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Investigating Enactments of Whanaungatanga in Social Media for Rangatahi Māori

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Abstract

Social Media (SM) and Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become omnipresent features in the lives of rangatahi (adolescent) Māori. Not only has the use of SM and SNS expanded, but their functionality has changed in diverse ways. Consequently how SM and SNS are used by rangatahi is still a developing field of research. Furthermore, how rangatahi interact with others in the digital world, is yet to be explored in regards to how this use impacts rangatahi relationships, and their mental well-being. The present study aimed to investigate enactments of whanaungatanga (establishing and maintaining relationships) in online spaces and how these enactments might influence rangatahi mental well-being. Being underpinned by Kaupapa Maori Theory, the current research utilised aspects of whanaungatanga to source and engage with participants. Over several months, semi-structured interviews were conducted with male rangatahi Māori where they discussed their use of SM and SNS, the nature of their relationships online and in real life, and their perceptions of their mental well-being. The analysis of these interviews was grounded in a pūrākau (traditional Māori narrative) approach utilising aspects of narrative analysis to explore themes that emerged from the participants' comments and connect these themes to broader understandings of whanaungatanga as they related to Māori perspectives of hauora (well-being). Four key findings were central to how the rangatahi experienced whanaungatanga. Firstly, the rangatahi were proactively using SM and SNS to maintain and enhance a sense of whanaungatanga with people they cared about. Secondly, the rangatahi used SM and SNS to develop their aspirations to strengthen their sense of whanaungatanga with others. Thirdly, how the rangatahi were navigating their relationships IRL and in online spaces to protect their well-being and that of their friends. Lastly, was that the rangatahi preferred to engage in their relationships kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) and the dynamics this preference. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications for those who care about rangatahi relationships and well-being, and suggestions for future research.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Despite research showing the effects of social media on aspects of mental wellness among youth (e.g. depression, anxiety, eating dysfunctions), little is known about how social media impacts Māori youth in particular. It is well known within Māori health research that quality relationships positively influence mental health for Māori in general (Durie, 1994; Carlson et al., 2022; Hamley et al, 2022). However unique aspects of the nature and quality of relationships for Tangata Whenua, their ability to engage in meaningful enactments of whanaungatanga, and how these aspects intersect and extend out into social media are yet to be explored. My current research will investigate how social media influences how whangaungatanga is enacted in the lives of rangatahi (adolescent) Māori, in online and face-to-face contexts, and how this impacts mental wellness for rangatahi Māori.

This chapter presents the context and rationale of my thesis. I begin with an explanation of Te Ao Māori understandings of well-being and how the practice of whanaungatanga is woven into how Māori experience well-being. As whanaungatanga is concerned with aspects of developing and maintaining relationships, I then introduce how features of social media (hereafter SM) and social networking sites (SNS) are in recent times facilitating the way that young people are engaging in online relationships. This is followed by a discussion of current literature regarding how these interactions might be impacting their mental well-being. I then present a critique of how international literature is limited in its understandings of digital relationships as they impact adolescent well-being in Aotearoa, specifically rangatahi Māori whose experiences of and perspectives of relationships are informed by cultural values. Subsequently, I then discuss local literature regarding rangatahi Māori enactments of whanaungatanga and how their well-being has been explored in these studies. This chapter then reviews research that investigates the impact of SNS and SM on the well-being of rangatahi Māori. I then conclude by outlining the focus of my research and briefly explain the following chapters of the thesis.

Te Ao Māori Concepts of Wellbeing

In order to understand or at least appreciate the complexities involved with Māori wellbeing and the subsequent models that have emerged and been applied within the current context, it is important to reflect upon the historical developments that have contributed to the state of health and wellbeing disparities we see in modern times. Historians estimate the arrival of Māori in Aotearoa to be approximately between the 12th and 14th centuries (King, 2007). Research has indicated that Māori life expectancy exceeded those of British citizens at the time, and was comparable with those living in privileged 18th-century communities (Reid et al., 2014). The first interactions between Māori and Europeans are estimated to have occurred between 1769 and 1777 (O'Malley, 2013; Salmond, 1992). Following this contact, a major decline in life expectancy for Māori was observed by 1891 (Pool, 2011). The successive years following colonisation saw major disparities between Māori and Pākehā (European New Zealanders) in all physical health and mental well-being measures (Reid et al., 2014). These disparities include higher rates of cancer, and mortality due to cancer (Robson & Harris, 2007), complications such as amputations from diabetes (Ministry of Health, 2012), a higher proportion of babies born at low weight (Policy Strategy and Research Group, 2007), and greater numbers of preventable conditions, such as asthma, congestive heart failure, injuries, skin infections, glue ear, diabetes, hypertension, bronchitis, chronic rheumatic heart disease, and acute rheumatic fever, leading to hospitalization (Robson & Harris, 2007).

It is well documented that the colonisation process including the exclusion of Te Reo, and land confiscation with loss of identity and extended whānau (family) connections, has had a destructive impact on Māori wellbeing (Durie, 1994). Mental health statistics report that more than 50% of Māori will become mentally unwell during their lifetime, with nearly one-third receiving a mental illness diagnosis every 12 months (Baxter, 2007). The most commonly diagnosed lifetime mental disorders include mood disorder (24%), substance abuse (27%), and anxiety (31%) (Kopua et al., 2019). Māori are also over-represented in suicide statistics for both suicide attempts and death by suicide (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2012).

Given the ongoing and persistent nature of these disparities between non-Māori and Māori, academics point to the likelihood that the processes of

colonisation, past, and current have influenced these disparities (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2019; Getz et al., 2018; Reid et al., 2000).

Another facet of colonisation is the implementation of psychological theories and practices that have been introduced from Western Europe and the United States of America that are based on the values and knowledge of these groups of people. Due to the privilege given to these approaches, certain types of thinking and being are consequently thought of as acceptable and ideal, while differing ways of thinking and behaving have become marginalised and judged as impaired or undesirable (Robertson & Masters-Awatere, 2007). Unfortunately, the psychological theories that emerge from this knowledge base, have historically excluded the unique ways indigenous peoples experience being in the world and their concepts of culture and local knowledge that influence human behaviour. For example, researchers Dudgeon and Holland (2018) found that a lack of available culturally responsive mental well-being approaches directly led to elevated numbers of indigenous suicides. Despite heavy reliance on Westernised and Eurocentric approaches being used to address the disparities mentioned above in Māori mental well-being, poorer well-being outcomes continue to be reported including increases in mental health diagnoses and suicidality especially among younger generations (Chiang et al., 2021, Williams et al., 2018). Westernised models of well-being have been critiqued by Māori scholars and health professionals as being inadequate to address issues faced by Māori, who also advocate for greater understanding and implementation of Māori models to be utilised when attempting to understand well-being concerns (King et al., 2023, Wilson et al., 2021).

Models of health created by Māori to enhance Māori well-being, address issues of discrimination, and combat the effects of colonisation within systemic processes, were introduced in the 1980s to bring Māori worldviews and values into mainstream healthcare settings (McLachlan et al., 2021). While various Māori health models are in use, these models are derived from mātauranga (traditional holistic Māori knowledge) and are founded on the idea that hauora (the Māori concept of well-being) is holistic in nature and therefore encompasses multiple dimensions. Such models include Te Wheke (Pere, 1991), the Pōwhiri Poutama (Drury, 2007) and Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985).

To explore the centrality of holism to Māori notions of hauora, it is useful here to unpack and go into further detail as to the specifics of how these models reflect and

encompass Māori ways of seeing the world. For example, Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985) is a holistic model of Māori health that encapsulates four taha (sides) of a whare (house) that represent the pillars of hauora which are built upon the foundation of whenua (connection to the land). The four taha include Te Taha Tinana (physical well-being), Te Taha Wairua (spiritual well-being), Te Taha Hinengaro (mental and emotional well-being), and Te Taha Whānau (family well-being).

Te Taha Tinana includes those aspects of health that support the health of the body such as kai (food) and whakapakari tinana (exercise). This principle also focuses on the growth stages and how to maintain harmony and balance within the physical aspect of life (Durie, 1994). Physical well-being is interconnected to the other dimensions of this hauora model, meaning that when Te Taha Tinana is experienced positively the other aspects of health are likewise positively affected.

Te Taha Wairua pertains to the spiritual realm and the connections from this realm to the natural world. For Māori, the idea of wairua is interwoven with positive relationships with te taiao (the natural world), and significant cultural aspects of this such as ancestral maunga (mountain) and awa (river) for example. Feeling connected to tūpuna (ancestors), Atua (deities), and having a sense of one's meaning can also be considered to enhance wairua. Hauroa is increased when Te Taha Wairua is strengthened and a feeling of balance between the spiritual and natural worlds is achieved.

Te Taha Hinengaro is focused on psychological well-being both mental and emotional. This taha points to the significance of the connections between the thoughts of the mind and emotional experiences and highlights the importance of balance between and within these functions. Durie (1994) explains that practices such as karakia (prayer) and whakawhanaungatanga (the practice of forming and maintaining relationships) are essential to promoting well-being in this area by nurturing connection to community and support.

Te Taha Whānau acknowledges the importance relationships have on wellbeing. These relationships are between the individual and their whānau and extended whānau, as well as the relationships between whānau and community. Durie (1994) explains that Māori relationships focus on the importance of reciprocity and mutual support. Because Māori view the individual as part of a collective, the well-being of one is inextricably linked to the other. Therefore, nurturing these types of

relationships is essential to enhancing well-being for the individual, family, and community.

Various other concepts have been considered to be of importance to Māori well-being, and given that Māori are not a homogenous group, not all concepts will be considered to be of equal relevance. However, an understanding of Tapu (restrictions and/or sacredness) and Noa (common), and finding the balance between these aspects is considered important for well-being. This balance is crucial to harmony within the self and relationships with others (Mitchell & Olsen-Reeder, 2021; Pihama, 2001). For example, Sachdev (1989) explains that traditionally, some Māori viewed an offence against tapu (such as improper food practices) as leading to illness or even death. Consequently, Māori may investigate their own, or whānau actions to reveal a cause of illness, and whether their relationship to the unseen world might have incurred a tapu violation that requires addressing (Sachdev, 1989). Furthermore, understandings of tapu and noa, support the successful attainment of mauri, a necessary component of Māori wellbeing (Reweti et al., 2023).

Mauri (life essence) is another concept considered pertinent to well-being. Mauri is described as the life force that is in all living things and connects living things (Moorefield, 2005). Mauri is the way one's vitality is reflected and thus is a manifestation of the four Taha mentioned above (Kingi et al., 2017). Ideally, a person or community is in a state of mauri ora (flourishing) which is reflected by feelings of enlightenment, hope, and alertness, as opposed to mauri noho (languishing), which is mirrored by pain, loss of hope, distorted thinking, and disempowering relationships (Durie, 2015). The concepts of tapu and noa, and mauri are useful for grasping the natural and spiritual worlds, and how well-being is connected beyond oneself and the tangible world for Māori.

An understanding of whenua (connection to land) and whakapapa (ancestry) are also useful to comprehend the ways in which belonging and identity are experienced by Māori. It is claimed that the foundations of whakapapa links to ancestral whenua still prevail as "the principal identifier of who is Māori" (Thomas, cited in Clarke, 2006, p. 143). Some argue that well-being for Māori starts with whakapapa in the sense that the interconnectedness of one's genealogical descent with self, links an individual and their community with the natural world and a secure cultural identity (Durie, 2006). By incorporating whakapapa into well-being approaches, a broader and deeper sense of wellness can be applied as consideration is given to the unique

ancestry of the individual and their community. Smith (1997) claims that knowing one's whakapapa is essential to a sense of well-being, meaning, identity, and fulfilment.

Given that my thesis is focused on exploring how whanaungatanga is engaged in for rangatahi Māori in online spaces, I will now look more closely at how whanaungatanga is understood and practised by Māori, and what implications this has for well-being.

Māori Concepts of Whanaungatanga and Mental Wellness

Whanaungatanga loosely translated as relationships or kinship also refers to the practice of fostering and maintaining these relationships, and the reciprocal nature of these interactions (Moorfield, 2005). While the root of the word whanaungatanga is whānau, meaning family, Durie (2001) explains that whanaungatanga is enacted with blood relatives, but also incorporates relationships that exist in a broader social sense recognising the significance that these relationships have on the individual, community, and the natural world. Whanaungatanga expands outward from the family unit to incorporate broader social and community networks. Consequently, whanaungatanga affirms the collective obligation of individual members to assist in the well-being of the community, thus nurturing a feeling of belonging and mutual support. As explained by Pihama (2001), community well-being is interwoven with the stability of whanaungatanga, with common values and connections developing and maintaining the fabric of Māori society. These relationships form a network of connections that can strengthen the well-being of the individuals within it. Whanaungatanga has been referred to as the "basic cement that holds things Māori together" (Ritchie, 1992, p. 66), and extends to non-whānau members in a way that individuals become whanau-like in relationships (Kukutai et al., 2016). Consequently, it is common for Māori to refer to a non-blood relative as an aunty, koro (elderly male ancestor), or cousin, implying the nature or closeness of their relationship, rather than a literal family member. The diverse ways in which whanaungatanga can exist and be practised speak to the importance placed on relationships within Te Ao Māori and the value of kin-like relationships.

Whanaungatanga promotes emotional support, feelings of belonging, and provides a foundation for individual well-being (Greaves et al., 2021; Hamley et al, 2022; Rameka, 2018). A study by Clark and colleagues (2011) highlights the significance of whanaungatanga impacting Māori health, identifying that strong family connections positively influence mental health outcomes. They particularly emphasise families being characterised as caring and supportive to be crucial to reducing suicidality for Māori youth, finding that these forms of family connection could reduce the risk of suicide attempts for rangatahi Māori at all levels of risk. This study also emphasised that the well-being of the family as a whole unit could enhance mental well-being for all youth, not only those experiencing negative well-being. This study underscores the protective impact of familial relationships on psychological health.

The relevance of whanaungatanga to Māori well-being is additionally supported by the research of Russell (2018), in Te Oranga Hinengaro, a report on the mental well-being of Māori using data sourced from 12 months of three population surveys. This report emphasizes the positive influence of favourable social networks, highlighting that persons with varied and stable community connections, founded in whanaungatanga, experience improved health outcomes. This study reinforces the broader societal ramifications of whanaungatanga, implying that collective well-being is a shared endeavour formed by strong interpersonal connections.

Whanaungatanga is also tied to the relationship between self and cultural identity and includes links to ancestral whenua. Whenua holds significant historical and spiritual meaning to Māori and is inherently ingrained in connection to one's ancestral lands. As explained by Durie (1997), a feeling of belonging to whenua, reflected through whanaungatanga, informs a holistic approach to well-being that incorporates the physical and spiritual dimensions.

The intersection between whenua and whanaungatanga is apparent in the concept of turangawaewae (place to stand). Turangawaewae symbolizes a meaningful connection to a particular site, commonly one's ancestral lands, and is fundamental to an individual's sense of wellness and identity. Research by McMillan and Chavis (1986) focusing on the sense of community affirms the notion that strong connections to a particular place positively impact factors associated with individual well-being. These authors posit that belonging to a particular community promotes feelings of being needed and closeness, that conformity to community values

strengthens relationship bonds, that the needs of the individual are met by the community, and reciprocity of influence to and from the individual and the community fosters a shared emotional connection.

The influence of whanaungatanga on mental well-being is a significant factor for Māori. Mental health is not experienced in isolation but is interwoven with the nature of relationships and community support networks. Cram and colleagues (2006) speak to the significance of including whanaungatanga in well-being interventions and encourage culturally appropriate approaches while acknowledging the interconnection of mental wellness and social relationships for Māori. These associations are additionally investigated by Smith (2012), who notes that disturbances to social support networks can have serious ramifications for the mental health of Māori. This research highlights the necessity to carefully consider not only the individual aspects but also the social determinants of mental well-being, with specific attention on nurturing supportive and stable relationships grounded in notions of whanaungatanga.

The significance of whanaungatanga for Māori well-being is clear, however, contemporary challenges such as urbanisation, migration, and the ongoing effects of colonisation, have impacted the way that social relationships are enacted in and between Māori families and communities. Disturbances to traditional living structures have prompted an exploration of how whanaungatanga is developed and enacted in the lives of Māori living in contemporary and shifting cultural contexts. For example, Durie and Hermansson (1990), discuss the influence of urbanization on Māori social networks and the difficulties faced by Māori trying to maintain their familiar connections. They explain that the efforts needed to keep whanaungatanga active in the lives of Māori are challenging and these challenges present adverse effects in modern times such as missing work, or fatigue from long-distance travel leading to car accidents.

Despite the many challenges and ongoing effects that urbanisation has had on Māori relationships, research has revealed ways in which Māori have adapted culture and concepts into new spaces such as urban settings. For example, efforts to revitalise and use Te Reo Māori in contemporary settings such as workplaces, media, community organisations, and educational institutions have been reported as being a critical component of strengthening a Māori sense of identity in urban settings (Berryman et al., 2022; Rameka, 2018). These efforts were bolstered by the

successful petitioning of Māori to the government that Te Reo be taught in primary schools in the 1970s (Jackson, 1993). This was followed by the Te Ataarangi movement to teach adults Te Reo (King, 2001), then the Kohanga Reo movement in the 1980s. Thereafter Kura Kaupapa (primary and secondary schools where subjects are predominantly taught in Te Reo) were introduced, and in 1987 the New Zealand government recognised Te Reo as an official language of the nation. Since this time, radio stations, television broadcasting, and designated Māori language events have continued to elevate and promote the use of Te Reo. In the most recent available census data, 23% of Māori reported that Te Reo was their first language, with 34% reporting their Te Reo could be spoken fairly well (Stats NZ, 2022). The same data reported that the percentage of New Zealanders able to speak some Te Reo was 30%, with three out of five New Zealanders agreeing that Te Reo should be a core subject taught in schools. These growing statistics evidence the ability and perseverance of Māori to bring culture into modern places and times.

Another example of Māori adapting culture to contemporary living is the introduction of marae into urban spaces. Traditionally the marae was comprised of several places (wharenui, marae ātea, wharekai, urupā, bathrooms and so forth) that served to host and gather iwi (tribe), hapū (subtribe), and communities for events, celebrations, hui (gatherings), and tangihanga (funeral processes), among other things. Walker (1981) explained

> . . . the marae is central to the concept of Māoritanga. Māoritanga consists of an acknowledgement and pride in one's identity as a Māori. While Māoritanga has a physical base in ethnic identity, it also has a spiritual and emotional base derived from the ancestral culture of the Māori. Māori oratory, language, values and social etiquette are given their fullest expression in the marae setting at tangi and hui. (p. 28-29).

The purpose of marae extends beyond the need for a local and well-resourced venue and has implications for the spiritual and psychological well-being of Māori. Consequently, the creation of urban marae have provided a continuation of tikanga (custom) and Māoritanga in cityscapes that otherwise would be bereft of this ability. The work of King and colleagues (2018) describes the importance of marae in urban settings as a way that Māori identity is being physically represented in urban areas

and serve to provide locations where being Māori and Māoritanga can be reproduced and maintained in new settings. Similarly, practices traditionally attached to the marae space, were discussed by the authors as having been re-imagined into urban settings so that social practices could be continued that allowed Māori to embrace Māori ways of being. Practices such as the sharing of kai, and gathering together at an 'auntie's' or local fish and chip shop became ways to maintain and reenact cultural values and provide a means to preserve a sense of Māori identity in urban settings. Consequently, the continuation and relocation of tikanga practice is possible away from traditional settings. In this study, these practices included notions of whanaungatanga including care, support, connection, sharing of stories and the fostering of relationships. King and colleagues' work underscores the resilience of Māori identity in urban settings and highlights the importance of incorporating and adapting cultural practice in nurturing a sense of connection and belonging among Māori communities in urban areas.

With Māori continually finding ways to express and enact culture in contemporary spaces, I now turn to digital spaces and consider how Māori might adapt and incorporate culture into this space also. In particular, those spaces where whanaungatanga is likely to occur. Consequently, online social networking is another contemporary consideration relevant to how whanaungatanga is being enacted in the daily life of Māori. Recent research shows that increasing numbers of Māori are turning to digital spaces to maintain relationships where individuals reside both locally and at a distance from others (O'Carroll, 2013; Sciascia, 2016; Waitoa et al., 2015). Thus, a consideration of how whanaungatanga might be enacted in these digital spaces, and how these enactments are influencing the well-being of rangatahi Māori is the purpose of this research. Given that my thesis is designed to explore how whanaungatanga is being adapted for online relationships, and how this might be being implemented for youth, I feel it pertinent to reflect on the international literature regarding the impacts of SM use on health and well-being. The discussion of relevant international literature is to achieve two goals. Firstly, so that I might situate my research within the conversations of the broader discipline of global psychology. Secondly, as there is a lack of literature that has a specific focus on Māori and SM usage, I hope to discuss international insights as they may relate to insights from my findings into local understandings of whanaungatanga and psychological well-being for Māori.

Social Networking and Young People

Social media, defined as internet platforms allowing the verbal and visual interaction of participants either publically or privately (Carr & Hayes, 2015), has become an omnipresent reality of contemporary living. The ability to share content from anywhere in the world to and from anyone with internet access has had an immeasurable effect on human experiences of communication, identity, connectedness, and expression (Carlson & Frazer, 2021). Access to and engagement with SM continues to increase among adolescents with four in 10 individuals having a smartphone increasing to nine in 10 over a six-year period in the United States (Common Sense Media, 2018). During this period SM engagement grew from 34% to 70% for the same demographic, with 45% of teens reporting their level of online activity as 'near-constant' (Rebar et al., 2015). In Aotearoa/New Zealand a 2019 quantitative study found that 93% of 15-17-year-olds reported having a smartphone that they used to access the internet on a 'frequent basis' (Netsafe, 2019). The same study explored which social networking sites (hereafter SNS) their participants used and found that 41% used Instagram, 37% used Messenger, 36% used Facebook, and 36% used Snapchat. Of note here is that 81% of the participants reported using YouTube, but this study considered this use to be for entertainment purposes, not social networking purposes, despite YouTube being a place where social networking can occur. Similarly, Minecraft and Discord were reported to be used by 26% and 7% respectively, and could also be considered platforms where social interactions occur. These findings indicate that social networking for young people cannot merely be understood as a platform-based occurrence, but more likely requires an in-depth and personal approach to deeper understanding. Furthermore, it should be noted that this study provided a list of SNS for the participants to respond to, meaning other SNS could not be specifically identified in this study. In any case, it appears that the SNS usage of young people comprises a large portion of their time and engagement with others. Given the prevalent presence of SNS in youth lives during a critical time in their lifespan, it is pertinent to understand how young people's engagements with social networking might be associated with their experiences of relating to others and well-being.

SNS and Relationships for Young People

The way that interactions between SNS use and relationships impact the individual and wider society has been of concern to researchers for approximately a decade. This is not surprising given that SNS offer a global and constant opportunity to interact with others, while potentially offering a distraction from face-to-face and/or real-life (hereafter IRL) relationships. A hallmark of adolescence and young adulthood is the formation of close friendships traditionally met through face-to-face interactions at places frequented by youth such as school or extracurricular activities. More recently, most adolescents use social media to interact with their friends (van Driel et al., 2019). Given that friendship quality enhances the likelihood of positive psychosocial development in life, research has begun to investigate if friendship closeness can be developed through the use of social media (Nesi et al., 2018). Multiple empirical studies and several reviews have explored the correlations between SM use and the friendship quality of youth. Consequently, several theories have been developed to explain how SM use influences friendship changes. For example, the transformation framework (Nesi et al., 2018) theorises that fluctuations in friendship closeness may be associated with how accessible social media is to the individual. To understand these fluctuations, Pouwels et al. (2021), studied real-time fluctuations of SNS and friendship closeness in the daily lives of their participants. They found that participants using WhatsApp and Instagram more frequently to communicate with close friends rated higher levels of friendship closeness than others in their cohort. Perhaps this is due to the unprecedented opportunity today's youth have of sharing in-the-moment experiences with others and subsequently, the ability to receive instantaneous encouraging feedback and emotional support (Bayer et al., 2016; Kahlow et al., 2020). Furthermore, other studies have found that adolescents believe that SNS use enhances their friendships due to the ease of keeping up with their friends' daily activities (Pew Research Center, 2018; Rideout & Robb, 2018). Additionally, Lenhart (2015) found that adolescents believed that SNS use aided their ability to better understand their friends' emotions and daily lives.

The same Pouwels et al., (2021) study also found a group of youth who experienced a negative relationship between SNS use and friendship closeness. They theorise that this decrease in friendship closeness may be due to an expectation that

feedback should be received immediately due to SNS being constantly available to their users, leading to feelings of stress when a perceived appropriate response is not received quickly enough. Another explanation from the authors was the perceived social exclusion individuals may feel when they are not invited to shared events or included in particular posts. Lastly, the authors surmise that some youth substitute using SM for IRL interaction, thus decreasing the quality of friendship closeness. These contrasting results could imply that SNS use and friendship closeness are more intricately related than merely how much time one spends using the networks or how closely the time is between this and IRL interactions.

Being interested in looking at other aspects of the above Riley and colleagues' (2022) study sought to understand how contexts in which social connections are enacted are pertinent to developmental concerns. This study investigated how adolescent use of SM might be used to build social connections, and if this type of use was protective against negative experiences (such as depression, anxiety, cyberbullying, and social comparisons). Riley and colleagues explored if interpersonal attributes like empathy and perspective-taking could be linked to using SM for social connectedness. The researchers further investigated if any association between these factors was influenced by the quality of face-to-face relationships, such as a parent-child connection. As young children initially learn socially appropriate behaviours and how to form social connections in the home with caregivers, the authors posit that given a consistently safe family environment, adolescence would be a time where social communication patterns would continue to be practised in the home context regardless of SM use, further, that adolescents accessing SM would engage in relationships online both near and far to practice perspective taking and empathy learnt in the home. The authors first looked at the reasons young people use SM. Secondly, they looked at whether empathy and perspective-taking could predict if adolescents used SM for social connection. They predicted that adolescents using SM for social connectedness would have increased levels of empathic control and perspective-taking and that for adolescents who had quality relationships with caregivers, social connectedness would be fulfilled, thus decreasing the use of SM in this area. They found that one reason their participants used SM was to increase social connection. Their results indicated that greater use of SM for social connection was associated with higher reports of empathic concern and perspective-taking, but only where adolescents reported having a less supportive

parent-child relationship. A supportive relationship was defined by the amount of time spent and the support offered by parents/caregivers. In other words, the authors claim that adolescents are more likely to seek out social connectedness online when they feel their face-to-face relationships are less supportive and don't provide the environment necessary to practice social skills. These findings imply that the quality of face-to-face relationships is influential in the way that adolescents use SM and why they may seek out digital social connections.

There are similar implications in the work of Carpenter and Spottswood (2013), who studied the effect of SNS on people's romantic relationships and their sense of self. Using the self-expansion model (SEM), created by Aron and Aron (1996), these authors explored if the interests of their participants' romantic partners would become more prevalent in their participants' SNS profiles due to their relationships, thus expanding their sense of self. According to the SEM, the development of a romantic relationship expands each partner's sense of self in both interests and social networks. Hypothetically, the more past romantic partners one has had, the more interests they would accumulate. Carpenter and Spottswood hypothesised that these accumulations would be reflected in their participants' SNS profiles. The authors also explored if the partners' digital interests and social networks would become permanent online interests and social networks of their participants beyond the relationship timeframe, thus changing their online presence and IRL experiences. Using Facebook and an online questionnaire as measures, participants' public profile interests were found to be associated with higher numbers of past relationships. However, this finding was only consistent with participants who reported being 'heavy' users of Facebook. For participants who reported being a 'light' or 'infrequent' user, the association between the number of past relationships and profile interests was weak. This study highlights the need to explore differing types of relationships, SNS platforms and the nature of how these platforms are facilitated and used.

To explore a different type of relationship, Carpenter and colleagues (2018) explored behavioural norms for friendship relationships and expectations around sharing life events, updates, and re-sharing information in public and private online settings. They discuss how some of the expectations of what constitutes acceptable behaviour online are somewhat ambiguous. For example, an individual may be comfortable disclosing sensitive events and thoughts in the public forum but could

be upset if friends act in the same way rather than privately reaching out. An additional finding was that some forms of interactions had the potential to unintentionally damage friendships. For example, damage to a relationship may occur when an individual publically shares information about a friend who would prefer this information to remain private or hurt feelings when friends do not respond to postings in an anticipated way.

Another aspect of this study was to explore how the development of new friendships would unfold when influenced by how individuals behaved online after newly meeting face-to-face. They introduced the variable of sharing either personal or mundane information with the new friend via private Facebook message, while others were directed to make regular public status updates on their Facebook profile. The study found that those who interacted via private message would have an increase in likability by their peers after three months, over those who only posted status updates. However, contrary to their expectations, the authors found that the nature of the message i.e. mundane versus personal information, did not yield significant differences in how the participants rated the friendship. The researchers posit that their results indicate that using private messaging to interact in a direct and personal manner is more effective for forming new friendships. This study also underscores the importance of understanding what is deemed to be appropriate for friendships that include online interactions, both public and private, and how to know the difference to avoid damaging the relationship quality.

A similar study by Vaterlaus and colleagues (2016) explored differing interaction expectations between individuals on Snapchat. Utilising in-depth interviews and a focus group approach with young adults, they explored how participants perceived Snapchat interactions to influence the quality of their familial, social, and romantic relationships. They found that certain behaviours of others using Snapchat were reported to be annoying for the participants, indicating that there was an ideal way that participants preferred to interact with others on this platform. The authors also discussed how the platform's feature of publicly ranking friends for its users created competitiveness and jealousy, particularly for romantic relationships. Another concern reported by the participants was the problems that sometimes occurred when interacting with a member of an older generation (such as a parent) on Snapchat. These interactions could lead to tension and frustration in the relationship. Also reported were issues related to the functionality of Snapchat's

main hallmark – that pictures and videos shared disappear after being viewed for one to 10 seconds (length of time depending on the sender's preference). This feature meant that individuals were comfortable sending more questionable content such as explicit or unpermitted and doctored images potentially resulting in relational infidelity and cyberbullying respectively. Participants also shared concerns about users' ability to screenshot content meant to be temporary, and the ability for the sender to see who had saved their snaps. These issues also caused relationship dissatisfaction, with one participant referring to this type of behaviour and its effects as "criminalizing" (p. 598).

Conversely, this study also discussed what the participants perceived as the benefits Snapchat had to their relationships. One benefit was that communicating in a visual way; which the participants thought was valuable due to being able to use facial expressions, tone of voice, and emotions, allowed for the clarity and context of the message to be better communicated. Additionally, because participants believed that Snapchat facilitated more interaction, this promoted the enhancement of relationships. This could be the strengthening of long-term relationships of any kind, or as a next step to getting to know people better. Snapchat also facilitated the ability for young people such as college students, living away from their family and friends, to visually share their experiences enabling them to maintain feelings of closeness within these relationships.

The results of the Vaterlaus and colleagues (2016) study inspire two interesting points I find relevant to my own thesis. Firstly, despite a tendency in the literature to focus on the negatives of social media, particularly for young people, there are useful ways to use SNS that result in positive outcomes. Consequently, attention to these positives, and expanding on these concepts could help understand how relationships can benefit from engaging with SNS. Secondly, young people are developing a culture of their own within digital spaces. The participants in this study alluded to practices and values linked to Snapchat use that influenced the way their relationships were experienced. They also spoke to the lack of understanding from older adults around these unspoken rules and values needed to effectively navigate the way relationships were impacted by Snapchat use. These practices, values, and rules will remain largely unknown and/or misunderstood by older persons unless they are willing to learn them. Adults such as parents and those working to support youth in their development and relationships might be better informed to engage

competently, with further knowledge about youth culture in digital spaces. Due to relationship quality being well documented to having an impact on an individual's mental well-being (Uecker, 2012; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Rice et al., 2012), I now turn to a consideration of literature regarding how SNS are linked to mental well-being for young people.

SNS and Mental Well-being in Young People

Multiple studies have been conducted to explore the effects of SM on mental well-being. A review by Krasnova et al. (2015) investigated how various facets of SNS might influence users' subjective well-being (SWB). They found both positive and negative effects and how differing aspects such as content consumption, consistency of use, length of use, and interactions with others might impact well-being. Positive outcomes include the triggering of social support, promotion of helpful behaviours, and self-assertion. However, SWB was also negatively influenced by online behaviours found on SNS such as negative self-comparison.

An aspect of SM and SNS, such as Instagram, is that these platforms allow the user to present themselves however they choose to selected audiences. It is possible to cultivate a particular image or lifestyle and selectively showcase any parts of one's personality, life, or interests in a way that may influence how an individual is perceived by other users of SNS. As stated by Tiggemann and Slater (2014), using SNS can lead to an individual creating an idealised online self. Additionally, the work of Fardouly and colleagues (2015) discovered that body dissatisfaction is experienced by SM users viewing idealized images online. This type of phenomenon has been termed 'social comparison' (Festinger, 1954) and has been studied at length. For example, Krasnova and colleagues (2015) claim that 'upward social comparison' - described as perceiving others to be more attractive or successful, can create feelings of inadequacy among SM users. Being concerned about these types of occurrences, researchers have looked more closely at how SM use might affect the mental health of young people.

For example, Rutter and colleagues (2021) studied 4592 adolescent-parent dyads using questionnaires regarding SM, psychosocial factor,s and psychological symptoms to explore interactions between physical activity and depressive and anxiety symptoms in adolescents and what effect SNS had on these factors. The authors explored Facebook use by the adolescents of the dyads, as this was the

participants' platform of choice. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they used Facebook on a scale from 1 = never use, and 18 = near-constant use. A variety of assessments were also used to estimate the depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, well-being, and physical activity of the participants.

As discussed by these authors, adolescence is a time when unique developmental changes occur in the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social aspects of the individual. Consequently, the authors claim it is crucial to understand how SM and adolescents' mental well-being and development may be connected. This is especially pertinent given that increasing numbers of adolescents are using SNS (Commonsense Media, 2018) and that 45% of teenagers confirm using SM on a 'near-constant basis' (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

Adolescence is a developmental stage when the onset of internalizing disorders are believed to occur (Rossellini et al., 2013; Kocsis, 2013), and considering that emotional distress has risen concurrently with the growth of SM use (Abi-Joude et al., 2020) Rutter and colleagues (2021) posit that internalizing disorders and the use of social media may exist in a bi-directional relationship where one factor influences and increases the likelihood of the other. Rutter et al. state that the results of their study indicate that higher SM consumption was linked with increased levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. They also found that there are potential positive effects of SM, such as its ability to promote mental wellbeing, and in providing educational resources.

Additionally, Rutter and colleagues (2021) found that social media exposure was positively linked to physical activity. Physical activity is generally understood to be a protective factor against internalizing symptoms. However, these researchers posit that physical activity was increased for their participants due to SM fitness comparisons (fitspo) and perceptions of their body image. Fitspo has been connected to impaired mental health outcomes for adults (Sumter et al., 2018; Slater et al., 2017). However, how Fitspo influences adolescents is as yet unknown. This study highlights the complex nature of social media's ability to affect differing aspects of one's mental well-being in a variety of ways for adolescents at a crucial period in their development.

The study of Braghieri and colleagues (2022) looked at how Facebook had impacted the mental well-being of college students across the United States in the mid-2000s. Because Facebook was introduced to 775 colleges in a staggered fashion,

the authors were able to create a quasi-experiment analysing the impact of the introduction on the students at each college. Using an empirical strategy, the study compared the results of the colleges' National College Health Assessment (NCHA) surveys administered twice annually to students. This survey includes questions about mental health, mental illness symptoms, and accessing mental health services. The authors had access to 430,000 responses to NCHA surveys from before and after Facebook had been introduced to the colleges in their experiment. Their findings had several implications. Firstly, the study found that after the introduction of Facebook at colleges, a negative impact on mental well-being was demonstrated. The authors equated this negative impact to 22% of the effect of losing a job on mental well-being. The authors also stated that Facebook use accounted for the occurrence that all mental health measures were negatively affected, except one. Those areas most affected were depression and anxiety-related disorders. This phenomenon is paralleled by the increase in students who accessed depression-related services post-introduction of Facebook to their campus. Another point raised by these authors was that the individuals who were most susceptible to mental illness were also significantly more likely to access depression-related services post-introduction of Facebook. This finding was strengthened by the authors' analyses of susceptibility to mental illness and the effects of Facebook use. They found that the introduction of Facebook had a stronger effect on symptoms of poor mental health for individuals with a higher risk of developing a mental illness. The authors posit, that these results imply that individuals at higher risk of developing a mental illness, and thus more inclined to seek treatment due to deteriorating symptoms, are more inclined to access depression-related treatment for depression due to the introduction of Facebook. The authors reported that these results were greater among women and non-Hispanic Whites. Additionally, the authors found that the negative influence on mental health after the introduction of Facebook would worsen as the time students used Facebook increased. For example, using Facebook for five semesters increased the probability an individual would be diagnosed with depression, be in therapy for depression, and be using antidepressants by 32%, 50%, and 33% respectively (Braghieri et al., 2022, p. 3682).

The above study also investigated the downstream implications of Facebook for academic performance due to poor mental health. The authors found that students were more likely to relate that their academic performance had declined as a result of

impaired mental well-being after the introduction of Facebook, with the largest concern being for depression/anxiety-disorder/seasonal-affective-disorder scales. The authors suggest two main areas to consider for these results. The first being *unfavourable social comparisons* (as mentioned previously in this thesis), which then encourage behaviours that affect mental well-being. These effects were greater for students who lived off-campus, implying that these students rely more on SM when assessing the behaviour of their peers. The second area the authors suggest considering for the results of their study is termed *disruptive internet use*. This is the idea that using social media impairs an individual's ability to concentrate and/or focus which can lead to anxiety. However, Braghieri and colleagues (2022) state that they did not find significant evidence to support this concern but posit that their results point to social media being somewhat responsible for the impairment of mental well-being among teenagers and young adults.

Critique of Current Literature Regarding SNSs and Youth Engagement

The previous studies have contributed interesting insights to current understandings regarding youth use of SM and SNS. The amount of time and the importance of using SM is apparently linked to differing outcomes as reported in some studies. Additionally, the way that young people use SNS to engage with their friends is important to them, and they have developed particular ways of conversing and interacting that contribute to an online and offline culture of behavioural expectations for young people that are beginning to be understood. The literature has shown that young people themselves are also trying to navigate these online spaces and cultural values with differing levels of success and satisfaction. While there are cases where positive aspects in relationships are experienced, there are also instances of problematic use, addictive behaviours, and negative effects on friendships and romantic relationships which have been found. While some research has reported that SNS have enhanced the users' communicative experience and closeness of relationships, others have shown that problems such as social comparison have been detrimental. Similar complexities in research have shown the variety of ways in which SNS and SM may influence physical activity, academic performance, and mental well-being. Each of the authors of these studies have acknowledged the

limitations of their research and encouraged that further research be done to continue to explore the complexities of these issues for young people.

One limitation of the above studies is the over-reliance on quantitative research methods. While useful at investigating cause-and-effect relationships for large populations, the aforementioned studies have highlighted that there are intricacies within the online youth culture that require more in-depth investigation to better understand these experiences. As youth online interactions are adapting to changing technologies and dynamic social norms, an approach capable of adapting alongside the research is required to capture the evolving nature of these engagements. One example of these changes to technology and social norms is how young people have largely withdrawn from Facebook (Pew Research Center, 2022). Given that the majority of the aforementioned studies focus largely on Facebook use, this presents challenges to their current relevance providing evidence of the changing nature of online use for young people, and their implications for research.

Quantitative studies also tend to reduce participants' responses to statistics or themes that simplify and reduce complex responses to outliers hence disregarding the richness of unique experiences. This reductionist approach neglects the authenticity of the responses and limits the depth of understanding of participant experiences. Additionally, with the employment of quantitative methods, an overuse of university students has become habitual within psychology research, as is reflected in the studies cited. This issue, coupled with the fact that the previous studies have been grounded in Westernised perspectives serves to maintain and reproduce particular ways of thinking that neglect different cultural perspectives such as those held by Māori individuals and communities. Unfortunately, such an approach lacks the cultural sensitivity and depth of scope needed to understand how Māori experience online interactions. Furthermore, exploring Māori perspectives on the issue of SNSs and their effects is necessary to enhance the relevance of research for Māori persons, especially where Māori well-being is understood by Māori and how research can meaningfully contribute to Māori communities.

One cultural difference of relevance to this study is the way relationships are understood, valued, and experienced by Māori. The aforementioned studies consider relationships from a Westernised viewpoint and are consequently structured and interpreted in a way that reflects differing understandings and values of this concept. Therefore, a consideration of how Māori ways of understanding SM usage,

incorporating concepts of whanaungatanga, and Māori way of engaging with others is needed.

Rangatahi Māori Engagement with SNS

Within this section, I will discuss the current literature regarding the ways SM has been utilised by Māori, where concepts of whanaungatanga have been explored. Building on my critique of mainstream approaches to understanding youth SNS use, within this section, I explore three key points, including: how whanaungatanga has been enacted in SNS by rangatahi Māori, how whanaungatanga impacts well-being for rangatahi Māori, and how enactments of whanaungatanga in SNS by rangatahi might impact their well-being. I begin the next section by considering how SNS and whanaungatanga are experienced by rangatahi.

SNS and Whanaungatanga

In her research, O'Carroll (2013) explored how traditional and modern understandings of whanaungatanga are being enacted in social networking, specifically with Facebook. O'Carroll used McNatty's (2001) model of whanaungatanga to explore if principles in this model were evident in relationships where social networking sites were used. These principles included: Whakapapa (principles associated with descent), Take/kaupapa (principles associated with a dependent issue), Wairuatanga (principles associated with spiritual embodiment), Manaakitanga (principles linked to kindness and reciprocity), Kotahitanga (principles linked to collective harmony), Rangatiratanga (linked to leadership and autonomy). Additionally, Edwards' (2009) model of whanaungatanga was incorporated into O'Carroll's (2013) research to conceptualise whanaungatanga in digital spaces. Consequently, the principles of Aroha (love), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) were added. O'Carroll also included Ngā-Kare-a-Roto (emotions) with the above principles in her conceptualisation. Using these principles as a collaborative framework, O'Carroll explored the experiences of rangatahi Māori in multiple ways. Firstly with focus groups, secondly, with individual interviews, thirdly with case study interviews within Iwi (tribes) in Aotearoa and also London, England, and lastly with overseas participants who used anonymous surveys to respond to research questions about how SNS were affecting their enactments of

whanaungatanga online. O'Carroll employed thematic analysis to analyse the comments of the study's participants. Subsequently, the data was represented in relation to concepts of whanaungatanga, and how O'Carroll found examples of how whanaungatanga had adapted to more contemporary notions in digital spaces. In this study, notions of rangatiratanga and wairuatanga were not present in the participants' responses. As such, the concepts of *Whakapapa, Take/Kaupapa, Manaakitanga,Kotahitanga, Aroha,* and *Kare-a-roto* were addressed as aspects of whanaungatanga spoken about by the participants and discussed by O'Carroll as follows:

Whakapapa played a prominent role in bringing individuals together online and was often found in SNS where individuals used online resources to find and establish relationships with whānau, with some interactions being for the first time. An example of this was iwi Facebook pages where their respondents said that SNS provided opportunities for them to meet whānau that they otherwise wouldn't have had. Thus, SNS proffered positive settings where new relationships could be engaged in, and existing relationships could be strengthened.

Take/kaupapa – refers to purposed-based networking and are not necessarily whānau/genealogy based. Examples of this include kapa haka (Māori cultural performing group), classmates, political movements, and te reo groups where Facebook pages had been created for participants to engage in. As noted by the author of this study, gathering people for a particular purpose online at the convenience of all involved is more feasible and straightforward than organising a physical meeting requiring the same venue and time. In this way, SNS contribute to the accessibility, and potential expansion of whanaungatanga in digital spaces.

Manaakitanga – encompasses hospitality, respect, and kindness. O'Carroll argues without this principle, relationships lack nurturing and will become impaired. O'Carroll shared that respect was demonstrated by participants on SNS toward elders, and manaakitanga was evident in the way that groups provided a safe online space for their group members to interact and connect in.

Kotahitanga – notions of support and unity. These were particularly referenced by O'Carroll's participants who were involved with kaupapa-based SNS as an example of how they experienced whanaungatanga. For example 'hanging out' and 'getting to know one another' were terms the participants referred to as they discussed their SNS relationships.

Aroha - core components of aroha include kindness, generosity, and compassion. O'Carroll states that without aroha, relationships lack the positivity and friendliness needed to endure. Aroha was described in relation to SNS as interactions that maintained positive and friendly communications. As aroha is also an emotion, this principle of whanaungatanga is also tied into the principle of *Kare-ā-roto*.

Kare ā-roto or the outward practical expression of emotion such as between people, for people, taonga, or for objects is one way whanaungatanga is enacted. O'Carroll explains that emotions expressed and felt between people such as grief or affection, is an aspect of whanaungatanga as these forms of interactions and experiences connect individuals to others. O'Carroll's participants engaged in the above concepts as feelings brought about by SNS interactions instead of in face-to-face scenarios. These emotional connections experienced in digital spaces facilitated feelings of comfort and were described as meaningful. This finding could imply that emotional responses can be experienced between people using SNS in place of face-to-face interactions. Because meaningful connections with others are associated with emotion, O'Carroll explains that these enactments overlap with *wairuatanga*.

Wairuatanga in a traditional sense refers to notions of spirituality and can include religious experiences, connections to ancestors, connectedness to Te Taiao (the environment), and atua (deities) (Cherrington, 1994). O'Carroll states that while wairuatanga wasn't explicitly mentioned by participants, meaningful connections were described by participants which are linked to understandings of wairuatanga. This could imply that further exploration of wairuatanga in digital spaces is needed to enhance understanding of how enactments of whanaungatanga unfold in downstream or complex ways.

Rangatiratanga – refers to notions of leadership and can overlap with other principles such as mana (status, authority). In this study, participants reported that rangatiratanga was mostly experienced as having an administrator permit them access to a group page, such as an iwi board member. O'Carroll found that rangatiratanga was not generally experienced in a traditional sense by participants in SNS, or central to their experience of whanaungatanga on SNS. This led to O'Carroll questioning how mana might be negotiated differently online and between generations and hierarchical structures. For example, in a marae environment, hierarchy and other leadership forms are more explicit, whereas in SNS these concepts are less understood.

This study has implications for how whanaungatanga is adapting to online spaces. Traditionally whanaungatanga has been grounded in whakapapa and face-to-face interactions (O'Carroll, 2013), while virtual forms of interaction are still reflective of whanaungatanga, albeit less formal and traditional. Despite this, the research discussed shows that there has been a shift in how principles of whanaungatanga are being applied in meaning and practice. Traditionally, whanaungatanga refers to the practice of creating and maintaining relationships collectively and individually, and where face-to-face contact supports and strengthens these relationships (Rameka, 2018). It is through communication, socialising, and being together that warmth and reciprocal nurturing of relationships have historically supported the practice and meaningful engagement of whanaungatanga (Greaves et al., 2021). O'Carroll's research highlights the ability to create meaningful connections without face-to-face interactions, and where engagement opportunities with others can be broadened.

Alongside these findings, O'Carroll (2013) discusses the lack of knowledge about the negative interactions experienced online by Māori that do exist. Negative enactments such as racism, discrimination, bullying, threats, and privacy violations are examples that may influence impaired mental health, damaged relationships, and serious outcomes such as suicide. She claims:

> "This area of study is indeed important to further explore and research as suicide rates of rangatahi (male in particular) continue to rise (which could be linked to online social behaviour and experiences) as well as the increase in cyber-bullying" (p. 241).

In an attempt to understand the changing dynamics of whanaungatanga and the implications of these changes, Sciascia (2016) looked more closely at how rangatahi Māori are choosing to form and negotiate their online identity. This research also discusses how identity is formed, maintained, negotiated, and promoted for Māori in various settings and practices, such as the marae, with the land, with tūpuna stories, and in the virtual world i.e., SNS. SNS provide a context where identity and self-representation of identity can be developed and expressed. Sciascia states that this is a way for rangatahi to exercise self-determination regarding their own image and identity. Furthermore, SNS facilitate a negotiation of identity, who has access to this and how one can comfortably present and share this identity with others, including online communities that have been chosen by the rangatahi.

The online world provides a space where identity as Māori and relationships with other Māori can be explored. For example, relationships including whakapapa and extended whanaunga (relatives) are being searched for and formed by contacting others online. Furthermore, Sciascia (2016) discusses how SNS arae being used to establish and maintain relationships with hau kainga (ancestral homelands), even though they are geographically distant from the individual seeking out these relationships. Rangatahi were found to be using SNS to engage in iwi and hapū developments, with one participant saying that Facebook had even become the marae for rangatahi, reasoning that this is where they go to talk and socialise. Another advantage for rangatahi was that SNS were facilitating the ability to fill in the gaps of their whakapapa for those who were missing links. These individuals were able to make online connections that assisted in these processes.

While being connected to one's marae, whenua, and whanaunga in the digital space has positive outcomes for rangatahi, such as strengthening their sense of identity and cultural confidence as discussed by Sciascia (2016), this study also highlighted concerns about the sharing of cultural knowledge online and its implications. For example, the sharing of whakapapa in a face-to-face way was considered a sacred process, and some participants expressed concerns that easy access online to whakapapa meant that something meaningful could be lost in the process, including the nurturing of relationships between generations who would likely be participating in the whakapapa sharing.

Additional tensions were found when the congruence and validity of online and offline relationships were explored and considered from rangatahi perspectives. Sciascia (2016) found that there were further insights in the online space where rangatahi were choosing to represent and express themselves online. Particularly in the differences between the online representation and the offline representation of the self. SNS provide their users with an array of functionalities, such as sharing, tagging, posting, editing images, and liking and commenting on content, which allows users to shape an online version of themselves, their lives and their personalities, that is presented to a selected audience. Sciascia (2016) found her participants expressed a desire to be perceived in specific ways in online spaces, for example, investing considerable effort to be seen a particular way, and screening SNS for images of themselves they would 'untag' if they found the image to be incongruent with their preferred online representation. Sciascia (2016) reported that 'untagging' of oneself in photos was a common and routine practice. However, participants also reacted to similar behaviours of other SNS users negatively. For example, contradictions between an individual's self-presentation online and IRL presentation led to confusion and judgment. These judgments included perceiving people as being false, attention seeking, and that their online presentations were overly manufactured.

As online relationships are often subsequent to having met IRL first, the idea that online and offline presentations of the self potentially being incongruent may suggest that real-life relationships could be threatened, and the nature of the authenticity of the relationships questioned. Sciascia (2016) posits that these issues create a blurring of offline and online spaces, which adds further complexities to how relationships are established, negotiated, and maintained online by rangatahi Māori.

Another question this research raises is what other implications exist where online relationships influence face-to-face relationship values and practices. Traditionally having real-life experiences with one's maunga, whenua, and marae were essential to identity formation and relationships with others who whakapapa to the same spaces. Sciascia's (2016) participants highlighted that fewer individuals were now having these experiences, opting to rely on digital spaces to keep them informed about their ancestral connections. Sciascia posits that these practices will come at a cost, and questions if rangatahi can recognize the value of the maunga,

whenua, and marae, their importance and their significance to one's identity and consequent relationships to others, without real-life experiences of such places. For example, connections are more than knowing the names of who rangatahi descend from but are connections that are experienced and felt. These experiences serve to ground rangatahi Māori "so they know who they are, where they come from, and who they descend from" (p. 81). These concepts imply that a meaningful sense of belonging and identity as Māori is facilitated by connection to others who whakapapa to the same places, as well as connection to others who are no longer living.

Whanaungtanga and Wellbeing for Rangatahi Māori

While concepts of whanaungatanga are evidenced in research to be a protective factor in mental health for Māori (O'Carroll, 2013; Williams et al., 2018), and affirmed to be a central protective factor for Māori communities (Greaves et al., 2021), there is little research investigating rangatahi understandings of whanaungatanga and how it impacts mental well-being from their perspective. Acknowledging that understandings of whanaungatanga have adapted to the effects of colonisation, urbanisation, and contemporary living demands, Greaves and colleagues (2021) posit that a working definition of whanaungatanga would be useful for things such as assessments and surveys for those working with rangatahi Māori. They propose the definition of whanaungatanga as "…active participation and sense of belonging in social groups such as whānau, friends, school, communities, iwi and hapū, kaupapa-based collectives, organisations or groups, and wider society" (p. 95). From this perspective, Greaves and colleagues developed a scale to measure whanaungatanga and predict well-being in a mana-enhancing manner for Māori. They posit that by utilising quantitative methods alongside their scale, whanaungatanga could be explored as a protective factor for rangatahi. Literature defining whanaungatanga and rangatahi Māori perspectives were researched and incorporated into the creation of the scale, while quantitative methods were employed to ensure that the scale met predictive validity and reliability standards for well-being scores. The results of their scale confirm that establishing whanaungatanga is crucial to the well-being of rangatahi. This research underscores

the importance of incorporating rangatahi perspectives when trying to understand how they value and experience whanaungatanga.

Similarly, the research of Hamley and colleagues (2022) developed a model for use with those supporting rangatahi well-being. Their research explains that whanaungatanga is connected with increased rates of well-being and contributes to identity formation for rangatahi. The researchers investigated how rangatahi conceptualise and experience whanaungatanga and looked at what is uniquely experienced at this stage of life for rangatahi. The research was designed to encourage a more developmentally and culturally appropriate approach to whanaungatanga for practitioners working with rangatahi.
Using a photo-elicitation project, Hamley and colleagues (2022), explored how 51 rangatahi Māori considered to be doing well in life; made sense of how whanaungatanga had supported them to flourish. The researchers found three components they suggested could be adapted for individuals and organisations wanting to engage in whanaungatanga with rangatahi while supporting their aspirations. Their model called Te Tapatoru, is designed to enhance rangatahi potential by working collectively with supportive networks and the insights of rangatahi toward their aspirations. The three aspects of this model will be briefly summarised below.

Firstly, *Ko wai? A reciprocal connection*. This aspect recognizes that rangatahi are central to other connections and focuses on who is involved with them in their everyday lives such as whānau and community. The researchers found that these relationships were where new skills and knowledge were acquired and practised in the day-to-day tasks of living, for example cooking with an aunty. People involved included whakapapa whānau (people with shared genealogy) such as parents, cousins, siblings, and grandparents, and also whakapapa kaupapa (people with shared purpose) like coaches, neighbours, tutors, and other rangatahi who occupy an important role in the life of rangatahi. Interestingly, rangatahi also conceptualised aspects of Te Ao Māori such as atua, whenua, maunga, and moana (the ocean or a large lake) as important to whanaungatanga, suggesting that relationships can extend beyond human-to-human connections. These relationships with atua or Te Taiao may be what Hameley and colleagues (2022) refer to as the spiritual or wairuatanga aspect of whanaungatanga. The authors note that these relationships provided participants with opportunities to "reflect and re-centre during

challenging times" (p. 178). The researchers claim that whanaungatanga in these settings were most effective when reciprocal in nature. Meaning that rangatahi were actively included in the achievement of goals or collective well-being.

Secondly, *he wā pai: A genuine time and place*. This aspect focuses on Māori experiences of time and place and recognises that whanaungatanga is impacted by how these concepts can both support and constrain relationships. The authors explain that for Māori 'place' can be understood as important in the idea of turangawaewae (where one stands informed by whakapapa). 'Place' is also emphasised where locations are central to connections being made to meaningful experiences. This encapsulates notions of 'time' where the associations between past, present, and future are woven into whakapapa and experiences such as reciprocal relationships and intergenerational connections are understood. The authors point out, that due to colonisation and neoliberalism Māori associations to place and time have been disrupted and reconstructed with productivity and efficiency taking priority. Despite the challenges these issues present to whanaungatanga, the rangatahi in this study emphasised how spending time with whānau had contributed to their sense of hauora. Everyday activities such as cooking and walking together, as well as different places such as churches, moana, and community places, were discussed by rangatahi as playing significant roles in their well-being and fostering their sense of identity.

Thirdly, *He kaupapa pai: a genuine kaupapa* was identified as the third aspect of the Te Tapatoru Model. In this area, rangatahi highlighted that activities that centred on their aspirations were key to their well-being where relationships to others were incorporated. The researchers explained that rangatahi particularly spoke of cultural practices such as kapa haka or marae service and other activities that contributed to their community as central to the joy, wisdom, and skill they experienced. Other less-formal practices such as hanging out, driving together, and sharing kai were spoken about as contributing to small intimate moments of whanaungatanga. These activities also encouraged the rangatahi to work collectively with younger group members, passing on their knowledge or skills, thus acting as agents of both mentorship and service to those who had taught them personally, such as parents or teachers. In this way, the rangatahi are not only attending to their own potential but to those of others also.

The three components of Te Tapatoru, were informed by the rangatahi of Hamley and colleagues (2022) research. The concepts of genuine connection to people, time and place, and kaupapa symbolise an array of opportunities for rangatahi to engage in whanaungatanga in ways that enhance their well-being and ideally promote their flourishing. These authors additionally emphasise the need for research in the digital space where rangatahi are engaging more frequently with online relationships. Hamley and colleagues posit that digitally mediated whanaungatanga offers the potential for whakapapa whānau and kaupapa whānau to remain connected across time and space. They suggest that online whanaungatanga will create unique divergences between in-person and online relationships that require further exploration to understand.

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SNS and Well-being for Rangatahi Māori

Little literature has been published directly addressing how SNS and engaging in relationships online are affecting rangatahi Māori well-being. Koi Tū The Centre for Informed Future; a research centre based at Auckland University this year published a commentary on current literature entitled Social Factors Affecting Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing (Stubbing et al., 2023). This commentary makes several observations and recommendations regarding SM and mental well-being for young people in New Zealand. However, these observations are based in literature from around the world and reflect the broad beliefs of global youth about SM. These beliefs range from SM being supportive of mental health and well-being (Gibson & Trnka, 2020) to other beliefs that it is harmful (Fleming et al., 2020). Youths in the LGBTQ community expressed that digital spaces can provide a sense of community and support (Black, 2018), whereas others experienced issues such as poor self-efficacy (Carlson et al., 2022), body image and eating concerns (Wilksch, et al., 2020), and hyper-sexualisation (Throburn et al., 2021). Stubbing and colleagues conclude that the relationship between digital spaces and young people's well-being is complex and that in Aotearoa high-quality research is required to understand why and for whom SM may be harming.

One example of local research investigating digital technology and hauora is the work of Houkamau and colleagues (2021). This study sought to pinpoint the features of cyberbullying in Aotearoa which they state has a high rate compared with

worldwide statistics. The data for this study was drawn from questionnaire-based self-assessments with Māori participants aged 18-83 years (*n* = 6,529) who were randomly sampled from the electoral roll. Participant responses were analysed by age group cohorts, including 18-25 years. Of this cohort, 40.5% reported having experienced cyberbullying, with 8.3% of the participants reporting cyberbullying in the last month. Cyberbullying behaviour was identified by the question "*Has someone ever used the Internet, a mobile phone, or digital camera to hurt, intimidate or embarrass you"* which the authors sourced from the Wang et al., (2021) study which they were partially drawing from. It was the 18–25-year-old cohort that reported the highest prevalence of cyber-bullying in the study. Added to this is the finding that participants with lower incomes or higher socioeconomic deprivation had higher incidence rates of cyberbullying. Another interesting statistic revealed that those who identified as 'Māori only' were less likely to experience cyberbullying than those who identified with an ethnicity as well as Māori. The authors draw comparisons between this finding and the work of Carlson and Frazer's (2018) research that examined the criticism of Indigenous Australians by others of the same ethnicity due to perceived differences in physical appearance leading to their indigeneity being challenged. In general, this research implies that cyberbullying is a serious problem for rangatahi Māori, specifically among those the study found most vulnerable. These issues are particularly concerning given that rangatahi Māori experience higher rates of mental illness and suicidality. Furthermore, this research highlights the need for an exploration of experiences of intersectionality where complex dynamics are played out in digital spaces.

The Present Study

This chapter has discussed aspects of how Māori currently experience well-being as influenced by issues brought about by colonisation and Western methods which have dominated approaches to well-being in Aotearoa. Due to widespread and persistent disparities experienced by Māori in health and well-being statistics, Māori models of well-being have been developed to better inform practices that can support a holistic approach to well-being based on Māori cultural values and needs. One such value underpinning these approaches is the Māori concept of whanaungatanga, the

development and maintenance of relationships via Māori cultural practices. Given that whanaungatanga has been evidenced as a supportive factor for positive well-being outcomes for rangatahi, I then discussed how the use of SM and SNS have become a pervasive aspect of adolescent lives and relationships and considered literature discussing the impact of SM and SNS on adolescents worldwide. Global studies have demonstrated mixed effects on the well-being and relationships of adolescents. While some studies report that adolescents found using SNS helpful to maintain feelings of closeness in relationships, others found that particular types of enactments could create feelings of resentment and anxiety, and negatively impact academic achievement. Other studies suggest that SNS and SM are useful but less advantageous than face-to-face interactions. These effects were further complicated when considering how the participants experienced their real-life relationships. Furthermore, the relevance of these studies to rangatahi Māori is impacted by the use of quantitative methods that reduce responses to statistics and themes, and are based on Westernised values and understandings of relationships. Consequently, a discussion of local literature presenting research with Māori participants followed, looking at how rangatahi experience concepts of whanaungatanga in SM. These studies found that rangatahi are adapting enactments of whanaungatanga to their online interactions. While rangatahi identified positive aspects of these enactments, there were also tensions around the formation and inconsistency of representations of the self which were negatively affecting real-life relationships. Other research pointed to concerns regarding cyberbullying and the downstream effects this has on well-being.

While the aforementioned studies have been insightful, they are limited in their scope. Firstly, these studies were focused on how participants engaged in relationships using the Facebook platform which has been largely abandoned by rangatahi in the years following these studies. Secondly, these studies raise questions about the complex nature of relationships being intertwined with real-life and online interactions. Consequently, little research exists about how SM and SNS impact Māori youth in particular. It is clear that quality relationships positively influence mental health for Māori in general. However, unique aspects of the nature and quality of relationships for Māori, their ability to engage in meaningful enactments of whanaungatanga, and how these aspects intersect and extend out into social media are yet to be explored. My current research will investigate how rangatahi enact

principles of whanaungatanga in SM, how these enactments influence the lives of rangatahi in online and face-to-face contexts, and how these factors impact mental wellness for rangatahi Māori.

Chapter Two: Method

This chapter outlines how Kaupapa Māori Theory and principles of Kaupapa Māori Research underpin the methods of this research and my approach to the semi-structured interviews I conducted with my participants. I then discuss how I incorporated principles of Narrative Inquiry and Pūrākau as methods to collect the data received from my engagements with the participants of this study. I then offer an explanation of and rationale for my chosen participants, how I sourced participants, and the method of engaging with them by way of whanaungatanga and semi-structured interviews. This is followed by an explanation of how I chose to use Narrative Analysis and Pūrākau analysis for analysing the data I obtained in the interview process. This chapter concludes by addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the methods employed and the ethical considerations of conducting this research.

Kaupapa Māori Theory and Research

Aotearoa/New Zealand exists and sits embedded within a history and culture of colonisation of largely British immigrants. These immigrants, termed 'Pākehā' by Tangata Whenua (pre-European contact term for Māori, meaning people of the land), became the predominant culture by imposing their values, practices, and perspectives on Māori in Aotearoa. Despite the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a document assuring Māori self-determination, the British Government assumed control over their acquired colony. This was followed by the institutionalisation and reification of the dominant culture's views, ideologies, and ways of being, resulting in the oppression and compelled eradication of Māori language, culture, knowledge, systems, and practices (Walker et al., 2006). Consequently, with the justification of introducing 'civilisation' to Māori, Māori ways of being and knowing were eliminated, often illegalized, and replaced by 'superior' Eurocentric and Westernised philosophies (Walker et al., 2006). Despite living in what some term 'post-colonial' times, Māori continue to live with the ongoing effects of colonisation in every facet of life, particularly where 'deficit' can be measured by modern validated standards such as health, crime, mental illness, addictions, incarceration rates, and domestic violence (Rua et al., 2021).

Another feature of colonization was research on Māori by Pākehā, beginning as early as the first interactions between the peoples (Mahuika, 2008). Unfortunately, not being in the dominant part of this relationship, Māori were often misrepresented, disempowered, and then fed back 'superior' and 'expert' views about themselves by researchers, without power to address or challenge these 'knowledge' claims (Walker, 1985; Mahuika 2008). These practices often served to dehumanize, other, and marginalise Māori, while perpetuating the superiority of Westernised philosophy and culture (Smith, 2012).

The emergence of Kaupapa Māori Research (KMR) can be traced to a movement aimed at reclaiming and rejuvenating Māori cultural aspirations that began to build momentum in the 1950s (Bishop, 2008). This movement, grounded in the desire to restore and assert Māori culture, language, beliefs, protocols and autonomy (Mane, 2009), created the impetus for critically challenging how knowledge is produced and how Māori view what Western paradigms term scientific knowledge (Smith, 2000). This is especially relevant in the context of research that has conventionally been carried out 'on Māori', disseminated, interpreted, reported, and used to inform policy by non-Māori, who are typically those in the dominant culture, thus maintaining and reproducing impacts and power dynamics of colonisation (Mahuika, 2008). As such, a foundational characteristic of KMR is that it be "research by Māori, for Māori and with Māori" (Walker et al., 2006, p. 333) with the assistance of those found to be supportive of and invited by Māori (Bishop, 2011). Consequently, KMR aims to decolonise hegemonic practices of knowledge-making, and to create knowledge that is applicable, significant, and empowering to Māori aspirations and the needs of lived reality for Māori (Rua et al., 2021).

Simplistically, KMR can be conceptualised and applied as a theoretical approach (Mahuika, 2008), and a methodology within research processes (Walker et al., 2006). While the precise definition of KMR has been cautiously and diversely described in the literature (Walker et al., 2006), most KMR practitioners agree on several underpinning assumptions and overarching principles for guiding how the power of KMR can be utilised and respected in research practices (Bishop, 2011). While requiring Māori values, knowledge, protocols, and control over and ownership of all aspects of the research by and for Māori, KMR also determines how the research will be structured, prioritised, conceptualised, interpreted, by and for the benefit of Māori (Walker et al., 2006). Further, specific values and expectations are

generally recognized as essential to successfully maintain engagement in a culturally safe and appropriate way (Rua et al., 2021). These values include, but are not limited to: *Whakawhanaungatanga* – building and maintaining relationships, *Social justice*, (Walker et al., 2006), *Rangatiratanga* – the right to self-determination and autonomy over future outcomes, *Taonga Tuku Iho* – cultural aspirations, (Bishop, 2008) and *Kotahitanga* – unity through collaboration (Rua et al., 2021). Other cultural principles have been added and incorporated into research principles by Cram (2001) which include: *Aroha ki te tangata* (respect others), *kanohi kitea* (conduct research in-person), *kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (do not step on other's dignity), *manaaki ki te tangata* (be generous with others) and *kia mahaki* (be humble, don't boast, share knowledge).

KMR also disrupts notions of research that favour and benefit individualistic gain often linked with traditional Western or Eurocentric research. Conversely, KMR is structured and performed in a way that befits and promotes collectivist well-being in harmony with Māori communities (Bishop 2011). Rather than designing a study that seeks to answer the research question of an individual, or promotes the validity of a singular framework, as described by Henry and Pene (2001), KMR is an iterative process of adapting, developing, and improving knowledge, while being grounded in Māori values and beliefs. Cram (2009) expands that KMR is capable of not only revitalizing traditional concepts of what it is to be Māori but also new constructions of the same. Furthermore, she purports that researchers are thus enabled within KMR to validate and affirm Māori worldviews while providing a critique of colonial and Pākehā conceptualisations of Māori.

A peculiarity of KMR is that the 'how to', in terms of a step-by-step guide typical of many Eurocentric methodological approaches, is not always explicit (Walker et. al., 2006). This is because a focus of KMR is to take a localised approach to research given the diversity of Māori coupled with the importance of self-determination to Māori (Bishop, 2011; Walker et al., 2006). Consequently, how KMR is enacted is determined by the local protocols and values of Māori engaged within the research process. This process requires a negotiation with participants within a site of research that cannot be explicitly pre-determined as this would violate the participants' ability to maintain their own self-determination, their voice, their mana, and their cultural aspirations.

Waerea-i-te-rangi Smith (2002) explains that Kaupapa Māori theory has developed by way of Māori experiences and Māori who strive to reject and challenge dominating theory and who "claim space for the legitimacy of Māori knowledge" (p. 13). Thus, a component of engaging in KMR is that it can reconstruct power relationships to facilitate and engage in them with autonomy for Māori (Bishop, 2008). As the nature of relationships are diverse and influenced by a multitude of individuals, attitudes, systems, and organizations, KMR appears to reflexively adapt to whatever means effectively and appropriately enhances life for Māori. This is a particularly salient aspect of KMR within my research, as whanaungatanga has only recently been enacted within digital spaces, meaning that a degree of adaptation may be required that departs from prior research into this cultural concept.

In my efforts to understand and appropriately utilize a Kaupapa Māori theory and methodology, I turn to the following statement by Rua and colleagues (2021) who state that KMR serves to "forge a stronger path towards realising our core aspirations for Māori to live well, to leave improved legacies for future generations, and to remain distinctly Māori" (p. 179). This statement will anchor my efforts to underpin my research from a Kaupapa Māori Theory epistemological perspective. Attempting to ascribe to the conceptualisation of Kaupapa Māori Research as I understand it, I now turn to explaining my relationship with, and my background in approaching the research as a Māori woman, student, and researcher.

Describing my position as a researcher

A foundational principle of Kaupapa Māori Research is that it be conducted by Māori, with Māori and for Māori aspirations (Bishop, 2011). As such I feel it pertinent to explain how I am personally situated within this research as a researcher, and also, to engage in the practice of reflexivity (Groot et al., 2012) to enable an understanding of my perspectives on the chosen research topic and additionally how I relate to my participants and their perspectives, as I will ultimately be analysing their kōrero through my own lens using pūrākau.

I identify as a Māori woman. On my father's side my whānau whakapapa to Ngāpuhi ki Whaingaroa, and more specifically to the Ngāti Uru hapu in the Whangaroa region of Northern Aotearoa. However, due to processes of urbanisation, I was born and raised in the Waikato region, and as such have mostly been connected

with the Tainui iwi in my early years. Although I learned kapa haka and some Te Reo in the public schooling system, like many, I have a feeling of disconnection due to not belonging to the Iwi in whose region I have resided for much of my life. This feeling of disconnection has followed me throughout my adulthood as I have resided in regions where I was not Tangata Whenua. Adding to this was the fact that I was raised away from my Māori whānau as my parents separated in my early years and I was consequently only exposed to 'being Māori' at school.

I currently reside in a rural environment between Katikati and Waihi with my husband and three teenagers. Through my husband I am also connected to Ngāti Porou, however, he was born and raised in Porirua (the tribal lands of Ngāti Toa) where we spent some of our early married years. While living in the Western Bay of Plenty (Ngāti Ranginui), I have made connections to local marae, local rūnanga, and at a Māori wānanga institution, all of which I have personally participated in, in various ways. It is through these locations that I have engaged in processes of whanaungatanga that have led to me being introduced to my research participants.

My participants are male, Māori and between the ages of 18-22 years old. Consequently, they are of an age similar to my own children and I needed to reflect on how to engage in the process of forming and sustaining relationships with these individuals that would encourage their comfort in sharing their stories with me openly and effectively. Furthermore, I wanted to be mindful that due to the difference in age between myself and my participants, the balance of power and mutual respect was maintained in an ethical way that served to uphold the mana of my participants, and so that their true voice would be represented in the interview process and the analysis of the collected narratives.

My research has a whakapapa (lineage) of its own. I began research with rangatahi male Māori in 2022 during the honours year of my Bachelor of Science degree. I anonymously surveyed 50 participants using online software to investigate in part, what they thought were the causes of and preventions for suicide for their peers. Of concern to my participants were the need for support they felt their friends needed, and how they saw SNS being used by their friends. This led me to ponder if SNS had the potential to enhance relationships and networks of support for rangatahi. Additionally, being a mother of three rangatahi, and a leader of youth at my church, I frequently overheard discussions about how their SNS use was intertwined with their IRL relationships. Not only were rangatahi discussing their

SNS use with friends, making recommendations, and offering cautionary advice, they would also judge who should be in their IRL friendship groups based on how an individual participated in SNS. I wondered how these interactions impacted the processes of whanaungatanga for rangatahi at a time of developmental importance, but also as a generation of individuals who are uniquely experiencing SNS at a time where it has been described as a social experiment for young people, while collectively belonging to a Māori community.

My Rationale for using KMR

KMR is generally understood to be a way of practising research that is by Māori for Māori so that Māori knowledge, philosophies and values are upheld. Consequently, KMR provides a relevant and appropriate framework for conducting research alongside Māori participants, and privileging their experiences as valid, while exploring enactments of whanaungatanga, a Māori practice and cultural value.

Consistent with KMR principles and efforts to decolonize methodology, is the practice of incorporating the reclamation of pūrākau as a method for narrative inquiry. Pūrākau are asserted to be a valid and pertinent approach to researching and representing Māori experiences and have been found to be a culturally responsive way to utilise Narrative Inquiry within research settings (Lee, 2009). Within the following section, I outline narrative inquiry as a general approach within the global discipline of psychology, while also exploring a more localised and culturally germane approach to narrative inquiry through the Māori cultural and theoretical concept of pūrākau.

Narrative Inquiry

Also consistent with KMR processes are the principles found in Narrative Inquiry (NI) methodology. The goal of NI is to explore how people make meaning in their lives through the stories (referred to as pūrākau in Te Ao Māori) they tell about themselves, their communities, their histories, and so forth. Consequently, empirical materials are made up of accounts of a person's telling or retelling of events in their words which means that it is capable of capturing memories, associated emotions, and values. As such, NI can be utilised to explore a richer level

of understanding of individuals' experiences, by how they organise their stories and draw meaning from them.

Traditionally in research and literature, narratives have been used as a way of storying the other. Early in the history of Aotearoa, Māori were often described in particular ways by Pākehā and other colonial settlers. These descriptions would be based on the teller's own understanding and culture, and thus viewed through a lens ignorant of Māori culture or knowledge. For example, British settlers came to Aotearoa with the belief that Māori were uncivilised and uneducated. Upon arrival and observing the native people living in simple huts with unsophisticated (by their standards) clothing and practices, Pākehā saw the 'evidence' of their beliefs. These narratives were then reported back to European populations who over time became greater in number and power in Aotearoa, making such narratives easier to reinforce and reify. Later, urbanisation became the backdrop to newer narratives that described Māori as incapable of coping with financial obligations, a people who were wasteful with money, and lazy and inefficient (Nairn & McCreanor, 1991; Petrie, 1998). Consequently, Māori like many minoritized groups have become subject to being storied by a dominant group in ways that do not represent the way they see themselves.

With the emergence of Kaupapa Māori Theory (KMT), (NI) has been used as a method within KMR due to its affinity with story-telling inherent in Māori culture. While recognizing a goal of my research was to explore how rangatahi form stories of their experiences of the enactments of whanaungatanga in social media networking, I see how aspects of NI can support this objective. Additionally, some features of NI are consistent with KMR as NI is a method of data collection that allows for the collection of stories in a culturally relevant and meaningful way while also privileging the voice of the participants who might otherwise be 'othered' in research discourses (Ware et al., 2018). Furthermore, a prominent cultural feature in Te Ao Māori is the ability and practice of story-telling as a way of connecting to one another through whakapapa (shared ancestry) and the relevance of lessons from the past, as seen in whakatau(a)ki (proverbs), pūrākau (ancient stories), waiata (songs) and so on.

As Māori culture places value in the practice of story-telling and the sharing of knowledge through stories, I found it appropriate to draw on principles of NI to enhance my understanding of participants' experiences. NI also offers an avenue for

rangatahi Māori to speak back to dominant narratives that they represent the statistical deficits found in education, economic, health, mental well-being, and forensic settings. Furthermore, with a prevalent consensus informed by public discourse that young people of today are increasingly victims of the harms of SM and digital technology, NI can provide a route to understanding the perspective and insights of young people at the core of these concerns. Privileging the experiences and voices of marginalised groups is in line with the work of Rappaport (2000) who states that NI has the ability to reframe and challenge dominant narratives about such communities.

Rappaport (2000) explains that narratives from the perspective of the marginalised have the power to 'reveal and expose rather than hide the terror' (p. 3) that exists in these communities and to reframe narratives in a light that liberates them. Consequently, Rappaport explains the process of NI as a process of 'turning tales of terror into joy' (p. 3). Rappaport describes the similarities among people to tell stories explaining that our experiences fall into sequential events like a story and that how we tell these stories reveals the meaning we ascribe to the events of our lives. Further, that these stories are connected to our emotional and cognitive experiences and are influential in forming personal identity.

Common narratives regarding the use of SM by young people are often created and perpetuated by older generations who are in positions of power to do so. These may include media reports, journal articles, and health professional recommendations, which largely espouse the dangers and negative consequences of social media use. Some of the dangers reported by such narratives include stunted social development, mental health impairment, difficulties with brain-related tasks such as concentration, sleep deprivation, bullying, and technology-related addictions (O'Keeffe et al., 2011; Meena et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2016; Salo et al, 2018; Craig et al., 2020; Larson, 2021). These narratives are examples of what Rappaport (2000) explains as being situated so that a prevailing shared narrative emerges that SM use for young people is problematic and leads to an array of precarious consequences. Subsequently, the meaning attached to these narratives would infer that SM for young people is harmful and that something needs to be done to counteract the negative outcomes of SM for young people. These narratives rarely if ever offer young people the opportunity to address or speak back to the narratives being constructed about them.

NI theory that human beings live storied lives and that the study of their story-telling reveals a unique view of phenomena, means it is capable of revealing a rich and deeper level of understanding which is contrary to decontextualised or objective facts (Connelly & Clandinin 2012). Consequently, NI researchers are not concerned with the truthfulness of narratives, but rather the meanings portrayed therein. Therefore, the goal of the researcher in NI is to ask participants questions that assist in revealing and interpreting narratives, without restricting the areas of conversational exploration. This is because NI researchers are often interested in investigating traditional assumptions and challenging the accepted norms of a given field, aiming to reveal a more in-depth and often unseen perspective in their field of research. For my research however, I found that an approach more aligned with KMT and KMR was to co-construct knowledge with my participants while drawing on shared understandings of Māori culture to make sense of their stories using pūrākau.

Rappaport (2000) explains that community or shared narratives, shape and inform the culture and context that influence individual lives. Subsequently, community narratives "are the currents in which our individual lives move down the river of time" (p. 6). Rappaport explains that personal narratives contribute to shaping a community narrative, and become tools of empowerment. As such, NI is a methodology that aligns with KMT which seeks to facilitate the hearing and empowerment of Māori voices at the personal and community level. These features are particularly relevant for me as Māori, given that traditionally Māori experiences and viewpoints have been marginalised or absent from research. Consequently, my intent for incorporating NI is to allow and legitimize the voices of those as yet unheard in the scope of rangatahi and social networking.

Connelly and Clandinin (2012) provide guidance as to the methods of conducting NI. From their guidance, methods that I find useful and appropriate to use and that are harmonious with KMT include developing and negotiating an ethical relationship with the participants, by caring, and mutual sharing of stories. Connelly and Clandinin posit that this provides a sense of equality and feelings of connectedness between researchers and participants. They also encourage unstructured interviews as an iterative data collection process. These recommendations are compatible with the concepts of whanaungatanga, kotahitanga,

and kaua e takahia te mana o te tāngata, explained above. They also promote Mishler's (1999) advice to not police the boundaries of the research to make it conform to a set of principles that may serve to corrupt or regulate how data is collected or interpreted. This concept is aligned with respecting the mana of those participating in research.

Connelly and Clandinin's (2012) idea that the researcher's voice be negotiated into the interpretation naturally infers that the researcher's views and culture will influence the data and its interpretation. Therefore, with this research, as the researcher and participants are Māori, it is assumed that Māori ways of being and existing in the world will inherently underpin this study. I will now discuss the use of Pūrāku as a Māori approach that fits within my research alongside Narrative Inquiry.

Pūrākau

The value placed on narrative is not a new idea to Māori. Lee (2009) explains that story-telling is a key way that Indigenous communities have maintained and protected their knowledge and connections in the past. For Māori the practice of pūrākau; often thought of as the sharing of fables, is also capable of expounding philosophy and epistemology and according to Lee can be "reconceptualised as a culturally responsive construct for narrative inquiry" (p. 1). Lee further advocates for the use of pūrākau in research settings as a way to decolonize research methodologies, while restoring indigenous researchers' traditional methods to capture data that is not consistent with or capable of being obtained by Western methods. Lee describes the concept of the 'Indigenous bricoleur' as a way to position pūrākau within research methods while decolonising methodologies. According to Lee, an Indigenous Bricoleur uses, adapts to, and weaves together a selection of methodologies and methods best suited to the research context in question. The product of such research being obtained via a collection of methods becomes the 'bricolage,' in which a fuller reflection of the complex realities of the participants and researcher can be seen. This includes the lived experiences of indigenous researchers who are concurrently attempting to reclaim traditional practices such as pūrākau in their decolonising approach to research.

At first glance narratives and pūrākau can be viewed as very similar, however, within this section, I felt it pertinent to discuss both for two reasons.

Firstly, pūrākau differ from narratives in that they are conceptualised and understood within the broader context of Māori worldviews, meaning that they are culturally specific forms of narratives unique to Māori. As explained by Cliffe-Tautari (2020) pūrākau provide Māori "with an indigenous construct to unpack their own perceptions about their cultural locatedness in a modern era." (p. 14).

Secondly, discussing both allows me to bring the local perspectives and understanding of Māori (pūrākau) into broader disciplinary conversations within global psychology. I chose to weave elements of both NI and pūrākau together to form my own approach that I felt was useful for the benefit of data gathering, but also for the comfort of my participants, and to maintain consistency with Kaupapa Māori principles. For example, while interviewing my participants I found elements within their narratives that were relevant to the way Māori uniquely experience the world. One participant told me about how his social networking use was influenced by his relationships within his whānau, and that these relationships were strained due to intergenerational impacts of urbanisation across time, including separation from his iwi whenua, and extended whānau. While this example speaks to a specific experience for my participant, it is shaped by his being Māori, and was shared in a particular way because I am Māori also, while also speaking to broader issues relevant to psychological processes and theory.

I also chose to use the act of pūrākau, or sharing my own stories with my participants, to elicit more in-depth responses from them. I found the sharing of stories to be a way that they became more comfortable sharing their experiences with me, but also that my stories would spark thoughts of their experiences that they hadn't thought to share previously. Furthermore sharing my stories with participants was a way that facilitated a mutual understanding and helped and unpack their pūrākau further. This practice was useful to make sense of a participant's story. For example, when a participant shared that they had experienced a strained relationship with their father and how this had occurred, I shared my own similar story, adding details around the later impacts on myself and other whānau members. The participant then added his own details that were similar or contrasting to my own story. This process of sharing stories and details back and forth led to the participant and I reaching a common understanding of what these stories had come to mean to us over time.

Participants

The Māori cultural concept of whanaungatanga was used to source participants. Having developed meaningful relationships with others who work with rangatahi was crucial to finding participants who were willing to engage in open discussions. These relationships included those with church and community leaders, as well as my connections at a Wānanga (institute of technology). These relationships allowed for the research to begin with a common bond, and were supportive in building relationships of trust with my participants to feel at ease. This process was made more fluid by the fact that my connection to each participant was a person who introduced me to the participants and was also a person of influence to them, who they knew and respected.

Considering my topic of interest, and that I would be grounding my research in KMT, I chose to seek out participants who were Māori and between 18-25 years of age. By chance, the first three participants to agree to engage with the study were male. Considering that all participants being male might open up broader conversations in whatever data emerged from the interviews, I made the decision to proceed with only male participants.

I initially made contact with each participant using either a text message or email depending on what they had indicated was preferable to them by our connecting person. After explaining what the study would include I invited the participants to meet at a time and place of their choosing. Each meeting began with a casual kōrero, introductions and catching up between interviews. Kai (food and drink) was provided at each meeting enabling the processes of manaakitanga (kindness, support, hospitality) and I would go over the purpose for each meeting with reminders about their rights and confidentiality to ensure the principle of rangatiratanga (right of autonomy) was upheld. It was important to me that the discussion followed a natural pace and flow that promoted the sharing of the participants' stories only in a manner of their choosing. Thus, at the beginning of each meeting, I would show the participants a brief outline I had prepared of 3-4 broad topics that I would like to cover during our kōrero and allow them to consider and contribute to these topics. The kōrero time lasted no more than 45-60 minutes and I endeavoured to be mindful of the comfort of the participants, being careful to finish when I felt the energy of the participants' engagement wane. Upon completion

of each meeting, the participants were given a koha (gift) of $50 for their time. I felt that this koha was an appropriate way to uphold mana and maintain whanaungatanga, and was a gesture of my appreciation for the participants' time and insights.

Consistent with the concept of whanaungatanga pertinent to KMR, I chose to prioritise relationship building with my participants. Over several months of contact and rapport building, I was able to gain a deeper and richer sense of insight regarding their lived experiences which contributed to our shared ability to make sense of their pūrākau in ways meaningful to them individually and collectively. Consequently, I felt that this contact and three interviews with three participants were an appropriate way to honour their narratives while incorporating whanaungatanga and sourcing relevant data for this study.

Semi- Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) have been chosen as the data collection method for this study. This method was chosen as SSIs are flexible enough to explore unexpected ideas that arise from the participant (Gill et al., 2008), while being guided by a small overarching number of themes for the interview to cover (Mahama & Khalifa, 2017). Using SSIs, questions pre-determined by the researcher may be adjusted to adapt to the nature of the answers and to allow a deeper understanding of the topics being investigated (Mahama & Khalifa, 2017). As the participant responses may guide follow-up questions from the interviewer, this process can be seen as a co-creation of the interview content (Adams, 2015). In this way, the co-creation process can be consistent with the principles of whanaungatanga, kotahitanga, rangatiratanga, and manaakitanga in KMT as the participants' voices and opinions are used to guide the interviews.

Rationale for semi-structured interviews

In keeping with the objectives of this study, the themes chosen for each interview will include an exploration of how rangatahi attain, maintain, and interact in their online relationships (Interview 1), how issues in Interview 1 might affect their IRL relationships (Interview 2), and third, how the issues considered in interview 1 & 2 might influence their experiences of mental wellbeing (Interview 3).

It is anticipated that these interviews will elicit narratives from the participants that provide rich insights unique to the lived reality of the topics of interest in this study.

Data Collection

Data collection was reliant upon audio recording supplemented by journal note-taking. Anticipating that the interviews would be 45-60 minutes long, audio recording is recommended by SSI researchers to be the most effective manner of accurately capturing the dense content and subtle nuance in conversations, while allowing the interviewer to focus on the conversation rather than note-taking (Adams, 2015; Gill, 2008). At each interview setting, I explained my preference for audio recording the kōrero between the participant and myself and sought their permission for this. I also chose to take written notes where I felt this would help me better understand the participants' responses, and which also served as reminders for topics to later return to. I also made journal entries following the interviews to practice a form of reflexivity that I found helpful to reflect on my self-awareness to reduce any of my biases that might influence the way I used or interpreted the participants' responses. All participants were agreeable to this method.

For the interview process, I found the most appropriate method was to have 3-4 broad themes that I wanted to discuss with my participants. I wrote these down on paper and showed these topics to each participant, telling them I was interested in discussing these with them during this kōrero. I used a general question to approach each topic for example, "Tell me about how you first started connecting with people online?" I then let the participant guide the conversation with their answers. According to their answers, I would ask follow-up questions to elicit more detail or a story that explained their experience, such as "You mentioned you only use Instagram for following your family overseas, why do you think that is?" When I felt the participant was satisfied with their responses, and that we had comfortably discussed a topic to completion, I moved on to another topic. With the permission of the participants, our kōrero was recorded.

I recorded the interviews using the Voice Memos application, which I then transferred to a laptop and transcribed verbatim using a function in Microsoft Word. This included pauses, stutters, and non-verbal communication such as "um" and "er." This is because I was interested in exploring how the participant chose to form their

self-narrative. However, as Māori are a collective people, I was also interested in exploring what shared narratives would emerge, considering that shared narratives are what construct collective cultural experiences and practices (Bishop, 1995; Davies, 1990).

In consequent interviews, participants were asked if they would like to add, amend or clarify any details in the transcriptions. After the interview process had been completed, Narrative Analysis grounded in a Pūrākau approach, was utilised to attempt the interpretation of narratives found within the transcripts. Participants views were also encouraged to contribute regarding these interpretations and any feedback was incorporated. Data collected was stored via password-protected access to a secure and confidential online platform.

Analysis

My analytical approach

Taking into account the co-construction of the data and the exploration of narratives and pūrākau within the interview process, I felt that the relevant approach to analysis should follow accordingly. Attempting to create and share in a knowledge production process in a way that is culturally suitable and useable, I drew on the concept of the 'Indigenous Bricoleur' advanced by Lee (2009). Lee drew on the work of Strauss (1962) who created the concept of the 'bricolage' to describe what a qualitative researcher produces by utilising whatever practices and methods are useful and adaptable to the research in question, according to the context wherein it is located. My role as a 'bricoleur' would then be to review the transcripts, identify shared meanings within the interviews, and weave together these parts of the narratives in an attempt to reveal shared knowledge from within the participants' lived experiences. Lee's (2009) work extended Strauss' concept to include indigenous methods and epistemological perspectives so that an Indigenous Bricolage would be capable of producing research that validates perspectives and knowledge that are relevant and applicable to Māori experiences. I considered this process of analysis to be an appropriate way to use Narrative Analysis (NA) grounded in Pūrākau theory explained earlier in this chapter. Further, by

incorporating aspects of NA into my research I felt that this supported my Kaupapa Māori theoretical orientation.

An Indigenous Bricoleur approach also takes into account the researcher's awareness of their own influence on the bricolage because the bricolage will be reflective of the researcher's interpretations of the data (Lee, 2009). However, the bricolage also reflects the complexities of the participants' lived experiences. I believe the practice of Indigenous Bricolage fits within a methodology with decolonising perspectives, as Indigenous knowledge that has been previously invalidated or ignored is privileged by utilising Indigenous epistemological models and cultivating the use of traditional practices. Furthermore, a methodological approach utilising pūrākau means that Māori storytelling is being restored as a legitimate research method. Additionally, actively exploring which methods are useful to encourage the active sharing of rangatahi Māori in the topic of SM as a way of engaging in whanaungatanga would require a flexible approach that is supported by the Indigenous Bricolage as explained by Lee (2009, p. 8),

> "An Indigenous bricoleur not only attempts to reclaim cultural traditions such as pūrākau, but simultaneously articulates these traditions in new forms… we strive to create knowledge outside the production and control of the powerful and elite, a different sort of narrative that aims to contribute to the social transformation of Indigenous groups."

By incorporating the Indigenous bricoleur method, I attempt to lend my support to legitimising traditional ways of researching and representing knowledge of Māori persons, and as a community within the experiences of SM relationships.

To advance my Indigenous Bricolage analysis, I began by grounding my analysis in a pūrākau approach of evaluating my data. Pūrākau is a culturally relevant way for Indigenous participants and researchers to analyse and evaluate their perceptions of their experiences using an Indigenous construct. So that the pūrākau maintain the authenticity of the participants' lived experiences, I felt it necessary that the completed pūrākau and the representations of the participants would be discussed with the participants while being constructed. This process also served to uphold the mana and confidentiality I believe to be essential to the nature

of both Kaupapa Māori Research, and the taonga of accessing pūrākau from participants.

While pūrākau is being reclaimed as a valid research method to collect data, it is also capable of being utilised as an analysis method because it provides an indigenous construct to explore Māori perspectives that are culturally situated in contemporary settings (Cliffe-Tautari, 2020). Consequently, I found that my making sense of the participants' pūrākau (or how they told stories and what they contained) became the starting point where my own pūrākau originated where I spoke to how I understood their experiences in the context of collective narratives in a modern era. This is in line with Lee's (2008) methodological approach where the reader finds the 'moral' of the story, and the meaning located within it for themselves allowing for past cultural lessons to be reshaped so that new understandings of these lessons are used in current settings.

As my research is grounded in Kaupapa Māori Theory, I also felt it pertinent to consider that there are certain cultural nuances, values, and shared collective meanings that were unable to be captured using any combination of conventional Westernised approaches. As Crossley (2011) explains

> "The essence of a narrative type of approach, as far as I am concerned, is an ability to understand and appreciate the personal and cultural meanings conveyed within oral or written texts and to explicate the socio-cultural resources utilised in this process" (p. 148).

Subsequently, for my study, I chose to implement the following analytical approach that I felt to be most consistent with Kaupapa Māori Research. This involved reading each transcript to become familiar with the participants' stories. I then separated transcripts by narrative (story). Each story became one piece of data. I then re-read the transcripts to identify stories that may be spread across the interview process, but which form the same narrative or contribute to one ongoing story. Narratives were then grouped by themes. For example, 'narratives about benefits of using SNS for maintaining whanaungatanga.' The narratives were again re-read together by theme, noting similarities, connections, and contrasts. Within this process, I explored the participants' pūrākau for connections to Te Ao Māori and Mātauranga Māori (the Māori world, and Māori knowledge respectively) specifically

notions of whanaungatanga that were evident in their lives. These connections were then related to the broader ramifications of whanaungatanga as they relate to psychological well-being for Māori rangatahi and their relationships.

After taking time to become familiar with the data, I observed patterns, and developed interpretations of the patterns about what they reveal in the context of the person's life and SM usage, then drew conclusions linked to the research thesis. I then focused on core narratives that had emerged from the participant accounts. However, Māori are considered to be a collectivist culture and as such, shared narratives construct and co-construct our lived experiences (Bishop, 1995). Consequently, for Māori participants, this would also include linking cultural narratives to existing collective narratives and identifying narratives that contain or are shaped by Māori perspectives and experiences.

A weakness of using the above approach to analysis is the unavoidable however unintentional aspect that the stories shared by the participants will be subject to my interpretation as the researcher, which were consequently analysed, disseminated and connected to literature and theory, based on my perspectives and knowledge. My approach to address this issue included four measures. Firstly, I engaged in a constant and iterative process of advisory meetings with my supervisor, whose guidance I incorporated into the way I analysed the data of this study. Secondly, at each meeting with my participants, I would follow up and reintroduce concepts I understood from our last kōrero, in an attempt to co-construct the research, allowing for more of their input, and less influence from my own perspective. Thirdly, I engaged in the practice of keeping a reflexive journal as I interacted with the participants and investigated their narratives and pūrākau. Reflexive journaling is promoted by social constructivist researchers as a way to enhance authenticity, maintain contextual relevance, and re-examine their own engagements with the research at hand (Meyer & Willis, 2019). Some of the benefits of reflexive journaling include enhancing the self-awareness of the researcher regarding their conduct throughout the research process and guiding the researcher to be critically aware of how they are shaping the interactions with their participants (Meyer & Willis, 2019). I felt these benefits of reflexivity to be of particular use in the act of performing my data collection, but also to be in harmony with principles of KMT and practice. Fourthly, and in line with reflexive practice, I made a conscious commitment to actively avoid assumptions and to question any assumptions that I

made during the research process so as not to impede the authenticity of the data, or the mana of my participants.

Ethical Considerations

As per Massey University Ethics Committee's criteria, my research was regarded as low risk. Consequently, it was my obligation to ensure that I followed all relevant ethical standards when sourcing, engaging with, and writing about my participants, with oversight from my supervisor. Consistent with KMR practice and ethical standards, it was my focus to ensure that my participants were fully informed of all steps and processes of my research before requesting their consent to participate in my study (See Information and Consent forms in Appendices A and B). Additionally, I invited my participants to choose the time and location of our kōrero and I began each meeting with casual chatting and the sharing of kai to develop whanaungatanga. I hoped these efforts would create an atmosphere of comfort and trust in an attempt to encourage free conversation.

In preparation for undertaking the interview processes, and in consideration of working in a culturally sensitive manner, I commenced an independent cultural consultation process. This consisted of acquiring two Māori research supervisors to assist me with culturally relevant issues, values, and behaviours. I also reviewed literature from studies with Māori participants in Aotearoa to gain insights into cultural and ethical concerns around my potential participants' lived experiences. Consequently, I met and discussed the ethical issues arising from the aforementioned process, with my supervisor on multiple occasions and received advice from him and others we felt appropriate.

We identified two main areas of concern that were specifically pertinent to consider for Māori participants. First, addressing the potential discomfort of participants was of importance to me. This was approached by informing the participants of how the interviews would be conducted by giving clear information regarding the interview questions, that their responses would be completely confidentially treated and stored, and of their right to withdraw from the research process any time during the interview phase, and up to two weeks after they have received the transcripts of their interviews. Additionally, participants were offered the option of engaging with the interviews at a time and venue of their choice.

Participants were invited to pause the interview should discomfort be experienced, and resumed at their convenience. Furthermore, relevant information and internet links to professional services that provide support to individuals and whānau who experience discomfort were given. Also, one of my supervisors who is a Māori Doctor of Clinical Psychology made himself available to assist any participants that might have experienced any of the above concerns. Participants were reminded of their right to cease engagement with the research at any time and were encouraged to use the services provided if they chose to withdraw before or at the end of the interviews.

A second ethical concern was addressing how meaningful inclusion as Māori could be achieved for my participants. This was a concern that was attended to in the cultural consultation process of planning my study. Following the advice of my cultural advisors and supervisors, participants were offered karakia, waiata, and the sharing of whakapapa and kai where they felt appropriate so that processes of whanaungatanga could be comfortably established and engaged in, and that a trusting relationship could be built. Furthermore, participants were given the opportunity to consider and discuss the transcripts of their interviews and offered a summary of the findings after the research process came to completion.

Summary

This chapter explained Kaupapa Māori Theory and Research and my rationale for grounding my research in this theory and framework. Being interested in the way that male rangatahi are experiencing whanaungatanga in online and real-life settings, and how this may impact their experiences of well-being, meant that I needed an approach capable of exploring and analysing a Māori way of being and experiencing the world. As such, I have discussed my adaption of Narrative Inquiry and Pūrākau methodologies and the incorporation of semi-structured interviews to centre the voice of my participants. I felt that these approaches were best suited to my topic of interest while also maintaining the integrity of KMT and KMR that privileges my participants' voice while affirming the decolonisation of research in Aotearoa and affirming Mātauranga Māori. I then explained my choice of and approach to Narrative Analysis and Pūrākau for disseminating and analysing the stories I collected from my participants and the rationale for these methods. In

keeping with the rationale for KMT I found that NA and Pūrākau were appropriately suited for analyses of this data. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of my research design and the ethical concerns I addressed in the research process. Of utmost importance to me was the facilitation of comfort and upholding of mana upholding for the participants, and the ways in which meaningful participation could be achieved throughout the research process.

Chapter Three: Analysis

As my research is grounded in Kaupapa Māori Theory and practice, I find it appropriate to begin the pūrākau analysis with an introduction of each participant. I intend to give the reader a sense of what each participant is like in character and wairua (spirit). Further, as I describe my time with each participant, and how I found their nature, it should be noted that these descriptions are coloured by my own worldviews and life experiences. I will refer to the introduction of each participant as a *Mihi Whakatau* or welcome. I chose to give my participants pseudonyms that I found reflected their character and/or interests as I got to know them. Consequently, they are called Te Mōhio (knowledge/wisdom), Te Aho (to shine/light), and Te Marohi (strength/power). Following the mihi whakatau, each participant's responses are broken into sections following our three kōrero topics. These are first, social media and relationships, second, in real-life relationships, and third, mental well-being. These sections are completed with a summary of each participant's responses. This chapter is then completed with a summary of the key research findings.

Participant One

Mihi Whakatau – Meet Te Mōhio

The first time I met Te Mōhio, we had arranged to meet by text message. He had given me his cell number through email. Te Mōhio's email address was forwarded to me by a mutual acquaintance after he had permitted them to share his details. I arrived at the place where we had agreed to meet, and Te Mōhio was waiting outside the building, he smiled when I said I was looking for Te Mōhio, and he greeted me saying "Yep, that's me." I felt like our interaction was off to a positive start.

Due to the timing of Te Mōhio's calendar, we ended up meeting in a different location each time, of his choosing. I noticed that he seemed to move through these environments with ease, but also with the quiet unassuming nature of someone who knows they are not the ideal societal citizen. Te Mōhio identified that he lived in a town with very different cultural views to the one he had grown up in, and found the town he lived in now to be racist against Māori.

During our first kōrero, we shared kai, and a bit about our backgrounds and family history. We talked about our common experiences of moving to small towns and the people and organisations we knew in common. I learned that like many Māori, Te Mōhio had moved to his current town of residence with his immediate whānau for the availability of living accommodation. They had been living in this town for several years and consequently, Te Mōhio had lost touch with extended whānau such as cousins, uncles, and aunties, as well as his ancestral lands.

We spoke somewhat about how Te Mōhio was choosing to live his life after finishing high school, starting further education while still living at home with his parents, and his thinking about what the future might look like for him.

During our interactions, Te Mōhio described himself as having had a "pretty rough upbringing" and wanting to better himself and bring the cycle of this rough way of living to an end. Te Mōhio said that he had complicated relationships with his parents, due to the way they had raised him, getting older, wanting more independence and wanting to change his habits that were inconsistent with his parents' views. Te Mōhio said he'd had a kind of epiphany where he believed he was better off without using social media the way he was before, and as such was using social networking sparingly, as a way to keep in touch with his friends, and was more interested in face-to-face communication. Te Mōhio explained that he was "against social media" due to the negative influence he felt it had on his immediate whānau and friends.

He described himself as "not a very social person," and that friends tend to contact him rather than the other way around. However, he did say he had close friends that he would help out if needed, and tended to treat people how they treated him. Having gone through a depressive stage, which he put down to SM overuse, Te Mōhio told me he was now trying to incorporate new habits into his life such as exercise and meditation, which he felt were having a positive effect.

After meeting with and corresponding with Te Mōhio over several months I found him to be intelligent, curious, insightful, and self-aware. Te Mōhio had an easygoing sense of humour, showed an interest in connecting different ideas and philosophies, and would often become animated when talking about world issues and his future. Throughout our interactions, I sensed that he was sometimes hesitant to share personal details about his life of a sensitive nature, perhaps from fear of judgment, but would nevertheless proceed to discuss these topics when he felt more

comfortable. Te Mōhio was humble in nature, and when asked how he would describe himself he replied "I'd just say I'm a positive person. I play guitar, I play chess."

Regarding SM use, Te Mōhio said he no longer used it due to having had some negative experiences and consequently had a bad opinion of it. Te Mōhio said he had been a fairly frequent user of Messenger, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram until recently. He confirmed he used social networking applications (apps) only to communicate with family to share information or memes, and friends to arrange face-to-face meetings. Despite this, Te Mōhio would sometimes refer to things he had seen recently on SM, such as funny videos or content he found inspiring. Te Mōhio also spoke about sharing content with friends using SNS apps, and having face-to-face discussions with friends about viral SM content.

During our third kōrero, Te Mōhio told me his SM use had increased due to starting work and as a way to occupy his time during breaks, and then relax after work. Reflecting on this Te Mōhio felt dissatisfied with his return to SM use. He would occasionally draw on the content he had engaged with online to relate to our conversation where it was applicable. I will now discuss my interactions with Te Mōhio as they relate to the focus of my thesis. This includes first looking at Te Mōhio's use of SM and his relationships, then how Te Mōhio described his in real-life relationships, and lastly how Te Mōhio perceived his well-being.

Te Mōhio: Social Media and Relationships

Te Mōhio openly expressed that he was not in support of SM due to the influence he felt it had had on his immediate whānau and their relationships. When asked what his thoughts were about SM generally, Te Mōhio said

> *I would say that I'm probably against it as a whole. Just the effect that it's had on our family. Yeah, it's sad.*

While Te Mōhio initially expressed concern over the amount of time his whānau spent using SM and the influence this may have on their well-being, he later reflected on the impact he felt this constant use was having on their relationships:

> *…there wasn't really an issue until like TikTok and YouTube shorts, and those quick 5-second scrolling things came out and ever since then…I feel like…we've sort of drifted apart from each other. We're not as close as the family used to be. We already had…previous family issues, but this sort of just made it worse. Because now we don't really have to face adversity…We can just take the easy route and just…distract ourselves…*

Te Mōhio's reflections indicate that the collective hauora of his whānau has been negatively affected by the use of SM in their home. Central to the concept of whanaungatanga is the nurturing of relationships (Moorfield, 2005). However, Te Mōhio recognises that the introduction of SNS has degraded the ability of his whānau to practice whanaungatanga with negative effects that are observable and felt.

His comments about a decrease in closeness have links to Durie's (1994) model of Te Whare Tapa Whā and imply that Te Mōhio feels that his whānau is suffering in a way that is detrimental to their family unit. According to Durie, the well-being of the whānau is central to the well-being of the individuals within it. This is added upon by the distraction from adversity Te Mōhio mentions. Overcoming adversity is thought to enhance emotional well-being (taha hinengaro) (Masten et al., 199). These concerns expressed by Te Mōhio indicate his awareness of the importance of taha whānau – the strength of family well-being and how his own well-being is tied into that of his whānau. Reflecting on his feelings about his whānau use of SNS and the effect this had had on his whānau relationships, Te Mōhio remarked:

> *… it's sort of just changed my perspective and made me realize how poorly we're living…we drifted apart from each other. There's no real love in the family, it seems like…*

Te Mōhio's observation about the absence of feeling love in his whānau is interesting as he refers to something that is felt as being impaired by how his whānau engage in digital spaces. However, for Māori, the practice of love incorporates more than conventional feelings often understood to define love. For many Māori the

concept of *aroha* (translated as love in English) is expressed when a person acts from the heart "in the sense of a genuine care for a person's well-being" (Ramstad, 2003, p. 184). Despite Te Mōhio acknowledging in our kōrero that his physical needs were met by his parents, he was aware of a lack of aroha, or genuine care in his whānau.

Wondering if Te Mōhio had experienced similar concerns with his friends, we shared kōrero about whether he observed similar patterns with his friends. To this, Te Mōhio commented:

> *Not really. They've got more self-control with it…but if like you're talking about peer pressure, they're a lot more involved in that way, like what they see on technology, you can tell it influences their thoughts and what they do…*

The idea that an individual's behaviour can be affected by well-known people they see online is not new, and is one way that many people capitalise on SM, marketing themselves as 'influencers.' However, it is not uncommon for real-life relationships to be affected by such influencers whose views or values can sometimes be controversial and create divisiveness. Speaking to this issue Te Mōhio noted:

> *That's real similar with my friends. That's how they are…I sorta had to stop hanging out with them cause…they could just change their mind just like that…it's normally based off technology. Like what makes them change if that makes sense…*

Te Mōhio confirmed in conversation that he had seen his friends change their values and beliefs to be more consistent with what they had seen particular people expressing online, saying:

> *Well, my mates in particular, I feel like they have to be like that because…it's like the trending thing… having like money and all that…so people I used to hang out with they used to go out of their way and do things like that…but it's like just all the image sort of thing. But I think that…it's like a negative effect of social media instead of just trying to… improve yourself and actually get it, they would just pretend they have it and try to have that image…*

The above comments illustrate the dynamics of Te Mōhio's friendships being altered by how he saw his friends rapidly changing their behaviours to follow online trends. Given that everyday friendship connections were found to be central to whanaungatanga in the lives of rangatahi in the study by Hamley and colleagues (2022), the inconsistency and changing identity of one's friends would create challenges for how whanaungatanga might be enacted online and face-to-face. If a person feels that their friend's behaviour is inconsistent, this presents barriers to reciprocal connections central to whanaungatanga. The Te Tapatoru Model (Hamley et al., 2022) emphasises the need for a genuine connection to people. Te Mōhio's experiences with his friends' online behaviours and representations of themselves indicate that he is dissatisfied by a lack of genuine connection, resulting in him ending his friendships and the dissolution of whanaungatanga in these relationships.

Additionally, Te Mōhio mentioned that he had noticed negative changes in his own behaviour commenting:

> *I was in sort of a depressive stage, a world of black over these past couple of months and just like constantly scrolling and seeing, you know, like millionaires on boats or whatever, it just makes you feel stink like you're missing out on life sorta thing. So I just deleted it and started working on myself to hopefully live like that one day. Because I feel like people get sorta put off when they see stuff like that, you know? It makes them feel like why isn't that me sorta thing…*

Te Mōhio's observations are somewhat aligned with Festinger's (1954) theory of Social Comparison. Above, Te Mōhio recognises the negative effect of comparing himself with others he perceived to be more successful on social media. Te Mōhio acknowledges that these comparisons had been influential in harming his hauora hinengaro (mental and emotional well-being).

In the above section, Te Mōhio described how his, whānau's, and friends' use of SM and SNS had impacted differing aspects of whanaungatanga and well-being collectively and individually. In particular, Te Mōhio's comments infer that the emotional and spiritual dynamics of whanaungatanga are being negatively affected in his home. Spiritual and emotional aspects are tied to holistic well-being for Māori.

As explained in the hauora models developed by Durie (1994) and Edwards (2009), where spiritual and emotional needs are neglected, the well-being of whānau is compromised. In Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model, the Taha Wairua is an essential element to whānau and individual well-being and is central to feeling connected to others and the natural world. Te Mōhio's feelings that reflect a lack of love indicate that the Taha Wairua in his whānau may be languishing and thus negatively impacting their well-being collectively.

Furthermore, Te Mōhio's comments about drifting apart reflect the need for rangatahi to feel a sense of reciprocal connection, as explained by the Te Tapatoru model (Hamley et al., 2022). As reciprocal interactions with others are a core component of whanaungatanga, it would appear that this cultural value and practice has been neglected through the prevalence of SM and SNS in Te Mōhio's home. Te Mōhio's comments identify the reality of SNS and SM content overlapping into real-life relationships and how the two are interwoven. In the following section, I will present what Te Mōhio told me about his real-life relationships.

Te Mōhio: In Real-life Relationships

Despite the negative aspects of SM and SNS that Te Mōhio identified in his relationships, he also discussed beneficial ways that he had chosen to use it in his relationships with others. For example, Te Mōhio talked about how SNS apps such as Facebook Messenger and Telegram allowed him to keep in touch with people regularly, which he did primarily to arrange face-to-face meetings and to share content he felt bonded him with others saying:

> *I feel like there'd be more of a connection talking face-to-face…I just prefer talking in person.…online you can't pick up like sarcasm or…the tone of their voice or anything like that so you don't know how they're actually* [feeling]

The above quote, while simple has direct implications for how whanaungatanga is authentically experienced and felt by individuals. Current research claims that emotional connection can be experienced online in meaningful interactions which support the development of whanaungatanga (O'Carroll, 2013).

Despite this, Te Mōhio is inferring that he experiences a stronger sense of Kare-ā-roto (outward expression of emotion) during in-person interactions. However, Te Mōhio later described how this lack of emotion using SNS was sometimes preferential as it facilitated the avoiding of emotional reactions from his whānau that he felt were uncomfortable.

Across the interviews with Te Mōhio, he shared that the nature of his relationships were complicated and that this was compounded by the introduction of SM use and SNS that they used to keep in contact. For example, Te Mōhio talked about the nature of his mother's SNS use being a barrier to being able to connect to her in real life saying the following about her use:

> *YouTube's the main one. She's on…Facebook. But it's like the amount of time that she spends on it, because…she's constantly…distracting herself with it. I think…actually just constantly on it 24/7 and she's not even like absorbing any information…I try to tell her like the negative effects of it like…just over-simulation, information overload…things like that. But she… doesn't listen. She's just happy to live like that sorta thing. And it's real frustrating…*

These dynamics are interesting for several reasons. Firstly, Te Mōhio identifies that he believes his mother to be over-using SM, and that his concern has led him to want to help her. Also, the choices that his mother makes are frustrating to Te Mōhio implying a level of impact SM is having on their relationship. This made me wonder if their relationship would be different if Te Mōhio's mother used SNS less, to which he responded:

> *I think she'd be a different person if she wasn't on social media so much. Like she would actually, like, listen to me, focus on what I'm saying…I reckon it would be a lot better if she wasn't* [using social media as much]*, like our relationship between each other. Because yeah…if you're talking to her, you've got her attention span for like three seconds before the phone scrolling and not listening to you. There's times when she tries to give her full attention. But all of that is just stopping the video, but she's still like reading something on her phone you know? It's like ahh* [expressing frustration].

What Te Mōhio described above was his frustration with how SM is prevalent in his mother's attention and time, which he perceives as being detrimental to their relationship, negatively impacting processes of whanaungatanga in real life. Additionally, Te Mōhio identified that his relationship with his mother would improve if the situation were to change. This speaks to the importance of face-to-face interactions within the development of whanaungatanga.

Conversely, Te Mōhio described his father's use of social media and SNS as more purpose-driven. When talking about how his father uses SM and SNS, Te Mōhio related that this was mainly for work related activities and to message his family when travelling for work. Reflecting on his father's SNS use with whānau, Te Mōhio said:

> *I think the main reason he uses messenger is just that, to message us when he's feeling homesick, how's things at home, things like that. But it's like that's when he's most sort of, vulnerable I guess, that's when I can have the best talks with him, when he's out of the home sorta thing.*

This comment infers that Messenger is not only a good way of staying connected when they're separated by distance, but for Te Mōhio it provides a vehicle to engage in meaningful conversation when face-to-face communication is uncomfortable or limited. This is especially relevant given Te Mōhio's description of his relationship with his father as being complicated by numerous factors:

> *There's some history. I'd say we get along good now. But yeah, there's quite a history behind us that still hasn't really healed…I'd say we could tolerate each other, but it feels kinda empty…I'd say there's just a lot of stuff that's happened, that he's done to me throughout my upbringing, just cause he was a drunk and all that. He's changed now though, but I feel like we haven't really um…that still affects me, how he was back then, but I still sort of see him like that...*

Consequently, Te Mōhio found it easier to talk to his father on Messenger. Te Mōhio expanded somewhat on the details of these conversations saying:

> *It's just if he's homesick sorta thing, then he becomes a lot more emotional like "Oh hey, I love you son, so proud of you." So he never says anything like that* [in person], *unless he's homesick sorta thing…when he says stuff like that it makes it easier, to…open up sorta thing.*

Te Mōhio's online interactions with his father show the level of communication that SNS have facilitated that has not been able to take place in real life. These insights reveal the potential SNS might offer for strained relationships to communicate in a more non-confronting way, and perhaps provide a context wherein connection and healing could be explored. For example, self-disclosure, or the sharing of personal information with another person, is considered to contribute to feelings of bonding and trust in relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). In a systematic literature review conducted by Towner and colleagues (2022), online self-disclosure was linked to enhanced relationship quality between individuals, as well as improved psychological well-being.

The above examples of Te Mōhio's IRL relationships in this section show the diverse ways in which whanaungatanga are being enacted with his parents and how these are impacted by SM both positively and negatively. The quality of these relationships is seemingly hindered and enhanced by the differing types of use among Te Mōhio and his whānau.

As relationship quality is known to improve well-being, I was also interested in how Te Mōhio perceived notions of well-being, including how he would experience this in his life, and what if any influence his online and offline experiences contributed to this. I now turn to concepts of well-being that were raised by Te Mōhio during our kōrero.

Te Mōhio: Mental Well-being

During our kōrero, Te Mōhio revealed that he wasn't sure what being mentally well felt like for him, saying only "I notice that I'm a lot more positive and talkative towards people." Regarding being mentally unwell, Te Mōhio was more self-aware saying that he was "a completely different person" and would isolate himself and want to sleep all day. As we explored this topic more, Te Mōhio began to reflect on

what contributed to his experiences of mental well-being, suggesting that his whānau dynamics, SM and SNS use, and personal habits were involved in influencing these experiences.

Talking about his whānau dynamics, Te Mōhio considered what he felt contributed to feeling mentally unwell, saying:

> *Normally…I only get to that stage* [mentally unwell] *from my family and that's just cause we have sort of a history of stuff...when I feel like that, I normally just resort to smoking weed and…it has been going on for like a lot of my childhood and it's like due to my family, there's a lot of stuff and I know that I can't explain it to them. And that just…builds on the feelings of like ohh nothing's gonna change…the day after I try to just avoid my family to stop that conversation or whatever it was, from coming back up again...*

Added to this was Te Mōhio's observations of his parents' relationship as being involved in the well-being of the whānau saying:

> *It's sort of annoying because he* [Dad] *thinks Mum doesn't want to change, but he doesn't want to let go of Mum. But he's OK with mum not changing…so we're all just falling down to that level of you know, no one's changing. No one's trying to become better everyone's just OK wasting, withering their life away.*

The dynamics of his whānau well-being as understood by Te Mōhio are insightful. He reflects on how the whānau as a whole is impacted by each individual and the relationships between whānau members. The dynamics between the relationships in Te Mōhio's whānau suggest that principles of whanaungatanga are being compromised. In the earlier quote, Te Mōhio infers that past whānau difficulties and his inability to speak openly about his concerns have led to feelings of frustration and a tendency to avoid his whānau. In the second quote, Te Mōhio addresses current issues that are exacerbating his feelings of frustration, which he implies lead to his mental unwellness. Consequently, past and current problems experienced by Te Mōhio are perpetuating his feelings of frustration and unwellness as the whānau dynamics remain unchanged. This situation illustrates the importance

of strengthening whanaungatanga by nurturing whānau relationships as critical to mental well-being.

Experiencing difficulties in his whānau relationships may be why Te Mōhio felt drawn to SM. For example, he states:

> *When I was using social media, I noticed it was easier for me to avoid my issues because, you know, I'll just get stoned and then instead of like* [addressing issues]*…just swipe on my phone all day…but now that I've used social media less, it feels bad. But it's good because it's like forcing me to actually face my issues. There's no…easy way around it, just you know, scrolling…the issue's still there.*

With these remarks, Te Mōhio contemplates his awareness of having used SNS and SM to avoid confronting his problems, such as challenging whānau relationships. Te Mōhio then talked further about wanting to address these issues, but how SM could sometimes be a barrier to this, saying:

> *There's quite a few things I want to change in my life…one is… a healthier lifestyle, exercising, meditating…the phone sort of distracted me…I could just sit on the phone. It's OK if I stay off the phone, but once I get on it's hard for me to get off...once I'm on, I could just be sitting on there for hours on end and I'll just completely forget about…all the stuff I wanted to do like exercising, meditating, reading all of that.*

The previous two comments illustrate the downstream effects of SM and SNS use on Te Mōhio's well-being. While not explicitly blaming SM and SNS for problems, Te Mōhio recognises that his use of technology is negatively affecting his ability to address concerns and engage in activities he believes would be good for his well-being. The distracting effects of technology are discussed in a study conducted by Lieberman and Schroeder (2020) who posit that even possessing a smartphone is disruptive to IRL interactions and quality social connection. Despite this, Lieberman and Schroeder found that SM and SNS can also enhance IRL interactions. Correspondingly, Te Mōhio spoke about ways that SM and networking had

positively influenced his IRL interactions. For instance, he credited SM for inspiring his interest in online business:

> *I watched a couple of YouTube videos on it…there's so much more than anticipated. You need to… have the understanding of HTML which is coding… make up your website… make the buttons work…getting images, making sure they're not trademarked…it was pretty cool. It opened my mind up…it's pretty interesting to learn about and that's actually what motivated me into* [a] *business course.*

This comment suggests that SM content has the potential to motivate and inspire rangatahi to consider opportunities beyond what is immediately available in their day-to-day environment, which may lead to enhanced well-being, especially where a current environment is unsupportive of well-being. Supportive environments can provide connection to wairuatanga (spirituality) and rangatiratanga (leadership) which are associated with improved whanaungatanga and well-being (Roche et al., 2018; Riki-Tuakiritetangata & Ibarra-Lemay, 2021).However, despite identifying a positive aspect of using social media and SNS, Te Mōhio was uncertain about his ability to use this technology wisely. When I asked about the potential for connecting with others to further his learning, for example, in an online class chat group, Te Mōhio remarked:

> *Oh maybe…I'm all good off the phone, but once I'm on, it's hard to get off and things like YouTube. Like if there was something I wanted to learn on YouTube like guitar for example, and I jumped on…I could probably watch like a guitar video…try and learn and then…I don't know it could auto-play to another video, some random video or shorts. I'll see those and just start scrolling.*

Te Mōhio mentioned that limiting his SNS and SM use had been positive and that long term he felt he'd be better able to maintain this saying:

> *I have a lot more energy since being off the technology. I think if I had like a month or two break from technology then jumped on, I'd be…able to keep track of my time. Another good alternative…if you use YouTube on your laptop you*

> *can download this thing* [where] *there's only the search bar… No homepage…No thumbnails anywhere. So you…don't get like, distracted and tap anything. You're only on YouTube for what you wanna look up sorta thing.*

Te Mōhio's comments regarding his perceptions of SM use and digital spaces illustrate the challenges he faces in navigating the online world in a way that he finds satisfying. Te Mōhio mentions benefits such as inspiration for his studies and guitar learning, but also alludes to potential issues of addiction which he is trying to manage by restricting his use or restricting access to certain platform features. Convoluting these efforts is that Te Mōhio recognises he has increased energy which he links to abstaining entirely from SM and SNS. The complexity and interplay of effects around these issues reflect the multi-faceted ways in which rangatahi Māori are trying to navigate their way in a digital environment that is rapidly evolving.

Te Mōhio: Summary

I found Te Mōhio to be a thoughtful young man who was trying to navigate his place in both IRL and the digital world. His comments reflect the reality of many rangatahi that SNS and SM relationships are overlaid by the dynamics of IRL relationships with both affecting the other in diverse ways which consequently cannot be considered separately. Having discovered challenges with his whānau and using SM, Te Mōhio acknowledged his difficulties with his whānau dynamics, and the role SM was playing in frustrating his efforts to change his relationship with his mother. Conversely, Te Mōhio's reflections regarding his online communication with his father were insightful and offered a potential pathway for addressing relationships in need of healing.

Among Te Mōhio's pūrākau are other examples of ways SM can be used positively, such as organising face-to-face meetings, sharing inside jokes that bond the participants, and inspiring him toward new ventures. Conversely, Te Mōhio perceived SM to be a large factor in impairing his well-being. Thus, the effects of using SM and SNS on whanaungatanga in Te Mōhio's life are woven together in complex ways.

At the end of our kōrero together, Te Mōhio he told me that he planned to move to a nearby city with a friend who had a similar mindset as himself saying that

he felt that this would be an improvement for his well-being and aspirational goals. While Te Mōhio didn't have any defined plans for his future, during the time that I knew him, he had completed a business course, was employed, and was interested in pursuing further tertiary education.

Participant Two

Mihi Whakatau – Meet Te Aho

I met Te Aho through mutual acquaintances at our church. As such, Te Aho was comfortable with me meeting him in his home. He would politely welcome me to his whānau dining table where we sat and ate and shared a bit about our common interests such as music and movies. Te Aho was currently undergoing religious study and working to prepare himself for a voluntary service mission that would ultimately see him leave Aotearoa for two years. He was living with his immediate whānau who he said he loved and respected. Te Aho had finished high school the year before so spent his free time catching up with high school friends and playing in a rock band which he wrote songs for. Although Māori, Te Aho lived in an area where he was not Tangata Whenua. However, he told me that his whānau did have connections at a marae locally where they would help out with gardening and at tanghihanga due to having connections with hapū who were also members of the same church. Te Aho stated that he was often mistaken for being Asian, and consequently, he felt people did not respond to him in a culturally sensitive manner. He expressed pride in being Māori and in cultural values unique to Māori heritage. He explained that his whānau had moved to their current location for his father's employment and had lived there for several years.

During the interviews, Te Aho didn't talk about himself much, but over time it became apparent that he had simple views that he held to firmly, such as being a good friend and avoiding drama. He matter-of-factly answered questions and tended to learn life lessons by observing others, particularly his parents and friends. Te Aho enjoyed making music, and digital artwork which he shared on Spotify and Instagram respectively. He also used these talents to make and give away gifts to his friends. He placed value on being unique and standing apart from others and

believed trends to be foolish and a waste of time. Te Aho felt that he sought out the companionship of his friends more than vice versa, and I got the sense that he felt his peers were somewhat immature in their lifestyles, and as such he was excluded by them during some of their activities, which didn't appear to bother him as they were activities that didn't interest him. Despite these differences, Te Aho mentioned liking his friends saying his friend group had known each other for years and as such had grown up together. He told me about how they now had to make the effort to spend time with each other having finished high school last year.

Te Aho spoke positively about his family relationships, saying that he had common interests with his parents, such as martial arts and music. He described being able to learn more about his interests from his parents and felt confident he could ask them for help and that they would prioritise his needs. Te Aho had siblings also, whom he said he got along with well. Te Aho said he believed he was a likable person and that this might be due to his habit of avoiding drama and that he focused on maintaining positive emotions mentioning that he had studied emotional intelligence for a time.

Te Aho struck me as a young man who is purpose-driven. He had specific and detailed goals in mind for the next 10 years of his life that he planned his current daily actions around. Te Aho was intelligent, sometimes referring to research within his responses, with a quirky sense of humour, and despite feeling that his friends weren't as invested as him in their friend group relationship, Te Aho still appreciated the value of friendship. The importance of family relationships was something that Te Aho had internalised, and while he did not explicitly discuss this, he made it clear that being a good husband and father were things that he looked forward to doing well, stating that this would become the key focus of his adult life. It became clear to me after I met with Te Aho, that while enhancing his talents and working toward his long-term goals was of importance to him, what he was also focused on in the process was shaping his character and how he hoped to be a good man.

When I asked Te Aho how he would describe himself, he replied "I'm Māori, I'm Christian, and I love rock music." I will now present my kōrero with Te Aho as they relate to the focus of my thesis. First by considering Te Aho's use of SM and his relationships, then how Te Aho described his IRL relationships, and lastly how Te Aho spoke about his mental well-being.

Te Aho: Social Media and Relationships

Te Aho explained that he'd started using SNS as a way to keep in contact with friends he'd made who lived far away from him, and later to communicate in group chats when a leader at his high school. Te Aho told me that although aware of multiple other SNS platforms he preferred Instagram finding its features as capable of doing all he needed. Consequently, most of our kōrero focused on his use of Instagram and how he used it to interact with his friends. Te Aho's use of Instagram had evolved to include sharing and viewing content that aligned with his hobbies of music and art creation. As such, Te Aho's pūrākau reflect how his SM and SNS use for friendship and hobbies, became intertwined in a way that supports the development of whanaungatanga. For example, early on in our first interview, Te Aho explained his SNS use, saying:

> *I usually just put on my* [Instagram] *stories…I'll just put what I'm doing that I don't mind people seeing like, if I'm making dinner and I did like a really good job, I'll share it so then my friends can see it. The way I…see it is just it's kind of like another way of letting your friends feel like they're still in your life…I'll keep personal personal stuff out of it. Obviously, I don't wanna take photos of myself being depressed or something, and then put that on there like, hey, guys look at me. But, yeah, if it's just something that I feel like my friends would enjoy doing with me then I'll put it on there.*

These insights reveal several interesting points. Te Aho uses the Instagram platform in a way that suits him (messaging), not only what it was designed for (sharing images with others). Secondly, Te Aho's comments also imply that some content is considered appropriate, and other content he would not consider appropriate creating or posting online. He implies that there are different levels of what he considers to be personal and that at some point more personal is too private to share online. Furthermore, Te Aho describes how sharing content allows him to maintain feelings of connection with his friends, which he later clarifies as content he thinks they would enjoy, giving a sense of how he is enacting whanaungatanga in online ways. It also creates a digital space for whanaungatanga to occur, whereby he posts activities he feels others would enjoy to collectively partake in; being social in

a non-face-to-face way. While western literature supports the idea that relationship quality can be strengthened in SM for adolescents, this research has focused on the accessibility of SM (Nesi et al., 2018), frequency of posts and timeliness of responses (Pouwels et al., 2021), and keeping up with friends daily activities (Pew Research Center, 2018; Rideout & Robb, 2018). However, Te Aho's comment implying he cares about his friends' enjoyment of his posts is linked with notions of whanaungatanga. Care and reciprocity are aspects of manaakitanga considered to enhance the process of whanaungatanga (McNatty, 2001). Of note is that manaakitanga is traditionally enacted in face-to-face contexts where hospitality and kindness can be physically engaged in. Te Aho's interactions show that care, respect, and kindness can be enacted in digital spaces, thus nurturing relationships in processes consistent with whanaungatanga.

Te Aho and I also talked about other forms of online whanaungatanga that are more subtle, for example, how his friends would respond to his Instagram posts:

> *Well, sometimes they'll 'heart' the story, which just means they liked it or, they thought it was funny so they usually only post those two things. Sometimes people will comment or…text me about it just to make a joke or something…*

Regarding how Te Aho's reacted to his friends' posts, he said:

> *Well, I like everything cause that's just kind of what you do…if I can make a joke about something, then I'll probably put it in…I suppose just cause we're friends and stuff, that's…the thing that you would do if someone posts something you would just like it.*

Te Aho also confirmed that his friends like all his posts as well. This unconditional liking of all friends' posts implies there is a reciprocity of support between friends in online spaces where content is shared. Responding to a post with a heart, like, or laughter reaction, are subtle and easy ways that Te Aho and his friends show support for each other and appears to be an expectation due to their being friends in real life. This reciprocity may also indicate that there is an unspoken culture where certain types of behaviours are expected or considered normal in the digital world.

Reciprocal behaviour also extended to public accounts where other individuals were not known in real life, however, these interactions had different conditions attached. For example, Te Aho told me about how he uses his public Instagram account saying:

> *That one, I just follow people that I've like seen on YouTube or people that show up in my recommended feed that have something that I'm looking at. People follow me and then I'll follow them back just because it's kind of like the community of having a public profile, you follow people back and they follow you.*

Te Aho's comment indicates that there is also a form of reciprocity occurring within public spaces, however, this reciprocity is conditional on the content of the users, as Te Aho explains he would stop following people if their profile no longer met his criteria:

> *Usually it's when they stop having useful stuff on their profile, …I unfollowed one person because they just kept doing photos of themselves, and I wanted to see their art more than their photos and I unfollowed them cause it was just useless and other ones they started doing really sexual stuff on their profile, so I just got rid of that…Some people I'll save their posts but the rest of them are just kind of not interesting. So I'll just save the one that is interesting…*

Te Aho's reflections on what he is looking for in an online community revealed that his preferences are rooted in his hobbies and interests such as guitar playing and digital art. This implies that Te Aho is invested in a type of online kaupapa-based community that is supporting his personal development. Te Aho's interactions with people he doesn't know IRL, are examples of online whanaungatanga where an online kaupapa (purpose-based networking) is what draws users together to support each other. Although the users in public digital spaces may be unknown, Te Aho spoke about why he would choose to allow someone to follow him saying:

> *I would add people if they… you can click on their profile and see…why they're trying to follow you. And when there's no connections to like any of*

your friends or anything…and I try to remember if I know them, sometimes I'll forget people, but if I don't know them in person or if I've not… had friendly interactions with them, it's mostly I will just say no, or I'll just delete the request.

This comment implies that there is a certain criteria that Te Aho follows to ascertain who he allows to see his private account, and that being connected IRL in some way is foundational to his criteria. Furthermore, Te Aho would investigate a person's motivation for following him before accepting their request to follow him.

An over-arching theme in this kōrero was that Te Aho mostly used SNS as a way to remain in contact with friends he had made in high school saying:

I would prefer to be face-to-face with them. But they live in different places or just aren't available.

Te Aho's comments in this section describe the potential benefits to online conversations where genuine support can be provided without the need to be face-to-face. Te Aho said that he would comment on his friend's post, and then follow this up with a private message, implying a deeper level of connection is achieved in this manner, and potentially reflects another aspect of support within digital culture. Despite this Te Aho spoke preferentially of face-to-face relationships, implying that these interactions facilitate a more satisfying sense of connection with others.

For Te Aho, SNS and interacting with his real-life friends appeared to be filling a void left by the absence of his friends, which allowed him to maintain feelings of whanaungatanga that might otherwise disintegrate. I will now turn to Te Aho's pūrākau about IRL relationships.

Te Aho: In Real-life Relationships

Te Aho described his real-life relationships as positive and changing due to leaving high school the previous year. Speaking about these relationships, our kōrero focused on his immediate whānau relationships, and how he tried to maintain

connections with his friends. In the following two quotes, Te Aho speaks about his father and mother respectively:

We spend a lot of time together. We have common interests. He teaches me a lot of things as well. I'll go to him for help with stuff as well…We both do the same martial arts, so if I want to learn a move from him then I'll go to him and ask him about it and he'll help me, he prioritizes his family over his work and that feels like a good relationship for me.

We spend a lot of time together and we do have a lot more confidence just... if I want to learn something from her as well then I can…ask her. Yeah, it's a very similar relationship.

These comments imply that for Te Aho positive relationships are characterised by spending time together, having common interests, and learning from one another. These values are also reflected in how he talks about his friendships which he endeavoured to create in-person meetings for using SM and SNS:

The main reason I started using social media was just for friends…school was ending, so I wanted some way to keep being in touch with my friends…that way if we ever do meet up we could do it easily…for that reason, I think it's social media is…what I resort to when I can't see them in person.

These comments highlight Te Aho's desire to maintain notions of whanaungatanga with his friends while they are physically apart and his use of SNS to achieve this. Further, that he continues to prefer face-to-face interactions which SNS assist him with organising. Despite Te Aho's assertion that he started using SM to contact his friends due to their going separate ways, he reflected on whether his use had increased since leaving school saying:

I don't think so. Actually, I think…I've decreased… I used to post up stuff on my stories because there was so much… you're hanging out with your friends, [at school]*…you do a lot of stuff…some stupid, some funny, some whatever. And so*

you have a lot of stuff that you can share with other people that are your friends. That didn't get…to see it…

These comments suggest that Te Aho's posting of stories was largely made up of his interactions with his friends, and then the sharing of this content among his friends as a way to strengthen in-person connections. Reflecting on how these activities impacted his friendships, Te Aho remarked:

Pretty good. The other thing I would do is birthday…albums. I would go through my entire phone gallery and then put all the photos I could of them that I had taken and I put them on my stories…They appreciate it…and I would also send it to them through e-mail, because if I sent it to them directly through Instagram, it degrades the quality…Some of my friends made it their profile picture...I made one that was…a phone background…

These experiences show that Te Aho has incorporated aspects of SM sharing and his talent with digital art into digital gifts that he gave his friends. Gift-giving is a common way that people celebrate and strengthen connections. While Te Aho spoke positively about using SM as a way to strengthen his IRL relationships, he did not view these spaces as a way to make new friends, saying:

I don't really view the online world as a friend-making place…a lot of my friends do have online friends they've made…on discord. They've made forums and stuff where they talk to people.. I just haven't personally…I just like being in person...

Reflecting on why he enjoyed being with people in real life over interacting online, Te Aho said:

I'm not really sure…I do think well, sometimes there's a lot of ideas that can be raised in different perspectives, and it's just interesting to hear other people. And sometimes I remember at school even not participating in the conversation, it's fun because you're just sort of watching everyone else interact.

Te Aho's comments imply that he experiences unique feelings by being around and hearing the views of others and observing others' conversations IRL. In contrast, Te Aho said the following about observing online interactions with others

> *It's alright…I think it's just cause they're my friends as well. So it helps online, if I'm like watching people like discuss or debate something or if they're joking around, it's fun, but…I feel it's just entertainment, you know? It's not like a friends thing.*

These comments indicate that Te Aho finds online interactions between his friends interesting but don't elicit the same feelings as when interactions are engaged in IRL. This may be linked to notions of wairuatanga mentioned by Hamley and colleagues (2022) as central to whanaungatanga and found to be lacking in SNS experiences of O'Carroll's (2013) participants. Additionally, kare-ā-roto (outward emotional expression) found within enactments of whanaungatanga, may be experienced more noticeably for Te Aho in IRL encounters. The importance of kare-ā-roto is highlighted in Te Aho's korero around how people appear in person when this conflicts with their online presence. For example, Te Aho spoke about how he would respond if he saw something online about his friends that he thought was concerning:

> *Because I know them in person, that* [posted information] *just sort of confirms what I know about their personality more than makes it look like they're really like going through a hard time. Because it doesn't look out of the ordinary, I suppose if they post something that makes it look like they're depressed and they've been joking that they're depressed in person…you would* [think they're joking online]. *And they joke about it all the time, yeah.*

Above, Te Aho expresses that he would be inclined to trust how a person presents in person over what they post online, explaining that a friend might joke about being depressed in person, therefore if they post online about being depressed, Te Aho would assume it was part of the joke. This is interesting because it highlights the importance of kanohi ki te kanohi, face-to-face interactions, as opposed to

making assumptions about someone's online presence, and emphasises the relevance of IRL whanaungatanga in scenarios where SNS can confuse the reality of a person's conditions.

Te Aho's pūrākau in this section illustrate the importance of IRL relationships to him, and how he uses SM to strengthen concepts of whanaungatanga among his friends. This is in contrast to his whānau who he rarely uses SM to interact with but says he spends a lot of time with in person. Consequently, online interactions serve as a substitute for Te Aho's preference to be in person with his friends, and allow for feelings of connection to be maintained virtually and IRL. I now discuss my kōrero with Te Aho regarding his perceptions of mental well-being.

Te Aho: Mental Wellbeing

This section discusses Te Aho's experiences and perceptions of mental well-being and includes how he spoke about his mental well-being, secondly, how Te Aho had observed his friends struggle with mental health at times, and we spoke about his thoughts regarding this. Lastly, this section also presents Te Aho's thoughts about the role SM and SNS played in affecting mental well-being.

Initially, Te Aho had the following to say about his mental well-being:

> *I don't really focus on my mental health just cause I don't…feel any problems with it. My parents kind of raised with me with…work through your problems attitude and also a bit of perspective as well because they're not that big, when you look at them from like a big distance. I've noticed…in comparison with my friends, I don't get that stressed easily, just cause I do those things. I think that's like one of the big contributors to youth mental health is stress…or like perceived stress, perceived problems.*

Te Aho's thoughts indicate that he perceives mental well-being as related to emotions and that problems can be addressed effectively with certain principles. Of note is that Te Aho's relationship with his parents has positively influenced his way of viewing and managing his well-being. These aspects are aligned with notions of

hauora being postiviely influence when one whānau relationships are healthy (Durie, 1994).He also mentions that stress and how someone views their problems are instrumental in how mental well-being is experienced. Te Aho later mentioned his friends' stress as being impacted by environmental factors. These ideas are also reflected in Te Aho's thoughts in the following:

> *I think…contributors for mental health are your environment. So if you surround yourself with social media, of course, it's gonna affect…your stuff. But in terms of whether it's bad or good or bad, I'm not really sure…I think…in some ways it's set up to…create as much traffic as possible so they get paid more…So if you ever find something that…you could be addicted to…it will show you those things to get you on the app. So yeah, it would be bad in that way…*

Te Aho's awareness of how SNS environments are designed to increase traffic appears to be associated with addictive behaviour and consequently influences how Te Aho chooses to engage with online environments as he is concerned for his well-being. This is at odds with research (Krasnova et al., 2015; Apaolaza, 2013) that purport that longer time spent on SM and SNS increases adolescents perceptions of their well-being. Another concern that Te Aho raised about SM related to mental well-being he described as follows:

> *I think there might be…*[an] *anonymity thing to it. So…you might feel faceless when you're on any social media and that might compel you to do things that you normally wouldn't do. Or…you might split yourself so you have like one online persona - how you act online, and one normal, how you act in person, and that could be bad…I feel like you're supposed to be the same person everywhere.*

The above comments link to notions of identity, the formation of which is a hallmark of adolescence. Where SM provides individuals with the opportunity to create multiple personas, genuine identity and connection to others can be compromised. Where identity and connection are impacted, it follows that well-being connected to these concepts may be impaired. For example, Hamley and

colleagues' (2022) Te Tapatoru model of whanaungatanga emphasised the importance of genuine and authentic connections for enhancing relationships that support rangatahi well-being. Te Aho's comments imply that these processes are being challenged by how individuals can represent themselves in online spaces, potentially impacting their well-being. Reflecting more deeply on the aforementioned issues, Te Aho said:

> *I think there comes a point when you sort of have to catch yourself where you're not on social media for attention because when that happens,* [you] *just kind of like start slipping like on a moral slope, you start losing things. That's what I've noticed with my friends anyway. I think it stems from sort of wanting to…fit in and the insecurity that you have in yourself, and that makes you want to follow trends, and following trends isn't always the best thing, I think, because they're usually not the smartest people that create them.*

The above comment refers to multiple issues many of which refer to individual psychological processes such as social comparison and self-esteem. Te Aho refers to SM affecting these processes negatively to the point of 'losing things' implying one's sense of self and values. These thoughts may relate to notions of wairuatanga. This is a spiritual aspect of well-being as described by McNatty's (2001) model of whanaungatanga and incorporates feelings of connecting with others. Te Aho's quote also highlights the complexity of IRL versus online connection. For example, spending time online can create feelings of connection to others, however, Te Aho is saying that someone can compromise who they genuinely are to fit in. Consequently, the compromise of identity then presents challenges to IRL connection when interacting with friends. Further, Te Aho explains this by saying that a lack of self-confidence and the need to "fit in" encourage people to follow trends, thus reinforcing the dynamics of genuine versus inauthentic online representations of the self, and losing a sense of self IRL. Giving an example of the above, Te Aho spoke about one of his friends saying:

> *They had one thing* [trend] *that they said they wouldn't do…they thought it was stupid. And then over time as they gained more friends that did those things, they sort of started doing it more and more…because they saw it heaps on*

> *social media. I think it was just exposure…then because there were people around them that were doing it as well…it didn't help…and it was a trend...*

These comments reflect the psychological perspective that adolescence is a time when identity, self-concept, and self-esteem are developed and become intertwined. Here, Te Aho is implying that his friends' development is being influenced by online environments, compounded by other individuals IRL engaged in similar trends.

While reflecting on particular relationships that Te Aho felt had been good for his mental well-being, he commented:

> *Definitely, my friends, because some are fun and some are just my close friends. I just relate with them more. Talking, music sharing, art sharing. Yeah, experience sharing* [feels] *just more connected, just love, I guess, yeah.*

Here, Te Aho succinctly describes concepts that enhance his well-being as fun, closeness, relating well to others, and sharing experiences with others that culminate in feelings of connectedness and aroha. These processes are embedded in enactments of whanaungatanga as described by O'Carroll (2013) as positively affecting rangatahi well-being and thus reflect Te Aho's descriptions of his mental health.

Te Aho: Summary

Te Aho was an intelligent and observant young man who used SM and SNS to maintain whanaungatanga with his friendships and enhance his talents. His pūrākau reveal the complexities that rangatahi face in developing their sense of self, the tensions they experience navigating issues of authenticity online and IRL, and how these impact their enactments of whanaungatanga in these spaces. Having a sense of what well-being meant to him and positive whānau relationships appeared to support Te Aho's sense of self and how he approached the aforementioned challenges of interacting with others. For example, Te Aho used SNS to share his talents with his friends and followers in positive and thoughtful ways, thus engaging in

whanaungatanga online in a positive manner, while being mindful of and choosing to avoid some of the negative aspects of SM on well-being.

Following my interviews with Te Aho, I discovered he had been assigned to complete his missionary service in Southeast Asia and was consequently preparing for this by using SM and SNS to learn a new language, and working to fund his time overseas. He told me that following these two years, he planned on beginning tertiary education to become a cardiologist.

Participant Three

Mihi Whakatau – Meet Te Marohi

I was introduced to Te Marohi through a kaiako we shared at a wānanga (Māori tertiary institute) in a nearby city. Like me, Te Marohi was in the process of deepening his knowledge of Te Reo and we often started our meetings talking about our progress in this area. Consequently, we felt an appropriate and easy place to meet was at our wānanga before classes began. As with my other participants, we shared kai and kōrero, and I would begin the interview at a time that felt natural and comfortable for Te Marohi. Te Marohi told me he lived at home with whānau, and that his time was spent on a variety of pursuits. One of these was working full-time as an apprentice in trade. Additionally, Te Marohi was a competitive athlete and was training in a disciplined way with the hope of participating in the Commonwealth Games. He also told me that he spent time committed to gym training and various challenges that his gym facilitated.

Te Marohi described having positive relationships with his parents recognising this was due to their commonalities. He also described having complicated extended whānau relationships and consequently did not spend as much time with extended family despite some living close by. Te Marohi also told me that he had maintained good relationships with his friendships from high school and had cultivated long-term relationships with individuals in his wrestling club and gym over several years. During our interactions, I found Te Marohi to be confident in his character and life choices. I observed him to be consistent and dedicated with aspects of his life that were important to him, such as his training, and in learning Te Reo

Māori. Te Marohi had only recently discovered his Māori whakapapa, and while he was optimistic about this, he was still learning what he felt it means to be Māori and to express this in a way that is comfortable and appropriate for him and his circumstances. He was also learning to navigate what being Māori means with the Pākehā members of his whānau who weren't overly encouraging about his efforts to embrace his taha Māori (Māori side). Further to this, Te Marohi described that due to his "severely pale skin colour," he felt it difficult to find how he fit in with other Māori and Māori culture and was trying to find his confidence in these spaces.

Our kōrero revealed that Te Marohi is a person who tries to reduce negative influences in his life and consequently values positive people and online content that he finds stimulating. Te Marohi described his SM use as mostly between friends, and occasionally with family who travel. Te Marohi also spoke about using SNS as a way to keep in touch with members of his gym and wrestling club to maintain accountability and a supportive network of individuals with common goals.

Te Marohi described himself as being a supportive friend, who enjoys humour, and good food, saying that it is important to him that the people around him are respectful of his interests, and contribute to his sense of positivity and well-being. I will now discuss Te Marohi's kōrero focusing on his use of SM and relationships, followed by how Te Marohi described his IRL relationships, and then conclude with how Te Marohi understands and experiences mental well-being.

Te Marohi: Social Media and Relationships

Te Marohi told me about how he'd started using SNS as a way to keep in touch and up to date with his father who travelled internationally for work. Additionally, Te Marohi told me that SNS were useful for maintaining contact with his friends which he found particularly helpful for chatting in groups rather than needing to message each individually. Te Marohi also talked about his involvement with kaupapa groups such as wrestling clubs and his gym, and that SNS facilitated efficient communication among these groups. Te Marohi used SNS apps that he felt were most appropriate for the purpose he was engaged with, as he describes below:

> *I have Messenger, which is Facebook I guess, and that's what our wrestling one is on. And I have WhatsApp because my Dad tried to make a family WhatsApp, but I still just text* [family]. *Another one would be on Facebook through the gym, where they do challenges…and they'll create groups on there…the whole idea is being accountable and stuff…and keeping in contact with each other…and all the information gets put on there as well. Same with my wrestling actually, for the group chat, for wrestling and any important information, goes straight on there…*

These comments imply that Te Marohi has adapted SNS functions to work in ways that are helpful to him. A main focus of Te Marohi's kōrero was the importance of his wrestling and gym training. Consequently, SM chat groups and posts feature prevalently in his pūrākau, particularly where platforms supported his engagement with kaupapa groups and his goals within these groups. For example, Te Marohi and I went on to kōrero about how he used SM generally, what kind of content he consumed, and who he followed online:

> *I follow a couple of the bodybuilders and that sort of thing…for those tips and stuff and people I've seen on YouTube, I follow them as well…there's a criteria…*[following a] *well-known person, I personally think that I don't know them* [but if] *they're trustworthy enough to follow them, I'll follow them.*

Given that establishing trust in relationships is associated with whanaungatanga (Komene et al., 2023), I found the idea of an unknown individual being regarded as trustworthy interesting, so we considered this more deeply and Te Marohi told me how he would rate someone as trustworthy saying:

> *I guess talking with my mates and stuff…like if they know who they are and that sort of thing*

This comment is aligned with the interconnected nature of whanaungatanga, where individuals will feel more comfortable or connected with others because of the trusting relationships they have with others in the same network as themselves. Te Marohi's comments imply that aspects of whanaungatanga can exist in online spaces

despite not having met, or ever meeting individuals that he is engaging with, due to IRL relationships. Despite this, Te Marohi's opinion of SM generally was cautious, remarking:

> *I honestly don't think I'd recommend it unless it was purely, (and that's never going to happen) but purely for the sake of looking for mates…I feel like social media takes you away from the real world, I guess. And unless it's like strictly with mates and family…like, don't worry about it…If you're gonna post something like just don't make it something that's gonna start a fight, like political views that sort of thing…*

Te Marohi's comments allude to the challenge that rangatahi have of navigating the addictive nature of SM. Additionally, his comment about feeling removed from the real world implies that SM is a place where he feels a lack of genuine and valid engagement. These issues are connected with the Te Tapatoru Model (Hamley et al., 2022) where 'he wā pai' (genuine space and time) are associated with experiences that strengthen whanaungatanga and enhance well-being for rangatahi. Te Marohi illustrates the importance of he wā pai with the following quote about SM:

> *It's like social media is becoming more about peoples'…views or their beliefs or political views or whatever…and not what it's originally created for…you follow people, keep up with them or talk to* [them] *or whatever. But now it's like "you should support this and this is the statement"…or something…that's not why I'm on here.*

These remarks indicate the changing nature of SM and the differing trends that appear regularly, which Te Marohi was not in favour of. Te Marohi's comments about trending opinions and promoting the latest issue are inconsistent with 'he wā pai,' and thus weaken opportunities for whanaungatanga to occur. Conversely, Te Marohi's intention for using SM and SNS was to maintain friendships and remain connected with his kaupapa groups. Te Marohi told me he was reasonably active within the SNS groups for his wrestling and gym challenges and mentioned that

there were expectations for how these were to be used so that the kaupapa of the group would be maintained saying:

> *…the wrestling one…the main thing is you don't post random stuff on there…if there's an important message or something relevant to the group - sure, put it on there…even if it's like some training ideas or a video you found and it's some move you wanted to show…you can put that on there, but…no personal conversations. The* [gym] *one, I guess it's the same. It's a pretty supportive space like you could say "Oh hey, I'm struggling with this part of my exercise" or health and well-being or whatever, and someone would try and help you out, but again, you wouldn't start posting like how's your weekend going sort of thing.*

Te Marohi's comments imply that the culture of his online groups includes certain behaviours that are required online to maintain the kaupapa of the group. This reflects a form of whanaungatanga where the group needs are respected and engaged in for a collective purpose, but also where specific individual needs can be met, as long as these are aligned with the group kaupapa. Working collectively as a group and for the enhancement of group goals allow rangatahi to enact principles of whanaungatanga and appears to be a process that Te Marohi benefits from. Talking about the supportive nature of his Wrestling Club Facebook page Te Marohi told me:

> [the group page] *is also there to…help people that are struggling and to stay accountable and stuff like that. I learned a bit of stuff, but I'd say it would be more the other way of me helping other people because I've done it before and I've been going to the gym and wrestling for such a long time, like I've done the cutting and the weight gain and all the different like sort of types of exercises and stuff, so trying to help other people more I guess.*

The groups and respective pages that Te Marohi belong to illustrate the reciprocal nature of Te Marohi's relationships in these groups. In some cases, he is providing support to others but is also aware of the growth and knowledge he has received within these spaces thus exemplifying how whanaungatanga can be enacted in digital spaces.

In this section, Te Marohi shared how he has been able to utilise aspects of SM and SNS to his advantage allowing him to engage in reciprocal and supportive relationships. For the most part, those he interacts with online are associated with IRL relationships linked to his hobbies and interests. I now consider Te Marohi's pūrākau about how he experiences IRL relationships.

Te Marohi: In Real-life Relationships

Te Marohi told me that his most significant IRL relationships consisted of his parents, friends, and wrestling and gym acquaintances. Most of Te Marohi's relationships involved the sharing of online content in some way, however, the nature of the content and the way it was engaged with changed depending on the nature of the relationship. This section looks at these differences within these interactions with Te Marohi's whānau, friends, and other acquaintances respectively.

Te Marohi spoke positively about his relationships with his immediate whānau, and said the following about how he interacted with his Mum and online content:

> *I would…show her stuff that was…relevant. For example, sometimes I'll show her pictures or videos of Gordon Ramsay going off like in the kitchen and stuff like that, and be like this is what you are like when I ever try and cook with you. And she will laugh…, but I mean only relevant stuff…she wouldn't be interested in my fitness* [online content].

Te Marohi also talked about his relationship with his father and how he maintained this while his father travelled overseas to work saying:

> *…it's usually if he takes a big trip to Europe or something like that. Dad will put something on the Instagram chat…He'll talk about that or whatever, and he'll be like, oh, I went to this place and you won't believe what they were like…This burger place I was at…something like that.*

Te Marohi related that his relationship with his brother was positive and that their online engagement with each other was different than with their parents. Te Marohi explained how he and his brother shared content online:

> *Like with my brother it would be mainly memes that would be* [through] *Instagram… Again, relevant funny stuff, I guess like a lot of the stuff is just inside jokes so* [also] *like…what we were talking about on the weekend…that's the video I was talking about, and I'll send it to him…that sort of thing.*

Te Marohi's comments about his whānau reveal that his use of SNS with them serves to enact whanaungatanga together in ways such as maintaining contact and sharing of humour. These particular interactions demonstrate how Te Marohi chooses to engage in ways that the other participant enjoys, rather than promoting his own interests. These types of thoughtful interactions highlight Te Marohi's concern for the enjoyment of his whānau and thus contribute to a sense of whanaungatanga in his immediate family.

There are similar representations of whanaungatanga in Te Marohi's online interactions with his friends, however, Te Marohi told me that he was more motivated to interact online with friends to arrange face-to-face meetings, saying:

> *it's* [online communication with friends] *like oh, I'm coming back from Auckland do you guys want to do something?. And then we'll be like oh yeah, I'm around [or] I'm not around. We should do this or that….Sometimes random conversation, like it'll die for like a week and then all of a sudden, everyone will be on there talking...sort of thing. Yeah, pretty random.*
>
> *My friends will send memes and stuff. It'll normally be funny and relevant or like an inside joke or whatever...every now and then, one will pop up and everyone will know what it means sort of thing...*

Te Marohi also talked about how following his friends' online posts affected their IRL relationship saying:

I mean, we're probably like [talking in person] *Ohh I saw you did this...sort of thing, but yeah, it keeps you up-to-date. Well, keeps you more up-to-date than if you weren't following…*

Te Marohi's comments about his online interactions with IRL friends illustrate how he finds SM useful to keep in contact with them and remain updated about their lives. The capacity to share personal information and jokes means that he can maintain feelings of connectedness and enact whanaungatanga despite being separated by distance.

Te Marohi also engaged online with individuals and groups associated with his wrestling club and gym establishment. These interactions are particularly interesting because they demonstrate how Te Marohi engages in what Hamley and colleagues (2022) refer to as 'he kaupapa pai' (a genuine purpose), an aspect of whanaungatanga they claim positively enhances rangatahi well-being. About these IRL relationships and online interactions, Te Marohi told me:

I follow a few of them on social media, and then the rest of the time would be like on that main Facebook group chat…So I've known some of them for that long so I guess in a way that's not just like a wrestling partner though, almost a friend as well. Some more than others….then you…sort of swap training tips and stuff and then you get to know each other.

And we sometimes used [online group pages] *to…create a sense of unity in the sense that you might put pictures of your group up there or you might be working towards something and all say if you had a goal for the week or the month or something and then everyone would share that and it would create a good sort of feeling.*

Above, Te Marohi mentions how connections have developed into friendships due to common Facebook group use, and how existing friendships have been maintained by SNS platforms. These interactions have also facilitated reciprocal support as well as feelings of unity and positivity. Especially relevant is that these friendships and groups are grounded in aspirational activities and goals. Thus, Te Marohi's interactions in the above examples illustrate how enactments of

whanaungatanga in SM and SNS can inspire goal achievement, and enhance mental well-being. Furthermore, because Te Marohi's online interactions involve others, he is contributing to the aspirations and well-being of others which is another aspect of whanaungatanga. Additionally, within these settings, Te Marohi has spoken about uplifting and unifying feelings that reflect notions of wairuatanga, indicating a further aspect of whanaungatanga that he experiences online.

Te Marohi's comments in this section reflect the daily reality of young people that SNS and SM interactions are becoming more integrated with IRL interactions. For Te Marohi, these interactions are centred it maintaining and strengthening the process of whanaungatanga with family and friends and were especially meaningful in groups with a common aspirational kaupapa. I now discuss how Te Marohi spoke about his experiences of mental well-being.

Te Marohi: Mental Well-Being

This section focuses on the main points from Te Marohi's pūrākau of mental well-being and includes firstly, Te Marohi's understanding of well-being where he emphasises his appreciation for positive people and environments. Secondly, Te Marohi talked about how to address issues of mental unwellness for himself and how he tried to address these issues if he saw them in others. Lastly, Te Marohi addressed what he felt was pertinent to mental well-being as it relates to SM and SNS.

Te Marohi had the following to say about what he thought being mentally well would look like:

> *Probably doing what you enjoy and being around people you like being around…I've got some mates that look at lots of negative things, and therefore they become negative people. So I think it's* [well-being] *quite a lot of…who you're around and what you're around. So I guess people that you find you want to be around… just someone that yeah, I guess is enjoyable to be around and…I really like a good sense of humour. So it's the same with my social networking as well, like funny people…I'll watch a lot of comedians and that sort of thing. When you're with positive people I guess you feel more positive,*

> *and if you have a bad day and you go and hang out with somebody who's funny.. Where vice versa, that if you're having a bad day or even a good day and you were with someone that's negative or down, it… just brings your mood down.*

These comments reflect Te Marohi's understanding of how people and environments; positive and negative, contribute to his mood and well-being. Te Marohi indicates that he is proactively engaged in mitigating the effects of negativity on his well-being. This kōrero implies that Te Marohi is protective of his wairuatanga, or how he experiences spiritual connection to the world around him, thus contributing to a holistic sense of hauora.

Te Marohi further recognised how SM could have downstream effects on his well-being by how it impacted his friends. He then described a situation with a friend, to illustrate this point saying:

> *I've got a friend at the moment who…has a lot of mental health issues and she got into a lot of like powerlifting and stuff. So I was following her content and stuff and…her lifts were just skyrocketing so I was pretty stoked for it. Then all of a sudden that stopped, and now it's all about Palestine and Israel…I don't know the exact situation, but it's like now I've seen her mood change as well in person, she's a lot more sad and stuff and it's like you* [should] *stop watching this because obviously what you watch and what you're around…it's affecting you and making you a less happy person…I just said to her like straight up I was like, you need to start posting more of your powerlifting stuff rather than this stuff, because that's really depressing…*

The above example demonstrates how Te Marohi's observations of his friend's posts influenced his own well-being. When his friend's posts represented positive or negative content, Te Marohi noticed his mood had responded accordingly. These dynamics reflect the findings of the Te Ora Hinengaro report (2018) that explained how social networks influence well-being and emphasized the need to address well-being as a collective endeavour that focuses on strengthening positive interpersonal connections.

Despite exposure to negative content and feeling affected by this, Te Marohi talked about how he had used SM in ways that he felt had benefitted him, saying:

> *I use different things* [on SNS] *to learn about different exercises people do so I can try that, so I can try and be as big as that guy, you know? So, yeah, I'd say that's…the way I want to use it. But then of course every now and then those negative things will pop up. And those are the things that you gotta watch out for,* [because] *they can turn into like a loop or whatever and just going downhill… but optimally, like sticking to those things of what you enjoy and trying to better yourself through them. I think I would probably benefit from that. That and maintaining relationships like with my friends and stuff as they go to Auckland or…university. So I get to keep in touch with them through that. I prefer people face to face…I think just physically be there and talk to someone…*

Te Marohi's reflections above reveal some interesting insights about his SM use and his well-being. Environmental settings have been well-established as influential in an individual's psychological health, and here Te Marohi concludes that online environments have similar significance to mental well-being. Furthermore, he directly points to the well-being of his taha hinengaro (mental well-being) as being influenced by taha tīnana (physical well-being), and forms of whanaungatanga he is engaged with online. Ultimately, Te Marohi gets greater satisfaction from kanohi ki te kanohi interactions and implies that this is how he experiences a sense of wairuatanga, or connection to others that he indicates contributes to enhanced whanaungatanga as opposed to online interactions which are useful for maintaining contact.

Te Marohi: Summary

Te Marohi was an ambitious and confident young man who had a good grasp of how to use SM and SNS to his advantage. A major theme in his pūrākau were the kaupapa-based groups he belonged to and how digital spaces had enhanced his participation and whanaungatanga in these groups. Additionally, Te Marohi used online interactions to maintain and strengthen one-to-one relationships within these

groups. Furthermore, his proactive way of choosing to be supportive in these spaces while maintaining personal boundaries on SM exemplifies positive ways to enact whanaungatanga and protect well-being while online.

After our interviews, Te Marohi said his plans for the future were still developing. He told me that because he doesn't enjoy working for others, he'd thought about owning his own business one day. Due to the Commonwealth Games committee removing Wrestling from foreseeable competitions, Te Marohi wasn't sure what this would mean for his training. He was considering competing in the Olympics one day, but was mindful of the huge commitment and sacrifice this would require. Te Marohi told me that he was hopeful that he would one day be fluent in Te Reo, saying that this would be cool and worth the effort he thought this would need.

Chapter Summary

This chapter considered the pūrākau of three rangatahi Māori males and their enactments of whanaungatanga in SM and SNS. I explored this through the lens of how each of these young men use and engage in online social environments, their IRL relationships, and how they perceive and experience their mental well-being.

The participants' pūrākau illustrate several key concepts relevant to enactments of whanaungatanga and its pertinence to online interactions for rangatahi. It appears obvious that for these young men SM and SNS are intricately woven through their lives, and consequently impact IRL relationships and their mental well-being. These rangatahi were aware of many negative and positive aspects occurring in online spaces and were agentically navigating these environments for the benefit and enhancement of their relationships and aspirations. These benefits include the facilitation of contact and keeping up to date with friends who had moved away thus maintaining a sense of whanaungatanga with distant friends. Additionally, the rangatahi were able to harness SM and SNS to advance and share their talents and hobbies. Another area of interest is how these rangatahi navigate the digital world and their relationships, and how this impacts their experiences of mental well-being. Lastly, a major re-emerging theme for all participants was the strong and consistent view that face-to-face interactions were by far their preferred way of interacting with others. These key points will be the foci of the following discussion chapter.

Chapter Four: Discussion

Situating this Research

This thesis explored how three rangatahi Māori males enacted principles of whanaungatanga in their online and real-life relationships, and how these enactments might influence their experiences of mental well-being. The analysis of their experiences illustrates how online interactions with others such as those facilitated by social media (SM) and social networking sites (SNS), are intertwined into the participants' face-to-face and real-life relationships in complex and subtle ways. The participants expressed their awareness of both positive and negative aspects of their SM and SNS use and were actively engaging in these spaces to reduce negative outcomes on their well-being and relationships with others, while proactively engaging in forms of whanaungatanga that they felt had positive impacts on their well-being and relationships. This study aimed to:

1. Investigate how rangatahi Māori enact principles of whanaungatanga in social meda and social networking sites.
2. Explore how these enactments influence the lives of rangatahi in online and face-to-face contexts.
3. Explore how identified influences impact mental wellness for rangatahi Māori.

This chapter discusses the main findings of this study in relation to the above aims, and how these findings related to current understandings of the issues regarding adolescent use of SM and SNS as these relate to their well-being raised in previous research. I will then discuss the key findings in more depth, followed by the implications of these findings, including recommendations for ongoing research. The implications will then be followed by a concluding statement.

This thesis began by considering the current research in Aotearoa regarding rangatahi Māori using SM and SNS and the influence of this on well-being. Some impacts of digital spaces on rangatahi are negative. For example, cyberbullying was reported by 40.5% of participants in the Houkamau and colleagues (2021) study. This finding was also associated with lower socioeconomic status inferring the

complex nature of online effects on well-being and social factors that may drive SM and SNS use for rangatahi. In global studies issues such as hyper-sexualisation (Throburn et al., 2021), body image distress and eating impairments (Wilksch, et al., 2020), and dysfunctional self-efficacy (Carlson et al., 2022) have added to growing concerns that SM and SNS may be harmful for the mental well-being of adolescents and young adults. While these studies are based on international populations, implications for how Māori may be experiencing these issues are yet to be further explored. Consequently, it became apparent that an in-depth and culturally situated approach to understanding how rangatahi engage in SM was needed in order to reveal how the complexities of how their relationships are impacted by online interactions as Māori. Furthermore, I chose to incorporate positive aspects of rangatahi online engagement, with particular emphasis on how Māori cultural values are reproduced and adapted in digital spaces. This was also largely reflected in the pūrākau of the rangatahi that I learnt from in this study.

Local research has suggested that SM and SNS are useful in enhancing some aspects of adolescent mental well-being. Of particular interest to Māori is that SNS in particular are designed to create near-constant ability to communicate and connect with other people. As communication and connection are central to whanaungatanga, some researchers have focused their studies on the role whanaungatanga plays in promoting mental well-being for rangatahi. For example, Greaves and colleagues (2021) developed a scale to measure whanaungatanga, based on the perspectives of rangatahi, and in the process found that whanaungatanga was important for enhancing the well-being of rangatahi. In particular, relationships with whānau, friends, and other adults were respectively predictive of well-being for rangatahi. This study states that whanaungatanga provides protective aspects to well-being for rangatahi Māori. Consequently, if whanaungatanga is enacted in online spaces, it could be suggested that online whanaungatanga may provide protective features against negative online interactions that adversely impact well-being.

Other research has focused on how whanaungatanga is experienced by rangatahi Māori using SM. Utilising McNatty's (2001) model of whanaungatanga, O'Carroll (2013) explored how prinicples from this model were being experienced by participants who used Facebook. The principles of whakapapa, kaupapa, wairuatanga, manaakitanga, kotahitanga, and rangatiratanga, as well as the principles of aroha, kaitiakitanga, and ngā-kare-ā-roto from Edward's (2009) model of

whanaungatanga were incorporated as measures for O'Carroll's study. While the use of Facebook has dramatically decreased and other platforms have proved more popular for rangatahi in the 10 years since this study was completed, this gave me culturally appropriate concepts through which to explore how rangatahi engage in whanaungatanga online. I considered that these concepts might reveal how these interactions impact rangatahi relationships and subsequent well-being in more recent times. This is especially relevant given that these newer platforms have a variety of functions that encourage interactions between users in unique ways. Consequently, I was able to identify how traditional engagements of whanaungatanga, such as manaakitanga, were being enacted by my participants in a digital space even in different platforms.

One aspect of how rangatahi interactions with others is affected by differing platforms is how these platforms allow their users to represent themselves online. For example, users can have multiple profiles with differing identities to attract different types of followers or to highlight their different interests. A study by Sciascia (2016) explored how rangatahi are influencing their enactments of whanaungatanga by how they choose to represent themselves and negotiate their online identity. These differing identities allowed rangatahi to explore whakapapa relations, and develop new relationships without face-to-face interactions. These interactions have reciprocal impacts on the identity of rangatahi. For example, connecting to marae and whenua using SNS affected the identity formation of rangatahi in this study. Thus, whanaungatanga had had an impact on a facet of well-being for these rangatahi, while engaging in online interactions.

This study also showed how developing and negotiating one's online identity also led to negative relationship interactions for rangatahi in some scenarios. For example, where inconsistencies between online appearance and real-life appearance, sparked accusations of 'fakeness' and 'attention-seeking' toward some rangatahi. Perceived fabricated presentations of the self, can lead individuals to question the authenticity of relationships and connections to themselves, indirectly impacting mental well-being. Consequently, as seen in the present study, how rangatahi choose to represent themselves and negotiate their online identity, may have ramifications for their real-life relationships and the types of whanaungatanga that are occurring in both online and real-life settings.

Aside from SM and SNS, other studies have been conducted to investigate how face-to-face enactments of whanaungatanga are linked to rangatahi well-being. For example, a photo-elicitation project by Hamley and colleagues (2022) explored the daily lives of rangatahi who were considered to be flourishing, to reveal how whanaungatanga contributed to their well-being. Their study highlighted three key concepts including genuine connection to people, place, and purpose which represented the various relationships and processes that influence positive enactments of whanaungatanga. Consequently, rangatahi identified the importance of authenticity in their relationships and that nourishing relationships extend beyond people to include notions of place and aspiration. This study proved useful in my analysis of my participants' pūrākau, as aspects of genuine connection to people, place and purpose featured prominently in the kōrero of the rangatahi in the present study.

Outside of Aotearoa, international studies have informed understandings of how young people interact within and between online relationships. In keeping with the findings of this study, the research of van Driel and coworkers (2019) found that most SNS and SM interactions for young people were between them and their IRL friendships. Several studies have investigated how online interactions between friends influence the quality of their friendships. This was reflected in studies where friendship closeness was correlated with the frequency of WhatsApp and Instagram messages between friends (Pouwels et al., 2021), and how SM was used by youth to enhance their relationships (Riley et al., 2022). The same research showed that these interactions could affect the perspective-taking and empathic capabilities of the participants. While increases in perspective-taking and empathic concern were reported, this occurred only where a less supportive parent-child relationship was also reported. These findings may indicate that although social connection can be experienced in SNS, the motive for seeking out social connection may be related to an unmet need in the home. However, the implications of this American study were not consistent with the rangatahi in the present study. The rangatahi featured in this research who identified a supportive relationship with their parents still sought to enhance social connectedness with their friends online. Furthermore, these international findings raise additional questions about what friendship closeness looks like for Māori, and why rangatahi may seek out online interactions.

Other international research also looked at friendship dynamics and expectations of online interactions between friends (Carpenter, 2018). Examples of these expectations include expecting friends to discuss sensitive information with them in person rather than online, and for friends to respond in an appropriate way to online postings or sharing of content. This study also looked at how individuals perceived a new friend after meeting IRL, and how certain online behaviours influenced the new friend's likability. While a private message increased the likability of the new friend, the type of message did not have any effect on the likability of the person. This study highlighted that online public and private interactions influence the nature of friendships, how these friendships might be damaged, and the likability of new friends. While these findings are interesting, their relevance to Māori friendships, and what type of online behaviours rangatahi find appropriate and likable are unknown. While this thesis did find that rangatahi did perceive certain kinds of behaviours as less admirable and would avoid people who displayed content they found unhelpful this would usually be in the context of influencers unknown IRL to the participants. Conversely, the rangatahi in this study were more likely to personally contact their friends if they posted or behaved in ways they found concerning.

Another facet of SNS is that their function design can influence how users view their friendships. For example, the study by Vaterlaus and colleagues (2016) interviewed young adults about the functionality of Snapchat. Certain features of this platform generated feelings of annoyance and jealousy in the participants. Due to Snapchat's feature of publically presenting a user's friends by rank, other users found that this was particularly irritating to users where one or more romantic users had viewed the ranking. Another issue participants had with Snapchat was the ability for other users to screenshot content that is meant to be only temporarily available; as per Snapchat design, and not shared. The sharing of private content has been reported as impairing relationship quality and can lead to bullying behaviours. This is important for our current understandings because despite the safety features of SNS, and their functionality for facilitating users' behaviour, young people navigate their own way around using platforms and consequently use these platforms in ways of their own choosing rather than the intent of the designers. This was seen in the present study where rangatahi would prefer using Instagram for messaging over apps specifically designed for this function. Interestingly, none of the rangatahi in this

study reported using Snapchat, thus illustrating the fast pace at which online preferences and trends can change. However, the participants of the Vaterlaus et al., (2016) study shared that Snapchat facilitated the strengthening of relationships due to its image and video-sharing ability. Participants found that visual content allowed for better communication of body language and other non-verbal queues, enabling a sense of closeness over long distances, and facilitating getting to know new friends better. The ability to enhance communication and relationship closeness may suggest that similar features to those within Snapchat could increase aspects of whanaungatanga where IRL options are not possible, especially where notions of authenticity have been highlighted as important to rangatahi in the current study.

The literature has shown that SM and SNS use is rising among young people in Aotearoa and worldwide (Common Sense Media, 2018; Rebar et al., 2015; Netsafe, 2019). While multiple studies have explored the ways that various platforms are being used by adolescents and young adults and the way these engagements affect their relationships and well-being, these enactments are constantly shifting as young people engage in new platforms and in new contexts. Unique to Aotearoa is that rangatahi exist and experience life and relationships as Māori. Notions of relationships and well-being are shaped by Māori cultural values and perspectives. For example, for Māori, relationships or whanaungatanga, begin with family relationships and expand outward to include extended family, friends who are like family, and community (Durie, 2001; Kukutai et al., 2016). These relationships are intended to provide a network of connections that nurture, support, and sustain the individuals, communities, culture, and natural world that they are comprised of. In a well-being sense, whanaungatanga enhances identity and feelings of belonging and has been shown to positively impact Māori mental health (Clark, 2011). Whanaungatanga is so significant to Māori mental well-being that it has been claimed that knowing whakapapa is imperative for Māori well-being (Smith, 1997) and is consequently a foundational component of multiple models of Māori well-being. For example, Sir Mason Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Wha model has whānau as one of its essential pillars of hauora (Te Taha Whānau). This model stresses the importance of family relationships to well-being, and also that whanaungatanga influences the other essential pillars Te Taha Wairua, Te Taha Hinengaro, Te Taha Tīnana, and Whenua as interconnected parts of one whole.

Māori models of well-being were developed to bring attention to the needs of Māori and to address the needs of Māori who face issues of discrimination and systemic processes influenced by colonisation known to be detrimental to Māori hauora. One of many inadequate conventions for Māori introduced to Aotearoa through the ongoing processes of colonisation is the acceptance and incorporation of psychological theory and practice grounded in Western and Eurocentric philosophies and culture. While the usefulness of these practices for Māori is a subject of debate, having been promoted as an optimal approach has seen the marginalisation of Māori hauora practices (Robertson & Masters-Awatere, 2007). Despite this marginalisation, it remains clear that whanaungatanga is an important aspect of how Māori experience their lives as was repeatedly seen in the rangatahi online and IRL engagements spoken of by participants in this study.

This thesis intended to explore how rangatahi Māori enact principles of whanaungatanga in SM, and how this might impact their experiences of mental well-being. Using a series of semi-structured interviews with three participants and a pūrākau style of narrative inquiry, several interesting themes emerged from our kōrero. Firstly, the rangatahi were proactively using SM and SNS to their advantage to maintain and enhance a sense of whanaungatanga with people they cared about. Secondly, the rangatahi found ways to harness the digital world to develop their aspirations in a way that strengthened their sense of whanaungatanga with others. Thirdly, our kōrero revealed how the rangatahi were navigating their relationships IRL and in online spaces to protect their well-being and that of their friends. Lastly, was the repeated finding that the rangatahi preferred to engage in their relationships kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) and their reasons for regarding this preference. I will now discuss each of these themes in more depth to explore the wider implications of my findings.

Key Findings

Online Whanaungatanga

The rangatahi I met with were all using SM and SNS to engage in forms of online whanaungatanga. All used SM to interact with their whānau, to keep in touch

when separated by distance and to share content they had found that they thought their whānau members would enjoy. This sharing of content was both in person using technology and through the internet. However, online whanaungatanga was more frequently and consistently engaged with by rangatahi to maintain feelings of connection with their past high school friends. Generally, these types of interactions were using the Instagram platform which rangatahi preferred for its features. Each of the rangatahi I interviewed had left school in the one-three years previous to 2023 and consequently had multiple friends whom they no longer saw daily.

The enactments of whanaungatanga the rangatahi shared with friends included sharing memes that related to inside jokes, messaging in group chats, and reacting to their friends' posted content largely by 'liking,' 'hearting,' or commenting. In cases where the content was especially exciting, such as the posting of new employment, or concerning, such as a relationship break up, the rangatahi would respond to this news on the post, and then privately message their friend to offer person-to-person support. Other forms of whanaungatanga between friends included the creation and sharing of digital gifts on SMS and SNS such as 'story' photo albums, and digital art profile pictures and screensavers. The sharing of tips and advice was another way whanaungatanga was enacted between the rangatahi and their friends. The participants revealed that these enactments allowed them to maintain feelings of connection and closeness, with one saying this closeness felt like love.

Little research has been published about the enactments of whanaungatanga in digital spaces. However, the results of this study have some similarities with the understandings of rangatahi and SM reported by O'Carroll (2013). Despite O'Carroll's study occurring with rangatahi using Facebook, of note is the principle of manaakitanga (care and reciprocity) as being enacted by the participants in this study as a consistent way of engaging in whanaungatanga and maintaining connections with their friends. Manaakitanga is an essential principle of whanaungatanga that promotes nurturing and respect between persons (McNatty, 2001). In Te Ao Māori, a traditional meaning of manaakitanga is the process of mutually upholding one another's mana (prestige or influence) (Ritchie, 1992). Thus, rangatahi were finding novel ways to enact this principle in their lives both in person and online.

Global literature exploring young people and their online relationships do not show evidence of engagements incorporating principles of whanaungatanga. For example, while many studies are looking at youth and their online interactions with friends, these studies look at SM use as it relates to friendship closeness (Nesi et al., 2018; Pouwels et al., 2021), how these interactions impact the participant (Bayer et al., 2016; Kahlow et al., 2020), and how these relate to developmental concerns (Riley et al., 2022). For Māori, relationships are reciprocal and have repercussions for the wider networks associated with the individual. Consequently, whanaungatanga is a collective and ongoing process that transcends space and time. For example, the participants in this study related multiple accounts of how their IRL relationships and online interactions were interwoven in complex ways involving differing layers of relationships that were important to them. Thus, much of what the rangatahi shared in this study focused on what they were doing for others whom they cared about, both online and IRL. Perhaps due to the reciprocal nature of whanaungatanga, the participants also found some forms of digital interaction unsatisfying for them and therefore limited their engagement with these interactions.

The practice of whanaungatanga led participants to meaningful feelings described as aroha, (genuine care for another's well-being) which is also unique to this study. For example, participant Te Aho mentioned that enactments of sharing digital content online that he had created with his friends, such as his art and music, allowed him to experience feelings of love associated with whanaungatanga. There could be many reasons for this, such as the ability of SNS to facilitate the expression of support from friends when content is shared, thus enhancing engagements of aroha (a sense of authentic concern for another's well-being). Such enactments are reciprocal in nature and therefore strengthen the connections existing within relationships where whanaungatanga is evident.

What is also interesting is that in previous literature, researchers posit that young people are more likely to seek and experience feelings of connection when they lack this in their real-life relationships (Riley et al., 2022). However, this was not the case in this study. The participants who engaged in manaakitanga (processes of caring, hospitality and respect) and described feelings of connection and aroha also spoke highly of their relationships with their whānau members in terms of closeness and frequency of contact. Perhaps this is because enactments of whanaungatanga start at the whānau level and then expand in an outward direction

(Durie, 2001). In any case, enactments of whanaungatanga were clearly evidenced in the lives of the rangatahi in this study in two overlapping ways. First was the practice that participants had of sharing digital content in face-to-face contexts with whānau and friends where they thought another person would enjoy this interaction. This was seen with Te Mōhio who would find memes to show his sister in person, that he knew appealed to her sense of humour, creating feelings of bondedness, and also with Te Marohi who would view cooking content with his mum that he knew she enjoyed. The second practice was that participants would create online content and share this to show affection to their friends. This was seen with Te Aho who made digital artwork to send to friends for their use as screensavers or profile pictures. Consequently, the rangatahi in this study were not only using digital platforms for their own enjoyment but to share content with others for their whānau and friends' enjoyment in ways that enhanced feelings of connection and aroha.

Aspirational Whanaungatanga

Another finding of this study was that one of the main reasons rangatahi engaged with SM and SNS was to develop and share their aspirations. This is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, rangatahi were using digital spaces to engage in what the Te Tapatoru model (Hamley et al., 2022) refers to as 'he kaupapa pai' (a genuine purpose), which the model incorporates as an aspect of meaningful whanaungatanga. Secondly, the aspirations of rangatahi were often developed in conjunction with others and shared with friends both online and in person.

The Te Tapatoru model outlines that for rangatahi, aspirational development is a collective endeavour that fosters relationships and is thus involved in processes of whanaungatanga (Hamley et al., 2022). Participants in this study were actively seeking out tips, advice, and tutorials in SM that they could learn from to enhance their own abilities. The sourcing of information from others online was often from strangers who the rangatahi saw as knowledgeable in a specific way that aligned with their goals. However, the rangatahi would select who they followed or sourced information from based on the consistency of the person's content, and on recommendations from others they found trustworthy such as friends. Hence, even unknown individuals online needed to demonstrate some form of reliability before the rangatahi would engage with their content. If the content provider became unreliable or changed the nature of their content, the rangatahi would view this as a

breach of their trust and restrict their interactions with this individual. Hence, the rangatahi had formed their own relational norms regarding the way online relationships should work in relation to their aspirations.

While young people following and learning from others online is not unique to this study, what is interesting is how the rangatahi did not stop at learning from online content. The participants in this study shared what they learned with others in various ways, thus demonstrating rangatiratanga (leadership) and manaakitanga. For example, Te Marohi talked about how he had belonged to a kaupapa page that he had learned a lot from, and more recently found his interactions had shifted to teaching and sharing with others the things he had learned in a more mentor type of role. This type of relationship has been referred to as a type of Poutama (stairway pattern often found in Māori artwork) and is often incorporated into settings where Māori learn in a whānau style manner. A learner or 'teina' represents a younger sibling who as they advance through learning and acquire knowledge become a 'tuakana' or older sibling to new learners. The tuakana-teina relationship, where connections are formed and strengthened through the interaction of learning and teaching, traditionally occurred on marae (Māori places of community gathering). Hence, for rangatahi who engage in this form of interaction, SM and SNS have become a type of online marae of sorts where the sharing of knowledge can be explored, and relationships can be formed through processes of learning.

These findings differ from research overseas where SM and SNS usage for learning related to improving the self. Consequently, as rangatahi are engaged in online kaupapa they share with others, a sense of kotahitanga (collective unity) is experienced resulting in the individual interacting for the good of the group, and the group enhancing the well-being of the individual. This sense of kotahitanga is illustrated by Te Aho's kōrero explaining that liking everything a friend posts, and following friends who follow him, just because that's the way you support your friends online. Thus, whanaungatanga is enacted in online spaces where a kaupapa is observed communally and results in collective kotahitanga. Additionally, where the kaupapa is centred in an aspirational endeavour of the rangatahi, this form of whanaungatanga becomes central to the enhancement of well-being for them and their online community. Furthermore, the kotahitanga and kaupapa enacted online promote and fortify a sense of identity in these spaces. Rangatahi in this study mentioned being known in their online communities for particular strengths that they

were admired for and approached for help with, such as Te Marohi being approached for workout advice, and being aware that he is known for this type of knowledge and guidance in his online community. A sense of identity is also linked to feelings of belonging and well-being. Traditionally, rangatahi experience these feelings in person with whānau, friends, hapū, iwi, and whenua, however, online spaces are now providing another method whereby adolescents can gain feelings of identity and belonging. This occurrence is made more significant considering all rangatahi in the present study had challenges to their notions of identity due to not living in their own ancestral lands where sense of identity was traditionally instilled (Durie, 1997).

Whanaungatanga and Well-being

There were many ways that rangatahi engaged in online whanaungatanga that impacted their well-being. Firstly, I would like to re-visit notions of well-being as they are informed by Mātauranga Māori to give context to well-being as it relates to this study. According to Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model (2006), for Māori, mental well-being is part of a holistic understanding of hauroa and encapsulates multiple factors, including the well-being of mind, body, spirituality, and whānau. These factors are interrelated and influence the dynamics of each other (Durie, 2006). Subsequently, hauroa practices can involve anything that enhance and protect the well-being of individuals and whānau in ways that affect these factors, such as nutrition, activity, emotional awareness and so on. Thus, I find it appropriate to discuss mental well-being as one part of the overall hauora for rangatahi in this study.

Whanaungatanga has been well established in the literature as a critical factor that contributes to the hauora of Māori individuals, whānau, and communities (Clark et al., 2011; Russell, 2018). Despite the impacts of urbanisation and the shift of social interactions into digital spaces, enactments of whanaungatanga continue to be evidenced as protective factors for Māori well-being on individual (Williams et al., 2018) and community (Greaves et al, 2021) levels. Consequently, one goal of the current study was to explore how rangatahi enactments of whanaungatanga in SM and SNS have impacted their experiences of well-being. Their pūrākau illustrate that online interactions were linked to both positive and negative outcomes for rangatahi, and by extension their whānau, and their relationships. As relationships are

intertwined with hauora, the well-being of the rangatahi in this study was also implicated by the nature of their relationships and how SM and SNS impacted these dynamics.

Ways that rangatahi said their hauora was positively experienced by SM and SNS include the maintaining and strengthening of IRL relationships, positive emotional feelings of aroha, belonging and identity, and the development of online relationship boundaries. All rangatahi in this study mentioned that they used SM to keep in touch with friends who had moved away. The rangatahi said that SM interactions help them to maintain feelings of connection, as though these friends were still part of their lives. Further, the participants gave examples of moments where they had been able to offer support to friends who were experiencing difficulties such as homesickness and relationship breakups. These examples are digital enactments of traditional forms of whanaungatanga that are considered to be crucial to adolescent well-being (Deane et al., 2019). This is particularly relevant given that some adolescents (including one in this study) do not have supportive living environments and hence offer potential alternatives for nurturing well-being online.

Rangatahi also talked about experiencing positive emotions. These were related to a sense of belonging, identity, and aroha. In a Te Ao Māori sense, emotions can be understood through Durie's (1994) Te Taha Hinengaro aspect of the Te Whare Tapa Whā model and expressions of wairuatanga as an aspect of McNatty's (2001) model of whanaungatanga. Hauora hinengaro (mental and emotional well-being) is essential to overall well-being and is most likely to be experienced in environments where whanaungatanga is flourishing (Durie, 2001). Wairuatanga traditionally refers to experiences of spirituality and feelings of connection to ancestors, Te Taiao (the environment), and deity (Cherrington, 1994). However, meaningful connection to others is also aligned with notions of wairuatanga and can be manifest in feelings experienced when an individual feels connected to their sense of self, identity, and connection of self to others (O'Carroll, 2013; Cherrington, 1994). Thus, the experiences of the rangatahi in this study illustrate how online whanaungatanga can inspire the positive aspects of te taha hinengaro and wairuatanga that enhance hauora.

A third positive aspect of whanaungatanga in SM and SNS that rangatahi spoke of was how they were navigating online relationships to develop a sense of

personal boundaries. What I mean by this is the cultural values and expectations of online behaviour that rangatahi felt were in line with what could encourage uplifting reciprocal relationships. For example, rangatahi mentioned that they would privately message friends who they felt were sharing content that was inappropriate or concerning and would avoid or unfollow content creators if the nature of their content changed and rangatahi felt these no longer met their personal values or needs. I found this interesting because recent research around adolescent use of SM focuses on their being unknowingly and negatively influenced. However, the participants in this study were knowingly and actively seeking out positive influences and choosing to remove unhelpful content from their online environments. This can be seen in Te Marohi's kōrero regarding his choices to use Facebook only to maintain online interactions with his kaupapa groups for the exchange of specific knowledge, and Te Aho's kōrero of unfollowing influencers whose content changed and also became sexual in nature, which he felt to be inharmonious with his values. Furthermore, rangatahi in this study were aware of how content and SM use could and had impacted their hauora and were subsequently selective about what they chose to consume online. Such as Te Mōhio's experimenting with abstaining from SM and SNS to combat feelings of depression, and his kōrero around how to carefully reintroduce SM in ways that wouldn't lead to negative effects on his hauora. Thus, rangatahi had proactively adjusted their SM consumption to improve their hauora and reported improved mental and emotional well-being due to their actions. These examples illustrate how rangatahi are capable of mindfully and agentically controlling and benefitting from their digital environments and who they choose to allow into their online social networks. By selecting and rejecting content and content creators the rangatahi were directly and knowingly influencing what they allowed to impact their hauora.

Kanohi ki te Kanohi Whanaungatanga

A final point I wish to discuss is the finding that the participants stated repeatedly that they were all in favour of face-to-face (kanohi ki te kanohi) communication over online interactions. This finding is somewhat surprising given that no other research I came across with young adults has reported the same or similar preference. Rangatahi in this research said that they were in favour of using SM and SNS as a way to arrange in-person meetings and as a substitute for being

present with friends when this was impossible. These actions are somewhat in line with research claiming that adolescents may use SM as a way to increase social connection when they feel their face-to-face relationships are less supportive (Riley, et al., 2022). However, the rangatahi in this study said that their preference for kanohi ki te kanohi communication was due to multiple factors that they felt benefited their relationships. This included the ability to more accurately understand the intent of what someone is communicating due to picking up on cues such as body language and vocal tone. This understanding obtained through physical presence may be linked to the principle of kare-ā-roto (the expression of emotion) that Edwards (2009) posits is a necessary component of whanaungatanga. Unlike O'Carroll's (2013) study, rangatahi in this study did not mention the sharing of emotion as something they could experience in digital settings, preferring to be in person. One participant said this allowed him to know how the other person is "actually feeling" implying that digital interactions can be ambiguous. The rangatahi in this study also explained that in-person interactions facilitated a deeper sense of connection that they enjoyed.

All participants mentioned that having met someone in person was almost always a pre-requisite for allowing someone into their online social network saying that not knowing them in person made it harder to assess their trustworthiness and motivations. Another interesting benefit of in-person communication was that rangatahi were better able to distinguish between their friends' online persona or representations and what they felt was their real personality. This in-person knowledge helped the rangatahi to navigate between identities and situations, as seen with Te Aho's kōrero around knowing his friend was okay despite portraying a depressed representation of himself online and being able to discern that this was not a serious representation due to their kanohi ki te kanohi interactions.

In Māori culture, kanohi ki te kanohi is considered a valued practice (Mead, 2003). Aside from seeing and hearing who one is speaking to, kanohi ki te kanohi allows individuals to feel what is also occurring with others, implying that it has links to wairuatanga (processes of spirituality). Through the practice of gathering and sharing knowledge, kanohi ki te kanohi has maintained a Māori way of being for centuries. Consequently, kanohi ki te kanohi has been described as a foundational concept of being Māori (Ngata, 2017), and is essential to certain aspects of Māori culture such as the hongi. Perhaps this is why rangatahi in the current study preferred

in-person interactions with others and why they sought a deeper sense of connection that could not be obtained in digital spaces. Despite enactments of whanaungatanga occurring consistently and diversely in many positive ways in this study, it appears that kanohi ki te kanohi provides unique aspects to being Māori and whanaungatanga that are yet to be replicated in digital spaces.

However, it is worth noting that although all three participants did prefer in-person communication, participant Te Mōhio shared that due to a history of family trauma, he found speaking with his father on a messenger app to be a way for his father to be vulnerable and open in ways that in-person interactions had not. While Te Mōhio was still thinking about how to proceed with these interactions, it is worth considering how digital communication might be used in situations where in-person communication is emotionally or psychologically difficult.

In the discussion thus far, I have chosen to focus on the positive aspects that the participants shared about their SM use, IRL relationships, and their hauora. While there have been various examples of associations with SM use and harm to adolescents, (O'Keefe et al., 2011; Meena et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2016; Salo et al, 2018; Craig et al., 2020; Larson, 2021), I chose to document the positive aspects of youth online engagement, with particular emphasis on how Māori cultural values are reproduced and adapted in digital spaces. This was also largely reflected in the pūrākau of the rangatahi that I learnt from in this study. Despite this, these rangatahi also expressed concern about some of the negative effects they felt SM and SNS could have on hauroa. These included knowing people they cared about overusing and becoming addicted to SM and SNS in ways that negatively affected their relationships, losing friendships due to SM activity that was inconsistent with their friends' earlier character, and the discrepancy between online and IRL representations of identity. These concerns illustrate opportunities for future research. I now turn to what implications might be considered valuable for others who are interested in how digital spaces impact experiences of whanaungatanga and well-being for rangatahi, and additional areas for future research.

Implications

The rangatahi in this study provide several valuable insights regarding their enactments of whanaungatanga in digital spaces and how Māori values can be

incorporated into online environments. These insights can have several practical implications. Firstly, rangatahi are mindful of maintaining relationships that matter to them and will invest their time and talents to increase and sustain feelings of connection within these relationships. Furthermore, the online space is important to rangatahi. Those who are trying to build relationships with rangatahi might consider these practices as ways to connect in more meaningful ways with them. One participant mentioned that his mother wouldn't care about some of what he shared online, and therefore he didn't share this part of his life with her. Adults who are interested in rangatahi well-being might start with a genuine interest in what they are creating and sharing online. This is akin to reading and praising a story your child has written which fosters their sense of self, encourages their efforts, and strengthens the relationships of those involved. Additionally, one participant related that he found it easier to connect with his father using a messaging app. This was an unexpected insight that has implications for anyone who is struggling to connect with people in an in-person manner. Those who are trying to increase engagement or response rate from people where there is a history of trauma, or discomfort might find that SNS or messaging apps could be a solution to increase communication and open doors for healing.

Furthermore, when rangatahi recognised particular online behaviours and patterns of friends as concerning, they would reach out to them if they were concerned about their well-being in ways that they found to be appropriate. These findings suggest that rangatahi are aware of the SM use and mental well-being of their peers and which types of interactions are problematic for those involved and that they have developed their own way of comfortably approaching these concerns. Those who are working to enhance rangatahi well-being and address well-being issues could learn from rangatahi about their online relational norms and behavioural expectations to assist in their work.

Rangatahi in this study were using SM to learn, develop, and share their hobbies and passions. Consequently, these interactions deepened and expanded their relationships on their own terms and in ways that were interesting and satisfying to them. Positive activity and relationships are linked to positive well-being outcomes (Durie, 1994). This has implications for the way rangatahi well-being can be approached in a holistic and technologically relevant way.

During my time with these young men, I personally learnt a lot about what I didn't know about SM and SNS. There were multiple sites and platforms and associated benefits and behavioural expectations, and normative practices that they were aware of that I had never heard of. Additionally, they knew about features of platforms to enhance their online experiences and maintain their relationships that I was not aware of, even on apps that I have used for a long time. These rangatahi had navigated the ways in which they use these sites and apps to maintain positive aspects of their relationships, well-being, and aspirations. Clearly, the digital world will continue to inhabit adolescent lives in prominent and relevant ways. Furthermore, online spaces continue to evolve and adapt, while trends in how adolescents engage online constantly change. For example, the O'Carroll (2013) study explored how rangatahi were experiencing whanaungatanga within the Facebook platform, however more recent research show that adolescent use of this platform has sharply decreased (Pew Research Center, 2022). This is consistent with the current research where only one of the rangatahi used Facebook to stay connected with his kaupapa groups. Consequently, anyone who wishes to be involved with rangatahi in any way, be it as whānau, teaching, friendships, or healthcare, will need to embrace the fact that their lives are intertwined with what is happening in online spaces. A better understanding of these spaces and rangatahi lives will most likely come from listening to the experiences and wisdom of rangatahi who are far more knowledgeable about these realities. Furthermore, there are ways in which aspects of whanaungatanga might be better utilised in digital spaces by other generations who care to learn from rangatahi knowledge.

There were some downsides to SM and SNS use that were not deeply explored in this study but are certainly relevant to rangatahi well-being. All rangatahi mentioned their concerns about the overuse and possible addiction of people they knew to SM. One participant said he felt his relationship with his mother would improve with more in-person interactions, which he felt were currently limited due to his mother's SM overuse. Rangatahi also expressed concern over the way their peers could occasionally represent themselves online in ways that were not reflective of their authentic selves and claimed that these inconsistencies could present challenges to the genuineness of their friendship. These concerns have been echoed in earlier research. However, one interesting concern in previous studies is the occurrence of online racism and how this affects rangatahi. While rangatahi in this

study did experience and observe racist interactions, they had resilient reactions to these interactions. For example, one rangatahi said he wasn't bothered by racist comments saying he thought they were posted by individuals online who lacked self-esteem. These types of interactions highlight further opportunities for research.

Lastly, there are clear limitations in this research. For example, the small sample size means that the findings of this study will consequently be ungeneralisable to broader rangatahi Māori experiences. Also, given that my participants were sourced through existing relationships I had, this may be seen as a reflection of unchecked bias in the findings. Although these issues may be viewed as limitations, they were deliberate choices I made to ensure that the processes of whanaungatanga would encourage the free exchange of kōrero with the participants, and allow me several months and interviews to deepen my understandings of their experiences, thus facilitating a richer level of content in their pūrākau to draw from.

Conclusion

This study has explored how whanaungatanga is being enacted in the lives of three rangatahi male Māori. The study highlights ways in which rangatahi are enacting some aspects of whanaungatanga in their online interactions. Notably, enactments of manaakitanga and engagement with aspirational kaupapa were prominent in the interaction of these rangatahi in digital spaces. Rangatahi were aware of and proactively engaging with SM and SNS in their relationships so that their own and others' well-being was protected and enhanced. Rangatahi had developed habits and expectations akin to relational norms that maintained relationships online so that in-person relationship connections endured and became more meaningful to them. Despite the many ways that rangatahi had used SM and SNS to enact principles of whanaungatanga, all expressed a preference for kanohi ki te kanohi interactions, explaining that these interactions facilitated a deeper sense of connection and other feelings that they felt could only be achieved in-person. These findings suggest that while some aspects of whanaungatanga can be flexibly adapted to online spaces, the digital world as yet, is not producing the same feelings as those associated with understandings of wairuatanga linked to enactments of whanaungatanga. For rangatahi in this study, SM and SNS proved to be a useful tool

to stay connected with friends, develop their aspirations, and enhance aspects of hauora, but according to them, SM and SNS are a less preferred substitute or supplementary to the benefits of kanohi ki te kanohi interactions.

Earlier in this thesis, in an attempt to ground myself in a Kaupapa Māori Theoretical perspective, I reminded myself that KMR serves to “forge a stronger path towards realising our core aspirations for Māori to live well, to leave improved legacies for future generations, and to remain distinctly Māori” (Rua et al., 2021, p. 179). These are the very principles that I was privileged to see enacted in the lives of my participants who were reaching for their aspirations, striving to live well, and improve their legacy as Māori. Ka mihi nui ki a koutou e ngā rangatahi tāne.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information Sheet

Investigating Enactments of Whānaungatanga in Social Media for Rangatahi Māori

Information Sheet

Kia ora koutou. My name is Natasha Osman. I am of Ngāpuhi descent, raised in the Waikato, and living in the Tauranga-Moana region. I am a masters student studying psychology at Massey University. As part of my masters research, I am conducting interviews to explore how social media influences the enactments and engagements of whanaungatanga for rangatahi Māori. This research will also explore how rangatahi experiences of these enactments impact their mental wellness. This research is being supervised by Dr Pita King and Dr Simon Bennett.

Participants: I am inviting rangatahi Māori between the ages of 18-25, who are users of social networking websites and apps to participate in my study. If you agree to participate you will be contacted for a brief initial chat via zoom or phone call to discuss what the research and interviews will include. During this chat you can ask questions about the research and decide if you wish to participate.

Participation will include approximately three one-hour interviews. These will be held over three weeks (roughly one per week for three weeks at your convenience). The interviews will follow a semi-structured format, meaning that I will ask you

open-ended questions. You are able to answer in your own words, based on your experiences of using social media to connect with others, and how you feel this has influenced your face-to-face relationships and experiences of mental wellbeing.

Those who agree to take part in the three interviews will be sent a consent form to sign, which will explain in detail what participation will include.

We will schedule the Face-to-face interviews to occur at a time and place of your choosing. These will require approximately 45-60 minutes per interview and will be audio-recorded with your consent. Your identity will be kept confidential, and all information shared will be anonymised. In appreciation for your time, a koha of $50 will be gifted to you for each interview you attend.

After the interviews:

I will transcribe the audio recordings of your interviews and change any of your identifying details. All data collected is securely stored using online software by password protection for a period of five years, after which it will be securely disposed of.

Transcriptions of your interviews will be available to you to review and amend if you should wish. Additionally, analyses and a summary of the research findings will be made available to you should you wish.

I am happy to answer any queries about this research project. You can contact myself, or alternatively my research supervisor at the email addresses below.

Thank you for your time,
Ngā mihi mahana,

Natasha Osman Dr Pita King

Email: [redacted] Email:

P.R.W.King@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been
reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.
If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other
than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099
ext 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Investigating Enactments of Whānaungatanga in Social Media for Rangatahi Māori

- I have read and I understand the information sheet for participants taking part in research exploring whanaungatanga in social media for rangatahi Māori. I have had the opportunity to discuss this study. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.

- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time during the interview process, and up to two weeks after I have received the transcripts of my interviews.

- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material that could identify me will be used in any reports on this study.

- I agree to my interviews being recorded for transcription, and that transcriptions will be analysed to produce a report (any personal/identifiable information will be replaced with pseudonyms).
- I have had time to consider whether to take part in the study.
-
- I know who to contact if I have any questions or concerns about the questionnaire or about the study in general.

- I agree that any edited transcript and extracts from my comments in the questionnaire can be used in reports and publications arising from the transcript. *Reminder: any extracts used in the report will not be attributable to the participants.*

  Please indicate Yes (Y) or No (N) to the following:

  *I would like to be given the audio files of my interviews Y/N

*I would like to be given the transcription of my interviews Y/N

*I would like to be given the opportunity to review and comment on the summary of my interviews. Y/N

*I would like to be emailed a summary of the results of this study Y/N

*I agree to participate in this research as per the conditions stated in this document Y/N

Declaration of participant consent:

I ______________________________

Agree to take part in this study. Signature: ___________________________

Date: