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The highs and lows of sole parenting experienced by Wāhine Māori

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Abstract

Wāhine Māori and their experiences of sole parenting is an important field of study although it is under-examined in the field of research. The topic is common in literature that is related to political, economic and educational issues of children being raised by a sole parent. An examination of the experiences of wāhine Māori sole parents is the focus of this study and is an area with very little academic research.

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach relevant in exploratory research that focuses on experiences and perceptions of people, in this research wāhine Māori. A kanohi ki kanohi interview process enabled the voices of the wāhine Māori to be heard, prompting their detailed lived experiences. Kaupapa Māori, Māori-centred research and a Mana wāhine approach guided and influenced this research.

The findings from this research showed that wāhine Māori identified the importance of education, therefore completing academic studies and seeking employment. Essentially they became role models for their tamariki. A major contribution was the significant supportive role played by the grandfathers who had fundamentally parented them then went on to manaaki their mokopuna. Other ‘good men’ had made an impact with the tamariki for example mentoring them through sporting ventures. A recognition for the wāhine Māori as sole parents was they were successful in parenting their tamariki for their future growth and development and therefore strived for the same outcomes as others in society. Finally, these insights provide the basis for recommendations to improve social services for wāhine Māori and principles to guide their future development.

He Mihi

I te taha o tōku whānau

Ko Tararua me Taranaki ōku maunga

Ko Punahau me Waitara ōku awa

Ko Kurahaupo me Tokomaru ōku waka

Ko Pariri me Manukorihi ōku hapū

Ko Kohutaroa me Owae ōku marae

Ko Muaupoko me Te Atiawa ōku iwi

Ko William Matipou Wall raua ko Erana Wall tōku tūpuna

Ko Taha Waitere raua ko Kuini Wirihana Waitere tōku tūpuna

Ko Te Manihera Matipou-Wall tōku papa, ka mate ia

Ko Sally Wall tōku mama

Tōku toru āku tamariki

Ko Mara te mātāmua

Ko Marty te tamaiti tuarua

Ko Ashdin te mātāmuri

Toku toru āku mokopuna

Ko Emphacy, Ko Delyric, Ko Contrea

Ko Ripeka Matipou tōku ingoa

Karakia

Whakataka te hau ki te uru

Whakataka te hau ki te tonga

Kia mākinakina ki uta

Kia mātaratara ki tai

E hī ake ana te atākura he tio

he huka, he hauhūnga

Haumi e! Hui e! Taiki e!

Tīhei mauri ora!

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This thesis is dedicated to all sole wāhine Māori who fight adversity to ensure their tamariki and themselves have good futures in education and employment. I would especially like to thank and acknowledge the six incredible inspiring wāhine who took part in this study and gave of their time generously and so willingly. Thank you so much for trusting me with your stories as without these stories this thesis, in this form, would not have been possible.

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Table of Contents

Abstract 1

He Mihi 2

Karakia 2

Acknowledgments 3

Table of Contents 5

CHAPTER ONE: KAUPAPA 9

Introduction 9

Aims of research 9

Definitions of sole parenting 10

Research justification 10

My personal journey 12

Chapter outline 13

Conclusion 14

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 15

Introduction 15

Part A:Māori society 15

Pre-colonisation 15

Part B: Impact of colonisation on whānau Māori 16

Whāngai 16

Part C: Traditional British norms and the colonisation impacts in Aotearoa (1840-1960s) 18

English values and belief systems 19

'Homes' for single pregnant women 20

Changing role for women in Aotearoa/New Zealand 21

Part D: Colonisation and Urbanisation 21

Expansion and growth: the great urban drift 21

Incentives proved disappointing 22

Part E: Political change-looking backwards to move forward 23

Welfare state 23

Fathers as fulltime caregivers/mentors 24

Teen Parenting 26

Domestic violence 26

Part F: Legislative changes 27

Domestic Purposes Benefit 1970 27

Pūao-te-ata-tū Report 1986 27
Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 (CYP & F) 28
Part G: Māori Protest and leadership 29
Māori land march 29
Bastion point 30
Māori Womens Welfare League 30
Wāhine Toa 31
Wananga battle for education rights 31
Conclusion 32
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN 33
Introduction 33
Qualitative research 33
Semi-structured interviews 34
Kaupapa Māori theory 35
Kaupapa Māori and Critical theory 36
Māori-centred theory 37
Māna wāhine theory 37
Overarching Māori principles (Takepū) 38
Māori ethical principles (Takepū and Āta) 39
Ethical considerations 42
Supervision-risk of harm 42
Information sheets and Informed consent 43
Confidentiality and securing privacy 43
Conflict of interest 43
Equipment 44
The recruitment of participants 44
Pilot interviews 46
Conducting the interviews 47
Thematic analysis 48
Reflections on the research journey 50
Dissemination of information 51
Conclusion 51
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS 52
Introduction 52
Participant profiles 52

Key themes....53
Theme One: Journey into sole parenthood....53
Theme Two: Whānau support encompassed by te ao Māori....54
Theme Three: Tangled with the system....57
Education and employment....61
Theme Four: Children and wāhine frustrations....64
Advantages of parenting alone....66
Disadvantages of parenting alone....68
Theme Five: Violence in relationships....70
Whanau intergenerational violence....70
Children and resilience....74
All grown up....76
Theme Six: Wāhine and their 'new light'....78
Wāhine advice to other sole parents....80
Conclusion....81
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS....83
Introduction....83
Journey into sole parenthood....84
Hurt and despair....84
Societal views of sole mothers....85
Looking back in history....87
Whānau support....88
Fathers as significant carers/grandfathers as mentors....90
Freedom to make decisions....92
Resilience in the face of adversity....92
Conclusion....94
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION....95
Introduction....95
Summary of research aims....95
Overview of research chapters....95
Key findings....98
Reflections....98
Limitations....99
Recommendations....99
Areas for future research....100

Conclusion 101

GLOSSARY 103

APPENDICES 106

REFERENCES 118