developed understandings of the research questions are reached.

Ideally these stages should be cycled through from five to eight full cycles with each inquiry group, and this often takes place over extended periods of time (weeks to months) (Heron, 1996). In this way, CI provides opportunities for those involved to reflect on and make sense of ones experiences, to develop new and creative ways of understanding the world and themselves, and an opportunity to learn and practice new skills.

These stages relate to CI's emphasis on experiential and practical ways of knowing, which is part of an 'extended epistemology' that underpins CI (Riley & reason, 2015). An 'extended epistemology' extends beyond positivist concerns for validity through rational and empirical ways of knowing. Instead, an extended epistemology is premised on the interdependence of multiple forms of knowing with each other, and that each form of knowing is valid in their own right. This extended epistemology is depicted in what is referred to by Heron (1996, p. 33) as *The Pyramid of Fourfold Knowing*, which depicts the interdependence of four types of knowing (see Figure 1). These four types of knowledge are theorised to form a systemic whole using a dynamic pyramidal process in which what is below supports, grounds and enables what is above. The pyramid rests on systemic logic which holds that intellectual or *propositional knowledge*, which is usually the focus of traditional qualitative and quantitative research methods, is interdependent with three other kinds of knowledge. At the base of the pyramid is *experiential knowledge*, which is concerned with actually meeting or feeling the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. Knowledge can be gained by simply experiencing and being in the world, and knowledge is considered to be more valid when it is grounded in those experiences. As an outcome, experiential knowing can produce transformations of personal being through engaging with the focus and process of inquiry.

Figure 1

The Pyramid of Four-fold Knowing



The second layer of the pyramid is *presentational knowledge*, which is concerned with knowledge gained through an intuitive grasp of the significance of creative patterns expressed by people in visual, musical and verbal art-forms. Knowledge here is produced through the stories and imagery we use to express ourselves, and knowledge is gained through understanding the significance of these art-forms. As an outcome, presentational knowing through various creative, expressive modes, can produce imaginal symbols of the significant patterns in our realities.

The third layer is *propositional knowledge* (also known as intellectual knowledge), which is concerned with the production and conceptual organization of intellectual statements (both verbal and numeric) about phenomena, often in ways that do not infringe rules of logic and evidence. As an outcome, propositional knowing can produce reports that describe and explain what has been explored, provide commentary on other kinds of outcomes, and/or describe the inquiry method. Propositional knowledge is often presumed to be pre-eminent and self-sufficient, and the only valid and respectable outcome of systematic inquiry (however an extended epistemology suggests otherwise).

The top layer of the pyramid is *practical knowing*, which is concerned with knowing how to exercise a skill. As an outcome, practical knowing can produce practical skills that contribute to transformative action within the inquiry domain, as well as other skills concerned with different kinds of participation and collaboration used in the inquiry process. Here, practical knowing cannot be gained without an understanding of the other layers of knowledge in the pyramid, and at the same time the other layers of knowledge lack validity if it is not able to inform practical knowledge.

In essence, CI and the extended epistemology posits that knowledge will be more valid if these four ways of knowing are congruent with each other. That is, knowledge will be more valid and meaningful if what we know is grounded in our experiences and what we express through our stories and imagery, if our experiences and expressions are understood through theories that make sense to us, and if that knowledge manifests in worthwhile action to our lives.

Methods

This section describes how the theoretical frameworks were integrated and applied to the study. Kaupapa Māori Theory provided the main framework for the study, and Co-operative inquiry as a form of Participatory Action Research guided the data collection process. This resulted in a research methodology that was rigorous, practical, collaborative, and culturally appropriate.

Research Design

This thesis is first and foremost a Kaupapa Māori research project that is grounded in Māori ways of doing, thinking, and being, and conducted By, With and For Māori. As a Kaupapa Māori study, avoiding potentially constraining aspects of the research within Pākehā research frameworks was imperative. As a result, it draws on Co-operative Inquiry as a form of Participatory Action Research to inform data collection methods, while remaining grounded in and prioritising Māori concepts of *whanaungatanga* (establishing meaningful relationships), *manaakitanga* (care and reciprocity), *rangatiratanga* (self-determination), and *kōtahitanga* (unity). This study was conducted in a way that elevated te reo Māori to better communicate, capture, and elevate holistic Māori understandings and concepts. The centring of te reo Māori was important to ensure concepts were conceptualised and explained in terms that make sense to Māori, and that research processes were aligned with tikanga Māori. Māori cultural concepts provided signposts to organise ideas, views, and experiences in a way that carried cultural integrity. These concepts also informed the data analysis (which will be discussed later in the chapter).

The resulting research design is a qualitative, Kaupapa Māori project that selectively drew on aspects of Co-operative Inquiry as form of PAR, that ensured: 1) that knowledge was produced and understood in ways that privilege and takes for granted Māori practices, values, and understandings of the world; 2) that power imbalances between researcher and participants were addressed, and participants experiences, perspectives, preferences and concerns prioritised; and 3) that the study produced positive outcomes that were experientially, symbolically, intellectually and practically useful for all involved.

Participants and Recruitment Method

Purposive sampling through *whanaungatanga* was used to recruit participants.

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria included:

- identifying as Māori
- being aged between 18 and 24
- using social media daily (this includes but is not limited to Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok)
- able to commit to attending 4 weekly/fortnightly group sessions with me and be willing to discuss social media use amongst a group.
- have 2-4 friends who also meet the above criteria who are willing to participate as a group.

There were no exclusion criteria, other than not meeting the above criteria. As a phenomenologically informed study that sought in-depth understandings of participants' own accounts of their experiences (rather than to attempt to make generalized statements about the experiences of all rangatahi Māori) this sampling method was considered appropriate.

Recruiting through Whanaungatanga

Participants were recruited through *whanaungatanga* (the process of identifying, maintaining or forming past, present and future relationships). *Whanaungatanga* enables Māori to locate themselves with those present, thus allowing for in-depth information to be shared and entrusted to Māori researchers (Walker et al., 2006). This way of recruiting enabled the study begin with a strong foundation built on already established trusted relationships, upon which the research could be carried out. The nature of the relationship between myself and participants was important to being able to meaningfully connect with them, ensuring a safe and supportive environment. From a Māori perspective, people are more likely to feel safe sharing their lives and wisdom with someone they know and trust (Walker et al., 2006). Therefore Māori research considers *whanaungatanga* and other cultural concepts as not just a culturally appropriate approach to conducting research with Māori, but as critical for meeting Māori expectations of research excellence (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019).

I began by reaching out to my own personal rangatahi networks who I knew fit the inclusion criteria above to gage potential interest in participation and to briefly explain the study. Interested potential participants were asked to then enquire among their own friend groups to obtain a further 2-3 of their friends to take part in a series of *wānanga* (reflective group discussions). Those who further expressed interest were advised to make direct contact with me by e-mail or Facebook Messenger. As groups formed, all participants were e-mailed detailed information sheets outlining the procedures involved and the potential topics to be discussed. Once all participants had read through information sheets and were happy to proceed, written individual and group consent was obtained prior to data collection commencing.

The Sample

Two friendship groups, with a total of seven participants, participated in the study. Group One consisted of a group of close friends, and Group Two consisted of a mixture of friends, siblings, and a couple. Relevant demographics of participants and their assigned pseudonyms are presented in Table 1. All rangatahi identified as having strong Māori identities. All were pursuing tertiary education, as well as working full-time or part-time jobs.

Table 1

Participant demographics

Group	Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	First Language	Schooling	Area of University Study	Working part-time or full-time?
1	Hiwa-i-te-rangi	21	Te reo Māori	Kura Kaupapa Māori, Mainstream	Education	Yes
1	Ururangi	21	English	Mainstream	Social sciences	Yes
1	Waipuna-ā-rangi	20	English	Kura Kaupapa Māori & Mainstream	Sciences	Yes
2	Niwareka	19	Te reo Māori	Kura Kaupapa Māori	Education	Yes
2	Mataora	18	Te reo Māori	Kura Kaupapa Māori	Arts	Yes
2	Hinerauāmoa	20	Te reo Māori	Kura Kaupapa Māori	Māori Knowledge	Yes
2	Hineteiwaiwa	19	Te reo Māori	Kura Kaupapa Māori	Education	Yes

Data Collection

Data was collected through a series of *wānanga*. Wānanga centres and promotes local language, understandings and practices of knowledge making and transmission (Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020). Wānanga also welcomes repetition, encourages critical thinking and debate, whakapapa, performance, and normalises the importance of emotion, nuance, oral traditions, and the co-creation of both new and inherited mātauranga (knowledge) (Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020). Wānanga also drew on aspects of Co-Operative Inquiry, thus resulting in a series of collaborative, culturally appropriate focus group inquiries.

Structuring Wānanga

The structure of each *wānanga* was guided by the cycles of action and reflection outlined earlier in the chapter (see Appendix A for detailed examples of preliminary *wānanga* schedules). While each wānanga varied, they followed a general structure. They began with *mihi mihi* (introductions) and *whakawhanaungatanga* (getting to know each other), followed by an introduction to the wānanga agenda. At the beginning of the first wānanga for each group, I also reiterated to participants the topic of the study, why I was interested in this topic, and what I hoped to achieve from it. I also reiterated key information outlined in the participant information sheets. I briefly explained Co-operative Inquiry (CI) as the method of data collection, as this was important for them to understand the structure of the series of wānanga, the benefits of this approach for myself and themselves, and what they could expect to be doing. This was then followed by open group discussions and group activities designed to facilitate discussion and to encourage reflexivity among participants. While I directed the structure of the wānanga, the topics of conversation were largely guided by participant's own interests and concerns regarding social media. I asked open-ended questions about their practices and experiences on social media to guide and prompt further thinking among participants where appropriate. The wānanga ended with a debrief on the key issues that arose for rangatahi during the wānanga, along with developing tentative questions or propositions participants wished to explore further as a focus of inquiry. Actions for rangatahi to implement before the next wānanga to contribute to this exploration were agreed upon as a group. Set procedures to record participants experiences before the next wānanga were also agreed upon. The focus of subsequent wānanga was tailored to the preferences, focus, and agreements set in the preceding week's wānanga.

Focus of Inquiry

The research design also provided rangatahi a further opportunity to reflect on their existing practices and experiences, to identify areas they felt needed to be improved, and to test various strategies that worked for each individual that enhanced self-awareness and lead to more intentional social media practices. As a result of the above processes, the focus of inquiry emerged where rangatahi identified managing screen-time (time spent on social media) as a key priority. Both groups identified feeling like they 'spent too much time' on social media, and that this was something they wanted to actively address. Therefore the weekly actions set at the end of each wānanga revolved around testing and implementing new practices and strategies to help participants achieve better balance in their lives. As a group, we brainstormed potential strategies or practices that could be tested and implemented based on each person's existing practices, their specific individual goals concerning their screen-time, as well as how each person wanted to achieve these. Each week, participants would share with the group any successes and/or challenges they encountered while implementing these actions throughout the week. Based on these, the actions and priorities for the following week would be revisited and adjusted accordingly. Through these cycles of action and reflection, by the end of the data collection phase this process of trial and error enabled rangatahi to find a number of solutions to effectively managing screen-time that were tailored to their own preferences and priorities. These will be discussed in more detail in the analysis section.

Engaging in Wānanga

Four wānanga were held with each friendship group over eight weeks. Eight wānanga were held in total. It was intended for one wānanga to be held with each group weekly for four weeks, however Covid-19 cases, general illness, and conflicting schedules meant that a number of wānanga were rescheduled to accommodate everyone. While it was also intended for all wānanga to be held *kanohi ki te kanohi*, two out of eight wānanga were conducted via Zoom due to the above unforeseen circumstances. Wānanga were organised via 'group chats' I set up with each group on Facebook Messenger. The days, times, and location of wānanga were determined by each groups preferences. Group One wānanga were held at one of the participants student flats, and Group Two wānanga took place at my own home. Each wānanga lasted approximately 45-60 minutes long. I provided grazing platters and beverages for both groups at each wānanga, and the sharing of *kōrero* (discussion) and kai together also inadvertently became a key dynamic of each wānanga. Wānanga were facilitated in both English and te reo Māori. While all participants were competent in both English and te reo Māori, some participants were more comfortable communicating in te reo Māori. Therefore, it was only natural that this be maintained during the research process. The data analysis process began following completion of the last wānanga.

Analytic Procedures – Phenomenological Thematic Analysis (PTA)

The analysis was informed by Phenomenological Thematic Analysis (PTA) grounded within Māori world views and concepts. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach also ensures that stories are shared, presented and understood in ways that align with Māori cultural preferences, while also privileging participants voices and taking into account the intersecting social and cultural contexts that influence Māori experiences (Ware et al., 2018).

Phenomenological Research

Phenomenological informed research privileges the nature of participants everyday experiences of reality and the meaning given to phenomena, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2012). It is an interpretivist approach whereby the researcher attempts to explore and understand an experience from the perspective of those experiencing it (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2012). Phenomenology thematic analysis distinguishes itself through three principles: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of lived human experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenological research seeks to engage with participants account of their experiences to obtain a better understanding of the quality, meaning and significance of that experience for that person (Willig, 2012). Phenomenological research is underpinned by a critical realist epistemology that argues reality exists but our access to it is never direct, and that we make sense of events though perceptual lenses (biological, cultural, personal) (Chamberlain, 2011). Therefore it sees people as “interpreters” who experience and interpret their social worlds. Phenomenological research involves obtaining detailed accounts of a persons lived experience, focusing on what a person’s experience with a certain phenomenon is *like* from the perspective of that person, and *how* that person comes to understand their experience in that way (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is concerned with the theory of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology is considered a ‘double-hermeneutic’ approach in which the researcher interprets the participants interpretations of their experiences (Chamberlain, 2011). Participants are first asked to describe and reflect on their experiences with a particular phenomenon and the meaning given to these experiences. Researchers then attempt to interpret participants accounts of those experiences. This approach therefore requires that we acknowledge the importance of intersubjectivity, meaning the researcher acknowledges (and explores) the ways in which he or she is implicated in the process of making sense and constructing meaning (Willig, 2012). Therefore our job as phenomenological researchers entails creating a context where participants can make sense of their world with us in an in-depth way, while also recognising our biases and managing them to be as open as possible to hearing the other.

Idiographic

Phenomenology is idiographic, meaning it focuses on individual perspectives and subjective meanings of experience (Willig, 2012). Phenomenologically informed research seeks rich and detailed accounts of each persons individual subjective experiences, and attempts to locate these experiences within each individuals unique contexts (Smith et al., 2009). This is especially important for Māori research which recognises individual experiences as inherently interconnected to the social, familial, spiritual and ecological contexts within which one finds themselves (Durie, 2001; Kim et al., 2006). Because phenomenological analysis is at an individual level, it seeks to make claims only about the individual rather than attempting to make generalisations about wider populations. For this reason, phenomenological research uses purposive, homogenous sampling (usually with no more than 10 participants) under the assumption that if people have similar lived experiences then we can make more meaningful observations about that groups experiences (Willig, 2012). This enables the salient details of a person’s experiences to be illustrated as well as more general themes across the data to be highlighted.

Doing the Analysis

The analysis process began by following Braun and Clarke (2006) 6-phase guide to doing thematic analysis. These phases, as well as how I applied these in the analysis process are outlined below:

***Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data and transcribing verbal data*.** This involves immersing yourself in the data to the point where you are familiar with the depth and breadth of the content prior to coding the data. This usually involves repeated readings of the data searching for meanings and patterns. I began this during the transcription phase. Transcribing the data involves translating spoken texts into written texts, and requires a thorough verbatim account of all verbal (and sometimes non-verbal) utterances to ensure it is true to its original nature. Each wānanga was transcribed with the assistance of transcribing software Otter.ai. Each audio file was imported into Otter.ai, which then produced verbatim transcriptions for each wānanga. I manually transcribed te reo Māori data verbatim into a word document as Otter.ai did not recognise te reo Māori. Although I used Otter.ai to assist with transcribing the data, I manually reviewed and corrected each document produced by software where needed to ensure transcriptions were accurate. Eight hours of audio recorded material in total was transcribed. While a lengthy process, this process of reviewing transcriptions enabled me to thoroughly familiarise myself with the data in preparation for data analysis. Throughout this process I took notes of potential codes or patterns that I could them come back to in subsequent phases.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes. Once all data was transcribed, I imported each transcription in to qualitative analysis software *Dedoose*, where I began coding. Coding involves identifying features of the data (semantic content or latent) that appeared of interest to me, that could be meaningfully assessed in relation to how participants experienced social media. Coding was ‘data-driven’, meaning codes were grounded in what participants were saying in the data, rather than according to my own theories about their experiences. I first coded each transcribed wānanga of Group One, before repeating the process with the data from Group Two. This was important to uphold the idiographic principle of Phenomenological Thematic Analysis that seeks to understand individual experiences before seeking wider patterns across the group. As a group project, this involved trying to understand not only the experiences of each group, but also the experiences of each individual within each group. After the first iteration of reviewing and coding each transcript, I then reviewed all transcripts and codes once more, refining or removing codes based on what had been identified across the entire data set. Due to the sheer volume of data, using manual methods of coding and theming like highlighting in word, or using cut-and-paste methods was not practical. *Dedoose* allowed me to efficiently assign single or multiple codes to each excerpt from transcripts, and to easily merge or amend codes during subsequent iterations and revisions of the data. *Dedoose* also kept a record of each extract assigned to each code, which made revisiting extracts and refining associated codes more efficient. Once I was happy with codes, I then exported all codes into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (another specific feature of *Dedoose*), where I began the process of organising codes and their associated excerpts into broader themes.

Phase 3: Searching for themes**.** To begin the process of developing themes, I made a list of initial potential themes that the codes might fall in to, based on patterns I had observed during Phases 1 and 2. I colour coded each potential theme, and then colour coded each code with one or more corresponding potential themes. Each code was then re-organised under new headings of their corresponding potential themes (see Appendix B for examples of how this was done). The double-hermeneutic principle of phenomenologically informed research meant that I needed to constantly reflect on how I was making sense of participants *kōrero* (talk) to ensure the themes I identified were grounded in what they were saying and not my own preconceptions about those experiences. Keeping a reflexive journal and regular supervision to discuss this process enabled me to do this.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes**.** Once preliminary themes were obtained, the review phase began. This involved reading back through the way I had organised codes and themes, and making further refinements. Refinements including refining the wording of codes, moving codes to sit within other themes, or refining the themes. During this process, I also constantly referred back to excerpts assigned to each code in *Dedoose* to help refine codes and themes and to ensure both were reflective of the data. As mentioned above, keeping a reflexive journal and regular supervision helped to achieve this. Multiple iterations of comparing excerpts, codes and themes took place until I had produced superordinate and subordinate themes. At this stage, I also consulted again with *kaumātua* for any potential feedback or recommendations regarding the way I had organised and interpreted the data. Minor amendments to the wording of themes were suggested as a result of this, and further refinements were made based on these recommendations. These were then organised into an overall thematic data table outlining each superordinate theme, associated subordinate themes, and associated excerpts as evidence of each theme (see Appendix C).

***Phase 5: Defining and naming themes*.** Once I was satisfied with the thematic data table, the wording of themes and associated subordinate themes were further refined to best illustrate the 'essence' of what each theme was about. This left me with the finalised superordinate themes and their associated subordinate themes presented in the analysis in Chapter 5.

***Phase 6: Producing the report*.** Once themes were finalised, I then began writing the final analysis (See Chapter 5). Direct quotes have been provided as throughout the chapter within each theme to support the analysis. English translations of te reo Māori have also been provided either underneath each excerpt, or for shorter terms or phrases in brackets afterwards. English translations provided throughout the thesis are not always literal translations, but instead were translated to capture the essence of the *kōrero* (talk) being shared as closely as possible. While all te reo Māori was transcribed and translated by myself, it was also reviewed by a *mātanga Reo* (Māori language expert). This ensured te reo Māori in this analysis was correct, and that translations were accurate.

Ethical Considerations

As a Kaupapa Māori study, research ethics was considered in relation cultural terms that play a similar role to research ethics outlined in the *Massey University Code of Ethics* (Massey University, 2017). Māori research ethics extend far beyond issues of individual consent and confidentiality (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), therefore as a Kaupapa Māori study, it was deemed more culturally appropriate to align the research with *Te Ara Tika Guidelines for Māori Research* (Hudson et al., 2010). This ethics framework identifies four tikanga-based principles as primary ethical principles relating to research ethics. While these guidelines are specific for Māori research, the concepts within it still address ethical considerations outlined in the *Massey University Code of Ethics*. Outlined below are explanations of each tikanga-based principle, alongside how these align with various ethical considerations outlined in the *Massey University Code of Ethics*, and how each principle was considered and applied to the study.

Whakapapa

Whakapapa is concerned with the quality of relationships and the structures or processes that have been established to support these relationships. My relationship to participants were already established prior to recruitment for the study, meaning relationships with participants were already based on trust, respect and safety, and my own commitment to keeping their best interests at the forefront of the research. Also integral to this relationship was making clear in the thesis and also to potential participants my own whakapapa, research experience, intentions with the research, and competence in *te reo Māori me ōna tikanga* (Māori language and protocols). My supervisors experience was also detailed to participants, as well as the cultural consultation processes that guided the study. This was critical to ensure transparency, informed consent and respect for participants autonomy. Prior to obtaining written consent, the contents of consent forms were explained to participants and any additional questions participants had were answered.

Tika

Tika is concerned with ensuring the validity of the research design in terms of whether the research is successful in achieving proposed outcomes, benefiting participants and communities, and bringing about positive transformational change. This was ensured by using a Kaupapa Māori framework that was designed By, With and For Māori. The strengths-based approach I took to both conceptualising the research and interpretating participant's *kōrero* acted as a further measure to mitigate any potential negative impacts on participants while maximising benefits. Cultural consultation and guidance was by way of *kaumātua* (elders) and *pakeke (*adults) in my personal networks who are highly knowledgeable of *tikanga*. Their guidance in the research from the consultation and ethics application stages, the data analysis stage, and prior to submitting the thesis ensured that I was able to safely and confidently traverse matters specific to *tikanga* and *kawa* (customary protocols and guidelines). While no significant issues were raised at any stages of cultural consultations, the key message conveyed was to ensure that rangatahi were going to tangibly benefit from the study. These are outlined below.

Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga (care, reciprocity), in the context of research, is concerned with notions of cultural and social responsibility and respects for persons, their privacy and confidentiality. Manaakitanga was firstly shown to participants by providing food and drinks at each wānanga. Examples of *kai* (food) provided were a combination of pizza, fruit, savouries, and grazing platters. Manaakitanga was also shown by gifting rangatahi with a $100 Prezzy card each as *koha* (offering) in recognition of the value of the time and knowledge they invested in the study.

To protect participant's privacy and confidentiality, all raw data was anonymized by assigning pseudonyms to be used in transcripts and published work, as well as omitting any identifiable material from transcripts and the final thesis. All data and consent forms are being stored securely by my supervisor on the Massey Online Server for five years, as per Massey requirements, and all audio recordings were deleted after the submission of the thesis. However, importantly as a Māori research project, the sharing of information to increase support and transparency with whānau and community is encouraged. Therefore some aspects of confidentiality were negotiated on the request of participants to allow them to freely discuss their participation and overall experiences in the study with their *whānau*. This was negotiated verbally at the beginning of the first wānanga, where each group came to a consensus on whether they wanted to keep discussions between us as a group, or whether they wanted to be able to talk to whānau about the study. They collectively verbally agreed that they could discuss their experiences with whānau if desired.

Mana

Mana (power, authority, prestige) is concerned with issues of power and authority in relation to who has rights, roles and responsibilities when considering the risks, benefits and outcomes of the study. This also ensured respect for participant's autonomy, and considered any and all benefits and potential risks to rangatahi. Expected benefits of participating in the study included the opportunity to talk with and learn from their peers and myself through the discussion of topics that may not always occur in every day conversations. Another perceived benefit was that the study provided participants an opportunity to contribute valuable knowledge to a body of literature that hoped to better understanding the lived experiences of rangatahi Māori. Another tangible benefit to participants was receiving *koha*, as mentioned above.

While the study was considered to be low-risk, the main potential risk identified was the potential for talk amongst the group, even of everyday activities, to cause discomfort or distress to rangatahi during data collection. To reduce any risk of harm, the potential for this to occur was outlined in the information sheet given to rangatahi and prior to data collection commencing. It was also outlined that should this (or any other unexpected risks) occur, they were free to leave the wānanga early, request a change of topic, request to reschedule the wānanga, or withdraw from the research entirely. As all participants involved in the study were known personally to me, it was also emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary, they were in no way obliged to participate, and that they were free to withdraw from participating at any point of the research process.

Mana was also considered in relation to issues concerning data management, Māori data sovereignty, and Māori struggles to retain control over their own data and the way it is used. The raw data (anonymised transcripts, consent forms, and copies of completed wānanga activities) remains under participant's authority and ownership. However, to ensure safe keeping it is being stored by my supervisor in a Massey University secure drive, with access to the data only authorised by both myself with participants permission. A statement was included in the consent form advising participants that I may publish a journal article based on the findings of the research, but that this would occur only in journals that did not require data sharing or for data to be archived. If a journal article is published after submitting the thesis , a data statement would be included that states other researchers wanting access to this data may enquire to myself or my supervisor to me and if it is deemed suitable by myself, and under further guidance and advice of Marae *kaumatua* and *pakeke*. The consent forms also offered an option for participants to opt-out of this completely if they wished for their raw data to not be used in any way outside of this thesis.

Engaging in Māori Research

In addition to these ethical principles, the data collection process was guided by culturally specific concepts that Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1991) identified as a set of responsibilities researchers have when conducting research with Māori people. These include *aroha ki te tangata* (respect people), *kanohi kitea* (present yourself to people face to face), *titiro, whakarongo…kōrero* (look, listen…speak), *manaaki ki te tangata* (share and host people, be generous), *kia tūpato* (be cautious), *kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (do not trample over the mana of people), and *kia mahaki* (don't flaunt your knowledge). These values ensure the respect for and protection of the rights, interests and sensitivities of the people being studied, and are as much about personal integrity as they are about collective responsibility (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Outlined below is how I embodied each concept in all interactions with rangatahi:

1. *Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people).* Even though I already knew the participants involved in the study, I still carried myself with professionalism by being respectful, caring, warm and inviting at all times.
2. *Kanohi kitea (present yourself to people face to face).* Meeting with participants in person was prioritised where possible. I intended for every wānanga to be in person, however events outside of our control meant that two of the eight wānanga needed to be conducted on Zoom (one entirely, and one partly where half the group attended in person, and the other half joined via zoom). Despite being on Zoom, and not at all the same as kanohi ki te kanohi, Zoom still partly retained the essence of kanohi kitea and being able to see each other.
3. *Titiro, whakarongo…kōrero (look, listen…speak).* I was conscious of remaining present and attentive to what each participant was saying, refraining from interrupting their kōrero too early, and giving participants the time to respond or add to each other's kōrero.
4. *Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous).* As described earlier, I provided *kai* (food) and drinks at every wānanga (except the one conducted entirely via zoom) with each group. As also mentioned earlier, participants were each gifted a $100 Prezzy card as a token of appreciation for the time and knowledge contributed to the study.
5. *Kia tūpato (be cautious).* I remained sensitive to the kōrero in each wānanga and made sure to read the room to ascertain if, and, or when participants might be feeling uncomfortable during conversations I felt might have been potentially sensitive topics. While it wasn't expected this would happen, it was important to be alert in the event that it did. There were no instances where participants indicated signs of distress, nor any instances where they explicitly described being distressed.

6. *Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people).* Remaining respectful and non-judgmental to participant’s kōrero and experiences was important to creating a safe space for participants to share. As group wānanga, this meant it was also my role to facilitate each wānanga to ensure everyone was cultivating a safe and supportive environment. At times this involved me needing to interject at certain points when multiple people were talking at once, and reminding participants to speak one at a time and to be respectful of others when they were speaking.
7. *Kia mahaki (don’t flaunt your knowledge).* Remaining humble and acknowledging participants as experts in their own lives, and refraining from imposing my own knowledge or theorising about their kōrero. Due to the collaborative nature of the research, I helped rangatahi to reflect on their experiences and practices through various open-ended question, and offered practical tips concerning social media platforms when I was asked. I made sure never to offer suggestions unless participants indicated they needed help.

Reflexivity

I actively reflected on my own positionality at all stages of the research process, including before even seeking ethical approval. I am a 30 year old wāhine Māori (Māori woman) who is both a student and employee at a tertiary education, and have strong ties to my whānau, marae, hapū and iwi. I am also a mother, an older sister, and an older cousin to tamariki (children), taiohi (adolescents) and rangatahi (young people) who have been and continue to be raised in Kōhanga Reo Māori (Māori early childhood language nests) and Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori language immersion schools), and where te reo Māori is now the dominant language in our homes. I acknowledge the privileges I hold as someone with access to quality education, to strong support networks, and to Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) and that my values, thoughts and world views are significantly shaped by these experiences. As a mother I am strongly passionate about raising tamariki who stand strong in their Māoritanga, and continue to witness first-hand the benefits these have for Māori. These experiences have significantly contributed to the topic of this research, as well as how it has been conceptualised and conducted.

I am also an active user of various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok meaning I have first-hand experiences within these spaces and how they work. I am also of the same generation as the rangatahi involved in the study. Prior to beginning data collection, I felt this would allow me to better relate to participants own experiences of social media. However, throughout the data collection process I realised the age gap between myself and participants (approximately 9-12 years), combined with the significant technological advancements that have been made over the past decade meant there were significant differences in our social media experiences. For example, my social media journey started when I was 11, where I would chat to my friends on MSN (Microsoft Search Network) Messenger, on dial-up connection, on my mother's computer after school. My time would end when someone needed to use the home land-line. In contrast, rangatahi involved in this study began their social media journey's at significantly younger ages on smart phones, mobile data, Facebook and Snapchat. Therefore throughout the data collection process it was for important to remember these differences, to stay open-minded to participants own experiences, and to also recognise that they were probably far more knowledgeable about how to navigate social media than I.

To manage my biases, I tried to use as many open-ended questions as possible and followed their conversations wherever they went. At the same time, there were often times when participants didn't know what they wanted to focus on or talk about at the beginning of a wānanga. In these instances, I drew on some of the key issues discussed in the literature as potential areas that they might want to explore (for example how they manage privacy) and from there they would say "oh yes, that's actually important because…". Relatedly, some found it difficult to think of new strategies they could implement to help manage their screen time, so I was able to offer guidance based on my own knowledge of the settings of iPhones and various social media platforms. Checking in regularly with both my supervisor and kaumātua and pakeke who were supporting me for cultural considerations also enabled my biases to be managed.

The use of te reo Māori in this study was also important for me to reflect on. While I am competent enough in te reo Māori on a day-to-day conversational level to have been able to conduct some of the wānanga in te reo Māori, I found it at times challenging to explain some of the more technical aspects of the study to rangatahi in te reo Māori. This meant I regularly switched back and forth between te reo Māori and English to ensure I was effectively communicating important information. Participants also sometimes found it easier to switch to English to talk about certain aspects or terms related to social media. I also found it difficult trying to translate some of the te reo Māori data into English in a way that captured the essence of how rangatahi were describing their experiences. However, this is the reality of conducting Māori research within a Western institution, therefore I did my best to retain the *mana* (prestige) of participants kōrero.

Reflecting on the methods, while ideally the cycles of inquiry outlined earlier under “Theoretical Frameworks” should be cycled through from five to eight full cycles with each inquiry group, and often over a longer period of time (Heron, 1996), I was practically unable to achieve this due to time constraints. Significant delays in ethics approval meant it was practically unachievable to do this within the scope of a Master’s thesis, so with guidance from my supervisor only four full cycles of action and reflection per group were repeated for this study. While this is perhaps not as in depth as Co-operative Inquiry usually seeks to achieve, it was nevertheless still enough to gain some level of depth that would have otherwise not been achieved using more traditional qualitative approaches (such as one off individual or group interviews).

As the data collection phase progressed, it became clear to me that while Co-operative Inquiry (CI) was beneficial to the study and offered helpful techniques to encourage action and reflection, wānanga as a method would have been sufficient in its own right. Trying to follow the exact steps CI started to feel restrictive on how participants appeared to prefer to engage - which was simply to kōrero. While the pen-to-paper activities had some benefits, stopping and starting to write seemed to break the flow, and participants appeared much more interested and engaged just talking to each other. Additionally, while it was important for me to explain the idea behind CI to participants, how the data collection process would work and its benefits, I struggled to be able to simplify the theory in a way that made most sense to them. In hindsight, reconceptualising co-operative inquiry principles, such as the *Pyramid of Four-fold Knowing* (Table 1), prior to data collection may have been more culturally relevant and appropriate.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Two superordinate themes were produced in the analysis that describe and interpret participants practices and experiences on social media. The first theme, '*He Ara Whakaoranga'* describes how participants leveraged social media to create agentic pathways to wellbeing. The second theme, '*He Ara Taumaha*' orients to the challenges social media presented participants and how they attempted to navigate these challenges. These superordinate themes and their associated sub-themes are described below and interpreted in terms of how participants made sense of social media and its value and influence in their lives as rangatahi Māori.

1: He Ara Whakaoranga: Enhancing wellbeing

'He Ara Whakaoranga' encapsulates how participants experienced social media as a space to create agentic pathways to wellbeing. The four sub-themes within this superordinate theme describe these different pathways. The sub-themes were: *whanaungatanga*: nurturing relationships and feeling connected; *pūkenga*: personal growth; *mana tangata*: self-discovery and self-expression; and *whakawātea*: clearing the mind. Each subtheme describes a range of affirmative social media practices participants implemented daily that positively influenced their wellbeing, and were ultimately seen as adding significant value to their lives.

1.1: Whanaungatanga: Nurturing relationships and feeling connected

Participants often described the ability to nurture relationships with whānau and friends through the whanaungatanga afforded by social media as extremely valuable. They described the nuance and complexity of social media-facilitated whanaungatanga in their ability to draw on different social media platforms for whanaungatanga with different networks, using different practices across many layers and geographical-familial distinctions. For example, Hinerauāmoa described Facebook as an important site for whanaungatanga with whānau, marae, hapū and iwi:

> *Ka whakamahi mātou (i te) Facebook nā te mea kei a mātou family pages on both sides [of the family]. So ka post rātou like what's going on up the coast or down here. So pai tērā ki te connect me tōku whānau and sharing the love, you know? Um taha Māori, iwi kaupapa, marae…[Ka] whakamahi (i te) Facebook mō ngā kaupapa ki te marae me ngā mea mō ōku iwi.*

[We use Facebook because we have family pages on both sides [of the family]. So they post like what's going on up the coast or down here. So that allows me to connect with my whānau and share the love, you know? Um for my Māori wellbeing, iwi kaupapa, marae… I use Facebook for marae and iwi kaupapa.]

In the above extract, whanaungatanga for Hinerauāmoa, was afforded through Facebook group pages that gave her a space where she could connect with whānau separated by distance. Despite the physical distance, this enabled her to feel a part of her whānau, marae, hapū and iwi, and to express and receive aroha (love) between them. She felt this virtual connection was also important for sustaining and nurturing what she described as her "Māori wellbeing". Below, Hinerauāmoa described whanaungatanga on social media with her sisters and friends as enabled through different ways:

*Um Tik Tok ko mātou ko *sisters names* ka whakamahi, ka send (a) mātou Tik Toks ki a mātou anō […] Friends, ka whakamahi mātou (i te) Instagram, Snapchat. Mainly ka send mātou ō mātou memories to each other. Like throwback, you know? Or Be Real. Kei runga rā ōku hoa katoa. And ko ērā apps ki te connect ki te taha o ōku hoa and ki te plan i o mātou if we gonna do something. So pai mō te social side of te oranga.*

[Um Tik Tok, my sisters and I use it to send Tik Toks to each other. Friends, we use Instagram, Snapchat. We mainly send our memories to each other. Like throwback, you know? Or Be Real. All my friends are on there. And those apps allow me to connect with my friends and to plan if we gonna do something. So it's good for my social wellbeing.]

In the above extract, Hinerauāmoa described Tik Tok, Instagram and BeReal as the spaces frequented by younger whānau members and peers *"all my friends are on there",* making them especially important for her to also be in. She described platform-specific affordances that her and her friends benefited from in day-to-day interactions to nurture relationships, such as sharing Snapchat 'memories'[1] that allowed them to reminisce on shared experiences with each other. Whanaungatanga was not limited to online, where

[1] A personal collection of saved photos and videos that users have previously shared with others.

she described these platforms being especially important for co-ordinating offline engagements. Both online and offline interactions were therefore experienced as being enhanced by social media. The ability to *feel* connected to whānau and friends when not in physical proximity to them was also described by other participants as important for their relationships and overall sense of wellbeing. Ururangi said:

> *Cause if you think about it, If I didn't have social media, I wouldn't be able to communicate with my siblings as much and one of my siblings, she lives in [detail removed], so… and I hardly get to see her already.*

Above, Ururangi described the whanaungatanga afforded by social media as playing a key role in enabling her to *feel* connected with her siblings. This was perceived as especially valuable given kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) was not often possible with one of her siblings who lived in another city. While physical distance brought a sense of disconnection to the relationship *"I hardly get to see her already"*, Ururangi felt social media was the only thing that could bridge the distance and mediate this sense of disconnection. The ability to nurture relationships from a distance was largely dependent on social media, making it almost essential for her taha whānau (whānau wellbeing).

The value of social media to mediate feelings of disconnection in many contexts was reiterated by Hiwa-i-te-rangi below:.

> *I know, this is weird. But like, even like, if you're not at tangihanga (funerals) or you can't go to like the walks at the parliament or something, you can still see what's going on [through social media] and you still feel like you're there even though you physically aren't there. Yeah.*

In the above extract, being able to virtually attend tangihanga and protests through social media partly enabled her to maintain a sense of spiritual connection to these practices "*you still feel like you're there even though you physically aren't there."* Simultaneously, in prefacing this experience as "*weird*" she also recognized the ability to do as being a potentially conflicting practice for attending tangihanga. A concern that has been raised in the literature highlighting the cultural implications of virtualizing extremely tapu (sacred, restricted) practices. While having the option to still *feel* a part of these practices and to *feel* spiritually connected from a distance could be highly valuable, Hiwa-i-te-rangi nevertheless felt this could be culturally conflicting. A similar sentiment regarding tensions around tikanga for whanauangatanga was expressed by Hinerauāmoa, who emphasised caution around balancing online and offline whanaungatanga:

> *I think [the good thing about social media is] staying in touch with people but then I feel like that can be a bad thing because then it means you won't go and like see them in real life. So you're just dependent on social media to stay in touch with them instead of actually going to see them or something? But I don't know if that's a bad thing or a good thing or...*

In the above extract Hinerauāmoa felt conflicted about the whanaungatanga afforded by social media, and was unsure about the potential impacts virtually connecting may have on the quality of relationships. She express concern about how an over-reliance on technology might simultaneously discourage people from making time to nurture relationships in person. In contrast, other participants felt less concerned about implications of virtual whanaungatanga for kanohi ki te kanohi, placing equal value on both online and offline whanaungatanga. For example, participants in Group One described social media as enhancing, not replacing kanohi ki te kanohi, by providing additional opportunities to nurture friendships when not physically together:

> ***Ururangi:*** *[…] Like for example, I would know that there's something wrong with BM if she wasn't to send me like any laughing faces. Yeah, like I would know there's something wrong. […] And then, for example, with [name removed] clearly I would hear something that there's something wrong. And then like she'd message me and then like I dunno, I can just imagine her saying that and like I see that she's like upset about something if that makes sense.*
>
> ***Hiwa-i-te-rangi:*** *If we don't...like if we don't communicate with someone but it's not in a way that we usually do, so we know straight away somethings wrong and we'll be over straight away. Like no matter what we're doing.*

In the above example, participants described how a strong understanding of each other's usual communication patterns created unique opportunities to identify when a friend was I distress. Despite the absence of traditional non-verbal cues of distress like facial expression or tone of voice, slight changes in the communication of Waipuna-ā-rangi, like the absence of laughing emojis, signalled to Ururangi that her friend was upset. The absence of emojis was enough to trigger a sense of worry and concern within

Ururangi, prompting her to immediately provide emotional support. Importantly, this was described as always translating into providing support in person, *"…we'll be over straight away. Like no matter what we're doing.".* In this way, while social media offered valuable opportunities to identify when friends were in distress and to offer support in the moment, it was an intermediary solution until support could be provided kanohi-ki-te-kanohi.

This sub-theme showed that affordance of whanaungatanga enabled participants to sustain and nurture relationships with those both near and far, and the potential to mediate disconnection caused by distance meant social media was extremely valuable for their relationships. Whanaungatanga on social media fostered a sense of belonging and connection, and enabled all kinds of feelings to be transmitted ranging from love to distress. Social support networks could be easily drawn on and mobilised in times of need, and this was particularly valued when enhancing connections kanohi-ki-te-kanohi, rather than replacing them.

1.2: Pūkenga: Personal growth

In this sub-ordinate theme, participants described how they leveraged social media for personal growth in numerous aspects of their lives, highlighting their various goals and aspirations, and of the importance of striving to do and be better. They felt social media played a key role in helping them work towards these aspirations, by providing easily accessible and easily digestible resources. For example, Mataora spoke positively about the ease of learning new things from Tik Tok and YouTube:

> *Tik Tok is actually really good because it's got like those one-minute videos that space in a whole lot of information in just one minute, so I like watching videos like that and getting a lot of knowledge in just one minute and it's so good. […] But like if I want to expand on my Tik Tok idea or like the Tik Tok I'm watching, to get more information about it I'd go to YouTube to watch like a longer video of it.*

Above, Mataora enthusiastically described the affordances of Tik Tok that offered fun, informative and efficient learning opportunities he could draw on for personal growth. At the same time, to further expand his knowledge or skills he could easily turn to YouTube to access more detailed, comprehensive, videos that further developed his knowledge and skills. In this way, being able to drawn on different platforms with different kinds of information and knowledge gave him self-agency over his learning, tailored to his own preferences and interests. Similarly, Niwareka felt social media offered an abundance of information on a vast range of topics that positively influenced her wellbeing:

> *Insta (Instagram) ka tiki au like ētahi tips and ētahi mea ka taea e au te hoko mai i runga rā hoki. Like some deals and stuff to help like tautoko i tōku hauora. Like ētahi recipes pea, ka kite au. But not just that hauora but like hauora hoki, ā tinana hoki, you know? Um Tik Tok…everything kei runga rā, ngā mea katoa like tips, like ka whakaatu ki a koe me aha ki te gym mēnā kāore koe e mohio me aha, ētahi kai pai, whatever. (E ō)rite ki a insta but pai ake. And important ērā ki au because I have to know what I'm doing.*

> *[I get lots of tips off Insta (Instagram) and can buy things off there too. Like deals and stuff that help like support my wellbeing. Like also maybe some recipes that I see. But not just that kind of wellbeing, but like physical wellbeing too, you know? Um Tik Tok…everything is on there, everything like tips, like it shows you what to do at the gym if you don't know what to do there, healthy food, whatever. It's like Insta, but better. And that's important to me because I have to know what I'm doing.]*

Above, Niwareka described Tik Tok and Instagram as go-to platforms containing *everything* she needed to know to support her to eat healthily and when going to the gym. As well as advice, Niwareka felt social media gave her access to retail products at low prices that also supported her health goals *"I get lots of tips…deals and stuff that help like support my wellbeing".* In this way, social media opened up an unlimited world of products and practical resources that Niwareka could incorporate into her life to enhance her *taha tinana* (physical wellbeing). This was especially important for Niwareka who described herself as the kind of person who needs reassurance and to feel capable and confident in her abilities. Having access to these resources and products through social media, met this need. In this way, social media gave her self-agency and self-determination over her wellbeing, as well as a sense of confidence in her abilities. Relatedly, Niwareka felt social media was equally beneficial for personal growth in other areas of her life:

> *He pai mō tōku taha pūtea cause […] well, he āhua koretake au with my pūtea, but I'm still learning. But ka whakamahi au Hidden Figures ia wā and ētahi wā kua tūwhera au (ī) ētahi like, savings. So he pai tērā kia aro whakamua au.*

[It’s good for my financial wellbeing cause […] well, I’m sort of useless with my money, but I’m still learning. But I use [detail removed] all the time and sometimes I’ve opened some like, savings. So that’s good as it helps me plan for the future.]

Above, Niwareka used the term ‘taha pūtea’ to describe money or finances as being another important domain of her wellbeing that she was actively trying to improve *“I’m sort of useless with my money, but I’m still learning”,* describing the Māori-led Instagram account *Hidden Figures*[2] as playing a key part in this. Being able to regularly access the page as an ongoing financial resource enabled her to take some initiative to improve her financial literacy. This helped her feel more in control over financial habits and by extension, both her current and future wellbeing *“he pai tērā kia aro whakamua au/ So that’s good as it helps me plan for the future.”* Personal growth was also described by some participants as enabled through exposure to wider cultural and societal issues and worldviews. Below, Niwareka described the importance of being able to be aware of social issues and diverse perspectives:

***Niwareka:** Insta, ka kite au i ngā kaupapa o te wā [I te Ao Māori] ki runga i a Insta. Um Tik Tok…he āhua interesting a Tik Tok. Like ka kite au (i) ngā different point of views o te katoa on like kaupapa Māori. He rerekē ō rātou whakaaro and he pai ki au te whakarongo ki ō rātou whakaaro.*

***Aorangi:** Ae. Ngā whakaaro o ngā Māori, o ngā whakaaro o te katoa?*

***Niwareka:** [Te] katoa. Like mēnā ko tēnei te tirohanga o tētahi Māori and ka kite au ka duet tētahi pākehā me ō rātou tirohanga, ka whakaaro au oh what the hell? He pai te, you know, mōhio i ngā tirohanga rerekē o everyone.*

*[**Niwareka:** Insta, I can keep informed about current affairs [in Te Ao Māori] on Insta. Um Tik Tok…Tik Tok is kind of interesting. Like I get to see everyone else’s*

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[2] A public Instagram account aimed at improving financial literacy among Māori. Content provides Māori perspectives and practical resources relating to finances, investing, and homeownership.

different points of view on kaupapa Māori. They have different thoughts and opinions and I enjoy listening to what their thoughts and opinions are.

Aorangi: *Yeah. The opinions of Māori or everyone's opinions in general?*

Niwareka: *Everyone. Like if this the perspective of a Māori person and I see a Pākehā do a duet with their own perspective, I think to myself oh what the hell? It's good to, you know, be aware of the diversity of everyone's perspectives.]*

In the above extract, for Niwareka social media was a window through which she could become aware of and learn about current events and issues pertaining to Te Ao Māori, as well as wider societal perspectives. She enjoyed and saw value in the exposure to diverse perspectives on different kaupapa (in this case kaupapa Māori), despite not always agreeing with these opinions. However, regardless of differences in opinions, she continued to see the value in being informed and keeping an open mind.

Not only did participants feel social media helped them grow as individuals, they also described the importance of personal growth in relation to their responsibilities as part of a collective. For example, Hiwa-i-te-rangi described social media as important for professional growth as a teacher:

I just got Facebook and Instagram because it helps me find pages to...oh pages or rautaki whakaako [teaching strategies], to help improve my classes. Pretty much my rauemi [resource] resource […] So Mahi by Mahi[3] is a Facebook page where this Pākehā girl - no Māori girl - posts up rautaki whakaako [teaching strategies]. Rautaki whakaako [teaching strategies] that you can teach the kids in Te Reo Māori. So like how to teach the kids if they're at this level, like how to test them. If they're at this level how to...whakaako ki tōna anō taumata whanaketanga [teach at different levels of development] […] I just found it randomly while I was looking for stuff and then found her page.

[3] A Māori-led Facebook page that provides Māori teaching resources.

As Hiwa-i-te-rangi's extract above shows, being able to easily access resources on Facebook gave her self-agency over her professional development, which supported her responsibilities as an educator. She described how effortless it felt to find this particular resource *"I just found it randomly while I was looking for stuff…"* . The ability to access Māori-led, Māori specific teaching resources was therefore considered especially valuable for her role as a Māori educator. The accessibility of this resource coupled with its cultural relevance played a valuable role in supporting her to become a better teacher. By extension, this positively impacted collective wellbeing through her impact as a teacher. By giving participants access to an abundance of information, social media opened up a window of opportunities for rangatahi to take control over their own personal development that they could relate to and that they enjoyed. This had notable value on participants lives when the information was Māori-led and Māori-oriented. Participants felt personal growth was important not only as individuals, but also in recognition of the key roles they held in their communities. In this way, social media and the information it provided was experienced as especially valuable in bettering themselves and the communities they belong to.

1.3: Mana tangata: Self-discovery and self-expression

Participants felt social media was a great space for self-discovery and self-expression, where they could explore their passions and interests, express themselves, and live out and endorse their values. Social media was described by Hiwa-i-te-rangi as playing a major (if not, *the* major) role in the process of self-discovery:

> *It [social media] makes you go through it [self-discovery] quicker. Does that make sense? Like we're still young yet we like, know what our style is and stuff and what we like, what we don't like as were like...getting older and finding out, if that makes sense?*

Above, Hiwa-i-te-rangi felt social media enabled her to quickly develop a strong grounding in her identity *"we're still young yet we like, know what our style is…what we like, what we don't like…"* that might not have otherwise been possible without social media. In this way, she felt social media enhanced her capabilities and overall wellbeing by speeding up the developmental processes. She also described her identity as fluid and constantly evolving *"getting older and finding out"*. Similar to social media and technology that was constantly advancing, her identity and capacity for self-discovery were also constantly evolving alongside it.

Another perceived benefit of self-discovery and self-expression through social media was the ability for rangatahi to control the narratives they told about themselves to others. For example, Hinerauāmoa felt that the ability to carefully and intentionally craft her self-image online gave her control over how others perceived her, which was important to her *“the only things that I repost are things that I think are cool and want other people to see.”* At the same time, Hinerauāmoa recognised this same affordance as something to be wary of when viewing the content of others:

> *That's a bad thing that as well, cause it's kind of fake. And like heaps of posts people put up…not fake, but like it's just the highlight of their life. And people think that like that's all...like maybe they'll compare their lives to others on Instagram and they'll think like theirs isn't as good and stuff.*

As a consumer of content on social media, Hinerauāmoa felt it was important to remember that because of the ability to craft specific identities on social media, it was not always an authentic reflection of peoples realities. This could be harmful in instances where viewers of content compared this with their own lives. In this way, she described the same affordance of social media for self-expression as being both positive and potentially harmful depending on how it is being used and interpreted by social media users, and the importance of keeping these in mind. Additionally, Hinerauāmoa described her own personal values as shaping her own social media practices and how she interacted with others social media content:

> *Mēnā ka puta tētahi kaupapa […] he kaupapa ka whakapiki i tōku ake mana...kāore au e hia(hia), like, post ki tōku ake story like for everyone to see like titiro i aha...like he pai tērā, but mōku? Just kāore au e hia(hia). […] but when it comes to […] like encouraging other people, […] he pai tērā. Nō reira he pai i te wā ka post ērā atu tāngata, so ka like uplift au i a rātou mēnā ka post rātou he mea like for themselves. But mōku? Kāore e pai ki a au kia pērā.*

> *[If something pops up […] something that enhances my own mana…I don’t like, post it to my story like for everyone else to see like look what happened…like that’s cool, but for me? I just don’t want to do that. […] But when it comes to […] like encouraging other people, […] that’s a good thing. So it’s cool when other people post that stuff, so*

I'll like uplift them if they post things like, for themselves. But for me? I just don't like that sort of thing.]

In this extract, Hinerauāmoa described how different Māori values influenced how she carried herself on social media and how she interacted with others. She described the concept of *whakaiti* (humility) as being endorsed in her practices when despite things happening offline enhanced her mana, she tried to refrain from posting about these achievements or successes online. She felt that while the act of sharing about your own successes and achievements on social media could indeed be a positive form of self-expression for others, it didn't align with her own values therefore was something she refrained from *"...like he pai tērā, but mōku? Just kāore au e hia(hia) / like that's cool , but for me? I just don't want to do that".* At the same time, she felt it was important to also endorse other values in her practices, like *aroha* (love and compassion) and *manaakitanga* (care and reciprocity) by always celebrating the successes of others *"like encouraging other people…that's a positive thing…so I'll, like, uplift them if they post things like, for themselves"*. She later described examples of what showing aroha and manaakitanga looked like on social media, including re-posting friends content or simply commenting supportive messages on their posts. In this way, the way the embodiment of cultural values in the online interactions of Hinerauāmoa, were mana enhancing.

Relatedly, participants also described how they asserted their mana tangata by making a stand for their values when these were perceived as being challenged on social media. For example, below, Niwareka described her experiences of others sharing anti-vaccination posts on social media and how she navigated asserting her own stance on the issue:

Niwareka: *Or like, hei tauira like...mēnā he like anti-vax tētahi o hoa, ka post koe he mea like […] Pro-vax. A ka whakaaro rātou 'ooo he pro-vax ia'. Ērā momo mea. You know?*

Aorangi: *So like mēnā ka kite koe i tētahi anti-vax, ka post koe i tētahi mea pro-vax?*

Niwareka: *Ae. Kia riri rātou pea? […] So like ka kite ia i a au, kāore ia ka kōrero about being anti-vax […] and kia ako rātou, ae. […] Or like...cos ka post noa raātou i ō rātou facts so kāore rātou e mōhio i ētahi atu facts, ka just ū rātou ki ērā.*

Hinerauāmoa: *Without actually telling them.*

Niwareka: *Yeah without telling them. Like you can't just tell them, you're just like saying what you're thinking, you know?*

***[Niwareka:** Or like, for example like…if one of your friends are anti-vax, you post something like […] pro vax. So they will think 'ooo she's pro-vax'. Those sorts of things. You know?*

***Aorangi:** So if you see something anti-vax, you post something pro-vax?*

***Niwareka:** Yeah. To make them angry maybe? […] So like, if they see me, then they won't talk about being anti-vax. […] and so they learn, yeah. […] Or like…cos they only post their own facts so they don't know any other facts, they just stick to their facts.*

***Hinerauāmoa:** Without actually telling them.*

***Niwareka:** Yeah without actually telling them. Like you can't just tell them, you're just like saying what you're thinking, you know?]*

For Niwareka, sharing *"pro-vax"* (pro-vaccination) content in response to others sharing *"anti-vax*" (anti-vaccination) content was a form of political self-expression. Both Niwareka and Hinerauāmoa felt that this particular practice enabled them to assert their own values, without impinging on the values or mana of others *"Like you can't just tell them, you're just like saying what you're thinking"*. She described the intention behind this practice as being to both politically challenge and evoke desired behaviours in others *"to make them angry…if they see me, then they won't walk about being anti-vax"*, as well as to push others to become more informed and open-minded to perspectives outside of their own *"so they learn…they only post their own facts so they don't know any other facts, they just stick to their facts".* Relatedly, many rangatahi felt that being able to stand up for your values on social media was especially beneficial for contributing to a collective sense of wellbeing. For example, Waipuna-ā-rangi and Ururangi highlighted the power of social media to change the world for the better:

> ***Waipuna-ā-rangi:*** *[I] Feel like it's a good way to support not only people, but like movements, I guess…from afar. For example like climate change. And because social media is such a huge platform like everywhere around the world, it's such a good way for people to...I don't know, advocate for... better everything I guess.*

> ***Ururangi:*** *Yeah, and especially like, you know…what's that dude that like, got pinned to the ground? Yeah, George. And like heaps of famous people like Chris Brown, Rihanna, Beyonce shared it all over their social media […] It's like a domino effect.*

Above, participants placed significant value in the potential for collective wellbeing to be enhanced on social media, through the ability to raise awareness of and mobilise action for important issues like climate change and social injustice - to *"advocate for…better everything"*. Ururangi perceived the power and reach of social media to mobilise transformative action and positively influence the world as especially valuable. She felt that even micro-practices like re-sharing posts on social media, were powerful enough to snowball into much wider, collective efforts to social transformation *"It's like a domino effect"* . By giving participants access to the world, social media by extension provided them a powerful opportunity to positively influence the world they live in.

While participants felt mostly positively about opportunities to curate and affirm identities on social media, they simultaneously expressed concern when expressions of Māori culture and identity on social media by others were perceived as inauthentic or exploitative. When I asked group one what kind of content or accounts they experienced less positively on social media, they gave an example of a particular group of influencers who participated in an Instagram te reo Māori promotional campaign, that received significant public backlash from Māori communities on Instagram. While the promotion of te teo Māori online was usually celebrated, rangatahi felt the intentions behind the influencers promotion of the language were not perceived as authentic and therefore, problematic.

> ***Waipuna-ā-rangi:*** *Like they're kind of using Te Ao Māori to get more famous? Cause they didn't care for it before...before they got on [detail removed].*

> ***Ururangi****: Yeah.*

> ***Hiwa-i-te-rangi:*** *So now that they're in [detail removed] and everything's Te Ao Māori, now they're promoting it hard and now you see them everywhere. But you didn't before [detail removed]. Like you would never hear te reo Māori drop […]* Like what's your whakapapa in reo? And they had none.

Above, participants felt apprehensive about the intentions of social media influencers taking a perceived sudden interest in te reo Māori, when previously they were not known to speak or promote the language on their platforms. Participants felt that the rising celebration and popularity of Te Ao Māori (and in this specific case, te reo Māori) online lead to it being exploited on social media as a trend, for public recognition and for social validation. Hiwa-i-te-rangi described an absence of whakapapa (in this context, history) in te reo Māori among the influencers as one of the key concerns influencing the perceived the authenticity and sincereness (or lack thereof) in promoting te reo Māori. Therefore, they felt uneasy about the intentions of these influencers who appeared as self-serving. Similarly, Group Two felt Te Ao Māori was often exploited on social media for followers rather than an authentic appreciation or expression of Māoritanga:

> **Niwareka:** *Oh ētahi wā he cringe hoki i te wā ka mahi [ētahi tāngata] ngā mea. Nā te mea they are so not like that in real life […] Even though I'm so happy that they do that, but he mea kei waho i tērā that they do, kaore e paku hangai ki ā rātou kupu...Ka ki ia like ohhh taku marae, koinei taku marae, taku marae engari kāore ia e paku whakatinana, hoki atu, tautoko i nga mahi. [They're] just like nō konei au and everyone needs to know that I'm from here but like I didn't really contribute to it. Ka whakaaro au he hōhā rawa tērā […] he pai he proud rātou to be Māori like that's so cool but like…me whakatinana koe i o kupu.*

> ***[Niwareka:*** *Oh sometimes it's cringe when people do some things online. Because they are so not like that in real life […] Even though I'm so happy that they do that, but the things they do offline don't align at all with their words online… They say ohhh my marae, this is my marae, my marae but they don't embody their words, go back [to the marae], support the operationalisation of the marae at all. [They're] just like I'm from here and everyone needs to know that I'm from here but like I didn't really contribute to it. I just think that's so frustrating […] it's cool they're proud to be Māori like that's so cool but like…your actions need to align with your words.]*

In the above extract, Niwareka perceived people’s words not aligning with their actions offline when it comes to Te Ao Māori as ‘cringe’, or unsettling, and felt frustrated when people’s embracing of Te Ao Māori and their Māoritanga was limited to social media. She acknowledged the benefits and empowerment that asserting and expressing Māoritanga on social media could have, *“it’s cool they’re proud to be Māori like that’s so cool”* and was encouraging of this and enjoyed seeing it. However, she simultaneously felt that this should always be followed through offline away from the public eye by physically returning to marae and helping or contributing in some way with the day-to-day running of the marae. For Niwareka, ensuring that your actions offline align with your words and the way you portray yourself on social media was important in order for expressions of mana tangata to be authentic and respectful. These were values she embodied.

1.4: Whakawātea: A therapeutic outlet

Participants often referred to social media as a space to *whakawātea* (to release, to clear), where it offered them moments of calm, clarity, and joy throughout the day. Whether it was scrolling social media to wind down before bed, watching funny Tik Toks, or simply switching the mind off after a long, hard day at mahi, being able to *whakawātea* on social media was perceived as extremely beneficial for participant’s wellbeing, even if only temporarily. For example, Waipuna-ā-rangi described how she used social media to find moments of inspiration and joy during the day:

> *Um [Instagram and TikTok] gives me ideas to try, new things to explore […] for example, like a new recipe I haven't done before. Um [it] keeps me really happy cause it’s like my...alone time I guess. Like where it's just me. And I'm doing something I love. So it’s like a...what do you call it? Therapy, I guess.*

In the above extract, Waipuna-ā-rangi found joy through a number of things including finding new ideas and trying new things in solitude. She experienced these as highly self-nurturing practices that combined, contributed to a very therapeutic experience *“It’s like a…what do you call it? Therapy, I guess.”.* She then went on to describe how finding moments of inspiration and motivation through social media had a positive flow on effect on other aspects of her life:

[Social media] keeps me updated with what's going on at the gym. They have like Facebook, a Facebook page for [my gym], and then their Instagram as well where they post up like, every week what we're doing. Um seeing influencers, fitness influencers, motivates me. Um it's also very, very, very important to me because […] it just affects how my day goes. If I like I notice a difference in my mood, my energy and stuff like that from like, if I don't go to the gym, then I'm like grumpy. Don't have any energy. So that kind of like yeah, predicts... how my day goes kind of thing. So that's very important. […] [The gym is] also my alone time as well. […] Yeah, like therapeutic for me too.

For Waipuna-ā-rangi, going to the gym was another important self-nurturing practice, and not going to the gym could negatively impact her emotional and physical wellbeing for the rest of her day. Seeing health and fitness related content on social media created moments of inspiration when she needed it, that translated into implementing practices offline that filled her cup. In this way, Waipuna-ā-rangi felt social media was inherently interconnected with multiple domains of her wellbeing by keeping her connected to people and spaces that motivated her to care for her taha tinana (physical wellbeing) and by extension, her taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing). Other rangatahi in the study also described the self-soothing potential of social media through providing a space where they could take a break from the from the chaos of everyday life. For example, Hiwa-i-te-rangi said:

He rautaki whakatau wairua [It's a strategy/tool to calm the spirits] pretty much. Because I'm always constantly thinking or something's going on. So it's pretty much my hauora, just to keep me calm and like my body [to] relax or allows my brain to relax.

In the above extract, Hiwa-i-te-rangi described social media as therefore not only synonymous with her hauora, but as essential for her hauora *"it's pretty much my hauora"*. Social media was a tool she could easily draw on throughout the day to calm her wairua (spirit), when the constant demands of everyday life sent her mind and body into over-drive *"I'm always constantly thinking or something's going on"*. She also described how social media was inherently intertwined with her overall sense of wellbeing, where the moments of calm social media gave her, flowed through her wairua (spirit), mind and body. In this way, social media was seen by many participants as especially valuable in the chaos of contemporary life, enabling them to find small, sporadic moments of calm, peace, and joy.

Theme Summary

‘He Ara Whakaoranga’ illustrates the affirmative social media practices that enabled participants to create agentic pathways to wellbeing. Their kōrero showed that they used social media in nuanced, agentic and complex ways that endorsed cultural concepts and values, in order to enhance multiple aspects of their lives. The *whanaungatanga* afforded by social media enabled rangatahi to sustain and nurture feelings of connection to important people, places and spaces in their lives. Social media gave participants access to a valuable repertoire of information that they could easily draw on and implement in their lives, giving participants self-determination over the development of *pūkenga* and personal growth. Participants were empowered through the capacity for self-discovery and control over the expression of *mana tangata* afforded by social media, and found social media was an important therapeutic outlet enabling them to *whakawātea* and find moments of clarity, peace, and joy throughout the day. Within this theme social media was also described as powerful and central to wellbeing, reaching into multiple domains of wellbeing with the power to effect ‘everything’. This power was beneficial for both individual and collective wellbeing.

2: He Ara Taumaha: The struggles of social media

This superordinate theme illustrated social media as a place of struggle for participants, and encapsulated what they described as key challenges on social media. Within this theme fall two subordinate themes: Kia Tūpato: *Protecting your mana*; and 2) Kia Mataara: *Staying focused and finding balance*. Participants felt that these areas were things that if not successfully navigated, could become problematic. They described a number of strategies they implemented in attempts to navigate these challenges, as well as the effort that was often required in these attempts.

2.1: Kia Tūpato: Protecting your mana

In this theme, participants spoke about the effort required to protect their mana in online interactions and to feel safe. The labour required for such protection differed across platforms, where some were considered easier to manage than others. Even then, participants felt that sometimes despite going to such efforts, avoiding experiencing harm could not be guaranteed. For example, Group One spoke positively about the ability to have multiple accounts on Instagram where they could tailor privacy settings and audiences to create spaces that felt safe to share, and minimised the risk of mana being diminished. Most participants in the study had what they called *'main'* accounts and *'personal'* accounts. Main accounts were open to the public, and personal accounts were private and only accessible by smaller, more controlled audiences. Waipuna-ā-rangi described feeling safe and trusting others as a key motivation for managing separate accounts this way "*I don't feel comfortable with sharing stuff with people I don't know*". Similarly, Ururangi described trust (or lack thereof) in others as a key influence in who she allows access to her Instagram accounts, and what she shares with them *"[I like] posting on my personal pages on Instagram as there are certain people that I trust."* A similar sentiment was expressed by Hiwa-i-te-rangi, who below, described how her practices differed between public and private accounts, and consequently between trusted audiences and less-trusted audiences:

> *So this [my main account] is like everything I don't care people seeing? Then if I go on to this [my personal account], this is just my friends like my close friends. I only got 30 [followers]. Which I need to go through and delete. And it's like just hidemuk (hideous) stuff that you don't want other people to see. Photos of us on the weekend.*

Above, Hiwa-i-te-rangi described how she protected her mana on her *'main'* account, by only sharing things that she felt would not have a negative impact on her. In contrast, her *'personal'* account that was only accessible by close, trusted friends was experienced as a safer space where she felt comfortable sharing posts that might make her more vulnerable *"just hidemuk (hideous) stuff that you don't want other people to see."* For example, photos of her and her friends partying on the weekend were perceived to only be only be appropriate and safe to share with her close friends, in the controlled and easily monitored space of her private account. She also described the importance of continuously monitoring and revising who has access to her personal account *"I only got 30 [followers]. Which I need to go through and delete"*, suggesting negotiating precautionary measures, even among trusted audiences was an important and ongoing process to keep herself safe at all times.

Group Two also described having main and private accounts as a common strategy among the group that helped them to feel safe. During a group discussion about the differences in how online practices differed between public and private accounts, Niwareka described these differences as being related to issues of social acceptability, vulnerability and authenticity:

> ***Niwareka:*** *Public [I post] like ngā mea pai…nice…like vlogs…such a nice girl (laughs). And private like...he mea like (pulls a silly face). Aua, private he rite...*
> ***Hinerauāmoa:*** *Private is the real you.*
> ***Niwareka:*** *Yeah private is the real me.*
>
> ***[Niwareka:*** *Public [I post] nice things…nice, like vlogs, such a nice girl (laughs). And private like…posts that are like (pulls a silly face). I dunno, private is like…*
> ***Hinerauāmoa:*** *Private is the real you.*
> ***Niwareka:*** *Yeah private is the real me.]*

In the above extract, Niwareka felt like her public account reflected what she perceived as a more socially acceptable version of herself, while Niwareka and Hinerauāmoa both felt that their private accounts gave them the safety to express themselves more authentically and safely *"Private is the real me".* In this way, having multiple accounts on Instagram was experienced positively by giving her control over how she is understood by others, while allowing her to easily negotiate social expectations on social media and the potential judgement publicity could bring. In contrast, Tik Tok was often described by participants as more difficult and labour-intensive to protect their mana. Hiwa-i-te-rangi described the strategies she used on Tik Tok to protect both her own mana and by extension, the mana of the students she teaches:

> *I've gotta like block every kid from it. […] on TikTok I have to be really careful of what I post. Because the kids watch my TikToks. Like can't make that private. […] Can't post like um drinking videos, or like if people take videos of me like they know can't put it out there cause if people see or parents see, then not really a good look.*

Unlike Instagram which allowed audiences to be more easily controlled, on Tik Tok Hiwa-i-te-rangi described the effortful work required to protect her mana, such as restricting individual access one-by-one *“I’ve gotta like block every kid from it”.* The lack of control over privacy settings meant she also felt more cautious, and put significant consideration into what she chose to share and the potential implications of her decisions *“I have to be really careful of what I post…like can’t make that private.”*. This was considered important not only to protect herself, but it was also underpinned by a sense of duty of care to others, and the importance of setting a good example for her students *“Because the kids watch my Tik Toks…can’t post like um drinking videos…cause if people or parents see, then not really a good look”.* She further protected herself and her students by enforcing boundaries with friends regarding their own social media practices involving her *“if people take videos of me like they know they can’t put it out there”.* This again required effort in that it required a lot of trust in friends to honour those boundaries as well as effort to remind them. The need to protect herself and others was therefore not only considered in decisions about her own practices, but she ensured a duty of care was extended into her wider social circle too.

Despite participant attempts to protect their mana as best they could, these were at times only partial solutions to challenges and could often be undermined by factors outside their control. The biggest obstacles described by participants were constraints of structural features of social media platforms, and a judgemental, prejudiced society whose voices were amplified through social media. Tik Tok in particular was described on many occasions by participants as a space full of ‘haters’ and despite implementing many strategies to reduce harm, it was sometimes inevitable. For example, Hinerauāmoa described how despite taking measures to anonymise herself as much as she could on Tik Tok, it could still be experienced negatively:

> *I don’t know, I feel like he just...he hōhā a Tik Tok. He maha rawa ngā haters, (he) maha rawa ngā fake accounts and ka just...ka just go for it. They just go for it. They see anything. But so ka mahi noa au like dancing videos. Kāore au e mahi i ngā mea kōrero, rānei ka kī rātou meh meh (speaking in a ridiculing tone).*

[I don't know, I just feel like…Tik Tok is annoying. There's lots of haters, lots of fake accounts and they just… just go for it. They just go for it. They see anything. But so I only do like, dancing videos. I don't do anything where I'm speaking, otherwise they'll say 'meh meh' (speaking in a ridiculing tone).]

Above, Hinerauāmoa described experiencing Tik Tok 'haters' as judgemental, unrelentless and quick to criticise anyone and anything *"ka just…ka just go for it. They just go for it. They see anything."*. This made her extremely cautious about what she posted, therefore to protect her mana she felt limited to only share specific types of content less likely to receive criticism *"I only do like, dancing videos."* She felt that sharing more authentic, personal expressions of herself could attract unwanted judgement and hate *"I don't do anything where I am speaking, otherwise they'll say 'meh meh'"*, and refrained from doing so. Therefore while she still enjoyed using Tik Tok, her capacity to express herself openly and freely was strongly limited.

When I asked participants to describe what factors contributed to particular social media platforms being experienced more or less positively than others, they associated this with the specific design and affordances of different platforms and the cultures each platform cultivated:

Niwareka: *Like Instagram kāore he maha ngā haters. Tik Tok… it's a whole world.*
Hineteiwaiwa: *Nā te mea kei runga a Instagram tō oranga engari Tik Tok he rite for the lols.*
Niwareka: *Nā reira (e) whakaaro (ana)te katoa they can comment whatever.*

*[**Niwareka:** Like Instagram there aren't many haters on there. Tik Tok… it's a whole world.*
***Hineteiwaiwa:** Because your life is on Instagram but Tik Tok is like, for the lols.*
***Niwareka:** So everyone thinks that they can comment whatever.]*

Above, participants described Instagram as a less harmful space than Tik Tok, and attributed this to the fact that people's lives are on Instagram, therefore perhaps experienced as more personal or genuine. In contrast, Tik Tok was described as a *"whole world"* of its own that lacked context of people's lives, was purely for entertainment and therefore was not taken too seriously *“for the lols”*. This “for the lols” culture was perceived as giving people a sense of entitlement and lack of accountability on Tik Tok that fostered a culture of harm. However, participants accepted this as simply the Tik Tok culture and just what you could expect to experience there. Therefore on Tik Tok, they protected their mana by just restricting what they posted.

The group further reflected on this in another discussion where they remembered a negative experience Mataora had on Tik Tok in previous years. After appearing in a Tik Tok encouraging rangatahi Māori to get vaccinated, he received significant backlash and was met with an influx of anti-vax and anti-Māori narratives in the comments of the post. Again, this type of digital violence was not surprising to participants, however Niwareka expressed particular frustration in the fact that this type of digital violence was left unchallenged:

> *Kāore tētahi i stand up. Then i kite au (i) (tē)tahi te tane i kī (ia) (i) tetahi mea i te whakaaro au like kāore tētahi i actually, like, kāore hoki te page [administrators] i mahi tētahi mea about it i just waiho noa rātou. […] I Like maha rawa ngā hate comments i whakaaro au oh my gosh! But kāore ia [Mataora] i raru, because he doesn't care about anything.*
>
> *[No one stood up. Then I saw one guy who said something and I was thinking like, no one actually like, not even the page [administrators] did anything about it, they just left it. […] There were so many hate comments, I thought oh my gosh! But he [Mataora] didn’t care, because he doesn’t care about anything.]*

Above, Niwareka described feeling disappointed, frustrated and angry that no one, not even page moderators, spoke out against or attempted to shut down the violence being expressed towards Mataora. She perceived this as especially disappointing because of the publicity and volume of the harm being experienced *“there were so many hate comments, I thought oh my gosh!”*. As an extension of this kōrero, participants described the complexities and labour involved in negotiating experiences of racism on social media:

> **Hinerauāmoa:** *I just sit back and watch. I just laugh but nā te mea, mēnā he maha kē ngā tāngata that are going back at them, then yeah. But mēnā kāore tētahi ka kī i tetahi mea ki a ia then tērā pea ka ki au (i) tētahi mea, but…*

Niwareka: *Āe, au hoki. Like mēnā...I'm sure like ka reply maha nga tangata so its alright.*
Hinerauāmoa: *Most of the time I just laugh because it's funny and because they don't even know so...*
Niwareka: *Āe. And ka hia(hia) au ōku facts right i mua i tōku ki tētahi mea.*
Hineteiwaiwa: *Āe. Cause ka tea ngā tāngata cancel i a koe.*

[Hinerauāmoa: *I just sit back and watch. I just laugh but because if there are already lots of people that are going back at them, then yeah. But if no one speaks up, then I might say something, but…*
Niwareka: *Yeah me too. Like if…I'm sure lots of people will reply then it's alright.*
Hinerauāmoa: *Most of the time I just laugh because it's funny and because they don't even know so...*
Niwareka: *Yeah. And I want to get my facts right before I say something too.*
Hineteiwaiwa: *Yeah. Cause people can cancel you.]*

In the above extract, participants described negotiating racism on social media as a complex and laborious task and often involved them picking their battles carefully. One way of keeping themselves safe was by preparing themselves with the most informed responses to minimize the risk of further criticism or being 'cancelled'. Assessing the situation to determine if and how others were responding meant that if others were responding, there was no need for participants to need to take on that labour and risk making themselves vulnerable to more harm. All of this required significant effort, therefore sometimes it was just 'easier' to ignore it. At the same time, while some described not internalising the racism, a strong sense of injustice and a need to stand up for their values often drove them to resist the racism and respond to things they perceived as being wrong. Niwareka further described extra measures she took when it seemed the racism online was being left unchallenged:

Āe I made a whole different Tik Tok [account] so they dont like stalk me and i te fully like go off ahau ki a rātou cause they didn't know who I was, and āe.[…] Because no one said anything! I whakaaro au is someone gonna say anything?! But no one did, so i mahi au. And i mahi hoki au mō [taku teina]. because i te kī like, i te whiwhi ia (he) *maha ngā hate comments. I whakaaro au what the heck don't talk about my sister like that! So i like hanga au he fake [account] and comment au ki runga i ērā mea.*

[Yeah I made a whole different Tik Tok [account] so they don't like stalk me and I was fully going off at them cause they didn't know who I was, and yeah […] Because no one said anything! I thought is someone gonna say anything?! But no one did, so I did. And I did the same thing for [my younger sister]. I did it for [my younger sister] because they were saying like, she was receiving so many hate comments. I thought to myself oh what the heck don't talk about my sister like that! So I made a fake [account] and responded to those comments.]

Above, for Niwareka, seeing her loved ones be targets of online discrimination eliciting many feelings including frustration, anger, and a strong sense of injustice. These feelings, coupled with a lack of public and platform intervention to stop the racism resulted in her taking it upon herself to shut it down. However, this required significant effort on her part, where she created an entirely new, anonymous Tik Tok account in order for her to be able to challenge the racism and avoid being the target of further harm. Participants in this study therefore actively implemented numerous and sometimes laborious practices to keep themselves and others safe, however societal judgement and prejudice continued to make this difficult for them.

2.2: Kia Mataara: Staying focused and finding balance

While in '*He Ara Whakaoranga'* rangatahi described social media as positively influencing wellbeing by allowing them to whakawātea and bring calmness to their worlds, they also described managing the time spent on social media as sometimes being a challenge. For example, Group One discussed how easy it could be to lose control over time and the ability to complete tasks when scrolling social media:

Ururangi: *… For example, like I have to study for like a test or something, I procrastinate and like i'm always on my phone […] And in the back of my head i'm like yeah you need to get off your phone now so you can study but I don't end up doing that because I just keep scrolling through social media.*
Waipuna-ā-rangi*: Mindless scrolling.*
Hiwa-i-te-rangi: *And then two hours pass and your like fuck! (laughs).*

In the above extract, Ururangi described a sense of conflict between what she knew needed to be done *“in the back of my head I’m like yeah you need to get off your phone now”* but somehow losing control over what she was doing and not being able to put her phone down *“I’m always on my phone…but I don’t end up doing that…I just keep scrolling”.* When this sense of control was lost, using social media turned into an unintentional and automatic practice *“mindless scrolling”,* and when they lost track of time it could create a feeling of regret and self-conflict *“two hours pass and your like fuck”.* Similarly, Hinerauāmoa described how using social media to relax was experienced positively until it reached a point where she felt she lost discipline or control over how long she was on it for:

> *Mōhio au, (hei) āhea me waiho i taku wea. So mēnā kei te whakareri i te ata...oh mēnā kei runga au i te ata, (e) mōhio (ana) au me waiho au a te 8:30 kia whakareri au mō te mahi and stuff […] but ā muri (i) te mahi he pai, nō te mea i know where I have to be at what time...so I know where to put my phone down. But he āhua kino tōku discipline anō i te wā kei te haere au ki te moe. Because kei runga au mō te wā roa and dont know when to put it down. Yeah (laughs).*
>
> *[I know when not to use my phone. So if I’m getting ready in the morning…oh if I’m on it in the morning, I know I need to put it down at 8:30 so I can get ready for work and stuff […] But after work it’s all good because I know where I have to be at what time…so I know where to put my phone down. But then I lose discipline again before bed. Because I spend ages on it and don’t know when to put it down. Yeah (laughs).]*

Above, Hinerauāmoa described a rhythm to her day where she felt in control and extremely aware of her social media use during the day when she knew she had other things to do, but at the end of the day when she used social media to wind down she felt she lost control over the time spent on it *“I spend ages on it and don’t know when to put it down”*. She described this lack of control as a lack of discipline that she was otherwise able to enact throughout the day, and trying to retain control and discipline was a daily form of labour for her. However, where Hinerauāmoa associated spending too much time online with a lack of self-discipline, Niwareka described specific affordances of social media as making it difficult to stay focused on certain tasks:

(E hia)hia (ana) au (me) mahi he mea like nā te mea me mahi au he maha ngā assignments i mua i tōku haerenga overseas so like... (I) ia wā ka ngana au (ki) te study i just can't nā te mea kua kā taku wea. Like ka haere au [to study]...but then ka whakaaro au whos messaging me? I message tētahi i (a) au? […] like ka (hia)hia noa au (i te) whakaoti (i) āku mahi but I focus on my phone too much.

[I want to do something about it because I have lots of assignments to finish before my trip overseas, so like every time I try to study I just can't because my phone is on. Like I'll go to study…but then I wonder who's messaging me? Did anyone message me? […] Like I just want to finish my work but I focus on my phone too much.]

While in theme one participants spoke positively about being able to reach people easily through social media, here Niwareka described how that instant access could also bring with it a form of anxiety, where she felt an obligation and hyper-alertness to constantly be available to others. Despite wanting to focus on study so she could enjoy her upcoming trip overseas, needing to constantly know if anyone wasn't trying to reach her that made it difficult to focus on the task at hand. Niwareka also mentioned at one point during data collection that the only reason she downloaded Facebook was because she needed Facebook Messenger for work, as this was their primary method of communication. This gives context to Niwareka's dilemma where she was trying to stay of her phone, but simultaneously needed to be reachable for both friends, whānau and work.

In response to the above concerns, as part of the inquiry process the series of wānanga gave participants the opportunity to test out various strategies they could use to enhance awareness of their social media use, develop more intentional practices, and ultimately to find a more balanced approach to social media use. It was often a process of trial and error finding something that worked for each person, but by the end of the inquiry most rangatahi had found at least one new strategy they felt worked well for them. For example, Waipuna-ā-rangi described how setting application time limits (an iPhone setting) for Tik Tok and allocating specific times of day to use social media were effective strategies to manage her time on social media:

I was actually pretty good, I think. I'm pretty good [at managing my time] anyways. My screentime went down 17 percent so that's pretty good. I stuck to the [app] time limits *the whole time, but that's because I was conscious of when I was on Tik Tok. Because I like using Tik Tok when I'm winding down at night time. So if I was on it like first thing in the morning, I'll be like oh now I'm gonna save my time for tonight so I just won't go until like that night.*

Although Waipuna-ā-rangi saw herself as someone with generally effective time-management skills, setting app limits helped her even further develop intentional social media practices. She described remaining self-aware while she was on social media, and intentionally setting time aside specifically for social media as an extremely effective way for her to retain control over her time and enable her to experience the time spent on social media more positively. Similarly, Hiwa-i-te-rangi felt an increased self-awareness that had developed through the wānanga was an important and useful strategy to help her stay on top of everything she needed to do throughout the day:

And then mindful, just being mindful about what I'm doing constantly. Because how it can affect what's coming up next. So like, if I'm on my social media during this time, then I have to be mindful how long I'm on it, if I have to do something leading up to something, and always thinking about what I have to do next. So like just be mindful of all that kind of stuff. Because like sometimes when it hits 3:40 I'll come home and I'll be like oh yay I can relax, forgetting that I have to be somewhere. And then I'm on my socials. Then I'm just like oh shit I need to be gone and I'll quickly rush off. Yeah.

Above, Hiwa-i-te-rangi continuously emphasised increased self-awareness of her practices '*being mindful about what I'm doing constantly'* as helping her to avoid disruptions to the numerous daily tasks and responsibilities she juggled. With everything going on in her daily schedule and constantly thinking about the next task while trying to finish another, she described it feeling easy to lose herself and time and slip into a state where she lost focus. Being mindful of her social media practices and the potential flow on effects they could have helped to bring herself back to the present, feel grounded, and stay focused on the task at hand. For Niwareka, after trialling several strategies to help her stay focused on her study and work with limited success, by the last wānanga, being more intentional and leaving her phone out of sight turned out to be the most effective strategy for her:

> *Tēnei wiki i pai rawa au like, pono! like overall I actually aro au cause i whakaaro au oh my gosh ko tēnei te wiki whakamutunga (o te Rangahau), me aro au. And like kāore au i haere ki runga i tōku wea maha and katahi anō au ka heke, ka tiro ki tōku screen time…kua heke 30 percent from last week. […] And tērā atu mea, te mea i aro au my goal from last week, i actually mahi au. I waiho au i tōku waea ki te taha and i mahi au like marking and i aro au. Like kaore au i pa i toku waea i waiho au ki toku ruma mo tetahi wā.*
>
> *[I was so good this week, honestly! Like overall I was actually really focused cause I thought oh my gosh this is the last week [of the study], I need to focus. And like I wasn't on my phone as much and I just got off my phone now and checked my screen time…it's gone down 30 percent from last week. […] And that other thing I was focusing on, my goal from last week…I actually stuck to it. I left my phone to the side and focused on my marking. Like I didn't touch my phone at all, I left it in my bedroom for a while.]*

In the above extract, Niwareka felt nearing the end of the study pushed her to focus on achieving the goals she had set herself the weeks prior, which revolved around reducing her screen time and focusing on her work. She felt she was able to achieve this through both being more intentional in her practices, by keeping tabs on herself by checking her screentime statistics on her phone, and most importantly by making an intentional decision to commit to the actions she had set herself in prior weeks. Additionally, leaving her phone out of reach and out of sight meant she could better focus on her work without being tempted to check if anyone was messaging her. While a simple strategy, she felt extremely proud of herself for finding something that was both effective and sustainable for her.

Theme Summary

'He Ara Taumaha' illustrated what participants identified as particularly challenging aspects of social media, as well as how they attempted to navigate these challenges. It explored how they attempted to negotiate safe online spaces that protect their mana, and how they navigated the struggle of finding a balance between time spent on social media and other daily responsibilities. Participants have developed and consciously implement on a daily basis a number of agentic solutions to navigate these challenges. Opportunities to reflect on these practices and strategies enabled rangatahi to develop more intentional practices, which rangatahi felt were important to maintain. However, these strategies were

only partial solutions to the challenges they described. Platform design constraints, especially when intersected with deeply embedded societal prejudices often undermined participants attempts to create safe environments and online experiences for themselves and others, as well as their ability to develop intentional and consistent social media practices. In this way, while social media was described in theme one as positively influencing wellbeing, factors outside their control could also present barriers to being able to experience the benefits of social media.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study explored how seven rangatahi Māori, with strong Māori identities, used and experienced social media. This analysis shows the inherent embeddedness and perceived value of social media in participants lives, and illustrates the complexity and nuances of participants practices and experiences on social media. Participants mostly felt and experienced social media positively and were using a range of affirmative practices that endorsed cultural values and practices to create agentic pathways to wellbeing. *Whanaungatanga, pūkenga, mana tangata,* and *whakawātea* were all culturally relevant affordances of social media that when leveraged using affirmative social media practices, gave participants a sense of self-agency and self-determination over their lives. Participants simultaneously felt social media presented a number of challenges that through agentic strategies, they tried their best to navigate. However, these were often only considered partial solutions and contributing factors outside their control, like platform design and racism, continued to undermine their strategies leading to a sense of frustration, injustice and disempowerment. What was also in these findings is that participants experiences were underpinned by an understanding of certain rights, responsibilities and obligations that are implicit within whānau relationships, and an underlying commitment to caring for and supporting others. To my knowledge, no other study has explored affirmative social media use among rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities that centres their own lived experiences and perspectives. These findings therefore add novel insights and new understandings on the topic. The aims of the study were to:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of the social media practices and experiences of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities.
2. Gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives, preferences and concerns of participants pertaining to their social media use.
3. Explore culturally grounded understandings of the online practices and experiences of participants.
4. Identify other potential social, cultural and structural influences on participants experiences of social media.

The following chapter summarises the main findings in relation to these aims and compares these to previous research findings. It then discusses the study's implications, strengths, and limitations followed by recommendations for further research. The chapter ends with a concluding statement.

Summary of Main Findings

Theme 1

Superordinate theme 1 '*He Ara Whakaoranga*: Enhancing wellbeing' illustrated how rangatahi leveraged the affordances of social media through a range of affirmative practices that endorse cultural values to create agentic pathways to wellbeing. They implemented a range of practices tailored to the specific affordances of various social media platforms, and the people who made up the networks on those platforms. The whanaungatanga afforded by social media enabled rangatahi to sustain and nurture connections to important people, places and spaces in their lives. Social media mediated feelings of disconnection caused by distance by keeping participants informed of whānau and marae from afar, and at times enabled participants to feel spiritually connected to customary events when physical attendance was not possible. Social media played an equally important role in nurturing relationships throughout the day with friends and family in close proximity, through small daily practices and additional opportunities to provide emotional support to each other both online and offline.

Participants felt social media was all-encompassing, giving them access to an abundance of information and resources, enabling rangatahi to proactively develop and refine their knowledge and skills to improve various aspects of their lives. Personal growth was supported through the ability to learn and adopt new positive health behaviours, to develop practical life skills (like financial literacy) and professional development, and to learn about diverse perspectives and worldviews. Rangatahi described this as important, not just for themselves, but to also enable them to develop in the roles and responsibilities they hold within their communities. This particular affordance was therefore valuable by giving rangatahi a sense of self-determination over their lives, and by helping them achieve various goals and aspirations.

Social media enhanced participants mana tangata by enabling them to discover themselves, giving them control over the way they projected themselves to others and consequently how others perceived them. Participants described important values in Te Ao Māori such as humility, aroha (love and compassion), and manaakitanga (care and reciprocity) as being endorsed in online practices, like re-posting friends content or simply commenting supportive messages on their posts. However, they also felt that authenticity in how one expresses themselves online was important, especially when it concerned any aspects of Māori culture, and described the importance of one's online and offline actions and personas aligning. The all-reaching power of social media empowered participants by allowing them to assert their values and stand up for what they believe in on social media, and by providing small but powerful opportunities for them to exert influence in their communities and social worlds.

Participants also described the therapeutic potential of social media as a tool to *whakawātea*, when it helped them find moments of calm, clarity, and joy throughout their days. The demands of juggling work, study and whānau responsibilities often meant that participants were constantly on the go, making it difficult to find time to breathe. Social media created opportunities throughout the day to breathe and switch off, even if only for a moment, before returning to their multiple commitments and responsibilities. It also created moments of inspiration that fuelled participants to take action offline to implement other practices that filled their cups. Thus, the therapeutic aspects of these practices positively influenced their sense of wellbeing.

Theme 2

Superordinate theme 2 '*He Ara Taumaha'* illustrated what participants identified as key challenges they encountered on social media, as well as the effort required to implement strategies that attempted to navigate these challenges. One strategy to protect their mana was through their careful consideration of privacy, where they used numerous tactics to control who has access to their social media accounts, and what those audiences have access to. The ability to create multiple accounts with varying privacy levels and carefully monitored audiences enabled participants to share more curated and aesthetically pleasing content with larger, less-trusted audiences. While on the other hand, they could still share vulnerable and raw content with smaller trusted audiences. The monitoring of content and audiences was an ongoing process that enabled them to be confident in what others had access to. However, the specific design of different social media platforms meant that this was easier to manage on some platforms than others, with Instagram being identified as the easiest to control, while Tik Tok was identified as one of the most taxing platforms. Participants also described navigating hate and racism on social media as a key challenge. Tik Tok was described as a space “full of haters” that gave people a sense of entitlement to be harmful to others without accountability, and therefore was perceived as fostering a culture of harm. This was especially evident when participants posted content on Tik Tok asserting themselves as Māori, which in one instance was inundated with racist comments. Participants often accepted this kind of digital violence as the norm and as an expected experience. Responding or resisting racism was also a complex and laborious task and they expressed frustration towards the lack of effective monitoring of the racism by platforms. While they mostly did not take it to heart, a strong sense of injustice often drove them to take carefully considered measures to challenge the racism they experienced. Consequently, participants actively implemented numerous laborious practices to counter the racism and to create safer, more inclusive spaces for themselves and others.

Participants described staying focused and managing the time spent on social media as another challenge, often feeling like they lost control over time and the ability to complete tasks because of social media. This was considered especially problematic when it interfered with other responsibilities and commitments. Some associated spending too much time online with a lack of self-discipline. However, others felt socially obligated to be constantly available and responsive to others, and the thought of not being available when someone was trying to reach them was a source of anxiety. Opportunities to reflect on these practices and strategies enabled participants to develop more intentional practices, which they felt were important to maintain. However, these strategies were only partial solutions to the challenges they described. Platform design constraints, especially when intersected with deeply embedded societal prejudices often undermined participants attempts to create safe environments and online experiences for themselves and others, as well as their ability to develop intentional and consistent social media practices. In this way, factors outside of their control like societal prejudice, digital violence, and particular features of social media continued to undermine participants efforts to enhance their wellbeing.

Comparison to Previous Research

Findings from the present study support previous literature recognising the numerous affordances of social media that positively influenced participants sense of wellbeing. This included bonding social capital (Chan, 2015); sustaining and strengthening relationships (O'Carroll, 2013); accessing health-related information (Walker et al., 2021); having control over their image and how they were perceived by others (REFS); and affirming their Indigeneity (Carlson, 2013). These were all affordances that participants in the present study felt improved various aspects of their wellbeing and thus felt social media played a major role in their lives. The present study adds to this list of perceived benefits, where participants also identified social media as a therapeutic outlet bringing them daily moments of peace and joy.

In relation to the above affordances, findings from the present study support existing literature that argues social media provides unique and critical opportunities to seek and provide emotional support in moments of distress (Carlson et al., 2015). Relatedly, findings from the present study support previous findings by Gibson & Trnka (2020) that young people were highly skilled at reading emotional cues on social media, and the immediacy of social media made it easier to exchange emotional support between friends in moments of distress. The findings of the present study add to this, where participants in this study described such support as an important but intermediary intervention until they were able to emotionally support each other in person.

The present study also supports findings of Walker et al. (2021) that social media gives Indigenous peoples self-agency over their health and wellbeing through easily accessible online information promoting positive health behaviours. For participants in the present study, workout routines and technique tutorials on Instagram and Tik Tok enabled some participants to feel more confident in themselves when trying to implement new health practices. Seeing health and fitness related content on social media was also a key source of inspiration and motivation for participants to get off their phones and go to the gym – motivation they felt was sometimes extremely helpful. Unlike findings from Walker et al., the present study did not explore if and/or how these health behaviours were related to social support and wider environments.

Findings from the present study support previous findings that young people could sometimes feel ‘locked in’ to social media and implemented numerous tactics to regain control of time spent online (Gangneux, 2019). Like participants in Gangneux’s study, rangatahi in the present study used various tactics in attempts to limit their time spent on social media. These included restricting use to certain times of the day or deleting or deactivating social media accounts altogether. Also like participants in Gangneux’s study, rangatahi found it difficult to limit their screen time given social media was also essential for negotiating day-to-day life. The present study also supports further findings from Gangneux highlighting young people’s anxiety caused by implicit social obligations to be constantly available and highly responsive online – something rangatahi in this study also alluded to. However, the present study adds a new insight to this, noting that these obligations were not limited to their peers and family, and that engagement on social media was often an expectation and/or requirement for jobs and study groups. This illustrates the paradox young people find themselves in which they are both encouraged and expected to limit their use of social media, while simultaneously being socially and morally obligated to use it.

Relatedly, this study supports previous findings that excessive non-communicative uses of mobile technologies may have negative impacts on young people’s lives (Chan, 2018; Thomas et al., 2021). While participants in this study did not describe it as having an impact on their mental states, they did feel like too much time ‘scrolling’ interfered with other responsibilities and thus could disrupt efforts to reach certain goals and aspirations. It also supports findings from Thomas et al. (2021) that using social media (especially when in solitude) can improve people’s moods but chronic device use to seek information or pass time can be counterproductive.

Findings from this study support findings within Indigenous literature identifying racism and online hate as a key problem for Indigenous peoples (Fredericks et al., 2022). Participants in the present study identified this as one of their biggest challenges on social media. Present findings also reiterate Fredericks et al. (2022)’s findings that these experiences were exacerbated by poor monitoring of racist content by social media accounts and platforms. Findings from the present study add to this by identifying certain platforms as considered more hateful than others, and participants collectively agreed Tik Tok was “full of haters”. Relatedly, the present study supports previous findings that online racism negatively impacts the wellbeing of Indigenous individuals (Carlson et al., 2017). While participants in the present study did not describe the racism as traumatising, being openly and publicly discriminated against was nevertheless a source of mental distress and strain, eliciting many feelings including frustration, anger, a strong sense of injustice, and at times disempowerment. Calling out or challenging the hate and racism also required significant effort, where participants often took extra steps like creating new, anonymous accounts in order to reduce the risk of being the target of further harm. All of this required significant effort, therefore sometimes it was just easier to ignore it.

While research on privacy concerns among young people on social media has tended to frame young people as passive and oblivious to issues of privacy, the kōrero here showed rangatahi are extremely cautious of privacy. While previous findings suggest young people's posting practices lack considerations of privacy, participants in the present study were highly considerate of privacy, *especially* in relation to drinking, because of the implications this could have on employment. Participants in the present study implemented a number of strategies to manage what they shared on social media and who they shared it with. They took various measures to ensure content of friends partying on weekends was only limited to private accounts amongst their closest, trusted friends, and they also monitored what others posted of them too. Findings from the present study also support findings by Melton et al. (2021) that young people do reflect on issues of privacy when posting content and recognise when content may be questionable. Participants in the present study strongly and actively considered the potential consequences of their actions online, and carefully constructed their online image. They actively avoided posting questionable content accessible by the public, often reflecting on how potential posts may be interpreted by others. They constantly re-visited existing posts and removing these as needed, as well as actively monitoring social media audiences and limiting access to their profiles when appropriate. These were largely guided by other responsibilities and roles they held in their communities. However, participants in this study were also older rangatahi (18 years and over) and there may be differences when investigating practices among younger age groups.

These findings support the idea that a strong cultural identity can enable rangatahi to more resiliently navigate contemporary settings (Durie, 2001; Durie, 2011; REFS). While this study did not directly assess the relationship between cultural identity and resilience on social media (and did not intend on doing so), the homogenous sampling technique allows some conclusions to be drawn from similarities in participants experiences as young Māori with strong Māori identities who have been raised in strong Māori environments. Additionally, while rangatahi in this study spoke about the value of Te Ao Māori in their lives, they did not explicitly discuss social media as being particularly important for their Māoritanga. This may support previous findings by Muhamad-Brandner (2010) that accessing Te Ao Māori may be more relevant for rangatahi Māori with weaker Māori identities or limited access to knowledgeable holders of Māori knowledge .

Findings from the present study map on to concerns within the Māori literature around how cultural practices are acted on and maintained by young people online (Durie, 2011; Keegan & Sciascia, 2018; O'Carroll, 2013). For example, while virtual whanaungatanga may appear radically different to customary practices, participants practices continue to endorse the underlying principles of whanaungatanga which are concerned with establishing, maintaining and nurturing relationships built on reciprocity and trust. Additionally, this study supported findings from O'Carroll (2013) who suggested increased online communication may disincentivise rangatahi from prioritising kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face communication) and returning physically to marae. Geographical location and physical distance had a bigger influence on whether or not rangatahi returned to various marae around the country or other cultural practices, and social media mediated this sense of disconnection. For participants in the present study, kanohi ki te kanohi was collectively perceived as the most valuable communication method, and social media supplemented this – not replaced it. These findings may suggest that not physically returning to marae may have less to do with social media, and more to do with impracticalities and weaker ties to marae or Māoridom in general.

These findings provide further insight to existing literature that have highlighted a lack of prescribed rules or guidelines for appropriate and safe behaviour in online encounters (Durie, 2011; O'Carroll, 2013). While participants in the present study did not explicitly follow a prescribed set of rules or guidelines in their online engagements, they did describe how implicit values pertaining to Te Ao Māori were endorsed in their encounters, such as aroha (love), manaakitanga (care and reciprocity) and humility. These enabled participants to approach interactions with both caution and certainty. These were perceived as important values to embody and enhanced their mana tangata, especially when social norms online often encouraged the opposite. These findings suggest that while there are no formally prescribed rules of engagement on social media, the embodiment of various values like aroha, manaakitanga and humility implicitly encouraged mana enhancing interactions. In this way, I believe this is an example of how kawa can and is being applied in contemporary settings discussed by Durie (2001) and Durie (2011), and that participants apply these protocols to guide safe, mana enhancing social media use.

Study Implications

This study adds valuable insight into the practices and experiences of rangatahi Māori on social media, shedding light on one of many kinds of Māori experiences, and has a number of practical implications. Firstly, findings from this study show that social media presents significant opportunities that can be leveraged for the promotion of rangatahi wellbeing. Participants in this study described seeking health information as important to them and that they preferred to do so using specific social media platforms where they were most active. For example, Instagram and Tik Tok were the most commonly referenced platforms for seeking information and connecting with others, while it seemed Facebook was only used to keep in touch with older whānau members or work places. These insights may therefore suggest that health promotion initiatives on Instagram and Tik Tok might be more effective at reaching and engaging rangatahi, while Facebook may be less effective. These findings may be especially useful for informing health promotion initiatives targeted at young people. Relatedly, this study is further evidence of the value of investing in initiatives that nurture and foster positive Māori identities among rangatahi Māori, and that support Māori to provide their own solutions. This study shows the need to invest more into initiatives aimed at building rangatahi resilience through strong cultural identities as a key protective factor to the issues rangatahi Māori are currently overrepresented in.

Secondly, findings from this study highlighted the direct benefits of creating immersive opportunities with rangatahi to have regular conversations *with* them (not at them) that encourage active reflection on their online practices, successes and potential struggles. This has shown direct practical benefits with this group of rangatahi who through the research process were able to reflect on their practices, explore new ways of doing things, and find tailored solutions that aligned with each person’s preferences and goals pertaining to their social media use. This process would be equally beneficial for adults in the lives of rangatahi, as an opportunity to understand what they are already doing and what they may identify as being areas they need support with. These findings may be useful to consider in schools, sports groups, marae, workplaces, or even at home, where implementing similar practices may see similar benefits for all involved in these various settings. Importantly, the reiterative nature of Co-operative Inquiry depends on *ongoing, immersive rangatahi-led conversations*. For those having (or trying to have) discussions with rangatahi about social media, these findings suggest that immersive, reflective, ongoing conversations guided by rangatahi concerns may be more effective than sporadic or one-off discussions, particularly those where rangatahi have little input. Another key benefit is that this method of inquiry requires minimal training or existing knowledge, therefore supporting whānau, educators and other community members who work closely with rangatahi to facilitate these kinds of wānanga would be relatively straightforward.

Thirdly, these findings identified racism and digital violence more generally as undermining participant's wellbeing, and I argue this must therefore be seen as a health risk. While participants in this study did not describe their experiences as particularly traumatising, this may not be the same for other less resilient youth. Therefore, this identifies the need for more effective monitoring of racist content by platforms, and the need to consider how social media corporations are implicated in maintaining and amplifying colonial violence and the ethics underpinning their business practices. This identifies a need for policies that enforce effective monitoring of racist content, and that hold structures accountable for perpetuating these narratives. Furthermore, this highlights deeply entrenched social and systemic violence as continuing to pose significant barriers to Māori wellbeing no matter how much resilience is shown. The acceptance of such violence as a normal part of Māori experiences by participants in this study is reflective of a society built on structures that continue to perpetuate colonial violence, maintain the status quo, maintain health and social inequities, and therefore contribute to the ongoing marginalisation of tangata whenua. Therefore, harmful political and societal narratives that feed digital violence against Māori and other minorities contribute to the attempted oppression of Māori and must be addressed.

Lastly, while this study focuses specifically on the experiences of rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities, many of the findings may also have relevance for other young New

Zealanders. For example, creating opportunities with young people that encourage active reflection on their online experiences can be just as successful with young people from diverse backgrounds. Therefore parents, educators, community workers, policy makers and other adults in young people's lives may also find value and utility in these findings.

Study Strengths

This study enjoys many strengths. It is the first study, that I know of, to use co-operative inquiry with rangatahi Māori. The data collection design enabled rangatahi to co-construct rich understandings and interpretations of their social media experiences, which enabled us all to deepen and broaden understandings of their practices, shared experiences, and social media together. It also gave rangatahi an opportunity to wānanga, reflect more deeply about their experiences and practices, and to voice their struggles and successes amongst their peers. Using whanaungatanga to recruit participants was also a key strength in this aspect, where rangatahi and I were already familiar and comfortable with each other, allowing our discussions to be more safe and open.

This method also ensured that the act of engaging in the research process resulted in immediate benefits for rangatahi, who walked away with practical knowledge and strategies they could continue to apply to their lives. These strengths were supported by various comments participants made at the conclusion of the data collection process. One participant stated the process was an "eye opening" experience for her. Another participant compared participating in the research to a form of counselling, through the opportunity to discuss and reflect on shared experiences with her peers. Another participant felt participating in the study was especially valuable because reflecting on their social media practices and experiences was not something her friend group would explicitly think to discuss in day-to-day conversations. The opportunity to do so highlighted the benefits of having these kinds of conversations. A key concern of mine for this study was whether or not participants would enjoy it and find it tangibly useful, so to hear those unexpected comments directly from them was reassuring and rewarding. While the utility of the findings of this thesis outside of my qualification is unknown, at least I know that the rangatahi involved felt like they have directly benefited from being involved.

Another key strength of the study is that it is the first, that I know of that specifically explores the experiences of social media among rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities, and who have been raised in predominantly Māori settings such as kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori. This reiterates the idea that promoting strong cultural identities among rangatahi as a protective factor in diverse contemporary settings, while also highlighting the value of initiatives that foster strong cultural identities which positively influence many areas of their lives.

While I was the author of this study, I was also supported by the wisdom and guidance from multiple knowledgeable people who are experts in their fields. My supervisor Sarah Riley is an expert in Co-operative Inquiry and provided valuable guidance and wisdom regarding digital media, phenomenological research approaches, and Participatory Action Research. While she identifies as non-Māori (Pākehā/British), her expertise in these areas added significant value to this Kaupapa Māori study, by ensuring that research processes were conducted thoroughly in order to maximise positive tangible outcomes from the research methods used. The cultural supervision I received was not limited to the ethics approval stage, and whanaungatanga I was able to draw on from these knowledgeable kaumātua and pakeke enabled an ongoing consultation process at all stages of the research. This demonstrates another benefit of whanaungatanga in research.

Another key strength is that the affirmative, strengths based approach of the study contributes to a body of knowledge that frames being Māori as an asset rather than a problem. It promotes a positive narrative about rangatahi Māori that speak to their strengths, aspirations, self-agency, and self-determination. This directly challenges the abundance of deficit-focused research that frames young Māori as unwell, unthinking, unknowing, and powerless. This is especially valuable in providing broader understandings about rangatahi Māori that may shift people’s perspectives about rangatahi Māori. This includes the perspectives of researchers seeking to conduct research with rangatahi Māori, or parents, teachers, and other adults who wish to better understand the lives of rangatahi. Most importantly, these kinds of narratives have the potential to influence how rangatahi view themselves, and therefore I hope this study contributes to a narrative that instils a sense of pride in being Māori and that encourages rangatahi to recognise their strengths as Māori.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

While I believe this study had many strengths, there were of course some limitations. Firstly, the homogenous sample meant that these findings are not representative of all rangatahi Māori. However, this study does not attempt to make any generalisations about *all* rangatahi Māori, nor is it an attempt to invalidate or dismiss the experiences of less fortunate rangatahi Māori. As mentioned, these were particular experiences of rangatahi Māori who had the privilege of being raised in strong Māori communities – a privilege many other rangatahi Māori have been deprived of for various reasons stemming from colonisation. Secondly, all participants involved had access to tertiary education and strong whānau support, suggesting the socio-economic status of this particular group would have likely influenced their experiences directly . However, there is no recent literature in this area for rangatahi Māori without a strong Māori identity, highlighting the need for further research exploring their lived experiences on social media.

Secondly, while the sample size was considered relatively small (seven participants), my chosen data collection was extensive and I felt the ability to explore participants more deeply was limited by time. Practically, I underestimated how time-consuming it would be to transcribe and analyse the data, where it took me just under two months to complete the transcriptions. In hindsight, it was not the most realistic approach given the scope of a Master's research project. Furthermore, a smaller sample would have been more beneficial, as I feel that more nuanced or deeper understandings could have been achieved with only one group of participants. Therefore, one recommendation for further studies based on this method would be to either limit the participant sample size (especially for Master's or honours projects), or to allow for significantly more time for data collection in order to obtain more rich, detailed insights.

Thirdly, the potential bias some may see as deriving from recruiting through whanaungatanga may also be considered a limitation of the study. While I myself do not identify this as a weakness of the study, I recognise this may be considered as a key limitation. However, I made sure to manage and reflect on my biases at all stages of the research process by keeping a reflective research journal. Regular supervision also enabled me to identify and manage any assumptions I had. I wrote any assumptions I had about what I might expect to observe during data collection prior to data collection commencing, and ensured that I was not letting these biases shape what rangatahi spoke about. For example, one assumption I had was that participants would discuss using social media specifically to access Māori content. By the third wānanga it was still not mentioned, so I asked rangatahi directly if this was something they used social media for – it was not. This made me further reflect on my preconceptions about *their* experiences, and adjust my thinking and prompts accordingly.

Lastly, the links made in this study between social media use and a strong cultural identity were based on the understanding that this was a common factor in the participant sample, as well as supporting literature. Further research among rangatahi Māori with strong Māori identities may be able to illuminate whether this is a common experience among other rangatahi Māori with similar experiences. It may also suggest further research is required that directly explores how cultural identity mediates the relationships between social media use and subjective wellbeing.

Conclusion

This research shows how rangatahi are navigating contemporary Aotearoa in unique, resourceful and agentic ways. As this study has demonstrated, social media is a deeply embedded, and extremely important aspect of contemporary realities for rangatahi Māori, and has the potential to meaningfully enhance wellbeing. However, racism and platform features presented challenges for rangatahi social media use, suggesting capitalist and prejudiced structures continue to risk undermining their efforts and wellbeing. The research also suggests that in order to meaningfully understand young people's practices and experiences on social media, their voices and experiences need to be privileged. These understandings must also take into account the contexts that shape those experiences, as when we stop focusing on individual behaviour as isolated events that responsibilise rangatahi for any and all outcomes, our attention can be drawn to wider structural and societal factors that influence the experiences and livelihood of rangatahi. Attention to such factors are critical for informing structural, institutional and societal transformation. The diversity in contemporary realities faced by rangatahi Māori means it is not appropriate to try to make generalisations that lump all rangatahi Māori experiences into the same basket, and that is not at all what this research attempts to do. However, I believe a strong connection to Māoritanga has significantly contributed to shaping compassionate, considerate, confident, and resilient rangatahi who are exerting self-agency and self-determination over their own lives, even when faced with adversity. The reality is that we are adapting to the fast evolving world, and when it comes to technology, this study shows rangatahi are experts. This research hopes to provide a new angle on the way we understand and perceived rangatahi and the many realities they experience. This research celebrates the strengths, agency, and aspirations of rangatahi Māori as they navigate the complexities of contemporary society. This research contributes to a body of knowledge that shows us there is more than just pain, poverty, and poor health in Māori communities, but there is also strength, resilience, also offers a message centred on hope and aspirations.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Preliminary Wānanga Schedules

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Exploring Affirmative Social Media Use Among Rangatahi Māori

As this project has an emergent design that is guided by participants, the following schedules have been provided as approximate guides to demonstrate how the first two group sessions may take place. Subsequent sessions are likely to have a similar structure –

an opening, and middle activity and a reflection activity with a plan for a future action - but the focus of those activities will depend on what the groups choose to inquire into.

WANANGA #1 SCHEDULE

Greeting / Opening

To begin with, we will do whakawhanaungatanga which will involve going briefly around the room to introduce ourselves. While participants will already know each other, this is an important process to ensure genuine and trustworthy connections can be established between participants and myself as the researcher.

Kia ora everyone and thank you all for agreeing to take part in this study. For those of you who don't know, my name is Aorangi and I am a postgraduate student at Massey University, and am completing a Master of Science with an endorsement in Health Psychology. The aim of this study is to better understand how you, as rangatahi Māori, use social media and how you think social media impacts your daily lives. As you will know, over the next month or two we will meet weekly for about an hour at a time to discuss and reflect on how and why you are using social media. By the end of our sessions I hope to not only gain a deeper understanding of how you as rangatahi Māori are using social media, but I hope that you will also take away some valuable learnings for your selves. I will do my best

to create a safe space for you all to speak openly and honestly and to be respectful of each other.
Participants introduce themselves.

Project commences

This session will be focused on exploring participant's experiences. We will start with getting a general idea of what participants current thoughts and feelings are around social media and what their main interests or concerns may be. The primary question I will ask will be "What do you like about Social Media?" I may also ask participants questions such as:

- *What social media platforms do you use?*
- *When do you use social media?*
- *What do you like most about social media?*
- *What do you like least about social media?*
- *Why is social media important/valuable to you as rangatahi Māori?*

Once participants have thought about this, I will then ask them to draw "social media maps" depicting their journeys over time with social media. I will show them my own social media map prepared in advance as an example.

Once maps are finished, we will go around the group describing our maps to each other and reflecting on emerging themes/issues. This is expected to fill the entire first session.

Setting actions

Based on reflection on activity, agree on set of actions for participants to implement over the next week and how rangatahi will record/observe these before the next session. Ways of recording could be:

- Journaling
- Screenshotting/saving images or videos
- Recording tik toks/reels/videos of themselves.

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it and I hope you enjoyed it. Based on what we have discussed today, I would like you to think about [issue or topic that emerged] over the next week. When we meet again, we will reflect on how the week has gone and continue to discuss/reflect/develop these ideas further. If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to message me via the group chat, text, or call me.

WANANGA #2 SCHEDULE

Greeting / Opening

Kia ora everyone, thank you all for coming back again this week. I hope the last week you managed to reflect on [topic or issue that emerged from session #1]. Let's start by going around the group and sharing with everyone how [topic or issue] regarding your social media use has been over the past week.

I will ask questions such as:

- *What went well?*
- *What didn't go so well?*
- *What (if anything) have you noticed or learnt*

This is expected to take 10-15 minutes.

Activity commences

Once reflections on the past week have finished, we will start the social media walk along activity with each of the participants. I will ask participants to scroll through their own profiles/feeds (their own posts), the content of others that they follow, as well as Discover feeds.

As they encounter images and content, I will ask participants questions such as:

- *Show me what you would typically do when you open Instagram / Facebook / Snapchat / TikTok.*

- *Who created this image / content? (E.g. Was it a family member? Influencer? Friend? Celebrity? Brand?)*
- *How does this image / caption make you feel?*
- *What about this image/content/page appeals to you?*
- *What sort of content do you prefer to appear in your feeds?*
- *What are your favourite pages/brands/people to follow?*
- *In what ways do you engage with the content on your social media apps? (E.g. Do you enjoy commenting / liking / posting? Or do you prefer to just observe?)*
- *What are some of the things you consider when posting/sharing/following/engaging with stuff on social media?*

As we will be in a group, it is expected that this activity will stimulate discussion among other participants in the group too. A fluid approach will be taken here where we will discuss topics in more detail as they arise, before continuing with the social media walk-along activity. As it is unclear how long this activity may take, we may not have time for every participant to complete this activity during this session. Participants will be given the option to complete this activity at the following weeks session if they wish.

Closing / Setting action

Thank you again for your time today and I hope you found that session enjoyable. Based on what we have discussed today, what would you as a group like to reflect/act on over the coming week?

Participants decide on course of action as a group.

I would like you to think about [issue or topic that emerged] over the next week. When we meet again, we will review how the week has gone and continue to discuss/reflect/develop these ideas further. If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to e-mail, text, or call me.

Appendix B: Examples of Coding in Microsoft Excel

64			
65	gaining, developing, sharing knowledge and skills	information is really helpful	learning and developing skills
66		~~Learning new skills/knowledge~~	matauranga maori
67		likes that information on social media is easy to access, easily available, and visual	sharing information about important issues/kaupapa
68		helps to expand your world view	expanding your worldview
69		powerful in helping to make a difference	
70		using social media to gain access to matauranga maori	
71		helps me learn new things and skills	
72		helps me to connect to kaupapa maori	
73			
74	winding down/therapeutic	putting off study to wind down after a busy week and rest before another busy week	using social media as a way to relax
75		scrolling social media a way to "switch the mind off"	using social media to calm the mind
76		scrolling social media a way to wind down from a busy schedule and long days	social media provides an escape from chaos of daily schedules
77		scrolling social media needed to fall asleep	
78		social media as 'therapy'	
79		uses social media to relax	
80		using social media feels good	
81		using social media to wind down	
82			
83			
84	managing time	already good at managing time spent on social media so found sticking to set actions really easy	planning ahead
85		bedtime/night a time when most time scrolling on social media is spent	procrastinating on social media
86		being hardworking an important value however spending too much time on social media perceived to misalign with this value	finding the balance
87		deleting social media not a realistic/sustainable solution for managing screentime	fitting social media time into schedule
88		difficulty sticking to limiting time spent on social media	social media as a distraction
89		To pass time	maximising productivity
90		even though social media still used, setting app limits still lead to reduced screentime	
91		feels confident in managing time spent on social media in daily routine, however is still figuring this out in new environment/job	
92		feels good about finding better balance between time spent on social media and getting other work done	
93		finding the balance between time spent on social media and phones, and other daily activities	
94		goes on phone at work even though not allowed to pass time.	
95		going on social media perceived as affecting productivity	
96		implementing strategies to limit phone use in order to improve focus on other tasks like study	
97		increased self awareness/reflection of social media practices has resulted in reduced time scrolling.	
98		limits when she goes on social media to specfiic times in day "downtime"	
99		losing track of time while on social media	
100		mostly feels bad about being on social media when she should be doing other things.	

153	Managing & leveraging Platform design	Lack of control due to platform limitations	
154		Leveraging platform design to control content	
155		different social media apps used to communicate with different networks	
156		Leveraging platform design	
157		platform design limitations	
158			
159	impact on health and wellbeing	exercising sets the tone for the rest of the day, and social media helps to motivate for exercise	motivation to exercise
160		giving and receiving emotional support	impacts sleep
161		health considered to be important	can be used to support mental and emotional health
162		Improving wellbeing	can be used in a way that feels good (relaxing/winding down/bring joy)
163		Physical health	
164		Gaining motivation	
165		Learning new skills to improve health	
166		increased self awareness of social media practices has had positive impact on sleep	
167		sharing funny things on social media important for friendship and feeling good	
168		shopping makes her feel good	
169		spending too long on social media at night can negatively impact mood the next day, which can then impact interactions with kids at school	
170		time spent on social media affecting sleep	
171		using social media for motivation to exercise	
172		using social media to improve health	
173		checking social media while driving but recognises it as a bad habit	
174	entertainment	Entertainment	
175		Following public figures	
176		Share humour with friends	
177		To pass time	
178			
179	Miscellaneous	cant live without social media/social media a fundamental part of life	
180		~~Control over content~~	
181		Unwanted interactions	
182		Viewing undesirable content	
183		Exposure to bullying/negative people	
184		Exposure to racsim	
185		Culture	
186		cultural responsibilities	
187		disrespecting maori culture	
188		Exposure to racism	
189		Tikanga	

Appendix C: Thematic Data Table

Superordinate themes	**Subordinate themes**	**Examples/extracts**
Theme 1: He Ara Whakaoranga: Enhancing wellbeing	Whanaungatanga: Nurturing relationships	*Hinerauāmoa:* Ka whakamahi mātou (i te) Facebook nā te mea kei a mātou family pages on both sides [of the family]. So ka post rātou like what's going on up the coast or down here. So pai tērā ki te connect me tōku whānau and sharing the love, you know? Um taha Māori, iwi kaupapa, marae…[Ka] whakamahi (i te) Facebook mō ngā kaupapa ki te marae me ngā mea mō ōku iwi. *[We use Facebook because we have family pages on both sides [of the family]. So they post like what's going on up the coast or down here. So that allows me to connect with my whānau and share the love, you know? Um for my Māori wellbeing, iwi kaupapa, marae… I use Facebook for marae and iwi kaupapa.]* *Hinerauāmoa:* Um Tik Tok ko mātou ko *sisters names* ka whakamahi, ka send (a) mātou Tik Toks ki a mātou anō […] Friends, ka whakamahi mātou (i te) Instagram, Snapchat. Mainly ka send mātou ō mātou memories to each other. Like

		throwback, you know? Or Be Real. Kei runga rā ōku hoa katoa. And ko ērā apps ki te connect ki te taha o ōku hoa and ki te plan i o mātou if we gonna do something. So pai mō te social side of te oranga. *[Um Tik Tok, my sisters and I use it to send Tik Toks to each other. Friends, we use Instagram, Snapchat. We mainly send our memories to each other. Like throwback, you know? Or Be Real. All my friends are on there. And those apps allow me to connect with my friends and to plan if we gonna do something. So it's good for my social wellbeing.]* *Ururangi:* Well, not even like like, by the, by the way that we like, text each other. Like for example, I would know that there's something wrong with [her] if she wasn't to send me like any laughing faces. Yeah, like I would know there's something wrong….Yeah if she don't pick up our calls. Yeah, and then, for example, with *name of friend* clearly I would hear something that theres something wrong. And then like she'd message me and then like I dunno I can just imagine her saying that and like I see that she's like upset about something if that makes sense. *Hiwa-i-te-rangi:* If we don't...like if we don't communicate with someone but it's not in a way that we usually do? so we know straight away somethings wrong and well be over straight away. Like no matter what we're doing.

		Ururangi: Cause if you think about it, If I didn't have social media, I wouldn't be able to communicate with my siblings as much and one of my siblings, she lives in [detail removed], so… and I hardly get to see her already. Hiwa-i-te-rangi: I know, this is weird. But like, even like, if you're not at tangihangas (funerals) or you can't go to like the walks at the parliament or something, you can still see what's going on [through social media] and you still feel like you're there even though you physically aren't there. Yeah. Hinerauāmoa: I think [the good thing about social media is] staying in touch with people but then I feel like that can be a bad thing because then it means you won't go and like see them in real life. So you're just dependent on social media to stay in touch with them instead of actually going to see them or something? But I don't know if that's a bad thing or a good thing or...
	Pūkenga: Personal growth	*Hiwa-i-te-rangi:* Okay. I got hobbies. I've pretty much put all social medias. this keeps me keeps me sane and it allows me to relax like so when I'm doing my hobbies, im not stressing out cos I don't know what I'm doing. I don't really have much hobbies either its mainly just sports and I have that in another section. But if I'm training or need to improve something then I just look up sites like softball sites, or schools, schools that I've like connected in with and what they're doing.

		Mataora: Tik Tok is actually really good because it's got like those one-minute videos that space in a whole lot of information in just one minute, so I like watching videos like that and getting a lot of knowledge in just one minute and it's so good. […] But like if I want to expand on my Tik Tok idea or like the Tik Tok I'm watching, to get more information about it I'd go to YouTube to watch like a longer video of it. *Niwareka: Insta (Instagram) ka tiki au like ētahi tips and ētahi mea ka taea e au te hoko mai i runga rā hoki. Like some deals and stuff to help like tautoko i tōku hauora. Like ētahi recipes pea, ka kite au. But not just that hauora but like hauora hoki, ā tinana hoki, you know? Um Tik Tok…everything kei runga rā, ngā mea katoa like tips, like ka whakaatu ki a koe me aha ki te gym mēnā kāore koe e mohio me aha, ētahi kai pai, whatever. (E ō)rite ki a insta but pai ake. And important ērā ki au because I have to know what I'm doing.* *[I get lots of tips off Insta (Instagram) and can buy things off there too. Like deals and stuff that help like support my wellbeing. Like also maybe some recipes that I see. But not just that kind of wellbeing, but like physical wellbeing too, you know? Um Tik Tok…everything is on there, everything like tips, like it shows you what to do at the gym if you don't know what to do there, healthy food, whatever. It's like Insta, but better. And that's important to me because I have to know what I'm doing.]* *He pai mō tōku taha pūtea cause […] well, he āhua koretake au with my pūtea, but I'm still learning. But ka whakamahi au Hidden Figures ia wā and ētahi wā kua tūwhera au (ī) ētahi like, savings. So he pai tērā kia aro whakamua au.* *[It's good for my financial wellbeing cause […] well, I'm sort of useless with my money, but I'm still learning. But I use [detail removed] all the time and sometimes I've opened some like, savings. So that's good as it helps me plan for the future.]* Niwareka: Insta, ka kite au i ngā kaupapa o te wā [I te Ao Māori] ki runga i a Insta. Um Tik Tok…he āhua interesting a Tik Tok. Like ka kite au (i) ngā different

		point of views o te katoa on like kaupapa Māori. He rerekē ō rātou whakaaro and he pai ki au te whakarongo ki ō rātou whakaaro. Aorangi: Ae. Ngā whakaaro o ngā Māori, o ngā whakaaro o te katoa? Niwareka: [Te] katoa. Like mēnā ko tēnei te tirohanga o tētahi Māori and ka kite au ka duet tētahi pākehā me ō rātou tirohanga, ka whakaaro au oh what the hell? He pai te, you know, mōhio i ngā tirohanga rerekē o everyone. [Niwareka: Insta, I can keep informed about current affairs [in Te Ao Māori] on Insta. Um Tik Tok…Tik Tok is kind of interesting. Like I get to see everyone else's different points of view on kaupapa Māori. They have different thoughts and opinions and I enjoy listening to what their thoughts and opinions are. Aorangi: Yeah. The opinions of Māori or everyone's opinions in general? Niwareka: Everyone. Like if this the perspective of a Māori person and I see a Pākehā do a duet with their own perspective, I think to myself oh what the hell? It's good to, you know, be aware of the diversity of everyone's perspectives.]

	Mana tangata: Self-discovery & self-expression	Waipuna-ā-rangi: [I] Feel like it's a good way to support not only people, but like movements, I guess…from afar. For example like climate change. And because social media is such a huge platform like everywhere around the world, it's such a good way for people to...I don't know, advocate for... better everything I guess. Ururangi: Yeah, and especially like, you know…what's that dude that like, got pinned to the ground? Yeah, George. And like heaps of famous people like Chris Brown, Rihanna, Beyonce shared it all over their social media […] It's like a domino effect. Hiwa-i-te-rangi: It [social media] makes you go through it [self-discovery] quicker. Does that make sense? Like we're still young yet we like, know what our style is and stuff and what we like, what we don't like as were like...getting older and finding out, if that makes sense? *Hinerauāmoa: Mēnā ka puta tētahi kaupapa […] he kaupapa ka whakapiki i tōku ake mana...kāore au e hia(hia), like, post ki tōku ake story like for everyone to see like titiro i aha...like he pai tērā, but mōku? Just kāore au e hia(hia). […] but when it comes to […] like encouraging other people, […] he pai tērā. Nō reira he pai i te wā ka post ērā atu tāngata, so ka like uplift au i a rātou mēnā ka post rātou he mea like for themselves. But mōku? Kāore e pai ki a au kia pērā.* *[If something pops up […] something that enhances my own mana…I don't like, post it to my story like for everyone else to see like look what happened…like that's cool, but for me? I just don't want to do that. […] But when it comes to […] like encouraging other people, […] that's a good thing. So it's cool when other people post that stuff, so I'll like uplift them if they post things like, for themselves. But for me? I just don't like that sort of thing.]*

		Niwareka: *Or like, hei tauira like...mēnā he like anti-vax tētahi o hoa, ka post koe he mea like […] Pro-vax. A ka whakaaro rātou 'ooo he pro-vax ia'. Ērā momo mea. You know?* **Aorangi:** *So like mēnā ka kite koe i tētahi anti-vax, ka post koe i tētahi mea pro-vax?* **Niwareka:** *Ae. Kia riri rātou pea? […] So like ka kite ia i a au, kāore ia ka kōrero about being anti-vax […] and kia ako rātou, ae. […] Or like...cos ka post noa raātou i ō rātou facts so kāore rātou e mōhio i ētahi atu facts, ka just ū rātou ki ērā.* **Hinerauāmoa:** *Without actually telling them.* **Niwareka:** *Yeah without telling them. Like you can't just tell them, you're just like saying what you're thinking, you know?* ***[Niwareka:*** *Or like, for example like…if one of your friends are anti-vax, you post something like […] pro vax. So they will think 'ooo she's pro-vax'. Those sorts of things. You know?* ***Aorangi:*** *So if you see something anti-vax, you post something pro-vax?* ***Niwareka:*** *Yeah. To make them angry maybe? […] So like, if they see me, then they won't talk about being anti-vax. […] and so they learn, yeah. […] Or like…cos they only post their own facts so they don't know any other facts, they just stick to their facts.* ***Hinerauāmoa:*** *Without actually telling them.* ***Niwareka:*** *Yeah without actually telling them. Like you can't just tell them, you're just like saying what you're thinking, you know?]* ***Waipuna-ā-rangi:*** *[I] Feel like it's a good way to support not only people, but like movements, I guess…from afar. For example like climate change. And because social media is such a huge platform like everywhere around the world, it's such a good way for people to...I don't know, advocate for... better everything I guess.* ***Ururangi:*** *Yeah, and especially like, you know…what's that dude that like, got pinned to the ground? Yeah, George. And like heaps of famous people like Chris*

		Brown, Rihanna, Beyonce shared it all over their social media […] It's like a domino effect.
	Whakawātea: A therapeutic outlet	Waipuna-ā-rangi: Um [Instagram and TikTok] gives me ideas to try, new things to explore […] for example, like a new recipe I haven't done before. Um [it] keeps me really happy cause it’s like my...alone time I guess. Like where it's just me. And I'm doing something I love. So it’s like a...what do you call it? Therapy, I guess. [Social media] keeps me updated with what's going on at the gym. They have like Facebook, a Facebook page for [my gym], and then their Instagram as well where they post up like, every week what we're doing. Um seeing influencers, fitness influencers, motivates me. Um it's also very, very, very important to me because […] it just affects how my day goes. If I like I notice a difference in my mood, my energy and stuff like that from like, if I don't go to the gym, then I'm like grumpy. Don't have any energy. So that kind of like yeah, predicts... how my day goes kind of thing. So that's very important. […] [The gym is] also my alone time as well. […] Yeah, like therapeutic for me too. Hiwa-i-te-rangi: He rautaki whakatau wairua [It’s a strategy/tool to calm the spirits] pretty much. Because I'm always constantly thinking or something's going on. So it’s pretty much my hauora, just to keep me calm and like my body [to] relax or allows my brain to relax.

Theme 2: He Ara Taumaha: The struggles of social media	Kia tūpato: protecting your mana	Hiwa-i-te-rangi: So this [my main account] is like everything I don't care people seeing? Then if I go on to this [my personal account], this is just my friends like my close friends. I only got 30 [followers]. Which I need to go through and delete. And it's like just hidemuk (hideous) stuff that you don't want other people to see. Photos of us on the weekend. Niwareka: Public [I post] like ngā mea pai…nice…like vlogs…such a nice girl (laughs). And private like...he mea like (pulls a silly face). Aua, private he rite... Hinerauāmoa: Private is the real you. Niwareka: Yeah private is the real me. [Niwareka: Public [I post] nice things…nice, like vlogs, such a nice girl (laughs). And private like…posts that are like (pulls a silly face). I dunno, private is like… Hinerauāmoa: Private is the real you. Niwareka: Yeah private is the real me.]

		Hiwa-i-te-rangi: I've gotta like block every kid from it. […] on TikTok I have to be really careful of what I post. Because the kids watch my TikToks. Like can't make that private. […] Can't post like um drinking videos, or like if people take videos of me like they know can't put it out there cause if people see or parents see, then not really a good look. Hinerauāmoa: I don’t know, I feel like he just...he hōhā a Tik Tok. He maha rawa ngā haters, (he) maha rawa ngā fake accounts and ka just...ka just go for it. They just go for it. They see anything. But so ka mahi noa au like dancing videos. Kāore au e mahi i ngā mea kōrero, rānei ka kī rātou meh meh (speaking in a ridiculing tone). [I don’t know, I just feel like…Tik Tok is annoying. There’s lots of haters, lots of fake accounts and they just… just go for it. They just go for it. They see anything. But so I only do like, dancing videos. I don’t do anything where I’m speaking, otherwise they’ll say ‘meh meh’ (speaking in a ridiculing tone).] Niwareka: Like Instagram kāore he maha ngā haters. Tik Tok… it's a whole world.

		Hineteiwaiwa: Nā te mea kei runga a Instagram tō oranga engari Tik Tok he rite for the lols. Niwareka: Nā reira (e) whakaaro (ana)te katoa they can comment whatever. [Niwareka: Like Instagram there aren't many haters on there. Tik Tok… it's a whole world. Hineteiwaiwa: Because your life is on Instagram but Tik Tok is like, for the lols. Niwareka: So everyone thinks that they can comment whatever.] Niwareka: Kāore tētahi i stand up. Then i kite au (i) (tē)tahi te tane i kī (ia) (i) tetahi mea i te whakaaro au like kāore tētahi i actually, like, kāore hoki te page [administrators] i mahi tētahi mea about it i just waiho noa rātou. […] I Like maha rawa ngā hate comments i whakaaro au oh my gosh! But kāore ia [Mataora] i raru, because he doesn't care about anything. [No one stood up. Then I saw one guy who said something and I was thinking like, no one actually like, not even the page [administrators] did anything about it, they just left it. […] There were so many hate comments, I thought oh my gosh! But he [Mataora] didn't care, because he doesn't care about anything.]

		Hinerauāmoa: I just sit back and watch. I just laugh but nā te mea, mēnā he maha kē ngā tāngata that are going back at them, then yeah. But mēnā kāore tētahi ka kī i tetahi mea ki a ia then tērā pea ka ki au (i) tētahi mea, but… Niwareka: Āe, au hoki. Like mēnā...I'm sure like ka reply maha nga tangata so its alright. Hinerauāmoa: Most of the time I just laugh because it's funny and because they don't even know so... Niwareka: Āe. And ka hia(hia) au ōku facts right i mua i tōku ki tētahi mea. Hineteiwaiwa: Āe. Cause ka tea ngā tāngata cancel i a koe. [Hinerauāmoa: I just sit back and watch. I just laugh but because if there are already lots of people that are going back at them, then yeah. But if no one speaks up, then I might say something, but… Niwareka: Yeah me too. Like if…I'm sure lots of people will reply then it's alright.

		Hinerauāmoa: Most of the time I just laugh because it's funny and because they don't even know so... Niwareka: Yeah. And I want to get my facts right before I say something too. Hineteiwaiwa: Yeah. Cause people can cancel you.]
	Kia mataara: Staying focused and not losing the balance	*Hiwa-i-te-rangi:* But throughout the day I'm constantly checking my, our Instagram page, our messenger page only because that's how we all communicate. And so I'm alert on what what's going on in my phone but if I see it's like Snapchat or this and open it and see if it's not one of them then I leave it. But if it's one of them then ill reply back to them." Ururangi: … For example, like I have to study for like a test or something, I procrastinate and like i'm always on my phone […] And in the back of my head i'm like yeah you need to get off your phone now so you can study but I don't end up doing that because I just keep scrolling through social media. Waipuna-ā-rangi: Mindless scrolling. Hiwa-i-te-rangi: And then two hours pass and your like fuck! (laughs).

		Hinerauāmoa: Mōhio au, (hei) āhea me waiho i taku wea. So mēnā kei te whakareri i te ata...oh mēnā kei runga au i te ata, (e) mōhio (ana) au me waiho au a te 8:30 kia whakareri au mō te mahi and stuff […] but ā muri (i) te mahi he pai, nō te mea i know where I have to be at what time...so I know where to put my phone down. But he āhua kino tōku discipline anō i te wā kei te haere au ki te moe. Because kei runga au mō te wā roa and dont know when to put it down. Yeah (laughs). [I know when not to use my phone. So if I'm getting ready in the morning…oh if I'm on it in the morning, I know I need to put it down at 8:30 so I can get ready for work and stuff […] But after work it's all good because I know where I have to be at what time…so I know where to put my phone down. But then I lose discipline again before bed. Because I spend ages on it and don't know when to put it down. Yeah (laughs).] Niwareka: (E hia)hia (ana) au (me) mahi he mea like nāte mea me mahi au he maha ngā assignments i mua i tōku haerenga overseas so like... (I) ia wā ka ngana au (ki) te study i just cant nā te mea kua kātaku wea. Like ka haere au [to study]...but then ka whakaaro au whos messaging me? I message tētahi i (a) au?

		[…] like ka (hia)hia noa au (i te) whakaoti (i) āku mahi but i focus on my phone too much. [I want to do something about it because I have lots of assignments to finish before my trip overseas, so like every time I try to study I just can't because my phone is on. Like I'll go to study…but then I wonder who's messaging me? Did anyone message me? […] Like I just want to finish my work but I focus on my phone too much.] Hiwa-i-te-rangi: And then mindful, just being mindful about what I'm doing constantly. Because how it can affect what's coming up next. So like, if I'm on my social media during this time, then I have to be mindful how long I'm on it, if I have to do something leading up to something, and always thinking about what I have to do next. So like just be mindful of all that kind of stuff. Because like sometimes when it hits 3:40 I'll come home and I'll be like oh yay I can relax, forgetting that I have to be somewhere. And then I'm on my socials. Then I'm just like oh shit I need to be gone and I'll quickly rush off. Yeah.

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Exploring Affirmative Social Media Use Among Rangatahi Māori

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

Kia Ora, ko Aorangi Kora ahau. He uri ahau nō Rangitāne, Ngāti Kauwhata, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāti Porou, Ngai Tahu hoki. I am a postgraduate student at Massey University, completing a Master of Science (Health Psychology) and am undertaking a research project as part of my degree. As a student, a mother, and a Māori woman, I am interested in Kaupapa Māori research that creates better understandings of Māori health and wellbeing. I'm supervised by Professor Sarah Riley from the School of Psychology, College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Massey University. Tā Mason Durie (Māori Heath Leader), Professor Meihana Durie (Te Pūtahi A Toi, Massey University) and Ilane Durie (Manukura School) are also supporting the project as cultural advisors.

Project Description and Invitation

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about this project. This information sheet contains everything you need to know to help you decide if you would like to participate or not, and of course you are free to contact myself or my supervisor directly if you have any further questions.

This is a Kaupapa Māori project that hopes to better understand the unique ways rangatahi Māori use social media, and the role social media plays in their lives. People often tend to focus on the negative impacts of social media on young people's lives, even though we know there are many benefits that come with social media too. This research will hopefully provide a more balanced view of social media use from the perspectives of those who use the platforms the most. More importantly, there is no recent research on this topic from the perspectives of rangatahi Māori either, so you would be contributing to some important and exciting new research in the area using a "By Māori, With Māori, For Māori" approach. The study will contribute to growing a body of knowledge that centers the voices of rangatahi Māori on issues relevant to their own lives, that privileges Māori world views and ways of doing things, while also providing participants with a valuable (and hopefully fun!) learning experience. I would love to share with you a summary of the research findings, as well as a copy of my final research project with you once the project is completed.

If you agree to participate, as a small group of friends, you will be required to attend 4 group sessions with me over a period of 4-8 weeks. Each session will be approximately 1 hour long. The locations, dates and times of the session will work around what best accommodates you as a group. Each session will be audio recorded so that I can transcribe the sessions later on. It is expected that you will give approximately 4-5 hours of your time to this study. I acknowledge that this is a significant amount of your time I am asking for, so in return you will receive a koha in the form of a $100 Prezzy card as a token of my appreciation. Snacks will also be provided at each session. See *Project Procedures* for more detail about what these sessions will cover.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

You are invited to take part in this study if you meet the criteria below:

- You Identify as Māori
- You are aged between 18 and 24
- You are currently living in Palmerston North
- You use social media (this includes but is not limited to Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat and/or TikTok) on a daily basis
- You are able to commit to attending 4 weekly/fortnightly group sessions with me and be willing to discuss your social media use amongst a group.
- You have 2-4 friends who also meet the above criteria who are willing to participate as a group.

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in taking part in this exciting project, please contact me directly by phone or e-mail to express your interest and to discuss the next steps moving forward.

Project Procedures

The method I am using for my research is called “Cooperative Inquiry”. This is a collaborative approach where our kōrero will be mostly guided by what you as a group feel are most important to you, and where you will actively participate in fun activities that are designed to encourage you to reflect on your social media use and any points or issues that arise in our discussions. Each session is designed to get you thinking about your experiences with social media as rangatahi Māori, and to try new things based on what you’ve learnt. The goal is that through this process of reflection and action, not only will I gain a deeper understanding of what social media means to you and how you use it, but you will also hopefully gain a deeper understanding of your own thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and wellbeing in general. Some of the activities we might do are outlined below:

Social Media Mapping:

The purpose of this activity is to get you thinking about your social media use over time. This might involve you drawing a map or timeline that depicts your journey of using social media and highlighting significant points in time relating to your experiences with social media. We will discuss these maps as a group, and I will also photograph them for record keeping (but they will be kept anonymous).

Social Media Walk-Along:

The purpose of this activity is for you to show me a glimpse of your social media feeds (if you are happy to share this with me) so that I can better understand the way you use social media, while also getting you to reflect on how you experiences the content on your social media feeds. This might look like scrolling through your feed and screen shotting three posts you want to talk about, or simply scrolling through and describing how your feeds represent you or enable you to enjoy social media. Everything discussed during this exercise will be anonymized to the best of my abilities to ensure your privacy, and the privacy of those who appear in your social media feeds, is respected.

While participation in this study should be a fun and educational experience for you, there is a small chance that talk, even of everyday activities, may elicit memories that might cause discomfort or distress to you or other participants in the group. Should this occur, you have the right to leave the session early, request a change of topic, request the session to be rescheduled, or withdraw from participating in the study. If significant mental distress is caused to you or other participants in your group, I will coordinate with my supervisor, cultural research advisors (and your whānau if required) to ensure appropriate supports are put in place for you.

Data Management

All information provided by you for the study will be kept anonymous to protect your privacy. Pseudonyms (codes or fake names) will be used instead of your real names to ensure your identities remain anonymous in the transcripts, thesis and any other publications based off the study. Your contact details, audio recordings and anonymized written transcriptions of the group sessions will be stored securely for five years by my supervisor, to align with standard research protocol at Massey University. There is a chance I may use this research to publish an article in an academic journal at a later point. If you are not comfortable with your data being used/published in an academic journal, or for this to be shared to other Māori researchers, you have the right to opt of this in the consent form.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question without the need for justification;
- withdraw from the study at any point (including during a group session) between agreeing to participate and when you have reviewed the final transcripts;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation by contacting myself or my supervisor directly (see contact details below);

- Request amendments to the interview schedule to align with your own needs, including cultural needs. For example, bringing a support person;
- Discuss with Aorangi if you would like certain topics not to be discussed prior to group sessions commencing. For example, sensitive or potentially topics that may upset you (these requests will be accommodated to the best of my abilities). This ensures I am aware of potential distress in advance and will be better prepared to redirect conversation quickly if it comes up during a session.
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- ask to take a break at any time during group sessions;
- Bring a support person/whānau member to any or all of the group sessions;
- Review the transcripts within a designated two-week period;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- Request a copy of all of your data (audio recording, transcripts) following project completion;
- Attend in person or virtually a results presentation when the project is complete.

Who should I contact for more information or if I have any concerns?

You are free to email or call me, Aorangi, with any questions or concerns you have about the project at any point. You can also contact my research supervisor Professor Sarah Riley.

Aorangi Kora

Master of Science (Health Psychology) student

Phone: [redacted]

E-mail: [redacted]

Professor Sarah Riley

Professor in Critical Health Psychology and Master's Thesis Supervisor

E-mail: s.riley@massey.ac.nz

1. <u>MUHEC APPLICATION</u>

Committee Approval Statement:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 22/09. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Exploring Social Media Use Among Rangatahi Māori

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

	YES	**NO**
I agree that I meet the inclusion criteria, as outlined in the Information Sheet.		
I agree to all group sessions being recorded.		
I agree to images produced during group sessions being photographed.		
I agree to taking part in a “Social Media Walk-Along” as described in the Information Sheet under “Project Procedures”.		
I wish to have my recordings returned to me.		

I agree to findings from the research to be potentially published as article in an academic journal at a later date, provided anonymized data will not be archived.		
I agree for my anonymized data to be made available to other researchers, provided they meet the criteria outlined in the Information Sheet under "Data Management", and are granted access as deemed suitable by Aorangi Kora and Professor Sarah Riley.		
I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.		
I agree not to disclose anything discussed in group sessions.		
I agree to my anonymized data being shared under the conditions outlined in the Information Sheet.		

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name -printed ....

Appendix F: Focus Group Confidentiality Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Exploring Affirmative Social Media Use Among Rangatahi Māori

FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I .... (Full Name - printed)

agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project ....

....

.... (Title of Project).

I will not disclose, retain or copy any information shared during group sessions.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....