# Ringleaders in Mischief:

# A study of one Māori whānau in New Zealand child welfare case records,

# 1926 - 1948

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**Summar Austin-Collins**

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# Abstract

The causes of Māori over-representation in state care have been connected to enduring symbolic and structural violence and can be linked to processes of colonisation. Recent survivor testimony has highlighted the need to critically examine the way welfare service providers understand and engage with service users. However, limited opportunities exist to examine the historical roots and impacts of violence on Māori in their engagement with the foundational child welfare agencies of the settler society. This research seeks to address this gap, by documenting an exemplar of the relationship between four Māori siblings - who were rendered wards of the state - and the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department between the years 1926 to 1948. The inquiry applies a narrative analytical framework to examine the way power was expressed and contested within the case file records of these siblings. The analysis identified several broad themes in the representation of power. These related to the construction of the state's actions as heroic, and the behaviours and identities of the Cole whānau as threatening. The goal of state intervention was assimilation, and success was measured against a set of assumptions of good citizenship, which limited the siblings' capacity to thrive. The research theorises that stigmatising narratives take on the guise of truth, and these create the context for the state's engagement with whānau. Creating a more empowering social context requires targeting the narrative social field as well as the legitimating political structures. Limitations of the research are discussed, and recommendations made that link historical antecedents to the current welfare environment.

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# Glossary

**Kauhanganui** – alternative spelling of Te Kauwhanganui, the Māori parliament for many of the iwi associated with the Tainui waka.

**Kotahitanga** – unity and togetherness. Kotahitanga also used to refer to a nineteenth century self-government movement that was strong in the Wairarapa and held parliamentary assemblies at Papawai marae.

**Manaakitanga** – hospitality, kindness, generosity, and the process of showing hospitality.

**Mana Motuhake** – self-determination, autonomy, independence

**mokopuna** – grandchild, grandchildren

**Papawai** – marae near Greytown, Wairarapa

**Pūrākau** – the transmission of ideas through storytelling, and a Māori narrative research practice

**Rangatira** – a person of high rank, nobility or well-esteemed

**Tangata Whenua** – literally, people of the land, the local people, indigenous to the land

**Taonga** – prized treasure, includes physical possessions and abstract treasures like language.

**taonga tuku iho** – a treasure passed down through generations.

**te ao Māori** – the Māori world

**te reo Māori** – the Māori language

**Tino Rangatiratanga** – sovereignty, self-determination

**Tīpuna** – ancestors, grandparents

**Hapū** – a collection of whānau joined by common ancestry. Primary political unit in Māori society

**Iwi** – an affiliation of hapū, joined through common ancestry and shared territory.

**Whakapapa** – genealogy, lineage, descent, central to Māori identities

**Whāngai** – literally, to nourish and bring up. Traditional Māori fostering practice.

**Whānau** – extended family group and primary economic unit of Māori society

# Chapter 1: Telling our Stories

*Figure 1: Margaret Jeffs (nee Cole), pictured at age 18.*

> Many times I have related to my family stories of my life and everytime [sic.] they have advised me to write it down, so I have decided to do so, to the best of my ability, word for word as my memory will allow, not only for their benefit, but for future generations as well... My memory returns to those first few years while living with my parents, first at Papawai, then at Mangaroa and although we had lived in several towns (according to our birth records) during those six years, it is only the last couple of years of my life with my parents that I remember everything, any incidents that took place at that time.
>
> **Margaret Jeffs -** (personal communication, December 16, 1997).

On Saturday, February 27, 1926, Hokotoki, Margaret, Francis, and Kuia Cole were committed to the guardianship of the state in Wellington, New Zealand. The details of their

committal are recounted in the spare prose of a government memorandum. It hints at a history of what would come to be called intimate partner violence, but which was at the time prosaically referred to as ill-treatment. The children had been living with their mother, Puiaki Cole (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa), at Papawai Marae, when her estranged husband Herbert forced his way into the home. Puiaki, then pregnant with her sixth child recounted that he remained there, against her wishes, for three days. Her relatives told her she needed to do something to keep her children safe, so she left Papawai, placing her two eldest in St Joseph's Orphanage, and taking her younger children with her to Wellington. Still, she feared her husband would track her down. It was not the first time he had done such a thing. So, on February 11, 1926, she sought the assistance of Child Welfare, and all four children were committed to the care of the state. These facts are a matter of record, although my retelling of the narrative represents my own interests rather than those which were of concern to the state. The Cole family welfare record came to me via my maternal grandmother, Margaret, who was six years old at the time of their committal to state care. Documenting the years between 1926 to 1948, it provides an insight into the priorities of the state during a period of increasing public interest in the personal lives of Māori whānau (Dalley & Tennant, 2004).

## 1.1 Locating Myself

I began this section with a narrative fragment to illustrate the power and purpose of narrative storying. It is a section of my maternal grandmother's autobiographical writing. The excerpt is confronting in its incompleteness. It is the first and last paragraph of a page-long account of her early childhood. She had written and re-written this account repeatedly, suggesting her struggle to articulate a narrative. She writes that her family "have advised" or "insisted" that she write her story down. Her family may have sought an heirloom story, a taonga tuku iho, but such legacies require emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012). Some stories are too difficult to tell (Riessman, 1993). Her story is trapped in a kind of nostalgic narrative

space, taking place before her committal to state care and the ensuing trauma. My grandmother's writing is located temporally, contextualised historically, and written for her family. It is characterised by fragmentation and narrative absence, and it is from this point that my inquiry begins. As a researcher and grand-daughter of one of the subjects of the case records, I am positioned as both an insider and outsider to the research (Seed-Pihama, 2019). This means that my interpretation of the stories contained in the file are informed by inside knowledge gleaned from my whānau membership, as well as the academic and literary traditions taken from my background in psychology and education.

As I am positioned in relation to my grandmother, my knowledge of her comes through family stories and my own memories. During my childhood, my grandmother presided over family gatherings from her armchair, a keeper of idiom and narrative, capable of cutting barbs mumbled to herself, perhaps more audibly than intended, or a laughing response to a joke with the exclamation, "oh, my hat!" My memory fixes her as permanently aged, baring little resemblance to the child who had been committed to state care as a six-year-old, who before that had been born on Papawai marae, a mokopuna of Rangatira Hoani Rangi-taka-i-waho. I had little understanding of the way governmental systems of care and protection scarred her childhood and impacted her life. This allowed me to read the narratives in the case files with a degree of distance, if not entirely as an outsider. The case files did not come into my possession until after my grandmother passed away in 2007. Her health had been deteriorating since her first stroke in 1998 had left her partially paralysed. It was also after her passing that her writing, referenced in the opening lines of this thesis, was re-discovered. My recollection of this time is that I was struck by the difference between the two. The case files were substantial; a non-digitised record comprised of 900-odd pages of single-sided copy. In comparison, my grandmother's story was handwritten, scrawled over foolscap paper, written, and re-written five times. The case files are not just weighty in the literal sense. They

represent the symbolic spaces within which the state was able to name and define my tīpuna and construct a single narrative of their engagement with welfare services. As I read the case files for the first time, I was struck by the way ideologies of Māori inferiority and class consciousness were given voice and the ramifications these had for my grandmother and her siblings. My whānau were evaluated against middle-class, predominantly Pākehā standards of propriety, and the narrative formed around them determined the state's response. The stories contained in the file seemed at once unique and universal, and it occurred to me that this case file could provide some insight into the processes and impacts of colonisation on individual lives. This thesis emerged from a desire to challenge dominant narratives, both in terms of the specific story of my tīpuna, and more generally, the shared community narratives that continue to harm Māori, and the welfare-involved. My aims in carrying out this inquiry are twofold. First, I hope to better understand the way the case files represent a site of violence, through the construction and reproduction of harmful narratives, which had material and long-lasting effects on our whānau. Secondly, it is to provide an indepth examination of the simultaneously unique and recognisable patterns of power reflected in the file, in order to suggest empowering alternatives in contempoary social welfare practice.

## 1.2 Narrative and Storytelling

Central to this research is the question of whose story is told, by whom and for what purpose. If, as Rappaport maintains, "the right to tell one's own story is an index of power and of psychological empowerment" (2000, p. 7) the fragment at the front of this thesis represents the relative powerlessness of my maternal grandmother's position, in comparison to the recorded stories written and preserved by the state. This inquiry is particularly interested in the state's employment of narrative as an ordering structure that allows people to derive meaning from and/or impose meanings on events and lives (Crossley, 2000). Welfare case files explored in this thesis applied narrative structures to their subjects. As I document

below, these draw on dominant colonial meanings and story structures which reproduced inequitable social relations between Māori and the state. As Riessman (1993) suggests, the narratives gain political currency through the reproduction of existing societal power dynamics. The composers of the case files drew on dominant narrative tropes, such as archetypes of the deserving and undeserving poor, to produce a case file which reinforced the privileged societal position of affluent Pākehā and portrayed the working classes and Māori as inferior. These stereotypes and tropes were historically used to justify the expanded reach of the state (Armitage, 1995; Walker, 2004). Their cultural dominance limited the impact of alternative representations of identities. The size of the Cole case file dwarves that of my grandmother's attempt to tell her own story. Figure 2 shows the two sets of documents.

The sheer volume of the case file was made possible due to the state's ability to devote substantial resources to narrative construction and organisational record-keeping. However, the state's actions also comprised a significant trauma that limited my grandmother's ability to revisit her life's narrative. Colonisation is multi-modal, and committal to the state, with the purpose of assimilation, is a colonising action that limits the potential for people to tell their own stories. These processes are evident in Rappaport's (2000) seminal work on tales of terror and tales of joy, describing the relationship between individual life-stories and the culture and context in which they are produced. He suggests that some shared cultural narratives constitute "tales of terror" as negative stereotypes may become appropriated by

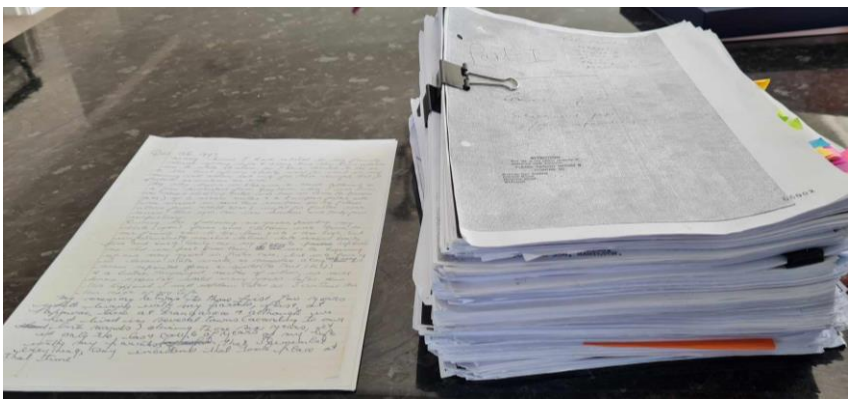

*Figure 2: Margaret Jeff's autobiographical writing next to the Cole whānau record.*

individual members of stigmatised groups when they tell their own life-stories. For individuals like my grandmother, who was Māori, female, and the child of poor parents, the wider cultural narratives about the groups to which she belonged were often negative (Johnston & Pihama, 1995; Labrum, 2004a; Mikaere, 1994; Ware et al., 2017). Rappaport (2000) describes the way members of such communities resist tales of terror, by drawing on shared resources to construct alternatives, which he refers to as "tales of joy." Ahuriri-Driscoll (2024) argues that self-stories of Māori identities have, as a product of colonisation, taken on the dominant constructions offered by stories of Māori subordination. The movement to turn these stories into tales of joy has been a focus of Māori academics and storytellers, and can be construed as a means through which Māori researchers and activists creates space for Māori knowledge-creation (Lee-Morgan, 2017; Pihama, Campbell, et al., 2019; Seed-Pihama, 2019).

## 1.3 A key concept for the present study: Symbolic Violence

The notion of symbolic violence was first conceptualised by Bourdieu (1991), who wrote that the elite exert control over the lower classes through their ability to name and describe the world in such a way as to favour the members of ruling groups Bourdieu observed that the state, through its institutional practices, often normalises the beliefs and values of the ruling group, so that they become widely accepted as truth. Central to the notion of symbolic violence is the participation of members of marginal groups in their own subjugation through the internalisation of harmful narratives. The dominated often take on the discourses that are supplied to them by dominanting groups (Thomas et al., 2020). Dominant stories become hegemonic when they are widely accepted, even by those groups for whom acceptance of the story necessarily entails their continued subjugation. Symbolic violence is difficult to resist. According to Bourdieu, once the ideological positions of the dominant group become widely accepted, they take on the guise of truth, which renders them

invisible and less amenable to challenge (Bourdieu, 1991). When individuals operate out of these “common sense” understandings of a given historical epoch, they act and react to social situations in ways that maintain power relations (Kramsch, 2020).

Unlike other forms of colonial power that are direct and decipherable, violence that takes place in the symbolic sphere is often invisible and therefore endures. Once harmful narratives become embedded, then they may be wielded, often inadvertently, through everyday interactions between people in settings such as welfare organisations. The concept of symbolic violence has been drawn on to help understand the relationship between these harmful cultural narratives and the suffering experienced by economically deprived and indigenous communities (Barnett et al., 2007; McGhee, 2017; Thomas et al., 2020). For instance, narratives of deficit texture welfare policy and practice, and the assumption that poverty indicatess a lack of personal responsiblity contributes to measures which restrict access to financial support (Thomas et al., 2020). Furthermore, evidence suggests that child protection practices are often shaped by motherhood ideals of self-sacrafice, and narratives of “putting children first”, which indavertently marginalise welfare-involved mothers (McGhee, 2017).

Historically, colonisation introduced narratives to Aotearoa New Zealand, which through their increasing dominance in social discourse, had the effect of stigmatising certain groups or people in society (Johnston & Pihama, 1995). These narratives took on a guise of “truth” in public perception, they were supported by, and lent legitimacy to government policy. Accordingly, the narrative resources made available within particular contexts constrain and allow a certain set of responses  (Rappaport, 2000). The Cole siblings, as children of a precariously employed Pākehā labourer and Māori mother, were particularly vulnerable to negative identity constructions based on harmful stereotypes, which were

mediated through the policy and practices of the state. Two dominant narratives were that of deserving and undeserving poor and the inferiority of the Māori race.

Colonial understandings of the deserving and undeserving poor were rooted in class consciousness and ideologies of personal responsibility associated with the British Poor Laws (Hodgetts, 2017). The Poor Laws obligated parishes to provide for the disadvantaged living within their borders, and evolved systems to determine who was considered deserving of assistance (Seabrook, 2013). The deserving poor included the eldery, the sick, and children, while the undeserving poor were described as beggars and criminals. The Poor Laws evolved to become a national system of relief, which was concerned with the provision of aid to the infirm, and which compelled the able-bodied into labour through various means. The underserving poor were described by one clergyman, writing in 1668 as work-shy "rats" and "servants of vice" who "are not the poor, but the worst robbers of the poor" (Seabrook, 2013, pp. 53-54). By this argument the criminal poor were just as responsible for the impoverishment of the deserving poor as the wealthy landowners, as they unjustly appropriated the resources that should be used to support the elderly and infirm. The belief in the necessity of protecting resources from fraudulent claims of need contributed to systems of scrutiny and surveillance, which remain a feature of many modern welfare systems (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Intensive urbanisation following the industrial revolution only increased anxieties among the more affluent members of society, as the population increased along with the perceived threat posed by the so-called dangerous classes. The debate about the appropriate response to urban poverty largely excluded people who were personally affected by it. Some groups advocated for a compassionate response to poverty, while others argued for punative actions to control the growing underclass. Solutions offered by the affluent ruling classes, however well-intended, were often limited in scope. Changes to labour and

living conditions which arguably had a greater impact on lives were more often than not the result of the organised resistance of members of the working class (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017).

Relatedly, dominant narratives of New Zealand's history posited that settler society was broadly egalitarian, affording every settler the opportunity to escape the limitations of the British class system (Nolan, 2007). Pākehā settlers access to land was facilitated by the colonial government's land distribution schemes. This facilitated cultural narratives of opportunity and fairness that became part of the national character of settler society (Thomson, 1998). Settlers brought with them some of the principles of the Poor Laws, and reified the responsbilities of family members, rather than local or national government, as caretakers of the poor. The story of self-responsiblity stigmatised impoverishment by associating it with poor choices (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). The ideal citizen was an economically autonomous individual who would not constitute a burden to other citizens. The ensuing moral binary positioned some people as more deserving of charity than others. These individuals may have been less responsible for their impoverishment, perhaps as wives or children, unable to care for themselves in a social order dominated by husbands and fathers (Beaglehole, 1993). These ideologies drove cultural narratives of the pauper and scrounger. Within the wider cultural story of the undeserving poor, there emerged a characterisation of the impoverished as a figure of disgust, a pauper entrenched in destitution, or a scrounging member of the underclass who sought to improve their social position through the misappropriation of state's funds (Jensen & Tyler, 2015; Tyler, 2013).

Similarly, dualistic processes of symbolic power were also evident in the positioning of Māori as inferrior to Pākehā. Interactions between Māori and Pākehā in Aotearoa's colonising environment were contextualised by constructions of racial heirarchies which posited that the European settler was naturally superior to other groups (Reid et al., 2017). Racialised ideologies were encoded in religious, scientific and political debates, where tropes

of Māori inferiority were used to convey the naturalness of colonisation by the superior Pākehā settler (Walker, 2004). In naming the colonised world, the settlers invoked dual constructions of savage and civilised, immoral and moral, heathen and Christian, which located Māori as the "other" in relation to the settler (Johnston & Pihama, 1995). The repeated, pervasive derogatory conceptualisation of Māori as colonised subjects had a profound impact on Māori identities, through the acceptance of the colonial narrative and internalisation of the self as flawed and deficient (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2024). As the settler population increased, the construction of Pākehā racial superiority permeated all aspects of New Zealand society (Johnson & Pihama, 1994). Colonial philosophies, fuelled by both Biblical constructs of manifest destiny and scientific-evolutionary ideologies provided a backdrop to discourses of the technological, racial and religious superiority of settlers (Walker, 2004).

These dominant stories were perpetuated through state structures, embedded, and normalised in policies and processes of state departments. Galtung theorised that structural violence, whereby societal structures limit and prevent certain groups from reaching their potential, and enable others to thrive, is embedded in state systems (Saleem et al., 2021). Historical evidence of practices which consituted symbolic and structural violence will be outlined in the following section. However, it is worth noting that the enduring impact of symbolic and structural violence is evidenced in numerous markers of inequality between Māori and Pākehā (Bishop, 1998; Cram, 2011; Dickson, 2006; Durie, 2001; Groot, 2017).

In Aotearoa, affluent Pākehā men were, and remain, more likely to hold positions of authority in institutional settings, are also more likely to benefit from structural inequities as their upbringing equipped them with the necessary cultural and linguistic capital to navigate and perpetuate systems of power. In constrast, working class Pākehā, Māori and women were, and remain, more likely to struggle for a foothold in economic and political systems

(Cochrane, 2017; Smith, 1992). These inequities are mutually reinforced within symbolic, structural and interpersonal spheres. Symbolically, inequalities are supported by the widespread continued association between te ao Māori and defecit. Symbols associated with Māori, such as Māori place names or the use of te reo Māori in public spaces has brought the debate into the public sphere (Bidois, 2023). Structurally, inequitable access to decent work, healthcare, educational opportunities, and the continued over-representation of Māori as members of the precariat or lower socio-economic spheres of society indicate that the dominant frameworks that structure public-private relations continue to cause harm (Groot, 2017). In spite of this power imbalance, Māori resistance to hegemonic power is evident in the revitalisation of Māori language, culture, counter narratives, and continued attempts to create space for Māori in fields of healthcare, education and welfare reform (Hoskins & Jones, 2017).

## 1.4 Inquiry Aims

This inquiry began with a story of personal significance, and a search for identity. It is reflected in the question, "how was it that the mokopuna of the Rangatira Hoani Rangi-taka-i-waho of Papawai … could within the space of a generation become estranged from their turangawaewae?" (Mulholland, 2021, p. 120). This question positions my whānau's experiences within the context of colonisation. The aims of the inquiry therefore focus on a single significant case as a means of understanding wider historical, social, and political forces. Case-based research has precedent in psychological research as it provides insight into "social relationships, processes, and categories that are simultaneously recognisable/typical and unique" (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012, p. 382). The purpose of focusing my inquiry on an exemplar of the state's engagement with a working-class Māori whānau, and against the backdrop of early twentieth century welfare reforms, is to shed light on the historical antecedents of current welfare practices. To that end, I consider how power was expressed

and contested within the case file, by applying a narrative analytic framework to a selection of products within the welfare records. These will be examined as examples of the way power dynamics were maintained within the welfare relationship, and the impact this had on the Cole whānau.

# Chapter 2 : Historical Context

This introductory chapter provides background to the case file. I begin with a description of the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the impact of settlement on Māori communities. Here I outline how the impact of dispossession and population decline in the nineteenth century reinforced narratives of Māori as a dying race. I also describe forms of collective resistance that emerged during this period as a challenge to settler domination. I then turn to the colonial imposition on the family sphere, where I contrast Māori childrearing practices and whānau support with those of the settler state that displaced it. The move towards nuclear family arrangements had a particular impact on women and children, isolating mothers from the extended families that had traditionally provided support. The chapter then proceeds with a discussion of the nascent Child Welfare Branch and its role in expanding the reach of the settler state into the homes of Māori whānau. It will describe the actions of state welfare officers in the early twentieth century, and the ways in which existing narratives of poverty and class became co-opted within a narrative of professional efficiency. I will conclude with a discussion of the negative impacts of state care on children and families, which draws on the findings of the recent Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care, to outline what we now recognise as harmful practices.

## 2.1 Colonisation and its Impact

To understand the complexities and inter-generational impacts of the Cole whānau's engagement with the state, it is important to locate the file historically, within the context of important social and political shifts facing Māori in the early twentieth century. This is because the file I am working from was not produced in a vacuum. Rather, it exemplifies many cases of state engagement with Māori that took place because of colonisation (Abuse in Care Research Team, 2020; Savage et al., 2021)

Historians have argued that the settlement of Aotearoa New Zealand by British colonisers was a traumatic and inherently violent process (Armitage, 1995; Binney et al., 1993; Walker, 2004). Colonisation entails the permanent settlement of territory by a group with the explicit aim of dominating resources and installing a regime of control (Veracini, 2010). Nineteenth century imperialism was driven by powerful racial ideologies, positioning the white race as superior to peoples of colour (Johnson & Pihama, 1994). The underlying, taken-for-granted assumptions of British superiority frequently entailed a commitment to bringing outsiders under colonial control, through violence both physical and symbolic (Armitage, 1995). In all fields of contact, coloniser aims of expansion were achieved via the denigration and replacement of indigenous social structures with settler institutions (Mikaere, 1994; Reid et al., 2017; Wolfe, 2006). In Aotearoa, the destructive expansion of the settler state in the nineteenth century saw the near destruction of many Māori communities through depopulation, land alienation and disenfranchisement (Walker, 2004). Of particular relevance to this research project was the displacement and denigration of traditional Māori systems that supported the care of children, in favour of dominant Western nuclear families. Māori collectivism, based on complex systems of iwi, hapū and whānau, was construed as antithetical to the colonial emphasis on individualism (Reid et al., 2017). The extended whānau, as with other roles in Māori society, would become reconstituted as self-reliant family units, capable of contributing to the economy of the state (Smith, 1992).

One of the earliest impacts of colonisation on Māori was the rapid population decline that saw Māori become minorities in their homelands (Kukutai, 2011). In the years following contact with Pākehā, as the Māori population declined steeply, many in the Pākehā scientific community of the time began to voice concerns that Māori were a dying race (Dow, 1999). Introduced diseases, alcohol and muskets all contributed to the declining numbers and reduced life expectancy of Māori in the years following first contact (Binney, 1990a).

Nineteenth century popular scientific discourse served as validation of racist ideologies by attributing population decline to inherent, inferior tendencies of the Māori race (Dow, 1999). Although the rhetoric characterised Māori population decline as inevitable, most legislators believed that they had a moral obligation to "smooth down the dying pillow" (Stenhouse, 2022, p. 135). Within this narrative, Māori were framed as victims, and their lowly position in society as natural. The key to their recovery, it was proposed, was assimilation and the reinvention of Māori as brown-skinned European (Riddell, 2000). Even the most sympathetic framing portrayed Māori as powerless to enact their own recovery, and positioned the state as a paternalistic saviour (Walker, 2004).

The Māori population, estimated to be around 100,000 in 1769, declined to an estimated low of 45,000 by 1901, before beginning a slow recovery (Binney et al., 1993; Dow, 1999; Riddell, 2000). Meanwhile, the settler population grew substantially, outnumbering Māori by the turn of the twentieth century. Settlers' desire for land fuelled the redistribution of resources that resulted in iwi and hapū becoming alienated from their economic foundations, leaving hapū with fewer resources to support recovery.

As the Māori population continued its decline, it was sometimes argued by Pākehā legislators that the half-caste Māori promised racial improvement (Riddell, 2000; Salesa, 2022). In common usage, the term "half-caste" was applied to almost anyone with mixed blood (Donne, 1927; Salesa, 2022). Context and stereotyping, rather than strict blood quantum, mediated the general understanding of Māori identities. In 1926, when the Cole siblings were made wards of the state, they were described in a memorandum from Superintendent John Beck as "half-caste Māoris [*sic*.]" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 298). While the Child Welfare Branch did not typically keep records of the number of Māori and non-Māori in their care, references within the case files indicate that race-labelling could be used as short-hand to describe any number of ills.

That same year, the term “half-caste” was added as a census category for the first time, which introduced more precise definitions than were applied in common parlance. The increasing numbers of people identified as half-caste Māori also lent credence to the popular theory that Māori would eventually be absorbed within the Pākehā racialized population (Salesa, 2022). Donne, writing in 1927, commented that the Māori transition from “savage” to “Christian civilization” demonstrated the people’s intelligence and strong moral fibre (Donne, 1927). As Māori characteristics were widely denigrated, those who were of mixed parentage were sometimes seen as superior to their full-blooded Māori peers, as long as they live and behaved as Pākehā (Salesa, 2022). The widespread acceptance of such positions is evident in the Cole whānau file, as notions of racial inheritance were drawn on as explanatory frameworks for unwanted behaviours.

Mass settlement required a steady provision of land, and Māori lands were redistributed to Pākehā ownership through forced confiscations, deceptive and coercive land sales and finally through legislative means (Cram, 2011). Māori resistance to land sales was met with violence on the part of the colonial government, who, under Governor George Grey, attempted to extend Crown control through a series of unjust wars in the Taranaki, Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions (Walker, 2004). Following the Land Wars, power over land sales was further consolidated with the introduction of the Native Land Courts, which served to bring Māori within the sphere of the colonial judicial system (Reid et al., 2017). The legislation brought Māori land titles under Crown control, which compromised the collective ownership of hapū and iwi (Binney, 1990b).

The erosion of Māori collective resources through confiscations and acquisitions was intentional and justified through narratives of settler superiority. Attorney-General Henry Sewell commented in 1865 that the Land Court was intended to “destroy... the principle of communism which ran through the whole of their institutions... and which stood as a barrier

in the way of all attempts to amalgamate the Native race into our own social and political system" (cited inTaonui, 2012, p. 3). Massive land loss followed the introduction of the Act in 1865, and by 1910, just over 10% of Māori land remained in Māori hands (Cram, 2011).

For Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, these systematic policies had the cumulative effect of leaving the iwi "practically landless" by 1900 (New Zealand Government, 2022). The limited access to resources made some Māori communities increasingly reliant on Western systems to support their needs. This dismantling of social and economic structures was a deliberate and pervasive colonial action, that had a profound effect on communities' ability to support their people (Walker, 2004). For Māori, the loss of whenua meant considerably more than the loss of economic stability. The connection with land represented a connection to whakapapa, which, when disrupted, served to erode the wellbeing of Māori for generations to come (Durie, 1997; Harris & Tipene, 2006; Jahnke, 1997).

In the years following the Land Wars, a series of legal measures secured Pākehā domination and eroded Māori rights. The war provided the settler government with the opportunity to introduce legislation to acquire land, supposedly as retribution for rebellion against the Crown, although land was also taken from iwi who had remained loyal (Walker, 2004). Among these laws was the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863, which redefined large-scale land confiscations of Māori land as "settlement", and in doing so created a new way of understanding colonial expansion (Jackson, 2004).

Jackson (2004) argued that this use of such legal frameworks legitimated land theft and lent credence to the myth of Aotearoa New Zealand's favourable race relations. Relatedly, to bolster the image of national unity, Māori representatives were invited into the settler parliament. The passage of the Māori Representation Act 1867 was seen as a pragmatic means of nullifying the power of Māori unity movements (Binney, 1990a;

Warbrick, 2019). This granted Māori men voting rights and introduced four Māori seats to parliament, which, as Walker (2004) has highlighted, were considerably fewer than the proportional entitlement of 20 seats. Māori representation would serve to support the dominant myth of New Zealand's favourable race relations, and obscure the reality that the Māori representatives' influence was limited by their minority status in Parliament (Walker, 2004).

Māori resistance to the forces of colonisation took various forms. Māori recognised that unity would be vital to asserting autonomy, and from the 1850s, paths were forged to bring iwi together to assert Māori political rights (Binney et al., 2015). These movements infused British models of leadership with Māori understandings of tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty) and mana motuhake (self-determination). The leaders of these movements did not see them as incompatible with Pākehā systems of governance, believing that they would work together. Wiremu Tamihana notably illustrated the concept of dual governance in relation to the Kīngitanga by thrusting two sticks into the ground, one to represent the governor and the other the Māori King, and across them, the ridgepole of law. He drew a circle around the sticks to represent the Queen, enclosing them all (Binney et al., 2015). By the 1890s, iwi were beginning to form their own parliamentary institutions. Two Māori parliaments met for the first time in 1892. These were King Tawhiao's Kauhanganui, which was associated with Tainui iwi, and Kotahitanga, which was strong in the Wairarapa (Walker, 2004). My whānau's tīpuna, Rangatira Hoani Rangi-taka-i-waho, was involved with the latter, and Papawai marae became known as the "Māori capital," hosting two sittings of the Māori Parliament in 1897 and 1898 (Manatū Taonga - Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2011).

Māori spiritual movements provided a further basis of resistance. These were led by influential prophets who often drew on Biblical narratives to rhetorically align Māori

experiences with the Old Testament tribes of Israel (Rangiwai, 2017). Spiritual movements, which included the Ringatū, Pai Mārire and Rātana faiths, provided narratives of hope in the midst of colonial oppression, often presenting Māori experiences as analogous to the Old Testament wanderings of God's chosen people (Binney, 2015). They were political as well as spiritual (Rangiwai, 2017). For instance, the pacifist community of Parihaka, led by Te Whiti, famously resisted land sales, and was met with violent consequences when the Crown enacted its "final solution" by pillaging their homes and arresting their leaders (Walker, 2004). The political importance of Māori spiritual movements was further consolidated when, in 1935, the Rātana church cemented a liaison with the Labour Government as a means of advocating for recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and seeking redress for land confiscations (Walker, 2004).

#### *2.1.1 Colonial imposition on whānau*

Changes that took place in the traditional Māori whānau and collective structure were influenced by the settler preference for isolated nuclear families (Walker, 2004). Although the ramifications of these changes would become more noticeable after World War II, with increased Māori urbanisation, associated cultural shifts taking place as early the nineteenth century set the conditions for later policy changes that disrupted traditional whanau structures (Thomson, 1998). One such condition was the colonial preference for prescribed gender roles in marriage.

The ideological positions imposed by the settler society on Māori emphasised the "cult of domesticity" and placed moral value on women's domestic role (Smith, 1992). Female inferiority to men was taken-for-granted. The characterisation of women's domestic labour conflicted with the more nuanced understanding of mana wāhine in Māori communities. Although both Pākehā and Māori women were the subject of the ideological positions, Māori and poorer Pākehā inevitably found themselves more constrained by them.

This was because upper and middle class Pākehā women sometimes had the ability to fulfil societally prescribed roles through philanthropic and professional organisations, which placed value on the supposedly innate moral instincts of well-bred women. In contrast, working-class women had fewer opportunities for self-determination, particularly as their husbands took possession of their earnings (Tennant, 2007).

Hegemonic discourses doubly disadvantaged Māori women, by positioning them as inferior based on their gender and race (Johnson & Pihama, 1994). Such attitudes are illustrated by the views of one anonymous writer to a New South Wales newspaper in 1922, who noted in response to Southern Māori running a female candidate for election:

> The Māori woman can talk like an eternal gramophone, and she can use her fists. She is very often untruthful and always lazy. It seems from this parade of virtues that she'll make a good politicianess! (Pantin, 1922).

Although letters to newspapers do not necessarily capture the general mood of the nation, as an example of language in a mediated space they may serve to highlight what is allowable as public discourse (Gregory & Hutchins, 2004). In this case, the writer's rhetoric taps into dominant narratives of Māori inferiority, that portray Māori as violent, lazy, and untrustworthy, as well as negative gendered stereotypes of wāhine Māori (Smith, 1992). This particular letter was met with a compelling rebuttal from Agnes Boyd (my grandmother's maternal aunt), whose argument was published in the *Dominion Post*: "In writing of the Māori race… [the author should] study their history, and he will find there all the evidence necessary to disprove the statements" (Boyd, 1922). This invitation may serve as a reminder that for some Māori, the ability to call back to a rich history could provide a rhetorical buttress against racist and sexist discourse (Jenkins, 1992). However, it also demonstrates that the ability to confront the dominant negative framing of Māori ironically required the

speaker to engage with the language of the oppressor. Boyd benefited from an education afforded to a woman of high-rank, which had assumedly provided her with the linguistic capital necessary to engage in such debates (Ballara, 2017). For many Māori women, trained in Native Schools which focused on their potential as domestic labour, such debates were socially proscribed (Johnson & Pihama, 1994; Smith, 1993).

The positioning of women as inferior had material effects on Māori women when legislative changes began to bring Māori whānau in line with the ideal settler nuclear family (Mikaere, 1994). The Native Land Act 1909 stipulated that Māori marriages were valid for some purposes only. Marriages that were guided by English common law principles redefined the nature of family and the role of women (Mikaere, 2003). Māori marriage customs protected the status and rights of women and served to consolidate whānau ties. In contrast, under nineteenth century common law, women became legal non-entities upon marriage. This was because of the legal fiction that marriage unified husband and wife as "one person" (Bradbury, 1995). Although property rights for married women would increase in the latter part of the nineteenth century, they continued to privilege husbands as economic providers, and protections for women against economic instability were often inadequate.

The shift to western family systems also made women more vulnerable to abusive relationships. Mikaere (1994) notes that in contrast with English common law, which condoned the use of violence as a form of marital discipline, Māori communal structures enabled the protection of women and children. This was because the family unit did not exist in a private sphere, but rather was part of an interconnected community. Violence, when it did occur, was difficult to hide and the effects were felt in the wider community (Mikaere, 1994). Abuse was construed as an affront to the entire whānau and was dealt with collectively. Social control was a function of reciprocal community obligations, and

consequences for violence ensured the continued security of women and children (Dickson, 2006; Pihama, Cameron, et al., 2019).

In contrast, the introduced settler fiction of family unity did not allow for the view of wives as separate entities, who could be the victims of marital abuse (Bradbury, 1995). Spousal abuse was viewed as a form of discipline, used by a husband to maintain control of his household (Mikaere, 2003). Such frameworks allowed few legal options for victims. Wives could apply to the court to have maintenance enforced, and from the late nineteenth century, they could seek a judicial separation on limited grounds. A newspaper report detailing Puiaki Cole's 1920 court filing for a separation demonstrates the difficulties that many women faced with such a process. The magistrate ruled in her favour for maintenance costs, but opted to decline the separation order, as "he trusted the parties would come together again" ("Alleged cruelty: wife seeks separation," 1920). In prioritising family unity, it appears that the magistrate reflected the dominant ideological positions of his era (Garlick, 2012). The case once again exemplifies the extent to which such narratives had material, often harmful, effects on people's lives.

Changes to family structures and the clear delineation of familial roles also impacted negatively on parenting practices among Māori (McDonald, 1978; Mikaere, 1994). Child-rearing practices conducted on marae in te ao Māori were often a collective undertaking. Mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, and grandparents all had roles in the supportive care and education of children (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970). Marriage consolidated kinship ties between whānau and hapū, expanding the range of social supports available to families. This was markedly different from the idealised Pākehā nuclear family that emerged with the industrial revolution, where the primary responsibility for child-rearing was in the hands of mothers (Mikaere, 1994; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1978). The idealised nuclear family was supported through policy positions which regulated child labour and education, and organisations such

as the Plunket Society, which oversaw the scientific order of the domestic sphere (Olssen & Levesque, 1978).

Government institutions and legal systems expanded their reach to Māori parenting practices. This included oversight of whāngai adoptions, a practice whereby Māori children are raised by someone other than their birth parents, usually grandparents (Mikaere, 2003). Traditionally, these practices were contextualised within wider concepts of childcare, nested in a deep-rooted knowledge of whakapapa (Else, 1991). Whāngai was practiced within the Cole whānau, as exemplified by a Cole sibling, Dulcie, who was raised by maternal relatives, and by my maternal grandmother's niece who described her experience in a family memoir:

> We were told Mum had given birth to 12 children, though sadly we lost two brothers in infancy. When I was born, my grandparents grew concerned because I was sickly, and they took me from my parents to raise me. They already had my half-sister and raised her as their own. She was from Mum's previous relationship with a Pacific Island guy when she moved to the Hawke's Bay, supposedly for schooling, but my strong-willed mum had other plans. My grandparents took the reins. (To'o, 2016, p. 4)

This family story exemplifies the way whānau resources were drawn on to support parents and help provide children with adequate and nurturing care. The nature of the whāngai relationship was flexible, determined by the needs of the family (McRae et al., 2006). The writer, as an unwell infant, was nurtured until she was strong enough to return to her parents' home, while her older half-sister was raised by her grandparents, an act that allowed a young mother to continue her education. The state's response to whāngai adoptions encroached on these arrangements. From 1909, whāngai relationships had to be ordered through the Native Land Court. Whāngai adoptions were governed separately to settler

adoptions, and whāngai records remained open and public, even as mid-twentieth century policy positions began to favour closed adoption, and tight restrictions on birth records. Closed adoptions favoured a clean break for mother and child.

In seeking to replace one family with another, the policy created a "legal fiction" by altering birth certificates and denying families access to their records (Else, 1991). By 1955, almost all adoptions were closed. The power of the courts was further consolidated in 1962, effectively introducing "one rule for all" and ending any remaining legal protections for Māori whāngai adoptions (Mikaere, 1994). This timeline demonstrates how incremental steps to replace whāngai with Western models of adoption served to delegitimise Māori parenting practices. The continuation of whāngai practices in Māori communities outside legally-protected frameworks demonstrates a point of resistance to social controls (Gabel, 2022). Nevertheless, for many Māori today, whāngai is no longer a practical option (McRae et al., 2006).

### *2.1.2 Othering of Māori*

This chapter has demonstrated that colonial violence was multi-modal. It eroded the social, economic, and political fabric of Māori society, but it also worked on a symbolic level by communicating meanings about settlement and conquest that justified the subjugation of Māori by the colonial state. Dominant narratives served to construct the identities of settler and tangata whenua in opposition with one another, and frame Māori as "other" (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2024). Scholars have argued that the othering of Māori within dominant narrative characterisations has been contextualised by a process of political myth-making, whereby the legal and political apparatus of state were used to re-story Māori experiences and thereby legitimate acts of oppression (Jackson, 2004). Consequently, acts of cultural oppression were redefined to support a myth that New Zealand had relatively peaceful race relations. Instead of recognising the impacts of deliberate and pervasive imperial expansion, colonial violence

was reconstituted as anomalous, the causes individualised. Correspondingly, contemporary negative health and welfare statistics became associated not with systemic failures but rather individual deficits. Child poverty, for example, is often linked to deficient parenting, and Māori ill-health ascribed to natural decline (Reid, 2007). In this way, the myth endures and obscures the connection between colonisation and enduring inequities (Jackson, 2004). Increasingly, such narratives are being challenged and problematised by Māori scholars and Pākehā allies working in such diverse fields as health, law, and education (Bishop, 2019; Jackson, 2018; Mutu, 2019; Reid, 2007). Their work encourages greater recognition that, "every wrong has a context, and unless that is understood, no meaningful change can occur" (Jackson, 2018, p. 10). This scholarship problematises traditional narratives of deficit, while simultaneously shining a spotlight on the role that colonising environments play in Māori inequity (Reid et al., 2017).

Colonising environments continue to result in the marginalisation of Māori. McIntosh (2019, p. 3) discusses the multiple expressions of marginality in Māori identities:

> Some can draw on the marginal experience as a site of resistance and use that location to challenge the status quo and to transform the marginal experience. This is usually a highly politicised identity where proponents can draw on significant cultural capital and an in-depth knowledge of both Māori and Western traditions. Others may acknowledge a marginal status but seek to redefine it under their own terms to allow them to develop a dynamic, distinctive, and authentic fusion identity. For others, marginalisation creates a forced identity. This is characterised by a marked and stigmatised marginalisation where deprivation due to social, economic, and political factors is entrenched and far-reaching.

Forced identities are more commonly associated with the intervention of the state in the lives of whānau, although, as McIntosh highlights, Māori are not passive in their acceptance of marginality, and often exercise their transformative capacity to resist the state's "tales of terror" (Rappaport, 2000). The construction of indigenous identities as "other" in relation to dominant settler norms is a critical aspect of the colonial project (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2024). The attribution of negative characteristics to indigenous peoples served to justify their subjugation. Furthermore, the widespread and repeated derogatory characterisations caused the internalisation of the self as a deficient "other," which prompted acceptance and conformity with the colonial agenda. This resulted in indigenous people performing an imitation of affluent Pākehā citizenship ideals. This was fundamentally inadequate; assimilated identities were rarely able to accomplish equal standing in a structurally inequitable system.

The Cole whānau were further marginalised by their position as members of an impoverished underclass. Tyler (2013) conceptualises the notion of social abjection as a violent and exclusionary social force which strips people in the margins of society of dignity. Social consensus converges upon objects of disgust, which serve to exclude certain groups of people from positions of social power. Descriptions of Herbert Cole draw on cultural understandings of the undeserving poor, by drawing on constructions of the "drunken waster" and "scrounger." These figures exemplified the parasitic qualities of the undeserving poor and legitimated the negative responses by the welfare officers. Tyler describes the way processes of social abjection shape the people's identities, contributing to the internalisation of social judgements that embody shame and self-loathing.

Tracing the impacts of colonisation forward to the present-day paints a dismal picture. Māori are over-represented in almost every measure of inequity. There are disparities in health, education, incarceration, employment, and life expectancy (Bishop, 2019; Durie,

2001; Human Rights Commission, 2021; Jackson, 2018; Ministry of Health, 2022; Oranga Tamariki, 2020; Reid & Robson, 2006). Colonisation's impacts, Reid et al. (2017) argue, are both cumulative and cascading. This means that as each generation faces new challenges, they must also deal with the consequences of oppressive policies weaponised against the previous generation. Māori subjection and subsequent status as an oppressed minority has been reproduced through various manifestations of the settler state (Smith, 1992), including, as this research demonstrates, the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department. That colonisation causes harm to every continent it touches has led to the argument that it constitutes a present and enduring intergenerational trauma (Brave Heart & Deschenie, 2006; Duran, 2019; Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Pihama, Cameron, et al., 2019; Savage et al., 2021).

## 2.2 Child Welfare in the Early Twentieth Century

Thomson (1998) has argued that our understanding of current welfare trends can be enriched by taking a long view of social policy. A lack of engagement with historical contexts has contributed to an incomplete understanding, one which either condemns or exalts the actions of past policymakers. Dalley (2022) elaborates on the importance of bringing early child welfare practices out of the "realm of myth" to better understand current trends in welfare provisions. Similarly, a clearer understanding of the ways that colonisation causes harm can be reached by tracing the effects of historical events, policies and practices on individuals (Reid et al., 2017). The close examination of the Cole case provides us the opportunity to view these impacts as interpreted by the welfare officers. This section focuses on key social and political shifts that led to the Child Welfare Act 1925 and outlines the extent to which these policy positions reflected changing attitudes towards the government's role in the private lives of citizens. I then turn to a discussion of the way policy flowed into the practices of child welfare officers working for the Child Welfare Branch of the Education

Department. Throughout this inquiry I refer to the state as shorthand for a collection of governmental agencies and departments, most prominently the Child Welfare Branch, whose position was represented in the case notes. Labrum (2002) notes that the welfare state was compartmentalised and did not always work to the same end. Social historians refer to the "mixed economy of welfare" that comprised of central and local government, families and volunteer groups (Tennant, 2007). The stories contained within the file represent the commonalities as well as contradictions in the state's approach to the Cole whānau. The excerpts I have focused on for this inquiry were, with few exceptions, authored by child welfare professionals.

Social policy is broadly concerned with society's attempts to deal with the wellbeing of its citizens through the equitable distribution of resources (Belgrave, 2004). The history of colonialism is woven into the fabric of Aotearoa's welfare traditions, which evolved as a colonial experiment, and rooted in a settler economy which excluded and then subjugated Māori (Thomson, 1998). The earliest systems of colonial welfare were predicated on the dispossession of Māori, as they involved the redistribution of Māori economic resources for the benefit of the settler (Tennant, 2007). For the nineteenth century settlers, the state's role in welfare provision was broadly perceived as supporting individual self-help by overseeing land acquisition for settlement (Dalley & Tennant, 2004; Garlick, 2012; Thomson, 1998). The colonists carried over some of the values of home, including Victorian sensibilities of thrift, self-help and family duty, and rejected British Poor Law provisions of rates-funded income protections, preferring to emphasise personal and familial responsibility (Garlick, 2012; Thomson, 1998). As the settler numbers increased, and the colonists claimed positions of power in society, these values became normalised and hegemonic (Veracini, 2010).

As the settler population expanded throughout the nineteenth century, so, too, did settlers' expectations of continued state assistance. Increasing settler demand was met with

reluctant, minimal state support, delivered through provincial boards (Thomson, 1998). The Victorian ethos divided poor into categories of deserving and underserving, attaching a moral requirement to the provision of charitable aid and scrutinising the choices of those in need (Garlick, 2012; Tennant, 2007). This construction allowed children to become the focus of philanthropy. As the victims of circumstances beyond their own control, neglected children were deserving of special protections. When church and private charity were overwhelmed, there were calls for central government to make provisions available for their care (Dalley, 1998).

Nested within ideological principles of the deserving and undeserving poor were discourses which framed children as both victims and threats (Dalley, 1998). Child-saving movements, gaining momentum internationally, posited that an impoverished environment was a threat to children's wellbeing and their prospects as law-abiding citizens. Reformers imagined a direct pathway between neglected child and criminal adult; anxieties encouraged actions aimed at the "adjustment" of family life. By this reasoning, the family unit itself became open to scrutiny. Families of vulnerable children were constructed in social policy and political rhetoric as malignant influences. It became the role of the state to ensure that suitable reforms took place to the family unit to ensure children became productive citizens. Social historians have argued that such a position did not necessarily imply that the state intended to replace the parents. Rather, as Labrum's (2000) examination of preventative welfare suggests, many officers saw their role as supportive of the family unit. Nevertheless, the state's evaluation of "good" homes and families was influenced by hegemonic ideas of nuclear families.

The language of "reform" and "adjustment" characterised the work of the state in relation to more unruly families (Labrum, 2004b). The provision of a moral education and vocational training was justified as a humane investment in the state's future prosperity.

Preventing “wastage” in a child’s life was the central philosophy of what would become the Child Branch of the Education Department (Garlick, 2012). Although institutional care through industrial schools and orphanages was the initial site of intervention, these fell out of favour as early as 1885. From then, it was policy to “bring up the children as members of respectable families” rather than “crowd them together in large institutions” ("Education: Industrial Schools and Orphanages," 1885, p. 13). This practice was commonly referred to as “boarding out” and was the precursor to modern foster care. Homes were almost uniformly Pākehā, and, for the Māori children who were boarded, became sites of assimilation.

By the 1920s, boarding out had come to displace industrial schools and institutions as the primary location of state intervention (Garlick, 2012). Some institutionalisation remained, and the state continued to send children to church-led homes such as the Salvation Army’s Whatman Home in Masterton, within which one Cole sibling resided from the mid-1930s, but fostering was preferred in policy and practice. Placing children with foster families served economic and ideological purposes, and even though the number of children under state control rose in the decades after the turn of the century, by 1924 less than 6% of state wards, referred to in contemporaneous accounts as “inmates”, were housed in residence. Stays in state-run institutions, called Receiving Homes, were intentionally short, used primarily for evaluation and between placements in family homes (Dalley, 1998). The state’s records from the 1920s do not show how many Māori children were in care. Dalley (2022) suggests that policy positions leaned towards keeping Māori children in their own communities. The Cole case file represents an exception which demonstrates the flexible application of policy.

The 1925 Child Welfare Act established the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department under Superintendent John Beck, one of the most influential senior public servants of the early twentieth century (Garlick, 2012). He drafted the Act and drove the department’s philosophy of preventative care. The passage of the Act marked the culmination

of over a decade's worth of work for Beck and his colleagues (Dalley, 1998). As superintendent until 1938, Beck was actively involved overseeing its operations, and was often called upon to advise on case work and help settle disputes (Garlick, 2012). As will be discussed in Chapter Four, it was on Beck's advice that the Cole siblings were committed to the state, and it was Beck's initial memorandum which set a precedent for the stories of the Cole whānau contained in the file.

The introduction of children's courts was a central tenet of the Child Welfare Act. Modelled on American juvenile court systems, the children's courts were intended to support the reformation of children who came before the magistrate (Seymour, 1976). Welfare officers were installed as court officials and tasked with carrying out investigations and making recommendations. Children came before the courts on a range of charges, including crimes such as theft and cycling at night without a light (Dalley, 1998, p. 102). As Dalley (1998) notes, what constituted juvenile delinquency was highly contingent on social, political and economic contexts. The ethos of reform rather than retribution presented magistrates with new possibilities for penalties, which could include preventive measures such as a period of supervision by Child Welfare Officers, as well as committal to state care. The reconstitution of juvenile delinquency as a welfare issue expanded the role of the Child Welfare Branch. Approximately half of all cases that came before the court between 1925 and 1948 were passed on to the Child Welfare Branch (Dalley, 1998, p. 104).

Over the period of time represented by the Cole case file, 1926 – 1948, the scope of welfare field work expanded significantly (Garlick, 2012). In addition to court-appointed supervision, the Branch was also responsible for the monitoring of adoptions and foster homes under the Infant Life Protection Act 1893, and supervision of state wards who were boarded out or placed in service. It also took responsibility for the oversight of illegitimate children and the monitoring of families after a marital breakdown (Dalley, 1998). Preventive

work furthermore allowed officers to work with children in their own homes, and thereby effecting change to both the child and family (Labrum, 2000). This work became central to the Child Welfare Branch's ethos of targeting the "social field" (Garlick, 2012). In effect, the child became the conduit through which the institutions of state could increase their influence on family life. To accommodate this range of functions, the Branch created a systematised structure, comprised of fourteen district offices (Garlick, 2012). This structure provided the means of co-ordinating supplies and lent the Branch a degree of professional credibility that belied the lack of formal training in its workforce.

This system created the context whereby welfare officers were encouraged to draw on dominant cultural narratives and explanatory frameworks to form judgements about the families within their purview. The workforce was predominantly comprised of Pākehā middle-class women, and supplemented by unpaid honorary officers in rural areas (Dalley, 1998). Officers worked with families who were frequently poor, and sometimes Māori, and the case files suggest that they were "othered". Welfare officers were hired in part for the attributes that were believed to be inherent to their gender, and women with backgrounds in nursing or teaching were preferred candidates (Garlick, 2012). Individual field officers were encouraged to utilise personal discretion in dealing with issues in their district. For this, officers were expected to draw on their innate qualities and life experience. Case work was highly gendered, with women taking on more general duties relating to monitoring foster homes and adoptions, implementing adoptions and supervising young boys and girls in their homes, while a small number of male welfare officers supervised adolescent boys (Garlick, 2012).

The functions and numbers of welfare officers increased considerably between 1925 and 1948. In 1925 there were twenty Child Welfare Officers gazetted. By the mid-1940s there were 100 employees working across thirty offices (Garlick, 2012; Labrum, 2004b). The

Child Welfare Branch expanded during World War II in response to concerns about the rise in juvenile crime. This change coincided with a more decentralised system, with each district appointing a male District Child Welfare Officer to oversee their region. This expansion, along with increasing Māori urbanisation, brought the welfare officers into greater contact with Māori communities. (Dalley, 1998). Although the children's court did not keep ethnicity records for children and families, in 1941, Beck's successor, Jim McClune, commented on the increasing number of Māori children coming before the court (Garlick, 2012). This marked the beginning of a trend that would see Māori overrepresented in child welfare systems throughout the twentieth century(Savage et al., 2021).

### *2.2.1 Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care*

Though the case file's authors offer little evidence of the negative effects of state care, subsequent evidence has been brought forward by care survivors to show that significant harm was, and continues to be caused when children are uplifted by the state (Abuse in Care Research Team, 2020; Oranga Tamariki, 2020). In 2018, the New Zealand Government commissioned a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate the historical abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults in state and faith-based institutions (New Zealand Government, 2023). The inquiry was a comprehensive examination of the experiences of survivors of state and faith-based care from the 1950s to the late 1990s. Its findings are particularly pertinent to this present research, as the focus on survivor testimony offers a lens through which to view state's story of the Cole siblings. In the absence of testimony from the Cole siblings themselves, the survivor accounts serve as powerful reminders that narrative silences in the records are equally meaningful in what they suggest about structural violence (Darroch, 2020; Fivush, 2009).

The Commission of Inquiry's interim report found widespread and ongoing abuse in both state and faith-based care settings. Abuse was defined broadly to include physical,

sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse as well as neglect and improper care that resulted in harm. The definition included conduct that caused serious harm regardless of whether it was accepted conduct at the time it was perpetrated, but acknowledged that much of the reported conduct would have been described as abusive at the time it was committed (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a).

A central theme of the findings from the inquiry is the profound harm caused to the most vulnerable people in society by a system that should have offered them protection (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a). The inquiry was also clear that abuse in care settings continues to this day. The children placed in care often came from environments that were detrimental to their wellbeing, but their time in care left many of them in a worse state than when they were first removed from their homes. Survivor accounts detail a wide range of abusive behaviours, ranging from physical and sexual assault to cruel and inhumane punishment, the use of physical restraints, solitary confinement, and the punitive use of medical procedures such as electro-convulsive therapy, verbal abuse, and racial slurs (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a). Many survivors faced abuse across multiple care settings. Frequent relocation between foster homes and institutions exacerbated the impacts of abuse and made it difficult for children and young people to develop secure attachments. The commission acknowledged that the impacts were differentially experienced by Māori and Pacific people and differently-abled people, and commissioned research to examine the causes and impacts of Māori over-representation in care settings (Savage et al., 2021).

The consequences of abuse were profound and long-lasting. The effects on individuals ranged from ongoing health difficulties, loss of identity and sense of belonging, loss of educational and employment opportunities, homelessness, incarceration, addiction, breakdown in family relationships, and the loss of cultural and spiritual identity (Abuse in

Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a) . The internalising of stigmatising narratives was evident in survivors' stories. The survivors reported that the effects of their childhood abuse made it difficult to make connections and forge stable relationships. The impacts were also experienced across generations and within wider communities (Savage et al., 2021). Subsequent generations were affected as abuse had an impact on survivors' parenting ability. One survivor noted that "the abuse itself had an ongoing impact on… what we expect from family relationships…I didn't go to sports games and things because I didn't know that was what a parent was supposed to do." (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a, p. 93). There are similar anecdotes of my grandmother that suggest she also had to learn parenting expectations, sometimes by looking to the behaviours of her children's friends' mothers. This struggle can be understood as a reverberation of state care, sometimes referred to as inter-generational trauma (Savage et al., 2021).

For Māori, this impact of abuse in care was particularly profound. Māori have been overrepresented in care for generations (Abuse in Care Research Team, 2020). This over-representation can be understood in the context of colonisation, which displaced collective capacity through the alienation of land and resources, and introduced denigrating narratives of Māori people and customs (Savage et al., 2021). The removal of Māori children and young people severed their connections to whakapapa and decimated whānau. The impacts of state care cascade out and are felt beyond the individual, realised in disconnected whānau, hapū and iwi. The report also found that, despite the identification of Māori over-representation as an issue as early as the 1960s, government responses have so far failed to stem the tide. Solutions have failed to adequately involve Māori in decision-making processes, and as a result state agencies have continued to implement harmful policies and practice.

Some survivors' accounts concern their access and response to the state's records of their time in care. These documents are sometimes sources of trauma, or a mechanism for

confrontation and healing (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020b). Some accounts note the inaccuracy, via omission, redaction, or tampering, of personal records. Some recalled that their records had been altered to omit any mention of abuse, or complaints from whānau regarding the state's practices (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020b). One survivor noted the profound frustration that the Ministry, "was allowed to hide behind its poor record-keeping and processes" (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a, p. 57). This has relevance to the Cole whānau case files, which appear at first glance to be comprehensive, but which omit to mention instances of cruelty or neglect which we know occurred due to the accounts of our whānau members. The Royal Commission demonstrates the way survivors' trauma was sometimes exacerbated when they found themselves having to assert their truth against the (arguably deliberate) obfuscation caused by poor record-keeping. It is a reminder that the voices of survivors may be silenced through both narrative inclusions and omissions, as the power to represent events rested with the welfare professionals (Fivush, 2009).

## 2.3 The Context for this Thesis

This current inquiry is informed by the work of academics in various fields, including history, social work, and psychology. The following section summarises relevant research in these fields that informs my understanding of the context for this research. I begin with a grounding in symbolic violence and class as evident in the case file documents produced by government agencies. I also outline contemporary findings concerning the harmful narratives utilised in the public sphere against lower socio-economic groups, including Māori and people who are welfare-involved.

The theory of symbolic violence speaks to the unjust and stigmatising characterisation of lower socio-economic groups and welfare-involved persons (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu (1991) is when the institutional practices of the

state normalise the beliefs and values of the ruling group, so that they become widely accepted as truth, even by groups of people who occupy positions in the margins of society. The internalisation of harmful narratives by members of marginal groups allows the ruling class to maintain positions of power. On the whole, themes that emerge from the literature on this topic as it pertains to the welfare state highlight the narratives of self-responsibility, and the moralising of impoverishment. These narratives support the characterisation of welfare recipients as abject figures (Tyler, 2013). Narratives of poverty engender disgust, which serves to reinforce their Othering in social discourse and activates an increasingly punitive response. These narratives become hegemonic and stigmatising, and are internalised by people in poverty, resulting in feelings of shame (Swales et al., 2020). The work of Rappaport (2000) discussed previously considers the complex interaction between cultural, community and personal narratives in the stigmatisation and resistance of minority groups. Rappaport referred to stigmatising stories as "tales of terror", which he described as dominant cultural narratives that story minority groups as "other" and construe difference as deficit. These are often communicated through stereotypical characterisations evident in shared cultural stories, sometimes coded and indirect, which are transmitted through various institutions. These stories are at once personal and idiosyncratic yet exist within a complex social and political climate. This context influenced the kinds of stories that were told about people in poverty, about Māori, and women. Tyler (2013) and Rappaport (2000) document case studies of groups who have been stigmatised by dominant narratives, to examine ways that individuals resist subjugation in various ways, including the crafting of counter-narratives which are shared by members of a community to support a positive self-identity. Rappaport refers to these as "tales of joy" and examines how people in stigmatised groups can thrive through the collaborative imagining of new stories.

The ways in which state institutional structures reproduce and legitimise harmful narratives was the focus on Galtung's (1969) theories of structural violence. Galtung theorised that structural violence occurs when societal structures prevent certain groups from reaching their potential (Saleem et al., 2021). Accordingly, academics have argued that state welfare agencies, through their structures, processes and practices, constitute sites of violence as they limit the capacity for welfare-involved individuals to thrive (Hodgetts et al., 2014; Mik-Meyer & Villardsen, 2012; Thomas et al., 2020). Lyndon (2019) argued that pathologising and individualising discourses of poverty pervade social policy in the United Kingdom and that these limit the state's responsiveness to structural pre-determinants of poverty. This was similarly documented in Starkey's (2000) study of the "feckless mother" in post-war England, which documents the individualisation of poverty through the narrative of problem mothers, and subsequent limitations to the response to structural inequities. McGhee and Waterhouse's (2017) case study of a welfare-involved-mother similarly highlights the way narratives of "putting children first" render mothers invisible. Various authors have drawn attention to stigmatising narratives of young Māori parents (Ware et al., 2017) and the way welfare dependency narratives produce policy positions aimed at controlling welfare recipients' lives (Hodgetts et al., 2014; Jensen & Tyler, 2015; O'Brien, 2019). Others have examined the additional harm caused when these narratives become internalised by the very people whose lives are unduly targeted (Swales et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2020).

The application of concepts of symbolic violence to historical case records has most frequently been the domain of the historian. Of particular relevance to this present inquiry was the work of social historians in Aotearoa, especially Dalley's (1998) work on child welfare services in the twentieth century and Labrum's (2000) examination of the case files documenting New Zealand's discretionary welfare provisions from 1920 to 1970. These, along with the work of international academics, have emphasised the contested nature of case

file documentation. As representations of state intervention in the lives of poor families, case files can be viewed as sites of contestation and resistance (Little, 1998), symbolic spaces within which power is wielded and harm is caused to people in marginalised groups (Labrum, 2000). Historical research has highlighted case files' reproduction of dominant, often harmful narratives. The records were written by welfare officers for their supervisors, and so have the effect of reinforcing a shared set of assumptions, sometimes derogatory, about welfare recipients (Labrum, 2004b, p. 35). As predominantly middle-class Pākehā women, welfare officers occupied a more privileged position in comparison with recipients, and were able to utilise their linguistic capital in the framing of their clients' lives (Gordon, 1988). Welfare officers sought to define the professionalism of the role while simultaneously reinforcing the "otherness" of the client, and in doing so were active in the replication of unequal societal power structures (Little, 1998).

Welfare professionals undoubtedly had access to greater reservoirs of valued social and economic capital. As the producers of the welfare records, they had the power to represent the reality of their clients (Gordon, 1988). Through case notes, welfare officers constructed narratives, drawing on a range of textual genres, including letters, memorandum, service and boarding agreements, requests for sundry items, and correspondence with the police over unpaid maintenance costs. As gatekeepers of state assistance, their constructions had material impacts on clients' ability to receive entitlements (Dalley, 1998; Labrum, 2000). For instance, welfare officers were called upon to make character judgements about their clients, and recommendations for material support, and this provided the context for personal biases to influence decision-making (Dalley, 1998).

Labrum (2000) argues that welfare officers' decisions regarding the way issues and individuals were constructed comprised a historical and social filter. She outlines exemplars of welfare practices which demonstrate the increasing scrutiny placed on welfare recipients

whereby the causes of their substandard living conditions were ascribed to individual moral failings, and an untidy home could be used as evidence of maternal degeneracy. In one example Labrum gives, the committal of children to state care was predicated on a woman's unclean home and a demeanor which suggested to the case worker that she was insufficiently concerned with "self-help" (Labrum, 2000, pp. 140-142). As a product of the agency, the case file represents the narrative of the welfare officer, and the welfare recipient's ability to offer a more complex construction of herself is therefore denied. In this way, institutions provided a means through which symbolic power was exercised, and social hierarchies maintained.

Contemporary accounts of welfare stigma and over-representation of Māori in state care suggests the enduring nature of harmful narratives (Jensen & Tyler, 2015; Savage et al., 2021). Research on the relationship between the Child Welfare Branch and Māori during the 1920s and 30s is limited as the Branch did not compile relevant statistics. Dalley (2022) suggests that the work of the welfare services during this time was more flexible in relation to the needs of Māori than it would be in subsequent years, although she notes that some practices, however well intentioned, may have caused harm. Flexibility, likely provided the context for bias, exacerbated by the profession's monoculturalism. As increasing numbers of Māori encountered welfare services, Dalley documents the prevalence of denigrating narratives of Māori as lazy and work averse. Racist stereotypes based on core beliefs in Māori inferiority underpinned scrutiny of Māori whānau, which contributed to their increasing representation in welfare systems (Savage et al., 2021; Walker, 2004). The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care found that Māori over-representation in care and criminal justice settings was the result of enduring structural and symbolic racism in state systems as a result of colonisation (Savage et al., 2021). The report points to assimilation

policies as integral to the erosion of traditional Māori support networks which set the context for economic disadvantage, and cultural alienation (Savage et al., 2021, p. 13).

This thesis recognises that contemporary accounts of Māori over-representation in state care have a long history. It contributes the connection between historical case work and the current welfare landscape. By outlining a case of a single historical record, this inquiry aims to draw a connection between historical and contemporary case studies of welfare stigma and historical antecedents by examining the evidence of symbolic violence in the newly formed welfare organisation's engagement with a Māori whānau. I propose that stigmatising narratives take on the guise of truth, and these create the context for the state's engagement with whānau. Community stories are given legitimacy through policy and structures. Creating a more empowering social context requires targeting relevant narrative social fields as well as the legitimating political structures through policy reform.

## 2.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the social and historical background of child welfare intervention, and the complex multifaceted ways that Māori were harmed by the implementation of colonial systems in Aotearoa. It then zoomed in on the primary aims and practices of the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department, and its infiltration into the domestic sphere. I have considered symbolic violence as it pertains to constructions of welfare dependency and the moralising of poverty. I then outlined the historical location of government case files as sites of contestation, whereby welfare recipients were characterized within the bounds of culturally informed narrative tropes. Finally, I examined how the work of state welfare came to be understood as hostile towards Māori, and recent efforts within state institutions to become more culturally responsive. The following chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological process through which the inquiry will proceed.

# Chapter 3 : Methodology

The follow chapter covers theory, methodology and interpretative procedures for the present inquiry. I begin with a discussion of Kaupapa Māori Theory (KMT), as the foundational interpretive framework for this study, before providing an overview of the methodological principles of narrative research and a justification of their applicability to the research aims. A bespoke approach to the inquiry is then proposed which weaves Kaupapa Māori and narrative methodologies.

## 3.1 Kaupapa Māori Theory

I have located my inquiry within Kaupapa Māori Theory (KMT) and drawn on narrative methodological processes to frame the research procedure. Kaupapa Māori Theory (KMT) is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of approaches, which share a common interest in carrying out scholarship in a Māori way, based on Māori worldviews (Durie, 2017). This approach offers a way to structure actions that prioritise Māori interests, by locating action in Māori worldviews. Kaupapa Māori research methodologies (KMR) emerged in dialogue with critical traditions internationally as a way of retrieving space for Māori and our knowledge production processes within academia. First theorised by Smith (1997) as a methodological approach, KMR offers a way of structuring research that privileges Māori worldviews, and that takes for granted the legitimacy of mātauranga (Smith, 1999). This approach is located within the wider project of self-determination and offers a local lens through which inequitable power structures can be questioned and resisted (Smith, 1997).

The current inquiry draws on the critical consciousness of KMR, as it engages in fundamental power relationships that are inherent to the history colonisation in Aotearoa (Smith, 1997). The replication of such inequitable power structures is evident in the

institutional practices of the state discussed above. This inquiry is concerned with the critical examination of harmful systems which originated in Aotearoa's colonial past, and which continue to influence our present. As an introduced system of the colonial state, welfare systems were entangled within assimilationist policies. KMR is an appropriate framework for this inquiry, which is concerned with shedding light on the experiences of Māori children and whānau, their assimilation within a Pākehā welfare system and subsequent alienation from their cultural knowledge.

KM researchers acknowledge the complexity of researcher positionality and often simultaneously occupy insider/outsider-positions within the community of interest. Smith (1999) points out that such self-positioning can foreground relational complexities foundational to research (Smith, 1999). Researchers may be partial insiders. They may be tied through iwi affiliations or group membership, but factors including age, gender, and education may simultaneously locate them as partial outsiders (Tiakiwai, 2001). Smith (2017) argues that a key rationale for engaging with such self-positioning is important because where one speaks from and why one speaks is important. My position as a granddaughter of one of the subjects of the case files informs my analysis as a partial insider, with connection to the stories contained in the file. This close connection motivates me to explore the way stories have impacted my whānau, and to highlight the ways the stories reveal resistance to dominant power structures. My perspective is informed by my mother's account of my grandmother, which is in itself a subjective retelling that may differ from the perspectives of other maternal relatives. While my subjective reading of the text is informed by family knowledge, I also bring my professional expertise as a reader and producer of narrative texts. I have a background in education, specifically teaching secondary English. In my teaching practice I am accustomed to the analysis and production of narrative texts. This was both an advantage and disadvantage, as it provides the tools for analysis, but sometimes had the effect

of causing my analysis to focus in detail on the linguistic choices and lose sight of the big picture. My teaching background is complemented by my academic background in psychology, which also informs my interpretation of the texts contained in the file. My position is not merely one of self-interest. I am also concerned with the transformative potential of this story, and the importance of improving systems of welfare for future generations.

KMR informed my research ethics, as did the principles of indigenous storywork, a methodological approach concerned with indigenous oral narrative traditions (Archibald, 2006). This framework requires the researcher to treat narratives with reverence and respect, as taonga. Indigenous storyworks informed my treatment of the stories in the case file, as they were stories of tīpuna, however complicated by the retelling. Tino rangatiratanga (insider control over research) and whānaungatanga (family relationships) are also central tenets of KMR (Bishop, 2003), and I recognise that this requires an ethical responsiblity of care towards the use of stories contained in the case file. This required me, as researcher, to recognise through whānau relationships which of the stories could be included in the inquiry, and where the process of uncovering and dissecting may inadvertently cause harm. I treated these stories with care, and was selective in the stories I chose. I was ever mindful of the fact that the stories contained in the file belong with people. As there were administrative barriers to accessing the case file, some whānau have not been able to read it. The document sometimes contained letters from whānau members. I considered these letters taonga and while they informed my inquiry I chose not to focus on them and I made efforts to make copies so that the children and grandchildren of the letter writer could read them.

## 3.2 Narrative Inquiry

In examining the ways structural violence is evidenced by the case files, this inquiry focuses primarily on the way particular documents' narrative constructions of the Cole

whānau limited their potential. I understand such narratives as constructed by people and institutions within socio-cultural and ideological contexts to sequentially order events and characterize key actors that guide readers to make sense of the complexities of human existence from particular vantage points (Crossley, 2000). That is, people use narratives to make sense of their own lived experiences, and the teller (whether an individual or institution) draws on shared understandings and concepts to make their stories intelligible to a particular audience and for particular purposes. The case files are narrative constructions formed by welfare professionals to make sense of the Cole whānau. They offer a representation of people and events that is both interpretive and value-laden (Rappaport, 2000). As official products of the state, they legitimate dominant conceptions of race and class, and render harmful stories invisible and natural.

This inquiry is interested both in the way these files were narrated and used by the state, and the ways they were resisted by whānau. In this context, whānau counter-narratives served as alternative identity constructions, which exemplify one means of resistance to the control of the state (Rappaport, 2000). These personal and resistive stories are given meaning through shared family and community narratives and may be preserved through inter-generational re-telling. As well as those of the state, I have drawn on some of these whānau narratives, where relevant, as a form of mātauranga-a-whānau to inform my reading of the dominant narratives presented by the state and inform the analysis of the text (Lipsham, 2020).

Narrative research offers an appropriate framework for the examination of the case files, because it orientates me towards recognising that the social context within which narratives are created, told and recorded is not neutral, but is a product of unequal power relations (Riessman, 1993). Historical power dynamics position certain groups within social hierarchies, and cause harm for those at the bottom of the ladder. Within systems of power

and domination, affluent groups often exercise the symbolic power to shape the dominant narrative forms in society (Bourdieu, 1991). Ideas from these dominant groups are often rendered foundational to the framing narrative for political policy and practice, and archival documents can be read as representations of these storying processes (O'Brien, 2019). The institutionalised or official status of these dominant stories lends legitimacy to and supports the positions of domination and subordination described therein.

## 3.3 Māori Contributions to Narrative Inquiry

Within the field of narrative inquiry, indigenous academics have sought to imbue narrative approaches with culturally relevant modes of inquiry. A benchmark in this work was Archibald's (2006) conceptualisation of indigenous storywork. The principles of indigenous storywork value the oral traditions of indigenous peoples, and the role storytelling plays in the transmission of cultural knowledge. It challenges orthodox Western research methods as it pays attention to the story as a collective, shared endeavour.

Māori academics have paired concepts from other indigenous groups with Kaupapa Māori strategies. Jenny Lee-Morgan's (2017) significant contribution to this field established and codified the pūrākau methodology, which seeks to reclaim the narratives of our tīpuna and assert a claim of knowledge through storytelling that is uniquely Māori. This approach claims that Māori storying has pedagogical significance and holds the power to talk about the world in a way that has often been silenced by Western narrative traditions. Through the pūrākau methodological lens, the narratives contained in the case files present a culturally filtered version of my tīpuna's life stories, not unlike the commodification of Māori stories as "myths and legends." These versions were recorded by state agencies for the purposes of surveillance and control. These are not neutral re-tellings of events. In re-examining them, I seek to draw attention to these elements.

The state's records often offer the only representation of particular events in the lives of its subjects. Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie (2009) reminds us that single stories of groups can be dangerous because, if left unchallenged, they make it impossible to see people in their complexity, and constrain the ability of groups to articulate a narrative of their own. Through a narrative lens, it may be argued that state care threatened to rob the Cole whānau of alternative ways of framing their histories and curtailed my grandmother's expression of her own stories. This research represents in part a response to this, informed by the goals of pūrākau as a KM methodology.

## 3.4 Case-Based Research

The inquiry is a case study which focuses on a particular document, produced by the Child Welfare Branch during the early iteration of Aotearoa New Zealand's child protective services. Case-based research can provide rich insights into people and processes (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). The examination of the document, and the stories within which concern the lives of individual whānau members, provides an appropriate way of exploring the often-hidden instances of symbolic and structural violence, and the evidence that denigrating narratives influenced the organisational practice of child welfare services. Viewed in the context of existing literature on the early welfare state (Dalley & Tennant, 2004; Labrum, 2004b) and survivor accounts of abuse in care settings (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a), this case study helps shed light on the underlying processes in the relationship between welfare service providers and Māori children in foster care during the first decades of child welfare services.

## 3.5 Procedure

The document analysis covers excerpts taken from the case file records of the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department, from 1926 to 1948. The Cole whānau case file

consists of some seven-hundred pages of photocopied documentation, held by the New Zealand Archives on behalf of the government. The reduction of a whānau narrative to a collection of memoranda represents the symbolic power of the state to name and claim the dominant narrative position over whānau. As products of the welfare state, these case files may be construed as contested symbolic spaces, within which power is wielded and harm is caused (Labrum, 2000). Some documents concerning key events were grouped together, but on the whole the case file was not ordered chronologically. The file was made available to me as a direct descendent of my maternal grandmother, to whom it jointly belonged, with some of her siblings. I obtained it through a formal application to Child, Youth and Family Services in 2008. The documents were examined using a bespoke procedure informed by a narrative analysis conducted from a KMR theoretical position. It was an iterative process, which comprised of several steps which I have outlined sequentially for clarity. In practice I moved back and forth abductively between the steps as I clarified and refined my understanding of the central plotlines, characterisations, and ideological underpinnings of the text.

The familiarisation process began prior to the research, when the document was first accessed, I read and broadly timelined the documents. While familiarisation was mostly concerned with answering the question “what happened?” it also allowed me to develop a deep understanding of the way certain individuals were presented, and key narrative developments that unfolded across the file. This helped inform the research focus. I read and re-read sections of the file several times, each time noticing something different. I engaged in a range of activities that helped process the documents. These included creating a detailed timeline and a digital page index, which was used as a reference throughout the inquiry. It also involved physically grouping documents into sequences or themes and using colour-coded labels to gain a visual overview of the relative prominence of particular form (plot) and

content (ideological) elements in the document. Finally, I re-wrote a narrative of events that paid attention to the movements of the family and key events from their lives.

The process of reflection sat alongside that of familiarisation. This entailed sitting with particular stories within the file, reading and re-reading them and reflecting on what was said, why, to whom and what was left out. Reflection was not a purely internal process, and was often a shared experience with whānau, particularly my mother whose knowledge of family history was vital. This engagement with the text was an exercise in imaginative empathy, to connect with the humanity in the margins of the stories. The purpose of reflection in the inquiry was to allow certain themes to become clear, and to ask questions of the text. These questions often prompted me to review relevant literature to connect the documents with relevant social and political contexts. In reflecting on the documents, I sometimes utilised a process of zooming-in and zooming-out, alternating between examining key documents and phrases within documents and then zooming-out to ask questions of the context within which the document was created.

Documents that captured either standout issues or reoccurring characterisations and impositions of colonial dominance were selected for deeper analysis. The first selection presented a broad range of documents. Central criteria for selection were as follows:

- Does this story reveal elements of power and violence in the relationship between the whānau and the welfare state?
- Does this story serve to advance the overall narrative arc of my tīpuna?
- Will the recounting of this story have a positive impact on the lives of our whānau?
- Is it my place to tell this story?

The initially selected narratives were typed up, to provide a digital copy for analysis. I had a wide range of documents and narratives within this first selection. To make the analysis

process more manageable, I grouped these documents into broad categories and then consolidated my final selection, ensuring that each of the categories or groups were well represented in the analysis.

Drawing on Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I considered the case notes within a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, considering the temporal/spatial and personal/social dimensions of the narratives. I worked through various ways of ordering the narratives and settled on a loose chronological grouping of personal stories, key situations and plotlines. This allowed me to apply the structures of autobiography to the lifespan of the relationship between the Cole siblings and the state. The headings of these chronological sequences were partially linear, and partially thematic. The thematic nature of the groupings evolved over the course of the inquiry and came to represent the ways that power emerged and was exercised through the state during the span of foster care. I revisited these thematic constructs throughout the process, and narrowed my selection, until I had two or three stories to represent in detail. It was necessary to choose representative stories that would allow me to discuss linguistic choices and patterns evident in the narrating of my whānau by the state.

**Writing my way into analysis and interpretation**

I engaged in an iterative process of writing my way into my analysis. I began this by taking a wide scope over the entire timeline. Under each section of the analysis, I copied entire stories into my analysis document and proceeded to use subheadings that included a synopsis, an analysis of the author and their purpose, linguistic features and the social and historical context for the document and broader cultural milieu.

Following this broad analysis process, it was possible to see where some of the documents spoke to one another through shared tropes, characterisations, and colonial language, and to identify patterns across the case file. From here I reduced the number of

documents to representative exemplars under each of the main thematic headings to allow for greater depth of analysis. To streamline the content for analysis, I provided a synopsis at the opening of the chapter.

In most cases, I have kept whole stories in-tact. This is because it is interested in the way those in power tell stories about their subjects rendering people as supplicants to colonial governance, which are storied within whole documents. Where there were multiple documents, such as an exchange of memoranda, I have summarised some content for brevity and focused my analysis on documents which provided self-contained stories. As I wrote and re-wrote my analysis, I found myself coming closer to an interpretative rather than plot-based structure.

Upon completing analysis within these subheadings, I became aware that there were common elements in the linguistic style and form of the texts that communicated aspects of power in the relationship between the state and whānau. I subsequently added a section on linguistic features that included an analysis of the common features of these texts.

Interpretation of the stories contained in the case file was an iterative process that involved reading and re-reading the stories, and the application of literature, historical context, and theory. I read through texts, each time applying a different lens or focus. I examined the levels of representation, and the silences in the state's accounts, and asked how stories served particular purposes for the original authors and readers. I theorised as to the kinds of dominant cultural stories and characterisations that the authors of the case files may have drawn on in the construction of the Cole whānau. This informed working theories concerning the way power was exercised and reproduced. I subsequently related the case file stories to the culturally dominant narratives and policy positions revealed through my reading of the literature. I also attempted to trace patterns in the implementation of the power across

the autobiography and looked for themes that emerged across all levels. This involved a general process of abductive reasoning via which I ventured out beyond the written texts to contextualise these within the broader socio-cultural milieu of the time, and in ways informed by my contemporary position as a member of this whānau.

My analysis draws from Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic power in relation to Rappaport's (2000) conceptualisation concerning tales of terror that structure state and dominant characterisations of marginalised and supplicated groups, including Māori. Tales of terror are those stories that manifest inequities in symbolic power and are told about people to justify their subjugation. I argue that the state's narrative constitutes a tale of terror and my analysis at each point will describe underlying cultural narratives that are being drawn on the in the construction of the case file. Rappaport considers how tales of joy, which are alternative positive stories that groups offer about themselves, can be protective factors in the face of discrimination and stigma. Such tales, though they likely did exist, are not significantly represented in the case file. Although the state was less than interested in providing alternatives to their own harmful rhetoric, I nevertheless attempt in my inquiry to pay attention to the silences, as they suggest an untold story in the margins of the state's representation.

# Chapter 4 : Analysis:
# An Autobiography of Symbolic Power

The present study is an autobiographical account of one whānau's involvement in state care, and an exemplar of the way symbolic power was reproduced and maintained over the course of the documented relationship. The autobiographical approach motivated my organisation of the data along a chronologically ordered, linear pattern. I draw on the structure of autobiography to organise the inquiry into distinct phases in the lifespan of the relationship between the whānau and the state. The stories analysed in each section were selected to represent the exercise of power as it took place within broadly defined timeframes. The sections of the analysis, which are outlined below, are broadly reflective of traditional monomythical narrative structures (Campbell, 2008), without adhering so strictly to the metaphor as to lose sight of human experience in complex settings. Briefly, this narrative structure, which is so widespread as to be considered universal, involves a hero's journey from a place of relative safety, through a series of challenges, and their return to a new normal. For clarity, I have grouped the sections within my analysis into two chapters, the first of which represents the origins of the relationship and expression of symbolic power in the care of the Cole children, and the second of which describes the experiences of the Cole siblings as they grew up and aged out of care.

The section**, Origin Stories**, discusses the origin of the relationship between the state and whānau, as represented through the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department. I will consider the key narrative patterns that emerged at the start of the relationship, during the 1926 transfer of custody of the Cole children to the state. A key focus is on the narrative patterns that were drawn throughout the case files, including simplistic moral binaries and character archetypes. Stories that document beginnings and emergent patterns have enormous

significance in the way people understand their identities. The narrative patterns contained in this section reverberate through the lifespan of the welfare relationship.

The section titled **Thinking of the Children** focuses on the schoolyears of the foster children, typically before they turned fifteen, when they were placed in service. I trace the narrative patterns as they evolve and are used in the construction of the "problem child" and the contributing citizen. This includes focusing on the way the children in foster care were characterized in the welfare officer's narrative accounts, and how these narrative constructions shaped the state's response, as concerns for the wellbeing of society as a whole and the resources of the state in particular began to eclipse the activating narrative of the vulnerable child.

In Chapter Five, the section titled **A Good Home** moves across the timeline and describes the contested notion of homes as sites within which citizenship ideals were inculcated. This section loosely documents the time in foster children's lives between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, when they were in service, during which they sometimes returned to live with whānau. The stories in this section address the internalisation of dominant narratives of home and child-rearing ideals and theorises that the colonisation of the mind was a primary goal of the state's engagement with whānau.

The final section, **Negotiated Futures**, examines stories in the file that were concerned with the lives of the state wards as they were released from custody and attempted to forge independent lives for themselves. These stories revisit the narrative conventions first introduced in the origins, to explore how these became an evaluative measure. Stories in this section concern the construction of the ideal citizen-supplicant of state care, and the way they responded with compliance or defiance. These stories are concerned with the way the state-

maintained oversight on the Cole siblings as adults, and the way they characterised them as successful or unsuccessful products of the state system.

In drawing these sections together, I will attempt to trace some of the common elements in the narratives that emerged across the lifespan of the relationship between the state and the whānau.

## 4.1 Language and Form

As a product of early twentieth century statehood, some of the terminology in the file is archaic. Some of these more commonly used phrases are worth considering briefly, as a representation of the taken-for-granted assumptions and attitudes of the staff of The Child Welfare Branch.

Welfare work had evolved from the charitable institutions of large orphanages, asylums and prisons, and this is reflected in the language of the case files (Tennant, 2007). Firstly, the placement of children in state custody was referred to as committal, a term used to denote the consignment of persons to a prison or institution by warrant (Etymology Online, 2018). The connotative meaning of committal was of incarceration and assumes an imbalance in power. Despite the delegation of most guardianship duties to foster mothers and welfare officers, the assumptions and language of incarceration remained. State wards were frequently referred to as “inmates” (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 335), who, upon reaching maturity, were “discharged from control” (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 621).

The language of control and compliance extended to the legal phrases used on committal orders. The Cole siblings were committed because they were, “not under proper control.” In the year that the Cole siblings were uplifted, 164 of the 603 children committed to state care bore this classification. A further 238 were considered destitute (New Zealand Government, 1927). These phrases were used to denote living conditions that were

considered grossly inferior and therefore incompatible with the parental duty of care. These conditions were blamed on parental neglect both wilful and ignorant, rather than on the structural inequalities that had led to impoverishment (Dalley & Tennant, 2004). It was, therefore, a description more often applied to working class families whose circumstances did not meet the ascribed standard of the Pākehā middle-class, and reflected powerful cultural narratives of the undeserving poor, where impoverishment was characterised as an individual failing associated with a morally depraved underclass (Lyndon, 2019).

Taken as a whole, these linguistic features suggest an unspoken understanding of what was valued in the role of the parent, and what the state construed as necessarily to provide in its custody of children in care. Notions of psychological and emotional well-being are de-emphasised, in favour of a parental duty that focuses on physical needs and supervisory control. The parental duty that the state fulfilled was, therefore, associated with compliance by the deserving poor (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Although policy shifts were activated based on rhetoric of child vulnerability, and these highlighted the primacy of the home over an institutional setting, these sat uncomfortably with notions of the threat posed by delinquency and disorder. The language of parenting practices stigmatised and disciplined certain types of families, particularly those who raised children in extended whānau networks, or families who lived in poverty. Importantly it structured the needs of children in care and de-emphasised the importance of affection and connection.

It is also worth considering the authorship of the case files. The inquiry touches on this when it becomes relevant, but it is worth considering that the authors of the memoranda often worked with the Cole whānau over a period of several years and would likely have considered that their decisions relating to their needs were based on extensive history and expertise. The majority of the case notes reflect the time between 1926 and 1938, when John Beck was the Superintendent of the Child Welfare Branch (Garlick, 2012). The welfare

officers frequently addressed memoranda to him to ask for advice and to keep him informed as to issues. From the time the Cole siblings moved to Hamilton in 1928, they were supervised by the same welfare officer, who remained in contact even after their discharge from care. It is possible to trace something like a developing rapport between the welfare officer and some of the Cole siblings, although it is impossible to say whether this was indicative of a mutual regard. It was always conditional, however, on satisfactory behaviour. While Margaret was described in 1937 as "well behaved" and "quite a satisfactory worker, being used to Pakehas [*sic*]"(Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 56), her older brother Hokotoki was considered "a troublesome youth" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 242) with an "unreliable" character (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 170). When welfare officers who were less familiar with the Cole siblings were required to evaluate them, they typically relied more heavily on negative stereotypes, particularly evident in one welfare officer's negative characterisation of Hokotoki as a "typical native" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 335).

## 4.2 Synopsis

I will first provide an overview of the life stories contained within the state's records, the purpose of which is to situate the reader in the context of the file. The purpose of this synopsis is to construct a narrative in a metaphorical three dimensional space, locating it temporally, as well as recognising the personal, interpersonal and spatial elements that are brought to bear on the story (Clandinin, 2000). The names and dates of birth of the Cole siblings are also outlined in the simplified Cole family tree (see Appendix).

The relationship between the state that is the subject of this inquiry had historical roots. The children's father, Herbert Cole, had himself been a product of state care. He had served in World War I, perhaps as an interpreter, and returned in 1917 with war injuries. Shortly

after his return, at age 34, he married my great grandmother Puiaki Hokotoki Paora (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa). She was seventeen years old.

The couple moved frequently within the Wellington and Wairarapa regions, as Herbert's work was often seasonal or short term. They had six children between 1919 and 1926. As early as 1920, Puiaki filed for a separation on the grounds of cruelty. She reported that Herbert had chased her while brandishing a tomahawk ("Alleged cruelty: wife seeks separation," 1920). The magistrate denied her this legal separation. A few months later, my grandmother, their second child, was born.

In 1922, Puiaki gave birth to a third child, a daughter, whom she placed in whāngai care with some relatives. She remained with extended whānau, and reunited with some of her siblings and her father when she was a teenager, after briefly living with her birth mother.

In 1926, when the state's record began, Puiaki Cole was living with her sister in Papawai. Her estranged husband had followed her and forced his way into the home. After two days, she left to keep her children safe. She placed the two eldest children, aged six and seven into an orphanage. She took the two youngest with her to Wellington but found that she was unable to care for them at her place of work. She sought assistance from the state, and the four siblings were committed into state care. Upon committal, Herbert Cole was ordered to pay nine shillings per child for maintenance costs, but he rarely made payments and was arrested on multiple occasions for his debts. A few months after the other children's committal, the youngest child Stanley was born. He remained in the care of his mother until 1935 when he was also made a ward of the state.

Between the years 1928 and 1935 the four Cole siblings were placed in a succession of foster homes. They were kept together throughout these changes but were moved to areas where they had little contact with their parents. Eventually they ended up in Hamilton.

During this time, according to my grandmother's accounts, their experiences with foster parents and employers were mixed. Some were good, however, there were instances where they suffered harsh punishments, cruelty and neglect by people who were tasked with their protection. In one home, for instance, punishments included removing their mattresses from the bed so that they slept on the springs of their cots. Although my grandmother later recalled complaints that had been made to welfare officers on their behalf by concerned teachers, these are not represented in the file.

Although Puiaki and Herbert Cole remained legally married, both began new relationships, and had partners with whom they lived for many years. Herbert Cole fathered two more children with his partner, Emily Rielly and Puiaki's partner Waka Davis acted as a surrogate father to Stanley. In 1935, following an argument between Waka Davis and Puiaki in which Davis reported evicted Puiaki from the home, Stanley, aged around nine, was uplifted into state care and placed at Whatman Home in Masterton. He was not placed in a foster home as state officials considered him, as a Māori boy, too difficult to place. He lived in the institution from age nine to fifteen. This institution brought him into proximity to Herbert, who lived in Masterton, but who had denied paternity. Stanley recalled later that he first saw his father when another boy at the home pointed him out at a rugby match (To'o, 2016). Stanley returned to live with Puiaki and Waka Davis in 1942 on a friends' license which allowed the state to monitor the home and remove custody if they deemed it necessary. He also visited Herbert and expressed a preference for living with his father, which the state did not allow.

Between the years 1935 to 1939, the siblings finished their schooling, usually around age fifteen, and entered into service agreements which saw the state manage their wages and pay them a small allowance. Girls became domestic help and boys worked as farm labourers. Annual reports documented whether they were good workers. The children were discharged

from state control when they were aged nineteen. Hokotoki was discharged in 1938 and went to live and work with his father for a few years. Margaret was discharged in 1939, and worked in a factory, then the Wellington Railway Tearooms before marrying my grandfather in 1947. Francis was discharged in 1942, and enlisted in the army, where he served with the 28th Māori Battalion. Stanley and Kuia were both discharged in 1944, and Stanley remained living with his mother while Kuia lived with her father in Masterton. Once discharged, the Cole siblings' savings remained under the control of the state. They sometimes requested to withdraw funds from their savings and welfare officers investigated their claims before approving or denying them. Margaret successfully applied to have her full savings paid out to her in 1942. She was 22 and stated (falsely) that she had plans to marry. Hokotoki made several requests for funds and was often denied. He and the other siblings had their savings paid out in 1948, following a change in departmental policy. This payment marks the chronological conclusion of the case file.

## 4.3 Origin Stories

The origin stories that I examine here concern the origins of the relationship between the state and the Cole whānau**.** Although specific and personal, the file also exemplifies some of the ways that state engagement with whānau contributed to cultural disruption and inter-generational harm. This section begins with the committal of the Cole siblings to state care. This took place in 1926. It is worth noting from the outset that the policy of the Child Welfare Branch in the 1920s and 1930s would be that Māori children should, whenever possible, be left in their communities, with their kinship groups (Dalley, 2022). That Beck chose not to do so in this instance was justified by the pressing need for the children's safety and apparent inability of the whānau to provide a safe home. This appears to support the suggestion that policies were often flexiby-applied and prone to the interpretation of welfare officers (Labrum, 2004a). It also suggests that, although the boarding out of Māori children

was less common than it would be in the latter part of the twentieth century, when it occurred there was little consideration of the cultural needs of the children.

In the analysis of these origin stories, I will outline the dominant narrative threads that structure the power relationship between the state and the Cole whānau. I will then postulate an alternative reading of events to the account that Beck has provided. This is intended to resist the dominant re-telling of the narrative in the state's text.

#### *4.3.1 Committal to the state*

The primary source for the committal narrative is a memorandum from senior public servant John Beck, writing on behalf of the Director of Education, to the Inspector of Police, Wellington. He was less than two months away from his appointment to the position of Superintendent of the Child Welfare Branch, which would come into effect with legislative changes in April of that year. This memorandum presents us with a self-contained narrative account of an interaction between Puiaki and Herbert Cole and subsequent committal of the Cole children to the state. The following excerpt is dated February 11, 1926:

> The mother of the Cole children has called at this office and stated that until recently she has been residing at Papawai with her children. It appears that her husband came to Papawai and lived with a cousin of hers for some time and the cousin brought him round to the house where Mrs. Cole was living. She protested against Cole coming into the house, but the man forced his way in and remained there for three days. As soon as the mother's relatives knew of this, they told her she would have to make other arrangements for the children. She immediately left for the Upper Hutt, leaving the two older children at St. Joseph's Orphanage, and then came on to Wellington with the two younger ones. Apparently, she has obtained employment at 105 Thorndon Quay and now finds it impossible to continue looking after her children. I enclose

> herewith the previous correspondence regarding this case. From Mrs. Cole's statement it appears that Cole has not assisted her in any way whatsoever to maintain either herself or the children, and that the statement made by him on the 4th of February to the Police at Greytown is not correct.
>
> The woman is again pregnant and is in great fear that Cole will follow her and ill-treat her as he has done on previous occasions (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 305).

Beck begins by outlining the problem as he sees it, which appears to be one of feminine vulnerability and masculine threat. He describes Herbert's actions as threatening. The story framing justifies intervention in the interests of the children. Beck outlines a solution:

> It seems to the Department to be a case of committal to the care of the state, in the interests of the children, even supposing they are handed back to the mother as soon as she is able to provide them with a home. It is essential apparently that some provision should be made, in order that Cole will not interfere with them or with the mother. I have advised her to apply for a separation order against him. At the same time I should be glad if you would apply for the committal of the children to the Wellington Receiving Home, on the grounds that they are not at present under proper control (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 305).

The initial description of the state's response suggests that intervention may be short term and it is impossible to know if this was how it was understood at the time. The case files lack of consistent chronology means that the initial committal record, written in 1926 sits

alongside a collection of memoranda from 1948, a jarring reminded of the longevity of the relationship.

In the examination of this storying, my analysis deals with the underlying ideological positions through which Beck characterises members of the Cole whānau and the state. I then turn to a discussion of how these ideological positions created material effects on the lives of the Cole whānau.

#### *4.3.2 The Moral Binary*

Beck's characterisation of the actors draws on simplistic narrative dualisms of good and bad, posing Puiaki Cole and her children as helpless victims, Herbert Cole as the villain. These character archetypes first outlined in the committal narrative will prove to be enduring over time and structure the state's response to the whānau. Within this framework, Herbert is presented as an undeserving poor person and blamed for his family's impoverishment and his wife's inability to take care of the children. He "has not assisted her in any way whatsoever to maintain either herself or the children". This framing draws on the rhetoric of self-responsibility that positions poverty as a personal, rather than a systematic failure (McClure, 2004). Of all his negative qualities, including the violence towards his wife, it appears that his lack of financial support for his family was most objectionable. To the state, he had reneged on his marital obligations as a provider and protector. As a labourer and chimney sweep, Herbert Cole's employment was precarious and inadequate to meet his family's needs. This was represented as further evidence of his poor character (Tyler, 2013). As an example of the undeserving poor, Herbert would become the focus of continued scrutiny by the state, specifically the judiciary and police force, whose attempts to recoup maintenance payments on behalf of the child welfare branch would be well-documented in the case file.

In contrast, Puiaki Cole's construction as the "deserving poor" is textured with gendered norms of feminine vulnerability (Labrum, 2004b). Herbert's use of physical force to enter her home, along with Puiaki's pregnancy, support a construction of her as a vulnerable and virtuous mother, making the best of a bad situation. Within this characterisation, Puiaki is presented in terms of her fulfilment of the self-sacrificing maternal role, whereby relinquishing her maternal rights are presented as being "in the interests of the children" (Stewart, 2021). Seeking the advice and help of the state positioned her as virtuous, as did her efforts to secure employment, which demonstrated that she had taken on the role of breadwinner, a position necessitated by Herbert's abdication of his duties. By taking up employment, however, Puiaki is forced to confront the realities of inflexible working conditions, finding it "impossible*"* to care for her children and hold on to her position (Rutherford, 2017). The repertoire of possible responses available to the welfare system was limited by narrowly constructed family roles, which did not take into account the reality of working-class women's lives (Rutherford, 2017). Although the role of mother as caregiver was viewed as an important one, it relied on the financial security of an employed husband. Colonial rhetoric of self-responsibility and general anxieties around the creation of welfare dependence contextualised the lack of adequate provision for women at the time whose husbands did not meet their financial obligations (Dalley & Tennant, 2004). Within this context, the removal of children and the divestment of parenting responsibilities to foster mothers was posited as the most appropriate solution.

#### *4.3.3 Constructing the Other*

The construction of the Cole parents demonstrates a dualistic framing that lacks nuance and complexity in the way the state constructed their subjectivities. In a scrawled note in the margins (see Figure 4), Puiaki is described as good, and Herbert is bad (Child Welfare

Branch, 1926-1948, p. 305). Furthermore, Cole is describe in official court documents as a "drunken waster" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 313).

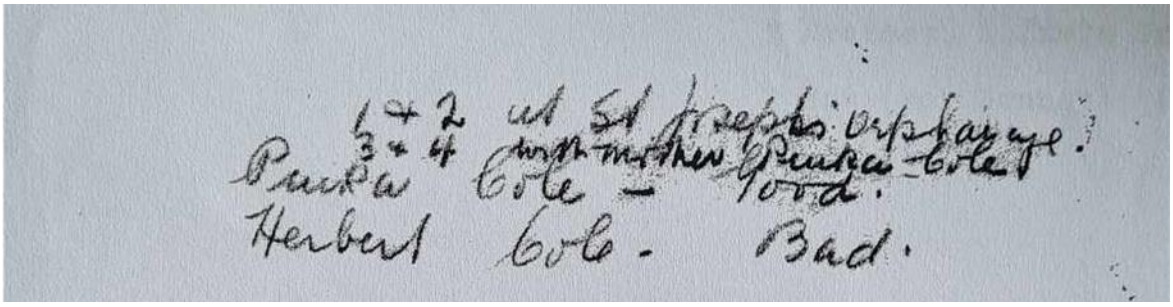

*Figure 3: Note in the file: "1&2 at St Joseph's Orphanage. 3&4 with mother Puiaki Cole. Puiaki Cole – Good. Herbert Cole – Bad."*

The Cole parents were constructed within moral binaries and compared to affluent Pākehā ideals. The construction of the Cole whānau as the "other" was based on colonial hierarchical power dynamics which marginalised individuals like Puiaki and Herbert Cole according to their positioning within racialised, gendered, and classed social categories. The Coles' actions were scrutinised against moral distinctions which were shaped by the social mores of affluent ruling classes (Bourdieu, 2010). Their best imitations of these classed ideals, however, still did not result in them being afforded equal status. Access to their children was contingent on perceived "good behaviour." A visit from Stanley, for instance, was postponed until after the New Year because, "with people like the Coles, particularly at holiday time, they are apt to have a crowd in the house" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 39). In subsequent stories, which will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Five, the construction of Puiaki as a good mother is at odds with the canonical narrative of Māori motherhood, and so its exceptionalism is duly noted as being "rare" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 362).

Inherent to the construction of the "other" is their position of inferiority relative to the writer. Eugenicist beliefs, which maintained that the state had a role to play in the control of genetically inferior traits, were widespread and informed some of the language of public

policy (Metcalfe, 2000). The annual departmental report for 1926-27 categorised parents of uncontrollable children into one of three character categories: “dead, deserter or unknown”; “good” or “bad, questionable, drunkards, feeble-minded, and physically unfit” (New Zealand Government, 1927, p. 7). The range of “bad” characteristics is indicative of the range of traits that were considered markers of inferiority, and therefore worthy of the state’s intervention (Wanhalla, 2007).

These frameworks provided a basis for the state’s response to the Cole whānau. For example, the characterisation of Herbert Cole as a bad influence on his wife and children contextualised the committal and separation orders and ensured his future custody requests were frequently denied. He was undoubtedly violent towards his wife and children, but evidence from the magistrates ruling in 1920 shows that allegations of violence was insufficient to grant a separation ("Alleged cruelty: wife seeks separation," 1920). It appeared that his lack of financial support for his family, and the subsequent charge to the state, was seen in some circles as more egregious than domestic violence. His violence and drunkenness served as confirmation of his poor character in subsequent characterisations by the state. He became the perpetrator for his family’s impoverishment, which limited the state’s reflection on the role played by social, political and economic forces that may have also exerted influence on the family (Rashbrooke, 2019).

The representation of the Coles’ as the “other” by definition limits their capacity to represent their own experiences on their own terms (Gordon, 1988). This narrative silence is a feature of the file as a whole and reflects issues of symbolic power in who gets to name and define the situation faced by the whānau. In this case, Puiaki is presented as somewhat passive, and responding to forces beyond her control by taking advice from her relatives and the Superintendent. Other sources demonstrate that she was more agentic than the committal narrative supposes. Evidence that Puiaki Cole had previously attempted – unsuccessfully - to

seek assistance through the judicial-legal systems of state may serve as a counter-narrative to Beck's representation of her lack of agency. Puiaki's attempts to gain a legal separation from Herbert demonstrate the complexity of navigating powerful institutions as a Māori woman. In March 1920, Puiaki Cole attempted unsuccessfully to gain a legal separation from Herbert, but her evidence was dismissed ("Alleged cruelty: wife seeks separation," 1920). Her witness testimony was not believed, whereas her husbands was accepted. Her separation now appears to be successfully managed because of the intervention of the Child Welfare services. This background is at once reflective of the unequal and gendered power relations in the judicial and welfare systems, and indicative of Puiaki's willingness and ability to engage with these institutions to secure modest gains (Mikaere, 1994). Although far from ideal, Puiaki Cole's actions created a means through which she could gain some safety and distance from an abusive relationship. In doing so, it is unlikely that she could have predicted how the state would exercise control over her and her children in the following years(Gordon, 1988; Labrum, 2004b).

#### *4.3.4 Constructing the Heroic State*

While the personal stories of the "other" are decentred in the narrative, the committal story focuses on the role of state intervention. In this, as with other stories in the case record, the state is represented as morally purposed, and unimpeachable in its processes and practices (Dalley & Tennant, 2004; Gordon, 1988). This narrative appeared to limit the possibilities of interrogation and accountability on the part of its employees. Abusive practices of caregivers, recalled later by the Cole siblings, were not recorded in the file, and so there is little reflection on the role the state's systems may have played in enabling such practices. This aligns with similar reports from the Abuse in Care Inquiry regarding the lack of accountability of care providers (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a). Beck's memorandum welds the declarative power of the state, when he writes that "it seems

to the Department to be a case of committal to the care of the state." This linguistic tendency to act as a mouthpiece of governance occurs throughout Beck's memoranda. In this instance, the "Department" justifies its expansion into the lives of the Cole whānau, "in the interests of the children." This rhetorically positions the state as working on behalf of the vulnerable and blameless victims of parental conflict. Furthermore, intervention is presented as being time-limited, with a vaguely defined possibility that the children will be returned to the mother's care "as soon as she is able to provide them with a home." This furthers the narrative of the state as a reluctant hero, and foreshadows the contested and value-laden evaluation of the homes of welfare recipients that arguably continues to characterise the state's engagement with some whānau (Hodgetts et al., 2014; Ware et al., 2017). The state's motives, and therefore the state's processes are positioned as beyond reproach.

Within this context, the state has the right to control the lives of welfare recipients, who are represented as morally deficient (Hodgetts et al., 2014). John Beck's views were reflective of the child-saving rhetoric of the early twentieth century, and represented the state's position that it had a duty of care to protect vulnerable women and children (Belgrave, 2004). This served to obscure and legitimate the harm caused by committal and foster care. Beck was the primary author of child welfare legislation and policy, these narratives were transmitted and legitimated through official policy positions and mandated processes.

Through framing the narrative in this way, the state became implicated in acts of violence that forced families apart and alienated Māori children from their culture. These stories were evidenced in the state's welfare and educational structures. In the following section, I examine the processes and practices associated with the care of the Cole children, to understand how welfare officers drew on dominant settler societal narratives in the framing of their response to the whānau.

To recap, by focusing on the silences in the narrative that Beck presents, it is possible to view the inciting incident of committal through the lens of colonial storying. In this way, the whanau case becomes a domestic metonym of the colonial project. Puiaki's Pākehā husband occupied her home by force, based on a broken marital promise which had displaced the collective traditions and left her unprotected. This is consistent with Mikaere's analysis of the tenuous position of Māori women post-colonial contact (Mikaere, 1994). Furthermore, the suggestion that he had been aided in his invasion by Puiaki's cousin represents the degree to which colonial ideologies that upheld gendered hierarchies within marriage were becoming hegemonic, and symbolic violence created the context for interpersonal violence. The implications for Puiaki and her children were material. The ongoing colonisation through structures of marriage and family systems provide the background for the committal narrative. The helplessness of the mother's relatives, who told her to make other arrangements for her children, suggests that historical forces had already eroded their ability to provide safety (Mikaere, 2003; Walker, 2004). Under common law, which had displaced traditional Māori judicial and marital legal frameworks, Puiaki had been denied the protection of the courts through legal separation (Mikaere, 1994).

## 4.4 Thinking of the Children

Below, I examine the way the state conceived of and acted on the perceived needs of children in care. This section deals with the broad period in the lifespan of the relationship when the Cole siblings were children, or, more accurately until they turned fifteen. This was the age at which they exited formal schooling and started in employment. In keeping with the broad aims of uncovering the embedded violence in the state's engagement with the whānau, the inquiry will turn to the ways the child welfare department carried out its duties to "prevent wastage in child life… and provide for social readjustment… in the interests of children" (Dalley, 1998, p. 16).

The narrative constructions of the preceding section are further developed with specific relation to the childhood of the Cole siblings. This section deals with the prominent moral binary of the problem child and the useful citizen, and the way these notions intersected with the tendency to draw on racial and class distinctions(Labrum, 2004a). As with the previous section, I will also attempt to draw attention to the narrative silences which limit the representation of the Cole children's voices.

One characteristic of social welfare systems is their tendency to silence the perspectives of the children while concurrently privileging the perspectives of their carers (Clark et. al., 2022). The case file presents ample evidence of this tendency. Children's attempts to exercise agency frequently conflict with the wider structural factors which maintain inequality. While the state's aims may have been broadly concerned with the reproduction of ideal citizenship, the children's attempts to communicate their needs were frequently ignored. Power is exercised when children's claims are disbelieved, their ability to defend themselves against accusations of poor character constrained. Within this context, outward expressions of defiance and misbehaviour may be construed as attempts to make themselves heard. These were largely unsuccessful and resulted in further attempts at silence and control.

### *4.4.1 Constructing the Problem Child*

The case files constructed the subjectivities of the Cole siblings as problem children, and the state as the sole purveyor of solutions to get them back on the right track. The functioning of child welfare and education systems were aimed at reforming and adjusting the familial context surrounding problem children, in order to produce active and engaged citizens (Dalley, 1998). This section addresses the narrative construction of problem children and the state's proposed solutions as evidenced by the Cole file.

In the first account, Margaret, aged 12, was accused of theft by her foster mother (Mrs. D. Her welfare officer, writing to the Superintendent, reported that:

> …the girl went to a neighbour's and stole the watch. She told Mrs D. that she found it, so Mrs. D. took it to the police. Mrs D. did not know that she had also stolen a small sum of money, with which she purchased a fountain pen. These children are all given to petty stealing (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 271).

This extract constructs Margaret and her siblings as inherently dishonest, "all given to petty stealing." The welfare officer's account is privileged, and Margaret's assertion that she had found the watch is assumed to be false. The representation of Margaret's guilt through court documents and the state's memoranda serve to legitimise the negative framing of the Cole siblings as evident in the focus on anti-social behaviour and lack of reference to more positive acts in the file. The positioning of the children as threats to social order served to reinforce the role of the child welfare branch as the moral agents of positive and necessary social reform. (Dalley, 1998; King, 2022; Tyler, 2013).

In a subsequent, and comparative instalment in the narrative, the alleged theft and destruction of the Coles' coupon books receives considerable attention. The coupon books represented a charge against the department, and a dominant theme in the correspondence is concerned with the mitigation of expenses incurred for the care of the children. After discussing the theft (see below), the welfare officer and Superintendent Beck's correspondence turns to a discussion of the most cost-effective replacement for the coupons.

The following extract is derived from correspondence between the welfare officer and Superintendent John Beck:

> I have to advise that Hokotoki Cole took the four coupon books from a shelf and lost them. He has told so many untruths about their disposal that I hardly know what to

> believe, but Francis told me that he saw Hokotoki take them along the road and tear them up. This he owned to doing, when I questioned him again, but to make quite sure, I asked Mr. T. [Male Child Welfare Officer], to go and question him, and he maintains that he tore them up and threw them away, on his way to school. In case this is not correct, will you advise the Postmaster, of the loss, and please issue special coupons for November and December.
>
> As the loss was not carelessness on the part of Mrs. V [foster mother], I will ask the Department not to penalise the new foster mother. Although we warned her that the children were addicted to stealing, she was not prepared for this extent(Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 266).

This account privileges the representations of the welfare officer and foster mother, and therefore characterises the children as inherently dishonest. Hokotoki's "many untruths" are not recounted and indicate the possibility of an alternative story. Here, we can see how the state exercises the power of representation and omits alternative accounts from the memorandum. This representation also limits the possibilities of interpretation (Gordon, 1988). Without a full account from Hokotoki's perspective, the reader relies on the conclusions of the welfare officer to form judgements. The welfare officer's interpretation of events draws on narratives of the undeserving, ungrateful, and criminal poor (Lyndon, 2019; Seabrook, 2013). Through this lens, the causes of the Cole siblings' actions are ascribed to inherent personality traits, rather than being seen as a response to circumstances. The welfare officer's interpretation serves to support a characterisation of Hokotoki as an anti-social adolescent. She co-opts biomedical terminology to assert that the children are "addicted to stealing." The use of "addiction" may be intended to imply that theft is habitual and repeated, and difficult to control. She also concludes that the alleged theft is a symbol of defect that is shared by all the Cole siblings, as "these children are all prone to petty theft." The

characterisation of the children's actions as personal choices rather than products of a social context is something which continues to shape the state's response to youth in justice settings (King, 2022). In this case, it served to distance the state from responsibility and in doing so diverts scrutiny away from the foster home and any concerns that the children might have about their care.

Above, I considered how the narrative centred on the opposition between the heroic state and a disobedient child, by focusing on the interrogation of the siblings. The welfare officer's elusion of the Cole children's voices aids narrative cohesion while disempowering children at the centre of the story. This action aligns with the state's prioritisation of efficiency, which placed secondary importance on the complexities presented by people. The state derives its heroic identity in this narrative not from positioning itself as a saviour of vulnerable children so much as a protector of valuable resources and the reputation of the children's foster mother. This represents in part the organisational turn towards professionalism and efficiency (Garlick, 2012).

Following a series of memoranda discussing the expense of replacement, there is a final telegram that reads "COLE CHILDREN COUPON BOOKS FOUND CAN MRS V. CASH THEM" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 255) This plot development challenges the preceding narrative framing, by introducing the possibility that the coupon books had not been destroyed by a criminal child as previously asserted. It also offers a challenge to the state's construction of Hokotoki, whose untruthful accounts had been used to evidence an inherently untrustworthy character. There is little evidence that this new information prompted a reversal of opinion, as subsequent documents continued to characterise Hokotoki as untrustworthy. It appears that the new information was assimilated within the existing understandings of Hokotoki, without challenging the accepted character construct. The negative construction of Hokotoki would prove resistant to change. In his early adulthood, as

documented in the section titled Negotiated Futures, Hokotoki's efforts to present himself as an autonomous and agentic were often curtailed by the negative expectations of both state and his own father. It is likely that the negative expectations were overlaid with narratives of the inherent flaws in young Māori men (Jackson, 2009). The tale of terror or dominant narrative throughout the case file at times suggests that the "natural tendencies" of the state wards represented a barrier to the construction of useful citizens (Labrum, 2004a; Stephens, 2023).

In other instances, the Cole's status as problems to be solved was derived from their social position and racial characteristics rather than their outward behaviour. This included comments on the difficulty finding a placement for Stanley, the youngest sibling who was committed in 1935, as Māori boys were "difficult to board out" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 622). It is unclear precisely what motivated Stanley's welfare officer to make this judgement, although the differential treatment of Māori children in care has been well documented (Savage et al., 2021). Māori children were more likely to be institutionalised, and more likely to be placed in less suitable adoptive homes (Else, 1991). Unlike the other Cole siblings, Stanley would remain in Whatman Home, a Salvation Army institution in Masterton, for several years.

In another thematically related instance, the Cole siblings were subjected to a medical intervention while on school grounds. They were targeted for an inoculation against a skin condition pejoratively referred to as the Māori itch, or hakehake. This event reflects wider societal anxieties around the uncleanliness of Māori and the threat they posed to the health of their Pākehā classmates (Christoffel, 2016). The narrative is notable in the way it shifts its focus away from concerns of the children on to that of the adults' worries about status and jurisdiction.

The Director of Schools outlines the concerns:

> I have to advise that on the 16th February, Mrs. P., the foster mother of these children, complained that they had been seized in the play-ground by a native man and two women, and had received an injection in the arm. Mrs P. immediately questioned the school teacher, who stated that she did not know who the officers were who gave the injection, but that it was for Maori itch. Mrs P. protested as no authority had been obtained for this treatment (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, unnumbered).

The author begins his account of this development by describing the inciting incident. The children, "had been seized in the playground by a native man and two women and had received an injection in the arm." This is a somewhat disturbing image, particularly due to the use of the verb "seized" and it places the children at the centre of the event. However, after this initial description, the children disappear from the story almost entirely, as the incident spurs others to action. This storytelling conceit centres the action on the witnesses, rather than victims, as protagonists. The author describes the response to the incident:

> I got into touch with Dr. Ada Patterson, who promised to make enquiries regarding the matter, and on the 1st instant I was advised that the inoculation had been carried out on the instructions of Dr. Boyd of the Health Department, and that in future, parents and guardians would be consulted before the inoculation was carried out. This certainly seems desirable especially in the case of state wards (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, unnumbered).

The responses of the other adults are central to the event's resolution. The opinions of the foster mother, Mrs. P, the school teacher, the school doctor, Dr Ada Patterson and health department's Dr Boyd as well as the Acting Manager of schools are all reported with various degrees of specificity. The most pressing concern is to clarify the authorisation of the

inoculation. It becomes apparent in the final line of the paragraph that, the extent to which the adults are “thinking of the children,” it is not as complex, feeling, people but as contested territory. This focus is evidenced by the phrase, “no authority had been obtained for this treatment.” The issue is resolved when it is agreed that parents and guardians will be consulted in future. The children are absent from the resolution, their experience apparently viewed as important only as far as it draws attention to a failure in the communication between various government departments.

Schools were and remain an important site of socialisation in the lives of all children, and particularly state wards (Beagle, 1974; Bishop, 2003). As cultural contexts, they are still frequently sites of marginalisation and “othering” (Borrero, 2012). As the state saw its role at this time as one of adjustment and reform, producing compliance was considered an important aspect of schooling (Dalley, 1998). For Māori, schools were sites of assimilation, the objective of which was to prepare them to take their place in society as members of a labouring underclass (Jackson, 2016). As Māori and state wards, the Cole siblings were the objects of increased scrutiny, and their classroom behaviour was discussed by teachers and welfare officers. My grandmother recalled that they were often the only Māori students, so this undoubtedly increased their visiblity. Teachers and welfare officers would consider the best interventions to address problem behaviours, which were often punitive and sometimes included the segregation of the problem child to reduce the threat of contagion. This can be seen as the evolution of concerns inherited from industrial school systems, which had attempted (largely unsuccessfuly) to impose separate systems for the vulernable and deserving poor from the “larrakin” youth who would negatively influence them (Beagle, 1974; Dalley, 1998).

The case file suggests that the veneer of professionalism associated with the state’s practices sometimes leant legitimacy to ingrained beliefs about problem children and Māori

inferiority (Dalley, 2022; Labrum, 2004b). In one instance, standardised intelligence testing was used as a tool to determine the placement of a Cole sibling whose behaviour had caused concern. Such tests were biased in their construction, representing dominant cultural values. Internationally, non-white students' performance was weaker than their white peers. New Zealand was no exception (Hodgetts, 2020; Flynn, 1998). The welfare officer prefaced the testing with a description of Kuia, who was about ten, as "very naughty... difficult to control and very destructive" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 87). The management of problem behaviour in state wards was viewed as part of the context of educational intervention, in that the state viewed its role as inculcating citizenship values, which included compliance with authority (Dalley, 1998; McClure, 2004). The connection of behavioural difficulties with intelligence was underpinned by a more general belief in Māori inferiority and links between so-called "feeble-mindedness," or developmental delays, with subversion and delinquency (Bishop, 1998; Savage et al., 2021). The report based on the intelligence testing suggested an inherent behavioural tendency which posed a threat to an orderly classroom:

> In reference to a mental test, this child showed herself to be erratic and impetuous. Vocabularly was limited, judgement and idea association poor, and comprehension several years retarded. Her memory was quite fair, visual memory being good (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 87).

The statement that the child "showed herself to be erratic and impetuous" implies that the uncontrollable behaviour is fundamental and innate. The language in this extract demonstrates that the state is concerned primarily on the impact of this behaviour on others. Unpredictability and impulsivity were difficult to control and there was ample precedent in social policy for the segregation of people who displayed these tendencies (Belgrave, 2004). The report gives an account of her strengths as "her memory was quite fair, visual memory

being good" but offers no reflection on the way the school setting or test characteristics might have contributed to a child with good memory performing poorly in measures of idea association and comprehension. Instead, educational processes and practices are not interrogated, rather, Kuia's results are construed as evidence of individual deficit. The report goes on to recommend a form of segregation at Richmond Special School for Girls, but admits that categorisation is not clear:

> It is difficult to give a definite recommendation in this case. The child is retarded, but not to such an extent that she could not mix with normal children, if her behaviour were better. It is not considered that she is a very suitable case for the school at Richmond, where she would probably be a ringleader in mischief. Perhaps the best course would be to give her an extended period in the Receiving Home to observe what her reactions are. It could then be decided whether she could be given another trial at board, or whether it will be necessary to try her out at Richmond (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 88).

Practices which attempted to segregate the "unfit" child from mainstream society, had a long history in child welfare policy (Stace, 2022). Special schools, including Richmond, were opened under the Education Department, with the mandate of training young men and women with developmental delays in domestic and manual labour(Dalley & Tennant, 2004). Within this context, mental testing can be construed as part of a larger suite of practices aimed at preserving and promoting the future fitness of the "New Zealand race" (Flynn, 1988; Wanhalla, 2007).

The state's anxiety about Kuia's potential as a "ringleader in mischief" constructed her as a problem child, and activated a segregationist response, but restricted its ability to provide her with an education and stable home. Her behaviour presented a challenge and was

consistent with fears of the negative influence of Māori children in institutional settings (Dalley, 2022). The state proved unable to balance her needs against what was percieved as a threat to other, more compliant, classmates, and so sought to remove her from school entirely. It may also be argued that the rhetoric of intelligence testing and disruptive behaviour concealed enduring ideas about the underserving poor, which story her defiance as ungratefulness, and which see the resources of the state as finite and better utilised on more compliant, deserving individuals (Lyndon, 2019). Within this framework a "good" and deserving welfare recipient is one who is docile, humble and grateful for whatever educational crumbs are bestowed upon them, whereas a "bad" or undeserving welfare recipient's behaviour entails a rejection of the state's beneficience. Furthermore, the use of biased intelligence testing was used uncritically to legitimise beliefs about the inferiority of Māori, by framing the results as a sign of inherent deficiency, which in turn allowed the state to distance itself from its own contribution to educational underachievement (Flynn, 1988). Such ideologies continue to be felt in certain school policies, such as, for example, the over-representation of the poor, Māori and Polynesian youth in "low-ability" classes, which limit students' educational opportunities (Bishop, 1996; Davy, 2021).

#### *4.4.2 Constructing the Useful Citizen*

State control, through home placements and education, was intended to produce good workers and engaged citizens (Dalley, 1998). Young men were trained for manual labour. Young women's work in domestic service prepared them for their future in the home. The training, and the evaluation of success, was predicated on notions of class status, race and gender (Dalley, 2022; Jackson, 2016; Labrum, 2004a). Acceptable citizenship relied on a social contract of rights and responsibilities. Whereas citizenship rights were supposedly concerned with equality and political voice, citizenship responsibilities were often inequitably evaluated (Labrum, 2004a). As state wards, the Cole children were members of

the working classes, who were required to prove their citizenship value in order to access civil rights (Dalley & Tennant, 2004). John Beck envisaged the role of the Child Welfare Branch was one of "re-adjustment" to the social field, with the aim of producing useful citizens (Garlick, 2012).

The Cole case notes offers evidence that welfare officers who internalised this grand narrative may have sometimes considered that they were working to instil citizenship values against a backdrop of the state ward's own natural deficiencies. Children's behaviour, as outlined in the previous section, was problematised, and often explained as being the result of the children's inherent flaws. In a report for the Abuse in Care Commission of Inquiry, it was noted that the term "maoriness" was conceptualised to include a wide range of racial biases regarding Māori, including the belief that Māori were intrinsically inclined towards criminality (Savage et al., 2021). These concepts were explicitly referenced in material produced by the Department of Social Welfare, as evidenced by a 1973 publication which connected the high levels of Māori children's offending to their "maoriness." These biases were differentially applied to boys and girls, with Māori maleness often associated with impulsive violence (Jackson, 2009) and Māori femininity tied to promiscuity and threats to the social order (Mikaere, 2003).

In contrast, the citizenship ideals to which the children were expected to aspire were modelled on classed ideals. Citizenship values were attached to the labour market and characteristics of compliance and docility were highly prized (McClure, 2004; Tyler, 2013). Measures of compliance served to structure and legitimise social power relations, through the efficient categorisation and regulation of human resources. The Child Welfare Branch, and the Education Department as a whole were interested in assigning value to the children in their care, which would guide their reforming practices (Dalley, 1998).

Frequently, annual reports considered whether the Cole children should remain in school or be placed in work. The welfare officers summarised their ward's progress under the categories, behaviour, health, and mentality, and noted if they were "good" or "sub-normal" based on their observations throughout the year. Once employed, their "capacity for work" and "character" were also regularly evaluated. These reports often contained references to the Cole siblings' perceived unreliability, their poor behaviour, and occasional references to their Māori blood, such as one report which accounted for a negative character assessment this way: "although half-caste, the Māori predominates" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948). The annual reports, constrained by a format that restricted (although did not eliminate) editorialising, provided an impression of legitimacy to the judgements of welfare officers. In these reports the Cole's Māori identity was either absent, or given as an explanation for poor behaviour. In one example (see Figure 4), Hokotoki was described as "having a percentage of Māori blood in him" and having "inherited some of the worst traits." This negative framing would continue throughout Hokotoki's association with the Department, and as will be discussed subsequently, constrained his ability to become independent.

In comparison, being a good worker was tied the Pākehā ideal, with one evaluation reading “She is quite a satisfactory worker, being used to Pakehas[*sic*]” (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 56). This file entry suggested that assimilation with Pākehā ways of working and being was a goal of citizenship. However, by the position of the Cole siblings as working class, the state system denied opportunities for upward mobility. All the siblings’ educational opportunities ceased when they turned fifteen. There was evidence in the file that teachers’ recommendations for further education were not acted upon. For one of the siblings the barriers to education were outlined in a series of memoranda that shift the responsibility for this lack of action. A report from a District Welfare Officer implies that the history of the Cole family would prevent the youngest of the siblings from accessing secondary education:

> Stanley has a strong academic tendency and would like to become a signwriter. In view of the history of previous members of this family it is rather problematical whether it would be advisable to send Stanley to the Wairarapa College, and board would be very difficult to obtain for him (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 394).

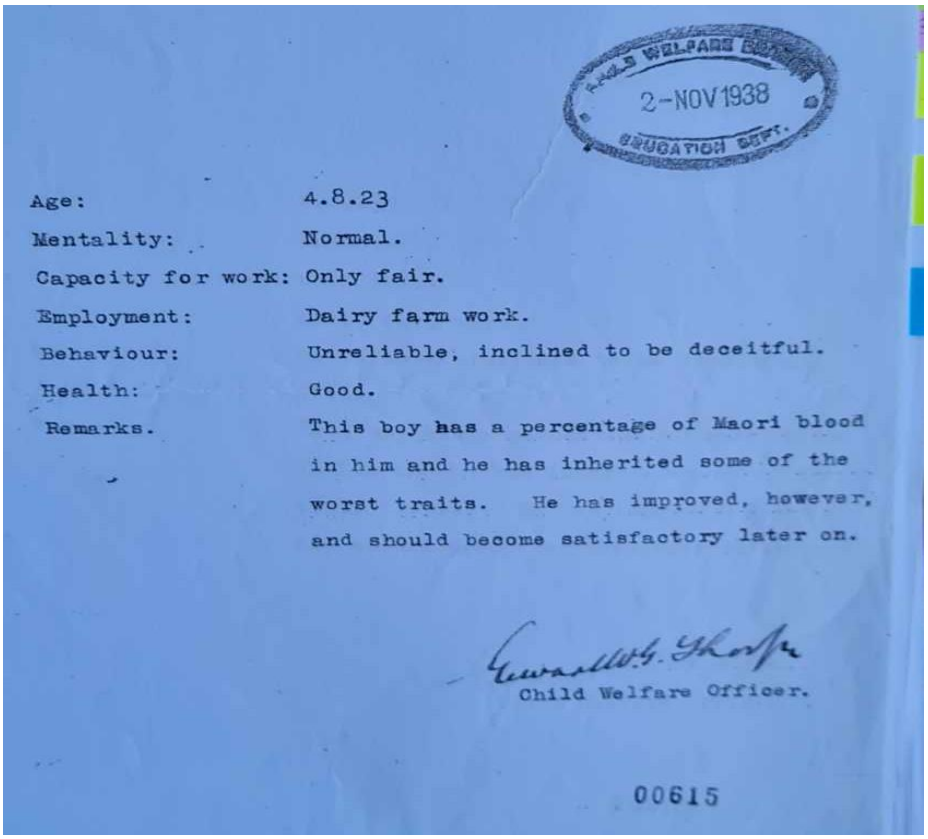


*Figure 4: An example of an annual report dated November 1938*

In this section I have considered the construction of the Māori problem child that limited the state's response to the Cole siblings by activating interventions aimed at controlling their behaviour and segregating them from other children. This characterisation limited the children's possibilities. This could be seen most clearly in the story concerning intelligence testing, which was used to segregate Kuia in an institution rather than to inform educational interventions that might have enabled her to thrive. The construction of useful citizenship as a benchmark of success similarly limited the potential of the Cole siblings as it evaluated them based on classed positions of citizenship responsibility. This meant that the Cole siblings were deemed successful if they exhibited behaviours consistent with an effective labouring class. They were discouraged from stepping outside these boundaries. Although they were supported to complete their basic education, for instance, recommendations that they complete some forms of secondary education were ignored. This limited their potential, as they were trained in manual labour and domestic service. In my grandmother's later years, this loss of opportunity would become a familial story of its own, used to motivate my mother and her siblings to engage with educational opportunities.

In the margins of every story about problem children lies some troubling questions. A modern reader may be more accustomed to pondering the inner lives of children. We may seek a reason for their behaviour that is more satisfying than the historical accounts of the inherent defects of Māori blood. For welfare officers of the epoch in question, when a child railed against boundaries, it was not the boundaries but the child who was at fault: even if those boundaries entailed punishments that would be deemed inhumane by today's standards. Children of the state had few resources, and their complaints, if they were ever courageous enough to make them, were frequently disbelieved. For this reason, accounts of childhood misbehaviour may be understood as acts of resistance, using the only tools available. Nevertheless, these accounts must be also taken with a degree of caution, as some have been

disputed. It must be recognised that state wards made for easy scapegoats and had little ability to defend themselves in the face of false accusations.

# Chapter 5 Respectability or Resistance

The previous chapter began the biography of the relationship between the state and the Cole whānau. I outlined the origin of the relationship, and the way symbolic violence was evidenced in the construction of problem children, and undeserving parents. Below, I continue my discussion of the relationship between the state and the whānau by discussing the way the cultural concerns around the ideal home contributed to greater scrutiny as well as the internalisation of domestic ideals which stigmatised Māori and working-class forms of mothering. I will then turn to the discussion of the ways in which the Cole siblings attempted to negotiate autonomous futures after they were discharged from state control.

## 5.1 A Good Home

Good homes and families were often associated with social progress, essential to the inculcation of citizenship responsibilities, and were considered central to the work of the Child Welfare Branch (Dalley, 1998; Labrum, 2004a). The practice of boarding out children in foster homes was based on a belief that improvement to children's lives and futures could be made if they were removed from "bad homes" and placed in "good homes." These binaries were based on the assumption in inherent superiority certain forms of domesticity that were associated with affluent Pākehā homes, and bore little resemblance to the material realities of keeping house and raising a family in strained circumstances (McGhee, 2017; Starkey, 2000). While much of the preventative work of the Branch was aimed at improving the conditions in poorer homes, the committal of children to state care allowed welfare agencies to exert control over the children's living arrangements through foster placements. As the return of children to parents was predicated on their ability to prove that they could meet certain standards of care, the requirements also served the purpose of controlling parenting practices (Dalley, 1998).

For the Cole siblings, foster homes and schools were uniformly Pākehā. Although subsequent evidence suggests that the placement of Māori children in Pākehā homes was inherently alienating and caused profound harm (Savage et al., 2021), the Cole's welfare officers appeared to find their placement unproblematic. The state's boarding agreements do not regularly identify the Coles' as Māori, suggesting that welfare officers may not have seen this as a salient feature in determining their placement in care. Subsequent critiques of such practices have argued that they exemplify assimilationist policies, and cause cultural alienation through a process whereby one is, "desocialised away from one's own culture and resocialised into another culture" (Galtung, 1990, p. 293). The intention of raising children away from their families was to encourage the internalisation of citizenship responsibilities, which it was believed that they did not adequately receive from their parents (Dalley, 1998).

The notion of citizenship and belonging was itself contested, with tensions between te ao Māori and the ideals of the dominant Pākehā ruling class (Mann, 2019). Bourdieu (2010) writes the ability of the ruling class to impose dominant forms of taste on society is a form of symbolic violence, which reproduces social power and impedes social mobility. The scrutiny of the home by welfare officers was overlaid with classed and racialised distinctions, which stigmatised the Cole whānau. The aspirational household was one which was scrupulously clean, where children were well-fed and neatly clothed and where Western-style meals were eaten around the dining table, and children were taught good table-manners (Labrum, 2004b). This kind of household was more easily obtained if a mother did not need to work outside of the home, or if a household could afford to employ servants.

Inasmuch as working class Māori may have aspired to the domestic ideals of the Pākehā ruling classes, they also brought with them notions from te ao Māori that encompassed more complex, multi-generational parenting practices (Jenkins & Harte, 2011). There is evidence in the Cole record of practices that may have been construed as a

citizenship responsiblity in te ao Māori, such sharing one's home and resources with extended whānau. These were scrutinised by inspecting welfare officers. and either co-opted into hegemonic citizenship narratives or storied in a derogatory way to reinforce existing negative stories of Māori living conditions.

### *5.1.1 The Home Inspection: A Game of Punishment and Reward*

The practice of inspecting the Coles' homes demonstrated the exercise of power over Māori parents and whanau. Upon the Cole siblings' committal, Beck anticipated their imminent return to their mother, "as soon as she is able to provide them with a home"(Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 305). With this statement, there emerged a series of contingencies upon which her parenting would be judged. The act of committal created the context for an unequal relationship between the whānau and the state, and the exercise of power took place in the inspection as well as its representation through the case notes. The welfare officer's visit was usually unannounced, at a time of their choosing (Labrum, 2000). This practice was a deliberate attempt to gain a naturalistic impression of the home, and it was rooted in the characterisation of welfare families as inherently deceptive, self-serving, and likely undeserving (Jensen & Tyler, 2015).

While family members did occasionally misrepresent the truth of their situations, the welfare officers' explanations for this often lacked an appreciation of the context within which this deception occurred. Deceptive practices, which might be appropriately construed as a response to limited resources and the humiliations of the welfare state, were viewed as signs of inherent character flaws (Jensen & Tyler, 2015). Indeed, this tendency towards dishonesty provides evidence that criteria for providing a good home was widely known and performed to demonstrate compliance. This is consistent with contemporary research into welfare-involved mothers' internalisation and performance of "good mothering" (Stewart, 2021). Welfare inspections often proved to be significant barriers to having their children

returned to their care. In the time that the Cole siblings were in care, only the youngest appears to have ever lived with family, although some lived with or close to their parents after they became adults.

The inspections and subsequent representation of the Cole family's homes were sometimes contentious, as whānau members and welfare officers' accounts competed for primacy. The dominant ideologies were heavily gendered and placed greater responsibility on women to maintain the moral heart of the home (Starkey, 2000). In contrast, the paternal role was one of financial support and discipline, and perceptions of Herbert's capacity for work were central to the evaluations of whether he could provide a suitable home. Next, my analysis turns to the narrative construction of a "good home" as a contested site (Little, 1998). These stories demonstrate the colonial imposition of domestic ideals, and their collision with Māori citizenship ideals and with the material realities of poverty.

#### *5.1.2 A Good Home is a Pākehā Home*

The state evaluated the homes of the working-class poor and Māori using criteria based upon normative comparisons to the ideal affluent Pākehā home. This was a difficult standard to meet for the working poor and welfare-dependent, for whom the conditions of impoverishment provided evidence of their failure to fulfil their parental moral duties (McGhee and Waterhouse, 2017). Traditionally, mothers were considered the moral heart of the home, and bore the weight of expectations, and welfare scrutiny, in ways that fathers did not (Starkey, 2000; Stewart, 2021). In addition to being heavily gendered, constructions of good homes were textured by racist ideologies which posited that Māori homes were inferior to those kept by Pākehā wives, drawing on stereotypes of unclean homes and poor parenting, which individualised the causes of poor living conditions in which many Māori found themselves (Labrum, 2004a).

The return of their children necessitated the endorsement of welfare professionals, and required parents in general, and mothers in particular, perform the required domestic role (Labrum, 2004a; Stewart, 2021). This was evident in this depiction of Puiaki Cole's home, which, in 1942, was noted to be a good home, and a rarity among Māori:

> The home occupied by Mr. Davies, Mrs. Cole and R.B [the child] is a humble one but scrupulously clean. It is on rare occasions that I have seen a humble Māori home so well kept and comfortable.
>
> The day on which I visited Mrs. Cole and the child were at home and there appeared to me to be a great bond of affection between the woman and the child.
>
> R.B was neatly and sensibly clothed and he appeared to me to be a well-cared for little boy.
>
> At birth apparently the child was rather delicate and has required special care which I should say he has undoubtedly received. Mrs. Cole has from time to time taken R.B to the District Nurse for advice on diet etc.
>
> In my opinion the allegations made by Stanley Cole are unfounded as rarely have I seen a Māori child appear so happy, well clothed and nourished. (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 362)

The racialised construction of the good home becomes clear in the phrase, "it is on rare occasions that I have seen a humble Māori home so well kept." The writer repeatedly points out this rarity, which indicates that the story of Puiaki as a good mother offers an exception to canonical narratives of Māori mothers (Fivush, 2009). The writer draws on individualised constructions, where a "well-kept" home is a personal choice, existing independently of material means for household maintenance. It is, nonetheless, a choice which, it was apparently believed, Māori women were less likely to make for their families.

The notion of the inherent superiority of Pākehā practices is also evident in the framing of Puiaki's parenting, which is linked narratively to her ability to keep a tidy home. R.B, is "neatly and sensibly clothed" and has a "bond of affection" with Puiaki, who demonstrated her maternal responsibility by seeking the advice of the District Nurse in matters of infant care. It appears that Puiaki's actions in seeking the advice of nurses contributed to her positive standing as it demonstrated acceptance and willingness to work with Pākehā institutions. As one who receives advice, she is positioned as inferior to the experts who invariably held positions of higher social status as professionals.

While Puiaki is framed as a maternal ideal, it is because her actions are construed as a reflection of good Pākehā-style domesticity. Examples of her parenting practices that could be reflective of Māori cultural practices are re-storied, and their significance as Māori ways of being are omitted from the narrative. For instance, the relationship between Puiaki and R.B is likely an example of a whāngai adoption. R.B was a delicate infant who required special care. He was the child of relatives. Whāngai adoptions continued to take place outside the jurisdiction of the settler welfare systems at this time, although there had already been legal changes in an attempt to bring the practice under the state's control (Mikaere, 1994). This narrative silence fails to represent that Māori homes could constitute sites of nurturing through Māori whānau systems. This misrecognition may be seen as part of a wider range of assimilationist policies. Mikaere (1994) writes that the recording and re-telling of traditional pūrākau often removed or sanitised women's roles for the benefit of western audiences. In a similar fashion, Puiaki's mothering is re-storied as a tale of western superiority, a self-congratulatory tale of the successful influence of Pākehā. The representation of Māori maternal care is thus whitewashed and concealed beneath "sensible clothes."

If Māori homes could not be re-storied as Pākehā success, then they risked being the target of denigration. An earlier inspection of Puiaki Cole and Waka Davis' home, made

shortly after Stanley's committal in 1935, finds little to recommend their home, and is particularly scathing of the presence of long-term guests. According to Waka Davis, these were relatives whose mother was in hospital, so providing accommodation for them may have been construed as an act of manaakitanga, a gesture of care which is a central tenet of Māori citizenship ideals (Durie, 2001; Stephens, 2023). To the welfare officers, however, these guests represent over-crowding and the risk of contagion, writing that the conditions seem worse than when Stanley was first committed, "owing to the family of children residing there … all contacts of the tuberculosis mother… the whole accommodation is very limited" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 174). This resulted in the application for Stanley's return being declined. He was not permitted to visit them for a further year, and only after it was established that there were no further houseguests residing on the premises.

The dinner table offered a further exemplar of good homes and bad. The cooking and serving of food was conceived as a maternal duty, presented un-tethered from the effects of material hardship. Then, as now, what and how mothers feed their children is tied to motherhood ideals, and a mechanism through which mothers are scrutinised (Arlinghaus, 2021). In the context where Pākehā norms were idealised, Māori food was often denigrated, as this complaint from Stanley, in 1942, upon returning home after seven years' in an institution demonstrates: "I could never get used to their mode of living, they mostly living on Pauas and seal eggs and when they have meat they cook all their food in the same pot and never have a second course" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948). The letter, commenting on his mother's meals, suggests internalisation of Pākehā notions of good homes, and his alienation from Māori cooking practices. His claims are refuted by the state inspectors, who verify Puiaki's conformity to western ideals. The inspector writes, "I saw the table after the breakfast meal – it contained cold roast mutton, bread, butter, Māori scone and a large jam tart. Other meals also are of European style" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 361). The

weaponisation of Māori-style meals and the associated “mode of living” to undermine Puiaki was nuetralised by her displays of conformity. If we read Stanley’s complaint as a true represenation of his feelings at the time, then we have evidence that state institutions had effectively resulted in the internalisation of Pākehā domestic ideals (Savage et al., 2021). This had an alienating effect, making it difficult to return to his now unfamiliar home.

For the state, the Salvation Army institution was seen as preferable to the Cole family home. This may be counter to the policies of the 1930s, which suggested a preference for foster homes and service placements (Dalley, 1998). However, in subsequent years the differential treatment of Māori in state care would be noted as a reason for Māori over-representation in institutional settings (Savage et al., 2021). The inspecting officer compared the Cole home with the institution, saying: “the child... has resided in the Salvation Army home, probably in better conditions than he has previously experienced.” The memorandum supporting Stanley’s committal sheds a little more light on the reasoning behind the state’s preference for institutional care. Firstly, the welfare officer argues that institutionalisation is preferred for Stanley because, “being a Maori boy, he is not very easy to board out and he would, I think, benefit, for a time at all events, by the care of an institution” (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 192). Race and gender were not invoked in any direct way for the other Cole siblings in their committal story ten years before. Its naming as a factor here serves as a reminder both of the changing social and political climate between 1926 and 1935 and of the flexible interpretation of policy based on the dominance of shared narratives. The depression had resulted in budget cuts, and the shortage of foster homes was a continual concern (Garlick, 2012). Within this context, foster parents were more likely to be selective in their choices. It is possible to theorise that cultural narratives of Māori inferiority, and particularly stories about the laziness and delinquency of Māori boys were barriers to

Stanley's placement. In subsequent years, welfare officers would make similar claims about the difficulty of placing Māori boys with adoptive parents (Else, 1991).

The memorandum notes the particular value of institutional care in providing Stanley with training for the labour market, stating that the home "is an open situation where they carry on a small farm. This would be suitable for a boy of this kind" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 192). Educational policy, as it pertained to Māori, was concerned with producing farmers and farmers' wives (Jackson, 2016). The imagined utopia of the small farm belies the reports of abusive practices at Whatman Home that have subsquently come to light as part of the Royal Commission of Inquiry (New Zealand Government, 2023). The state's representation also conceals the assimilationist policies that were embedded in public policy at the time, reflected in G.P Shepard, Under-Secretary of Native Affair's comment in 1937 that "we must assimilate the Māori into useful and self-respecting citizenship" (Interview with Shepard in David Williams, Crown Policy Affecting Māori Knowledge Systems, 55. Cited in Stephens, 2023, p. 210).

#### *5.1.3 The Paternal Role in the Home*

Although the domestic sphere was primarily considered a mother's responsiblity, the state also considered the role of the father, in instilling citizenship values of thrift, hard work and personal responsiblity(Wanhalla, 2007). The evaluation of paternal character was less likely to be made on the basis of household cleanliness. Rather, welfare officers were alert to signs of prevarication or laziness. For instance, the following note, obstensibly concerned with the availability of sleeping quarters for Stanley, includes a commentary on the percieved laziness of Waka Davis:

> When this home was visited at 10.45 am Davis and all the children were still in bed and it was not possible to see the sleeping accommodation that would be provided for Stanley if he returned to this home (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 174).

Furthermore, Herbert Cole demonstrated some awareness of the unspoken criteria when he requested to have his children returned to him in 1938. He drew on constructions of the deserving poor in presenting himself as a disabled veteran, stating, “I have a good home for them. I am a Disabled Returned Soldier and have no one to look after me and waiting to go before the War Pensions Board”(Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948)p.599).

Despite his best efforts, Herbert Cole continued to be constructed as a self-serving individual, whose attempts to regain parenting rights concealed nefarious efforts to rob the state of its resources. The following inspection of his home demonstrates this characterisation:

> I found him extremely untruthful and unreliable.
>
> I first interviewed the Police who state he is living with Mrs. Wilde and often is known as Mr. Wilde. They say he is a scrounger and in no way fit to have the children.
>
> I then saw Mr Cole and was shown over the house, which was fairly clean. A man named W. lives with him, is supposed to be on a visit, but has been there some weeks. He is the same type as Cole and has a native wife and family in Pahiatua whom he will not maintain. The house contains two bedroom, (one of which has a double and single bed and the other two single beds), a small sitting room and a small kitchen. All rooms are small and stuffy (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 566).

The first three paragraphs of the memorandum (above) contain references to Herbert's poor character. Two separate and unlinked phrases relate to the nature of the home, noting in the third paragraph that it is "fairly clean" and the rooms "small and stuffy." The same paragraph provides an itemised list of the number of rooms and beds. This was because the state wished to protect children from overcroweded conditions that would make it necessary to share beds (Dalley, 1998). The memorandum draws on the negative characterisation of Herbert Cole that was first represented in the committal narrative. The inspector notes Herbert's tendency to sometimes take his partner's name, which appears to provide emphasis to the subversion of expected family roles. To muddy this representation further, it is worth noting that Herbert's partner was named elsewhere in the file as Rielly rather than Wilde, and that Wild was actually Herbert's mother's maiden name. The report continues to provide evidence of Herbert's dishonesty in the following story:

> Questioned Cole about Mrs. Wilde but he stated she was away, where he did not know, was working and had the two children with her. Whilst we were talking a little girl ran quickly past us into the house. I asked Cole who she was and after a lot of hesitation stated she was a neighbour's little girl, giving her name. I asked to see her and when questioned the child told me her name was Una Cole. Cole had no excuse but persisted she slept with a Mrs. B, 34 Roberts Road, Lansdowne and that the younger child was away with the mother. Called on Mrs B and asked for Una, but she told she was at home (Coles) and that her mother, Mrs. Wilde, had just left on her way home. I asked if either of the children ever slept there but Mrs B said no, they lived at Coles (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 566).

Here, Herbert's attempt to present his home as a "good home" is intruded upon by his daughter, the Cole siblings' half-sister. He at first denies that she belongs to him, then claims that she lives elsewhere. It is possible to theorise a likely reason for Herbert's subterfuge. He

likely thought that the presence of his daughter in the home would harm his chance of having his other children returned. It is quite likely that he would have been correct in this assumption, based on welfare policies designed to ensure each child had their own bed (Dalley, 1998). His lack of material resources would have been considered a cause for denying his requests. In the preceding section it was noted that Puiaki Cole and Waka Davis' request for Stanley's return was declined primarily on this basis. Under these circumstances, Herbert is left with a limited range of options. The welfare officer theorises as to the reasons for Herbert's dishonesty, and concludes:

> Cole's only reason for applying for the children appears to be so that he will collect more pension. He does not appear to be at all suitable to have charge of children and is depending on the pension he has applied for for finance.

This conclusion draws on narratives of the undeserving poor and specifically the welfare scrounger (Engels, 2006). It leaves no room for Herbert to be motivated by anything other than greed. It serves to construct Herbert Cole as a member of an undeserving and parasitic class (Tyler, 2013). Details proferred in the memorandum serve to bolster this argument, even if they appear only superficially relevant. For instance, the boarder's presence in the narrative serves to remind the reader that Cole is a certain "type" of man, who has failed to fulfil his obligations to his family and thus created a financial burden to the state. This image of the welfare-dependent scrounger is one which persists in various forms, and has only been strengthened by neoliberalism and state austerity measures (Jensen & Tyler, 2015; O'Brien, 2019). It was, and continues to be at odds with the reality of social security payments' abilities to keep up with the cost of living (Hodgetts et al., 2014). Within this narrative, Herbert's personal irresponsiblity is viewed as enriching himself at the state's expense (Tyler, 2013).

The state had the power to determine what constituted a good home and by extension good citizens and families. Once families were involved in the state's system they were subjected to increased strutiny. If they requested that their children visit them or live with them permanently, they were subjected to evaluation. There is no evidence in the case file of similar attention paid to institutions and foster homes, despite the evidence of abuse in care during this historical period and subsequently (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a). It is evident that children were removed from homes that were less than ideal, only to be placed in care settings that were often far worse. However, within these narrative fragments, the state officials position themselves as heroic detectives, tasked with uncovering prevarication on the part of whānau, with relatively little evidence that they applied the same scrutiny to their own systems.

## 5.2 Negotiated Futures

The former section was concerned with the family home as a site of the assimilation of Māori into the settler society and inculcation of associated citizenship ideals. The stipulated purpose of state intervention was the readjustment of the child through the social field (Dalley, 1998). It is therefore worth examining the intended product of state intervention, alongside the actual aftermath of state care. Contemporary accounts from survivors of state care systems reveal considerable trauma, with survivors reporting difficulties adjusting to life after discharge (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020b). For Māori, the loss of cultural connections was particularly profound, as it was associated with disconnection from traditional support networks and represented an ongoing source of hurt to whānau, hapū and iwi (Savage et al., 2021). While the impacts of state intervention were generally negative, they were differentially experienced. An intersectional understanding of the impact of state care will be explored in greater depth below, but it is worth considering that even individual members of the Cole whānau had differing experiences of care based on factors such as

gender and birth order that impacted their resilience in the face of challenges. This section is concerned with stories relating to the transition of the Cole siblings from state care, and the state's continued supervision over their early adulthood, specifically the time spanning their fifteenth to nineteenth year.

It is useful at this juncture to provide an overview of the explicit policy relating to the oversight of state wards and their earnings. According to the 1937 annual departmental report, "when a child first goes to service, he (or she) is allowed a portion of his wages for pocket money. The balance is banked by the department and drawn out as required…Later he is allowed an increase in portion personally" (New Zealand Government, 1937, p. 5). Each of the Cole siblings entered a service arrangement upon turning fifteen and were awarded an allowance from their earnings in accordance with policy. The state paid their board and expenses directly, and other earnings were placed in a savings account under the control of the state. It was the state's policy to progressively allow its wards greater control over their working situations, acquiring the right to enter a service agreement with employers. Full control over their earnings was afforded them approximately six months prior to their discharge from care. It was the intention that welfare officers give them advice about the judicious use of their funds. This practice aligned with the ethos of state care as a mechanism of instilling young people with the necessary social and cultural capital to engage effectively in marketplace economics (Dalley & Tennant, 2004). However, after their discharge, they had to request access to funds from state-maintained savings accounts. The annual report for 1937 noted that "money banked may be paid out at any time, and the Department, as trustee, endeavours to guide these young people in investing or expanding their money to the best advantage" (New Zealand Government, 1937, p. 5). The state's role as trustee, in practice, appears to have resulted in welfare officers withholding their savings. Even after their release from state care, the Cole siblings had to maintain a performance of acceptability.

The sections below conclude the lifespan of the relationship between the Cole whānau and the state. To illustrate the way the successful citizen was evaluated along moral binaries, the section is organised around two separate accounts of citizenship. It recognises the classed, racialised and gendered nature of cultural narratives of good citizenship, and how employees of the Child Welfare Branch understood their purpose as instilling citizenship values in their wards (Labrum, 2004a). These accounts demonstrate how Māori state wards, once conceived of as "problem children" continued to be construed as problematic, and their "māoriness" a barrier to full inclusion (Stanley, 2002). The stories simultaneously evoke notions of the heroic state, lauded for the production of "Good Māori," acceptable facsimiles of Pākehā citizenship. Any success experienced by former state wards was attributed to the intervention of the department. Any failure was their own.

#### *5.2.1 A Staid Girl and a Good Worker*

The first plotline in this section demonstrates some of the expectations of good citizenship in young women. It concerns my maternal grandmother, Margaret, who, by the time of her discharge at age nineteen, was receiving favourable evaluations as a good worker (see figure 5). Her welfare officer, who had supervised her care since she was eight, wrote generally positive reports concerning Margaret, valuing her general compliance. She noted that Margaret was "quite a satisfactory worker, being used to Pakehas [*sic*.]" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 56). This indicates that the approval of her welfare officer was contingent on her ability to understand her place in a racialised, classed, and gendered social system, and performed appropriately to survive. In the account that follows, the notion of Margaret as a successful citizen is problematised by another welfare officer, who draws on negative gendered stereotypes to describe Margaret.

*Figure 5: Margaret Cole (left) pictured with friends, Te Kowhai, circa. 1937.*

In 1939, Margaret reported to her welfare officer that she intended to get married, and her welfare officer applied for her discharge from care. It would subsequently come to light that Margaret's father Herbert had arranged for her engagement to Ernest, the adult son of Herbert's partner. Ernest was himself a state ward. Margaret and Ernest had not met, but Margaret requested that he send her a ring. When Ernest informed his welfare officer of the match, his welfare officer disapproved and wrote to the Superintendent to intervene. He suggested that Margaret's welfare officer (Mrs. W.) prevent Margaret from writing to Ernest. The letter, which was received shortly after Margaret's discharge, is represented below.

> **...** It would appear that Ernest has been in correspondence with a girl named Margaret Cole, whose address is care of Mrs. C. F. O'C. of Hamilton, whom I understand the lad has never seen.
>
> Recently a letter written by this girl to Ernest was shown to me, wherein it was stated that their engagement had been announced in the Waikato Times and he was asked to send her a ring which was properly stamped. Seemingly the ring he had sent

> her had been purchased from J.R. McKenzie's Departmental Store for 1/6 and was not suitable. Margaret Cole, I understand is a Ward of the state and is under the care of Mrs W. Ernest appears to be carried away with the nonsense this girl writes about, and I suggest that the matter be brought under notice of Mrs. W for her to take the necessary action at that end to stop any further correspondence between these young people. Ernest, as you are aware, is a low grade feeble-minded type of lad who will always find difficulty in keeping himself, let alone a wife (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 472).

The narrative that is presented in this memorandum is at odds with the characterisation of Margaret as a successful citizen. In contrast, it positions Margaret in the role of manipulative temptress figure (Campbell, 2008), whose "nonsense" letters has caused her fiance to become "carried away." The suggestion that the ring was "not suitable*"* indicates self-serving motivations underly the match, and implicitly draws from discursive tropes of the welfare scrounger that were often applied to her father.

The welfare officer represents the work of the state as protecting the interests of Ernest, whose vulnerability and passivity is associated with his reportedly low-intelligence. Underscoring this storying of threat and vulnerability is the unspoken understanding of racial purity ideals and the threat posed to social stability through the fertility of so-called "low grade feeble-minded*"* individuals (Wanhalla, 2007).The classfication of people of unsound mind had been codified in law since the passage of the Mental Defectives Act 1911 (Stace, 2022), and was used to segregate and limit certain groups of individuals.

It was generally supposed that the state had a role to play in promoting social progress by limiting the birth of children to the so-called genetically undesirable

(Metcalfe, 2000). Many central tenets of eugenics had taken on a guise of common-sense with professionals working within welfare and education, and likely influenced the welfare officer's recommendations. The belief that the effects of poverty were linked not to social conditions but to individual defecits is hinted at in the welfare officer's summation that Ernest is a "feeble-minded type who will always find difficulty in keeping himself, let alone a wife" which ties Ernest's ability to engage fully in citizenship responsiblities to his ability to maintain an economically autonomous household. It is presupposed that inherent deficiencies of intelligence have rendered him unable to fulfil certain social obligations. By characterising Ernest as "feeble-minded" any notion of his autonomy is rendered incomprehensible. The only acceptable construction of Ernest and Margaret's relationship requires the construction of Margaret as deviant. To this end, the welfare officer reverses traditional gender roles most often associated with engagement narratives, whereby a man pursues and a woman demures. Margaret is portrayed as assertive. She requests an engagement ring, which she later scorns. Margaret's letters are described as "nonsense," which causes Ernest to become "carried away." As a result, Ernest's welfare officer appeals to his colleague to "put a stop" to this unwelcome behaviour.

In response to this characterisation, Margaret's welfare officer re-invokes images of successful citizenship by positively re-framing her ward. She highlights Margaret's ability to make "good choices," inasmuch as these align with the goals of the department, stating that:

> Margaret informs me that she has broken her engagement. I cannot quite get the story of the engagement, but I think it was engineered by her father and her brother, Horotoki [*sic*.]. She showed me a letter from each of them demanding that she go to Masterton, but she tells me that she is not going.

> As I have already stated, Margaret has been no bother to me. During her time at Service with Mr. W. L at Te Kowhai, Mrs L has often said what a staid girl Margaret is. Mr and Mrs L have a family of growing boys and each one had the greatest respect for Margaret (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 474).

This characterisation of Margaret invokes a series of behaviours intended to exemplify the domestic ideals of compliance, common sense and a maternal instinct. Where Ernest's welfare officer had viewed Margaret's behaviours as signs of a malignant character, Margaret's welfare officer suggests Margaret has, through making the correct choice, worked to overcome her natural inclinations as Māori:

> One has to remember that she is half-caste Maori and would feel that she should marry the man of her father's choice, however, she assures me that the whole business is finished as far as young Reilly is concerned(Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 474).

The casual othering of Margaret as a half-caste Māori serves as a reminder that there were limitations to her ability to embody the dominant citizenship ideals (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2024). It furthermore serves to reinforce the dominant organisational narrative of the child welfare branch as a facilitator of good citizenship. The success of the state's intervention is demonstrated by Margaret's apparent choice to distance herself from her malignant family. The welfare officer's earlier approval of the engagement are omitted from the story, as they distract from a narrative which shows Margaret as a successful product of state intervention.

Margaret's own views on the match are not clearly understood, although in later years she expressed that she had never intended to marry Ernest, and it seems as if she played the part of fiancee as a means of gaining some advantage. It is possible that she thought an engagement would expedite her discharge from care. It appears that she became adept at

performing compliance, as there are accounts in the years preceding her discharge of her seeking advice from her welfare officer on family issues. This likely created a positive impression on the welfare officer and may have contributed to the assessments of Margaret as a "staid" and sensible girl. By exemplifying a successful product of state care, Margaret's requests to withdraw her savings were not as carefully scrutinised as those of her brother Hokotoki (see below). For instance, in 1942, Margaret claimed that she was to be married, and was able to withdraw the balance of her earnings to put towards the establishment of a home.

#### *5.2.2 A Typical Native*

In contrast with the stories about Margaret, the welfare officers' frequently evaluated Hokotoki in terms of his deviance. His welfare officer had described him as a "problem child" and as a young adult this characterisation would evolve into that of a "scrounger." He was described as untrustworthy and work-shy. These characterisations were often supported by his father, with whom Hokotoki lived after his discharge, who complained in a letter to welfare officers, "We had a hard job to get him out of bed of a morning to go to work…He would only go to other people's homes to sleep, or else go into the Billiard Rooms and spend the day, and come home at night at a very late hour" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 437). He concludes his complaint by stating that he is, "having no more to do with him." This conclusion may have been intended to present as a model of paternal discipline, for the purposes of regaining custody of his other children. However, it also highlights the difficulty Hokotoki faced as he attempted to integrate into society after his discharge, finding limited support from his father or the state that had essentially raised him.

After being discharged in 1938, Hokotoki had frequent interactions with welfare officers where he attempted to present himself as a successful citizen. Successful citizenship implied active engagement in the labour market through gainful employment. In particular, as

a young Māori man, it was expected that his training in manual labour would prepare him for industry (Belgrave, 2004; Jackson, 2016). The welfare officers also valued thrift, which sometimes conflicted with Hokotoki's apparent vision of himself as an entrepreneur. Hokotoki's requests to withdraw funds were usually connected to some form of "investment." He was sometimes undermined by welfare officers and even by his father. For example, in 1939, Hokotoki requested a withdrawal of fifteen pounds from his savings, which he had hoped to use to put towards the purchase of a lorry. However, upon the welfare officer's investigation it was discovered that he had already purchased a lorry:

> What he wanted to do was sell this one and use the proceeds and 15 pounds from the Department to buy a more suitable lorry. While I was talking to the boy the father came along and stated the lorry the boy now possessed was quite satisfactory for the work that was required of it, but suggested that some repairs might be effected (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 556).

In attempting to present himself in a positive light, Hokotoki draws on the language of individual success, the "go-getter" and entrepreneur. This suggests the internalisation of colonised ideologies of successful citizenship (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2024). Frustratingly, perhaps, for Hokotoki, his imitation of an ideal citizen is rejected, and he is pre-supposed as problematic. Then, as now, "Māori men are only ever portrayed as 'the problem'" (Stanley, 2002, p. 81). Both the welfare officer and Herbert's expectations of Hokotoki serve as a negation of his positive self-identity, placing limitations on his capacity to invest his savings as he chooses. The lorry he possessed was deemed "quite satisfactory" with a few repairs. Hokotoki's plans were summarily dismissed. The welfare officers' organisation of repairs on his behalf disempowers Hokotoki further, as it assumes his incapability or untrustworthiness. Both the welfare officer and Herbert agreed that, "this was the best way in which to deal with the matter, as … the boy should not handle the money" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p.

556). This demonstrates how Hokotoki's attempts to negotiate an autonomous position for himself after his discharge were circumvented by a paternalistic re-assertion of external control. The state's response was focused on the protection of his monetary assets. No responsibility was taken to engage with Hokotoki as a parent might: to nurture his interest in self-improvement or to teach him the skills he needed to make sound business decisions. This induced continued dependence, rather than autonomy. It likely fostered in Hokotoki feelings of resentment and distrust towards the state and his father, similar to the statements expressed by contemporary survivors of care settings (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a).

Several years later, Hokotoki requested another withdrawal of funds. Once again, his request was declined. In this instance, as will be shown, the inspecting officer explicitly drew on essentialist, denigrating narratives of Māori men as a justification of declining his request. The plot line of Hokotoki's attempts to gain autonomy, and particularly the story outlined below, highlight the way multiple marginalities (Rua, 2022) impacted Hokotoki's life course. Importantly, the context within which this memorandum was produced exemplified the way power was structured within the welfare state, and the corresponding frustrations and indignities it presented to individuals whose savings were still held by the state. The following chain of events exemplifies the administrative barriers to assistance that continue to be faced by many welfare-involved individuals (Hodgetts et al., 2014). Hokotoki's request to withdraw funds from his savings was made to the Superintendent. Before his claim could be approved, the Superintendent required that an investigation to ascertain if the need for funds was genuine. He delegated responsibility for this to a district welfare officer, who did not act on the request for several months. Hokotoki wrote multiple letters without receiving a reply. They were all polite, and each offered reasons for needing the funds with some urgency. Each letter from Hokotoki spurred the Superintendent to write to his delegate, urging him to

complete his inspection. The district welfare officer's response, written some three months after Hokotoki's letter, was to recommend that Hokotoki be denied his request. His visit, described in the memorandum below, was likely textured with resentment on both sides.

> I visited Cole last week. He is a typical native living with a Māori family named Brown at Kihikihi. He is employed by Mr. Brown as a labourer, doing concrete work. He frankly stated that he did not have any immediate need for the money, merely wanting to put it into the bank. He states that he has no banking account of his own but thought that this would be a good enough reason to satisfy the department and persuade them to pay the amount to him. He informed me that he occasionally feels the urge to "go on the bust" and I am satisfied that if the Department acceded to his request, the money would soon be spent on entertaining his friends. I therefore recommend that his application be declined (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 335).

The welfare officer's characterisation of Hokotoki draws on narrative resources of Māori inferiority and the individualisation of poverty. His description of Hokotoki as a "typical native," with no immediate need for the money, which would likely be "spent on entertaining friends" invokes a stereotype of Māori men as lazy and irresponsible (Walker, 2004). His use of the money is considered frivolous. The freedom to choose how to spend one's own money was a civic right that was not extended to Hokotoki (Stephens, 2023). In relation to Hokotoki's clear inferiority, the welfare officer constructs himself as heroically guarding the resources against a disreputable man who would seek to take advantage of their assistance. The fact that Hokotoki was requesting access to his own money is immaterial to this narrative.

This account demonstrates Hokotoki's active resistance to what had become an acceptable script for engagement with welfare systems (Tyler, 2013). This script required Hokotoki demonstrate subservience, and that he articulate an acceptable plan for the use of his funds. In this narrative, however, Hokotoki resists his role. He does not hold a bank account, but nevertheless claims his right to withdraw his own savings. He admits to feeling the urge to "on the bust" presumably a colloquialism used to disparage Hokotoki's social activities. Hokotoki's resistance represents an assertion of his citizenship rights, likely an angry response borne from a history of humiliations. It pushes back against the expectations that he should be subservient, and conflicts with the welfare officer's evaluation of his citizenship responsibilities. Hokotoki's leisure activities would likely have been unremarkable had they been enjoyed by a differently positioned subject, but scrutiny is differentially applied based on racialised, classed and gendered constructions (Hodgetts, 2015). This heightened sensitivity to the welfare recipient's social obligations is notably a feature of modern welfare provisions, whereby assistance is contingent on the performance of acceptable social mores (Thomas et al., 2020; Ware et al., 2017). Justification for this practice is usually communicated through tropes regarding a parasitic "underclass" who, through welfare benefits, claim an unfair advantage through accessing the state's resources (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). These funds, the story maintains, belong rightfully to "hard-working, ordinary citizens", whose taxes support the lifestyle of the degenerate class of welfare-dependents (Jensen & Tyler, 2015). In framing this present story, the welfare officer draws on many of the same cultural tropes by presenting Hokotoki as an abject figure, a member of the parasitic underclass who would misuse his funds on frivolities (Tyler, 2013). It combines with derogatory stories that characterise the Māori male as problematic (Stanley, 2002). In this narrative, the state is positioned as the protector of resources. The story does

not require that the resources belong to the taxpaying public for the characterisation to be effective. The result denies Hokotoki control over his own finances.

Hokotoki's resistance to having his request denied was revealed two months later and demonstrate his understanding of, and willingness to subvert, the functional systems of the welfare branch. Having been denied his savings, Hokotoki purchased a suit and charged the expense to the department. When questioned about his actions, Hokotoki again invoked his citizenship rights to personal autonomy and privacy, while simultaneously legitimising his claims through the pretence of respectability:

> You see Mr. D, it is all through my private affairs that I had to take that action. I was not if possible, going to discuss my private affairs with the Department unless I had a reason for doing so. You see Mr. Donaldson, after you visited me some time ago, Mr. Brown and I invested half shares each in a Ford V8 motor lorry which we are now using on the Waikato Bitumen Company at Raglan. Both of us put in 150 pounds each and now we are trying our best to get back what we invested in as short a time as possible.
>
> Apart from that my mother has been chastising me about financial difficulties and I was forced to send some money to her every week. If I never kept up to what she asked for, I was struck out as a beneficiary to anything she owned. As this has come up at the same time as I was in need of the suit to go down to my sister Margaret's wedding in Wellington at Christmas time. That was the only way I could arrange it by sending the account to the department. I know it won't be long before my struggle will be over now, and I know I have something now to show for the amount of money I spent (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, pp. 331-332).

Hokotoki's response to the welfare officer in this letter is assertive. His indignation in the opening paragraph is reflected in the repetition of the phrase, "my private affairs." In this, he rejects the state's imposition on his personal life, and makes a claim for his citizenship right to privacy. Hokotoki asserts himself by drawing on shared stories of agentic citizenship in his account of himself. He attempts to draw on the shared understanding of successful citizenship predicated on the engagement in the labour market, stating that he had "invested" in a lorry. Furthermore, Hokotoki seems to suggest that his mother has been threatening to cut him out of an inheritance if he does not help her financially. The language of investment and inheritance is used to make a claim for a classed status and reimagine financial stress as a short-term condition of capital investment. There is confidence in these assertions that allow them to be accepted as truth, or at least not worthy of further scrutiny. At least one claim made in his letter was demonstrably false, specifically the suit purchased for his sister Margaret's wedding – Margaret would not be married for another five years.

Hokotoki's response to a denigrating narrative was to re-assert a positive self-identity, predicated on notions of Pākehā citizenship ideals of upward social mobility and market engagement (Mann, 2019). His actions demonstrate that he understood the state's systems as well as his siblings, but his efforts to negotiate an autonomous future for himself were very different from Margaret's. It is useful to reflect on the two stories as representing a culmination of the relationship between two individuals and the state and the ways that differing marginalities impacted on their outcomes (Savage et al., 2021).

Informed by the lifespan approach of organising this inquiry, the two narratives may be seen to represent contrasting approaches to the negotiation of future autonomy. It is tempting to offer a conclusion about which approach was more successful in allowing the siblings to negotiate a future free from the influence of Child Welfare. However, notions of "success" are contested and evade definition, and the case file offers little insight into the Cole siblings'

own evaluations of their time in state care. What can be concluded is that both responses to state care demonstrated that the model of successful citizenship had been transmitted through the state's systems and was generally well understood and able to be performed by both Hokotoki and Margaret. Hokotoki's experience demonstrates the catches inherent in the experiences of the state ward, particularly one who was also Māori and male, as he was expected to be agentic and engaged in a labour market which rewards capital investment, but his simultaneous construction as a wayward youth, predisposed by his "Māori blood" to drunken debauchery, meant that he was often prevented from making his own decisions. In comparison, the markers of good citizenship for Margaret, as a Māori woman, were submissiveness and compliance. She was trained in domestic labour, and performed her role dutifully, which allowed her to escape the same degree of scrutiny that was applied to Hokotoki. She was able to negotiate a life within the confines of the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, it was a version of autonomy which offered her limited opportunities beyond domestic work and marriage.

## 5.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has taken an autobiographical approach to trace the exercise of power through the lifespan of a relationship between the Cole whānau and the Child Welfare Department. I exemplified some of the ways that the state crafted a narrative to support its assimilation of working-class Māori into affluent Pākehā ideals of citizenship and demonstrated how shared narrative resources served to enable and constrain the state's response to members of the whānau in ways that often caused harm.

The section titled Origin Stories examined the activation of the stories that would shape the state's response throughout the lifespan of the relationship. In the narrative of the children's committal to care, the state constructed the Cole parents by drawing on binaries of good and bad parents, and of active and parasitic citizenship. The story of Puiaki and Herbert

Cole positioned them within the shared cultural narratives of the deserving and undeserving poor, which associated their impoverishment with a moral failure, and Herbert's debasement of his "natural" paternal role. These binaries would be utilised in some form in the constructed identities of the Cole children, who were positioned within these binaries in relation to the influence of their parents.

The section titled Thinking of the Children, discussed how the early years of fostering worked to inculcate citizenship values by controlling behaviour and instilling compliance. It developed the narrative of the heroic state, by exploring how state officials viewed their position as morally infallible, which limited the capacity for reflection. In the narratives of childhood there are silences that speak of the possibility of abusive conditions, but these possibilities remain confined to the margins of representation as they are of little interest to the authors and readers of the case files. Children's voices were silenced as welfare officers and foster mothers formed alliances, and behavioural concerns were controlled through changes to the social field. The extension of the moral narrative of the underserving poor was evoked in the description of problem children, whose behavioural needs were construed as a rejection of the well-meaning efforts of interested adults.

In the section titled Good Homes, I demonstrated that the ideal of the Pākehā nuclear family structure which relied on professional, working fathers and domestically capable mothers was taken for granted in wider societal structures. Notions of what constituted a good home became hegemonic, and members of the Cole whānau had to demonstrate that their homes met the criteria if they were to be allowed to have their children live with them. This was a form of violence that ensured state wards remained living in state institutions and foster homes and prevented their return. Ways of living and parenting that were particular to Māori were either denigrated or re-storied as a product of the settler state. It is possible to

infer from the case files the internalised denigration of Māori practices of parenting and domestic practices and trace the way these ideas impacted people across generations.

Finally, Negotiated Futures exemplifies the ways in which the Cole siblings attempted to negotiate a pathway from state ward to autonomy through conformity or subversion of the expected citizenship responsibilities and rights. These narratives concern the way the Cole siblings were viewed as products of state care, and their evaluation against the criteria of citizenship responsibilities. These stories demonstrate how the welfare officers valued compliance and how they responded punitively to assertions of citizenship rights. The state's tendency to guard the Cole's savings and hold their requests to scrutiny stemmed from an underlying story in the inferiority of the poor, and the link presumed between poverty and poor "choices" (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017).

The following chapter outlines the evolution and continuity of the dominant narrative structures that were drawn on throughout the lifespan of the welfare relationship. I also relate key findings from this chapter to relevant literature, discuss the limitations of this inquiry and make recommendations for future research.

# Chapter 6 Discussion

Research into welfare stigma has outlined the harmful impacts of welfare systems and the stigmatisation of marginalised groups (Jensen & Tyler, 2015). The stigmatisation of groups of people through dominant cultural narratives often focuses the modern notion of the welfare recipient as socially abject figures (Tyler, 2013; Ware et al., 2017). It has been proposed that these negative characterisations emerged as a product of neoliberalism and were strengthened through austerity measures (Jensen & Tyler, 2015), whilst other scholars has shown that they vary over historical periods, but are much older (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). In Aotearoa New Zealand, colonial myths became embedded in derogatory stories of the poor and Māori, and these in turn became narrative resources for the work of the welfare state (Dalley, 2022; Walker, 2004).

Recent attention has been paid to the over-representation of Māori in state care, and the resulting harm by, and lack of accountability of the state (Savage et al., 2021). As noted in Chapter Two, the Royal Inquiry into Abuse in state care (2020) has documented the link between direct violence perpetrated against Māori whānau and structural and symbolic violence embedded across multiple settings. This is exemplified by the use of stigmatising narratives in the case files of the early twentieth century Child Welfare Branch (Labrum, 2004a). However, due in part to the lack of ethnicity data for state wards in the 1920s – 50s, documentation of the experiences of Māori wards of the state during this period is limited (Dalley, 2022). My inquiry aimed to partially address this knowledge gap, by outlining a case study of a single historical file. The focus of the inquiry was on tracing the evidence and impacts of symbolic violence in the newly formed welfare organisation's engagements with a Māori whānau. The purpose is partially a response to Thomson's (1998) call to take a long view of Aotearoa's history, by highlighting the complex ways social, political, and economic

processes combined within the lived experience of members of the whānau in state care in the 1920s to the 1940s. The use of a case study provides an avenue for deep exploration of complex practices, and a lens through which to view current welfare policy and practice. The inquiry sought to answer the questions, how was power expressed and contested within the case file?

In this discussion chapter I will answer the inquiry aims and questions in the following way. Firstly, I offer a review of the notion of symbolic power and its relation to state structures as evidenced from the analysis presented in the previous chapter. Secondly, I will break down key narrative patterns evidenced across the lifespan of the welfare relationship between the state and my whānau, to consider further how power was expressed and contested. Finally, I conceptualise what such findings suggest about the impacts of state violence on the Cole siblings. The chapter is concluded with an outline of the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

As noted in Chapter One, symbolic power occurs when affluent ruling classes exert control over marginal groups through the ability to name and describe the world in such a way as to favour the members of the ruling group (Bourdieu, 1991). The state, through its institutional practices, normalises the beliefs and values of the ruling group, so that they become widely accepted as truth, or complicated to resist. When examining how power was expressed within the case files of the Cole whānau, this inquiry identified the ways the various authors of the Cole case file drew on widely understood cultural narratives and archetypes in the identity construction of the Cole whānau. As evidenced in the previous chapter, the state's response to their needs was limited by narratives which individualised the causes of their distress. Policy implementation served to sustain and exacerbate suffering, in ways that became naturalised and normalised. This case file reveals that some particularly

pervasive, enduring narratives dominated the relationship between the welfare officials and recipients, throughout the lifespan of the relationship.

Below, I address the dominant narrative patterns or expressions of power in the case file by breaking it down into a series of overarching storylines. Firstly, **Protagonists and Antagonists**, which outlines the constructed identities of the main characters in the case files as the Heroic State and the Other. Secondly, the theme **Bad Eggs**, which takes a deeper look at the othering of the Cole whānau, by exploring the way the members of the whānau were conceived of in simplistic moralistic terms, as problem children and welfare scroungers. Finally, the theme of **Bootstraps of Success**, which outlines the way success was described by welfare officials, and how such expectations of success worked with denigration narratives to capture the Cole siblings in a double-bind.

## 6.1 Protagonists and Antagonists

The narrative case under scrutiny is concerned with key protagonists, or "main" characters, whose actions are the centre of state scrutiny. Campbell's influential conceptualisation of the Monomyth contends that heroic narratives are universal, and that the story-telling practices of diverse cultures draw on shared patterns and characterisations to make meaning of experience (Campbell, 2008). Thus, in almost every genre of narrative, heroes find themselves pitted in opposition to antagonistic forces, beyond their own control, and these forces present an obstacle to their success. One function of storytelling is that the storyteller often casts themselves in the role of the protagonist in a story that helps them make sense of their predicament (Crossley, 2000). This is a common inclination, and it is logical when individuals tell their own story as it allows them to reflect and account for their motivations as well as their actions. A function of the case records is that their authors are not their subjects. The welfare officials record the Cole siblings' life stories as supplicants of the

state. Although the stories contained in the file are about the Cole siblings, the siblings themselves are not the storytellers. Therefore, the stories invite readers to focus their attention on the imagined struggles of the welfare officers, rather than the children whose life-journeys were disrupted by state intervention. The Coles themselves are frequently figures of condemnation, in opposition to the heroic welfare officers. The Cole whānau are frequently othered within this narrative, positioned in relation to the hero in various ways, sometimes as direct antagonists to the heroic state.

The stories produced by welfare officers draw on grand narratives of the heroism in their construction of the state as morally agentic arbiter of social values (Jackson, 2004). These shape the identity constructions of the welfare officers, who imagine themselves as upholding the values and vision of the Child Welfare Branch. The notion of the heroic state is evidenced in the Cole whānau case files by the centring of the experiences, concerns and voices of the welfare officers, and a corresponding de-centring of the experiences of the Cole whānau. Various authors position themselves as heroes of stories contained in the Cole file. By extension, the settler state is conceptualised as engaged in a heroic and ongoing struggle against a series of obstacles. In colonial mythmaking the obstacles are often the untamed land and people, and the heroic purpose is characterised by conquest and subjugation (Walker, 2004). The welfare officers draw on various traditions of this narrative, and envisage themselves in various heroic roles, according to the needs of the story. For instance, in the origin narrative, Beck positions himself as reluctantly accepting the call on the state's behalf, to protect Puiaki Cole and her children from danger. Elsewhere, the state's heroism is predicated on a fierce protection and conservation of resources. These stories position members of the Cole whānau as antagonistic, and their acts of resistance as trials along the hero's journey.

The construction of the heroic state in case records limited the potential for reflection on the part structures and process may have played in reproducing intersecting classed, gendered and racialised inequities. By framing their motives as unimpeachable, morally purposed, welfare officer's narratives of their work left limited space for questioning whether their practices were ethical. The accounts of abuses in state care (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a) represent similar themes to the stories of neglect and abuse that were told about the Cole siblings childhoods. Similarly, stories that represent interventions such as standardised intelligence testing, or inoculation practices, show little concern for the internal lives and emotional wellbeing of the children in care. These practices were considered unproblematic by welfare officers, although the debate in some circles concerning the utility and validity of intelligence testing was almost as old as the tests themselves (Flynn, 1988). These were examples of practices that have cased demonstrable harm, which is felt in particular ways by people whose identities are characterised by multiple marginalities.

An intersectional approach to marginality provides a useful lens through which to understand the differential experiences of the Cole siblings. Intersectionality recognises that people inhabit different social categories, and may experience multiple layers of prejudice related to their position within categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and age (Hodgetts, 2020). In a report on the over-representation of Māori in care for the Royal Commission of Inquiry, it was noted that survivors' experiences in care were influenced by gender (Savage et al., 2021). Māori feminist writers have explored the way wāhine Māori were doubly disadvantaged by racial and gendered prejudices (Johnston & Pihama, 1995), and how the legal (re)positioning of Māori women had material impacts on women's rights (Mikaere, 1994). This was evident in the limited options available for Puiaki, and in the differential treatment of the Cole siblings as they reached adulthood.

Aotearoa's colonising environment was predicated on constructions of racial heirarchies, contextualising interactions between Māori and Pākehā (Reid et al., 2017). This hierarchical ordering of the socio-economic world was pervasive, encompassing intersectional understandings of race, class, and gender. Examples of narratives that emerged within this context included the widespread acceptance of the superiority of Western customs and inferiority of Māori ways of being. The construction of the Cole whānau as the "other" was based on these ideological assumptions. This story constituted a tale of terror which constrained their choices. Their educational and employment opportunities were limited by their status within a classed and gendered order. Although the case file shows little evidence of tales of joy, it is worth noting that protective counter-narratives of Māori identities are a feature of both Cole whānau stories and some survivor accounts more generally (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020b).

Because the presumed inferiority of Māori was taken for granted among welfare professionals, it was often unspoken in the case files. The narrative silence suggests the "problem" of the Coles' "maoriness" was part of a canonical cultural narrative, which was so widely understood that the writers did not need to give it voice unless the stories in the case notes deviated from expectations (Fivush, 2009). In instances where the Cole's Māori identities were mentioned explicitly, it was often to comment on perceived character defects. For example, one annual report conjectured that a Cole youth's deceitfulness and unreliability was inherited from his ancestors, "this boy has a percentage of Māori blood in him and he has inherited some of the worst traits*"*(Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948, p. 615). There was no apparent reflection on the contradictions to the state's internal logic, which positioned Herbert, the children's Pākehā father, as the bad parent and negative influence within their own moral framework. This suggests that welfare officers had more than one narrative

resource from which to draw for descriptions of the Cole children and applied them with flexibility.

The combination of character archetypes creates the context for violence to be felt by those whose identities are marginalised (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2024). For instance, it often means that the heroic story, and not the story of the "other" is represented in the case files. The representation determines how the story will be read and understood in future generations. Before needs can be represented, they must first be noticed by welfare officers, and the lack of representation implies that little attention was paid to the needs of the Cole children. This was particularly true in the narratives of problem children, whose actions were presented as threats to social order rather than indicative of deeper issues. Displays of defiance and disobedience were likely the only means the Cole siblings had available to communicate their unhappiness. The Cole children are doubly and triply disadvantaged, their voices silenced by their youth, as Māori and, for two of them, as wāhine Māori.

There is evidence that the construction of the "other" can contribute to the internalisation of harmful stories (Thomas et al., 2020). Testimony from the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care demonstrated that stigma attached to being a ward of the state had inter-generational impacts in survivors' ability to maintain connected relationships and parent their own children (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020a). The limitations of this current inquiry are such that it is difficult to measure the internalisation of stories, and to separate them from the performance of a form of citizenship designed to appeal to the welfare officers. Nevertheless, these performances suggest a familiarity with the dominant citizenship ideals, if not a wholehearted acceptance of them. This performance required the Cole siblings deny their Māoriness to survive. In subsequent years, my grandmother talked about the experiences of being seen as a "good Māori". My grandmother married a Pākehā man, eventually moving to Auckland, where subsequent generations would become alienated from

our turangawaewae. Her children and grandchildren would move more easily in te ao Pākehā than te ao Māori, although reconnection and (re)membering continue to form a part of our whānau's journey.

## 6.2 Bad Eggs

> "Apparently, he's a bit of a handful, a real bad egg. I mean, if you look at his file, you'll see that for yourself. We're talking disobedience, stealing, spitting, running away, throwing rocks, kicking stuff, defacing stuff, burning stuff, loitering and graffiti. And that's just the stuff we know about" (Waititi, 2016)

The state constructed a narrative that associated poverty with moral failure (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). The individualisation of poverty functions to minimise its structural foundations and limited the possibility of widespread change. This is consistent with contemporary research findings which draw attention to the negative framing of welfare dependency in political and media discourse (Engels, 2006). Colloquially, these abject figures are the Bad Eggs of particular social groups, rotten in the centre, and capable of contaminating others with their damaging influence.

The construction of the Cole children's deviance was cumulative, with each new accusation used to build a more convincing story of the children as "bad eggs." Welfare officers' generalisations tarnished the reputation of all the Cole siblings, and their records served to confirm existing biases and legitimise assumptions about the causes of the siblings' behaviours. The quotation above exaggerates this practice with comedic intent, but in nevertheless reflects the way views of youthful "larrikinism" evolved, and could become magnified by the welfare officers' biases (Dalley, 1998). These negative stories had material impacts on the Cole siblings' lives. One example of this was the decision to respond to Kuia's classroom misconduct with intelligence testing, and then institutionalisation. This

decision to segregate her from other children was informed by the welfare officers' appraisals of her behaviour, and legitimated using standardised intelligence testing that had not been normed for Māori as yet another extension of symbolic violence (Hodgetts, 2020). This example indicates how the welfare officers constructed their own role in relation to the children, limited their abilities to imagine helping responses. The prevention of moral contagion motivated much of the state's early intervention. As the children grew into adults, the construction of the problem child evolved into notions of deviant citizenship, such as the poor worker or the welfare scrounger (Tyler, 2013).

The adult Coles' failures to adhere to societal expectations were also scrutinised. Herbert Cole was constructed as the bad parent in the committal story. He had failed to provide the necessary economic stability for his family. He was labelled variously as a "scrounger" and a "drunken waster" by welfare officers and the police. Many attempts were made to force Herbert to comply with the maintenance orders to support his children financially, including a stint in prison. Herbert embodied the notion of the undeserving poor, castigated for failing to take personal responsibility for his and his family's impoverishment (Tyler, 2013). When Herbert requested to have his children live with him, the state framed his request as self-serving, as having his dependents live with him would increase his pension entitlements. Notions of self-responsibility fuelled the archetype of the welfare scrounger (Engels, 2006). As the rhetorical ancestor of the dole-bludger, a scrounger was a welfare-dependent individual who sought to access unearned advantages by co-opting the resources of the state. The scrounger was viewed as lazy and work-shy, often in opposition to hard working, engaged citizens. He shared many characteristics with the denigrating stories used to describe Māori men, and in fact Māori men were more likely to be subject of newspaper headlines about criminality and benefit fraud (Savage et al., 2021). The welfare scrounger is referred to in accounts as "creating a charge on the state" (Child Welfare Branch, 1926-1948)

and it was this opinion, that he was a drain on resources, that caused him to become an abject figure, particularly in times of austerity such as the 1930s.

Negative attitudes towards members of the working class proved to be an invasive species, transported on the ships of colonisers to Aotearoa, New Zealand (Hodgetts, 2017). The narrative binary of the undeserving and deserving poor storied poverty as existing in a moral field, whereby assistance was contingent on a performance of good citizenship. The notion of pauperism, or entrenched poverty, was to be guarded against by the state, as it posed a risk for the country's future prospects (Seabrook, 2013). Related narratives of personal responsiblity storied poverty as a result of poor choices, a notion which cohered with a story of New Zealand's settler society as being founded on broadly egalitarian ideals, with equitable access for Pākehā to a rich provision of land (Nolan, 2007). The associated narrative of impoverishment as an individual failure is prevalent in public discourse about welfare recipients in the contemporary media landscape, where it has the effect of stigmatising already marginalised groups (Hodgetts, 2017). The construction of the individual whose material circumstances exist independently of harmful social structures, is one which, some argue, limits successive legislators' ability to enact meaningful change (Jensen & Tyler, 2015). Narratives of self-responsibility have been shown to contribute to conditional welfare provisions and punitive responses to beneficiaries, as they are founded on the misrecognition of poverty. This has the effect of requiring welfare recipients to demonstrate compliance with a set of increasingly restrictive demands to ensure their continued, precarious, existence.

## 6.3 The Bootstraps of Success

The case file represents the aims and purposes of the Child Welfare Branch, which involved the adjustment of the social context around the Cole children, in order to enculturate them into the citizenship ideals of the state (Garlick, 2012). With the passage of the Child

Welfare Act 1925, the Branch's purpose was outlined as being: "to prevent wastage in child-life, to provide for social readjustment … in the interests of the children" (New Zealand Government, 1927, p. 1). This involved fostering in them the qualities of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency that the state associated with a successful brown Pākehā product of its intervention (Greene, 2017). For the Cole whānau this expectation created a double-bind, whereby they were expected to work hard and be productive but limited in their capacity to exercise full autonomy. The ideals of autonomous, engaged citizenship competed for space with derogatory beliefs about the capacity of welfare-involved individuals. In the Cole file, this had the effect of allowing the state to claim credit for successes, while blaming failures on the Coles'. This section reflects on the way the state evaluated the outcomes of its interventions to enculturate Māori children into the settler society.

The good home was the primary site of intervention from the state (Dalley, 1998). The Cole parents' abilities to reproduce symbolically the structures of a predominantly middle-class Pākehā domestic sphere in their own households was a mark of success. While "good" homes were thought to provide for the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter, they were also places where citizenship values could be inculcated, through shared practices. The inspection stories indicate that the evaluation of the Cole parents' abodes relied on shared understandings of classed and racialised notions of domestic ideals. The return of children to the care of either parent was predicated on their ability to demonstrate conformity, irrespective of the material realities of their hardship. Therefore, state inspectors were alert for signs of moral degeneracy in their visits, which would cause them to decline custody requests.

The problematisation of Māori identities meant that their culture was constructed as a barrier to inclusion; assimilation to Pākehā social norms was the preferred outcome for Māori in care (Savage et al., 2021). The narrative tropes of good homes and good citizens provide

linked narrative accounts in the case file that structured the state's evaluation of the Cole parents and children against criteria that emerged directly from colonial Eurocentrism. These narratives describe the qualities of state care processes and outcomes that were valued by the state, and likely became internalised by the Cole whānau over time.

The notion of good citizenship appeared to be internalised by members of the Cole whānau. Knowing that the presentation of good citizenship was a sign of the state's success (and thus offered a path to emancipation), members of the family all at some point presented a story about themselves as good workers or homemakers. This included reframing characteristics that the state had interpreted as signs of their poor citizenship. For instance, Hokotoki's framing of a request to withdraw funds from his savings was storied as a waiting for a return on an investment. Similarly, Herbert's precarious employment history was storied as resulting from war injuries. Both Herbert and Puiaki attempted to present themselves as temperate, to counter the dominant stories of alcohol-fuelled parties. All this demonstrates an awareness of citizenship ideals, and the willingness to perform them for welfare officers to advance their own interests. It suggests that the state's ideologies had become internalised by members of the Cole whānau. These notions of good citizenship kept the Cole whānau in a subjugated social position. Engagement with state services frequently required that they prove themselves worthy of participation in society by exercising citizenship responsibilities, while de-emphasising their rights of citizenship.

The Welfare Branch may have had lofty goals of citizenship creation, but everyday measures of success were far more mundane. The efficient use of the state's resources, and the protection of assets from "wastage" was a recurrent theme in the Cole file. The needs of professional efficiency were often elevated above the needs of the people, and a successful intervention was one which used the fewest state resources. Each decision concerning the care of the Cole siblings appeared to be evaluated against measures of efficiency and thrift.

This extended to the oversight of the Cole's own savings, which were guarded with suspicion. The interests in systems rather than people also presents one of the limitations of this inquiry, as it determines the way information is preserved and retold.

## 6.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The examination of historic welfare case files can shed light on the current practices of the welfare state (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). This is because the patterns of engagement have a long history, and, as social historians remind us, taking a long view of policy highlights the way old positions often become repackaged and repurposed (Thomson, 1998). Furthermore, a narrative analysis which uncovers hidden stories that motivate practice serves to remind us that, even as policies shift, underlying narratives endure (Riessman, 1993; Thomas et al., 2020). The storying of the welfare recipient as a figure of abjection, and the practice of setting contingencies for state assistance pre-date the modern iteration of the welfare state (Seabrook, 2013). This inquiry suggests that stories have changed their form over time, but that negative stereotypes continue to structure responses to individuals living in poverty.

My inquiry was limited in that it reflects a single welfare record. As a historical examination of the case files, the narratives of the Cole whānau were represented through a social and historical filter. As such the participants, now deceased, had no ability to offer their own representation of their lives. As one of the key aspects of symbolic violence is the internalisation of ideologies by those for whom such beliefs cause their subjugation (Bourdieu, 1991), it is challenging to draw conclusions about the extent of internalised beliefs from a file which does not significantly represent their voices. To some extent, my position as an insider to the family affords me some insight, and a degree of extrapolation is possible from descriptions of people's actions, and accounts from others who were in state care

around the same time (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020b). Nevertheless, this is primarily a study of the voice and perception of welfare officers. While their accounts in some areas were detailed and comprehensive, they were selective in their representations and did not hold their own practices up to scrutiny. There are significant silences and missing pieces in the narrative, and these are equally as important in gaining an insight into the character of the Child Welfare Branch.

Narratives require a welcoming context to be converted into action. The stories of the Cole whānau were produced by welfare officers, for the apparatus of state governance, including other welfare professionals who appeared to share these beliefs. There was little space afforded for counter-narratives. Although there was some evidence of disagreement, it was always within a set of acceptable parameters. For instance, when the fitness of Puiaki Cole as a mother was challenged with a suggestion that she cooks her food in a Māori style, the welfare officer refutes the claim by demonstrating evidence of her conformity to Pākehā customs rather than standing up for her right to live as Māori. It is impossible to say, within the limitations of this study, the extent of internal dissent within the Child Welfare Branch. However, the hiring practices of the department produced a relatively homogenous workforce of middle-class Pākehā women, who likely shared common views about the world, and were perhaps unlikely to form alternative representations about their clients (Labrum, 2000). These storying practices offered a series of resources for responding to the Cole whānau. There was little question, therefore, that the Cole siblings would be placed into service as soon as they turned fifteen, rather than continue their education.

The role of context in constraining and limiting whānau action is relevant to contemporary settings. Recent critiques of the organisational culture of child welfare services suggest that there may be a “culture of silence” which punishes dissenting voices from within the organisation (Darroch, 2020). Evidence suggests that harmful narratives are given power

by their public representation and reproduction by people in positions of influence. Recent political rhetoric has drawn on narratives of welfare dependency, and re-invigorated the debate around benefit sanctions (Scott, 2023). The vocal support of harmful narratives concerning Māori and beneficiaries creates the context within which harmful practices can thrive.

Several questions emerged over the course of the inquiry that warrant further investigation. The inquiry suggests that narratives endure over time, adapt to and thrive within particular social and political contexts, while other narratives are silenced and marginalised (Riessman, 1993). Individuals who are recipients of welfare, particularly if they are also women or children, are infrequently the heroes of their own stories (Gordon, 1988). Some of the canonical cultural narratives that the welfare officers drew from in their stories about the Coles' have fallen out of favour, some have evolved. For instance, while Māori outcomes are still theorised as deficiencies, genetic explanations have become displaced by accounts of deprivation (Bishop, 2003). This suggests a question for further investigation. If harmful narratives can evolve, changing their nature through concealing their roots, how might they be altered in other, more positive ways? Rappaport's (2000) suggestion that tales of joy may be used by marginalised groups to displace tales of terror is helpful here. It is worth considering how the power of storytelling could be used to significantly change the way marginalised groups are storied in dominant narratives.

# Chapter 7: Epilogue

> E hoki ki ō maunga, ki ō awa, kia purea ai koe I ngā hauora ō Tāwhirimātea – return to your mountains, and to your rivers, that you may be cleansed by the healing winds of Tāwirimātea (Alsop, 2016, p. 20)

There is a tendency to think about stories as bounded within the span of a single life, but notions of whakapapa and pūrākau challenge this assumption, by weaving stories across generations (Seed-Pihama, 2019). Narratives can be picked apart and re-storied by different authors, to serve different purposes; they are personal and social, located in time and place (Clandinin, 2000). Through this inquiry process, I have imagined myself picking at the threads of the state's storying of my grandmother and her siblings, locating them within the construction of the case records, and untangling, weaving, entangling their stories with my own in an effort to re-story the narrative written by the state. It is in the interests of restoration that I wish to end this narrative inquiry analysis with an epilogue of sorts, an attempt to refocus on the memory of the person at the centre of this story, as I knew my grandmother.

My nana exists for me in memories of her space. It is a space that I have come to recognise as complicated by symbols of social mobility and the assimilation of Pākehā ideals, but nonetheless infused with manaakitanga. She and my Grandad lived in a little brown and beige two-bedroom unit in Otāhuhu. As children (I was one of three), we would bundle through the ranch-slider and wait for our eyes to adjust to the dimness of the living room. My Grandad, who passed when I was about five, seated in his favourite armchair; my Nana emerging from the kitchen to fill us with Sodastream and sandwiches. Like all the domestic

skills learned through her time in state care, she excelled in the art of sandwiches. Like many other nanas, feeding us was a sign of her aroha. Colonisation, I realise, yields complicated consequences. It brings with it well-made sandwiches, and generational alienation from cultural memory. If this is, on balance, considered a good thing for Māori (Goldsmith, 2021), it is only because we find sandwiches easier to digest.

My nana made sandwiches and collected trinkets. In pride of place was her collection of salt-and-pepper shakers, displayed in neat little rows in front of a mirror backdrop that suggested an infinity of colourful novelties. In the converted garage lived a pottery kiln which she used to produce egg cups and tea sets. Christmas presents for her whānau. The tea set she gifted me now sits in a box, cradled within layers of tissue paper. I take it out and I tell my daughter, who is four, this is taonga. It was made for me by my grandmother. Treat it with care. We drink sweet strawberry tea, and then return it to the cloud of tissue paper. My nana did not make the tea set to be a precious taonga, kept hidden in a box, in the same way she did not intend to have her case file read as an exemplar of colonisation. Both form part of a complicated legacy in the way we value memory.

In October 2008, some of our extended whānau returned to Papawai marae with the memories of our loved ones who had passed. My nana had been laid to rest alongside my grandfather at Manukau Memorial Gardens the previous year, as were her wishes. Returning with her photograph was as much an act of reconciliation for the future as it was remembrance of things past. For some of us, this was our first time being welcomed to Papawai. It surprised me how much it felt like coming home. It is significant that my cousin who facilitated the kawe mate had arguably travelled the farthest, having been adopted and raised apart from our whānau. His personal search for identity led him back to Papawai, ahead of the rest of us, and he guided our return. The act of recording our history and re-storying my grandmother's childhood is a continuation of the journey. It is a difficult

balancing act, to recognise firstly that this construction of mine is different from how my tīpuna would tell their own stories, but to suggest humbly that it could still have value to our whānau and to others. A story is not contained within a life. The knowledge gained from the past becomes the firm foundation upon which we step into the future. The story of my tīpuna and their journey from Papawai becomes part of the story of my generation's return. By redrawing the boundaries of the narratives that concern us, it is my wish that we write a story of hope for generations to come.

*Figure 6: The Cole siblings at a family function in the 1980s. Pictured from left: Kuia, Stanley, Margaret, Francis, and Francis` wife Aileen.*

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# Appendix: Simplified Cole Family Tree