

Whiria te Tamaiti, Whiria te Tangata, Whiria te
Mātauranga:
Māori Parents' Experience of Playcentre

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Te Ara Poutama

He Whakarāpopotonga (Abstract)

Playcentre is a parent-led early childhood education (ECE) model in Aotearoa New Zealand wherein parents can build relationships with other whānau while being present to educate their children. Playcentre has a long-standing tradition of empowering parents and children in their ECE journeys together. Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre represent a unique perspective on this well-established ECE context. This research opens a conversation about different cultural perspectives within Playcentre. It is a timely conversation as early childhood education (ECE) is increasingly becoming an outsourced job, where funding favours teacher-led services. Focussed through a kaupapa Māori lens, this research explores Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre, their reasons for choosing Playcentre, and their understandings of the bicultural ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki*. Data was collected through six interviews, as well as an interview I conducted with myself using a narrative inquiry approach, and was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings showed that positive partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti is paramount to Māori parents' feelings of empowerment as Māori in Playcentre. The importance of whakapapa both to te ao Māori through genealogy and to Playcentre through familial connections is explored, as it is a key factor in Māori parents' decisions to join Playcentre. The final finding explored in this research is Māori resilience and the ability to turn feelings of whakamā into whakamana within the Playcentre context. Playcentre is a space where Māori parents who have been disenfranchised are finding a space to reclaim their identity as Māori and build resilience; however, that relies on positive partnership. To be able to thrive in Playcentre, Māori parents need to be better supported, understood, and celebrated in that environment.

Te Mana Tū (Attestation of Authorship)

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Talena Melisse Hansen

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on the 12th of August 2022. AUTEK reference number 22/182

Whakapapa

Ko Tarawera te maunga.

Ko Awanui te awa.

Ko Rotoiti te roto.

Ko Te Arawa te iwi.

Ko Ngāti Rangitihi me Ngāti Mākino me Ngāti Pūkiao te hapū.

Ko Arawa te waka.

Ko Rangitihi te marae.

Ko Rangiaohia te whare tupuna.

Ko Rangitihi te tupuna.

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Ko Michael tōku matua.

Ko Judy tōku whaea.

Ko Samuel tōku tungāne.

Ko Alexandra tōku teina.

Ko Piper tōku tamāhine.

Ko Talena tōku ingoa.

Kei Tāmaki Makaurau tōku kāinga noho āiane.

He kaiako ahau.

Kei te mahi ahau ki Te Whare Kararehe o Tāmaki Makaurau.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

This pepeha was gifted to me from my great Aunty Jess. It is the pepeha I have chosen to represent me and my whakapapa as it is a taonga I cherish from my tūpuna.

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Conventions of this Thesis

Te reo Māori words and concepts are used throughout this thesis, and as te reo Māori is an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, they have not been italicised. This is in line with kaupapa Māori theory and practice that Māori culture, including the language, is normal and taken for granted. All words within this thesis are included in a glossary found on page 102. The exception to this is the whakataukī (Māori proverbs) throughout, for which I have included the translation from the source for context, and any titles where a translation follows in brackets.

Throughout this thesis I refer to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TTOW) only from a te ao Māori perspective unless otherwise specified and consider the te reo Māori version the true representation of this document.

It is important to understand that the term Māori is used to define individuals who whakapapa to te ao Māori and to delineate between tangata whenua and tauwiwi. It is understood and celebrated that an individual's whakapapa and way of describing themselves within te ao Māori is first and foremost to their iwi. Tangata whenua classify and clarify themselves following the social structures of whānau, hapū, and iwi. Māori, when used to identify people in this thesis, does not imply a homogenous group, but rather refers to the collective experience of Māori parents who whakapapa to different iwi.

All whakataukī used in this thesis are taken from whakataukī used by Playcentre unless otherwise specified. It was a deliberate decision to include whakataukī that speak to the te ao Māori philosophies that are present in Playcentre Aotearoa.

As *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education, 2017) is referred to often throughout this thesis, it will only be referenced when a direct quote is presented.

1 Introduction

Maha rawa wā tātou mahinga, te kore mahi tonu. Tawhiti rawa tō tātou haerenga, te kore haere tonu.

—Tā Hemi Henare

We have done too much not to do more; we have gone too far not to go further.
(Playcentre Aotearoa, 2021d)¹

1.1. Rationale for this Research

As a mother and wahine Māori, the choice of where my child went for early childhood education (ECE) was a decision I deliberated on, with my husband, for some time. Choices, as a parent, feel as though they hold more weight because your considerations are no longer selfish; they are for the benefit of your tamariki and ultimately your whānau. We are currently facing a cost-of-living crisis within Aotearoa, where choices we make about who cares for our tamariki while we work are paramount, and the juggle we face is between the cost of childcare, cost of living, and how much earning power we have. As a result, many households now require both parents to be in some form of paid employment, and the social expectation that one parent will remain at home with the children has changed. Since 2007, the government has funded 20 hours 'free' ECE care for children three years and older (May, 2008). This, alongside other funding decisions, essentially subsidises the cost of childcare, encourages parents to return to work, and privileges teacher-led care models (Manning, 2018). For context, the options available to parents in Aotearoa are either teacher-led or parent-led services. Teacher-led services include education and care services (such as private day-cares), Kindergartens, and home-based education and care services. Parent-led services include Ngā Kōhanga Reo, Ngā Puna Kōhungahunga, Pasifika Playgroups, Playcentres, and Playgroups. The choices parents are faced with around which ECE model to choose for their young children are highly influenced by social expectations, socio-economic conditions, and government policy. Māori parents are influenced further by their identity as Māori and by which ECE model supports their cultural beliefs and values.

Ultimately, as parents, my husband and I chose that I would remain at home with our tamāhine, because the cost of childcare for her outweighed my earning potential at that time,

¹ This whakataukī (Māori proverb) speaks to the essence of this research. It is about contribution to Māori academia from Māori academics and giving voice to Māori who are often left out of the academic conversation. If Māori academics do not go searching for more within academia that could be uncovered, those taonga (treasures) cannot be brought to light for us.

and we were able to financially survive as a one-income household. However, as a Māori māmā I still wanted my tamāhine to have some form of early childhood education before she turned three and qualified for subsidised childcare. I wanted it to be somewhere that I could be involved in her learning. After investigating my options, I considered Te Kōhanga Reo and Playcentre. I chose Playcentre, because I had attended Playcentre as a child and it was a familiar space to me. Also, the local Te Kōhanga Reo would not have had space for us until my daughter was four, based on their waitlist at the time. Therefore, I enrolled myself and my tamāhine in our local Playcentre when my daughter turned one, and off to Playcentre we went.

Playcentre is a unique ECE option in Aotearoa New Zealand where parents act as the kaiako for their children. It is a space where parents are encouraged to 'find their village' as a whānau. Playcentres rely on the voluntary effort of enrolled families to maintain, administrate, and participate in the running of their centres. Parents and their tamariki attend multiple sessions each week where parents are encouraged to become involved in child-led, play-based learning with their tamariki. Parents are also encouraged to complete adult education courses delivered by Playcentre Aotearoa which contribute toward a New Zealand Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care Level 4.

However, one result of the current socio-economic climate in Aotearoa is that fewer parents are choosing Playcentre as an option for their child's ECE journey, as they simply cannot afford to be stay-at-home parents, or survive on minimal part-time paid work. Also, the parental commitment that Playcentre requires may not be supported by a parent's full-time employer. Therefore, parents who may want to choose Playcentre are often financially unable to do so, and this has a gentrifying effect on Playcentre. The socio-economic profiles of parents who attend Playcentre reflect this situation; their annual household incomes tend to be in higher earning brackets (Education Counts, 2022; Tearney, 2016). They also tend to be tertiary educated and of European descent. Of the tamariki enrolled in Playcentre in 2021, 11% recorded their ethnicity as Māori (Playcentre Aotearoa, 2021a). This means that Māori parents in Playcentre are a minority. When I began Playcentre, I was the only Māori parent there, and I had to navigate this space and my identity as Māori while also defining who I was as a first-time mother. Often, it was a difficult space to occupy. In my daughter's second year of Playcentre I went back to university to complete my bachelor's degree in Māori development. It was at this time that I became interested in how my Playcentre was incorporating te reo Māori on session. There was a definite interest from many of the parents at my Playcentre to

learn more te reo me ngā tikanga Māori to use on session. Therefore, as part of my degree requirement was a work integrated learning module, I created a proposal to create te reo Māori sessions for our Playcentre which focussed on language you would use in an ECE setting. This is where my interest was piqued about the roles that Māori parents take on within Playcentre. I wanted to understand what other Māori parents were experiencing in their centres and if we had a shared experience.

When I was deciding on the best way to frame this investigation, I considered my own experience within Playcentre. Therefore, the following research questions are aimed at Māori parents and how they have experienced 'being Māori' within Playcentre.

- *What are Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre?*
- *How do Māori parents feel that their mana, mauri, wairua, and Māoritanga have been respected and honoured in Playcentre?*
- *What are Māori parents' understandings of Te Whāriki?*

This research opens an important discussion of Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre, how they have felt empowered as Māori within Playcentre and their reasons for choosing Playcentre for their whānau. It will also consider their understandings of *Te Whāriki*, the bicultural curriculum for ECE in Aotearoa. The overall intent behind this research was to understand Playcentre through the eyes of Māori parents and to uplift their kōrero about being Māori in a Pākehā dominated space.

The following section begins with a discussion of the research questions and how this line of inquiry about Playcentre came about. I then discuss Māori identity, which sets the scene for the next section where I position myself as a researcher. I contextualise the ECE landscape of Aotearoa, and why I chose Playcentre for myself and my tamāhine. Finally, to conclude this chapter, I give an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.2. Researcher Vision Regarding the Research Questions

Kaupapa Māori theory and practice challenges Pākehā paradigms of knowledge and critiques hegemonic discourse (Pihama et al., 2002). Much of the literature about Playcentre to date comes from a Pākehā perspective. Therefore, there is little that is known or discussed about Māori views of Playcentre. As a Māori Playcentre parent I feel strongly about the role that Playcentre has played in my life and in the life of my whānau, both in the generations that

have come before and the generations that follow me. However, during my experience of attending Playcentre as tangata whenua there were some systemic issues I encountered that left me feeling frustrated. This was during the time that I was completing a Bachelor of Arts in Māori development and my aforementioned project on increasing kaiako capabilities of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori in Playcentre. It was from here that my line of inquiry into Māori parents' experience of Playcentre began.

As Smith (2012) discusses, kaupapa Māori research aims to decolonise spaces within academia for Māori, by Māori, and to forge a path towards transformation for tangata whenua in Aotearoa. Colonisation and hegemonic educational systems introduced by colonial settlers disrupted Māori pedagogies and replaced them with Pākehā educational ideals (Hemara, 2000; Penetito, 2010; Smith, 2012). This resulted in an education system that did not respond to the needs of Māori learners and therefore created social and educational inequity (Nuttall, 2013). There are some studies that focus on Māori education from a Māori perspective (Hetaraka, 2022; Penetito, 2010). However, there seems to be little research conducted on the experiences of Māori parents as educators. Playcentre offers the opportunity for Māori parents to engage in ECE as the educators, which is in line with traditional Māori pedagogies (Hemara, 2000). Too often the lens is focussed on educators outside of the home, or on the power struggle between Indigenous and Western ideals of education. This research addresses this issue by asking Māori parents about their experience of being Māori in a space where educating their tamariki is their responsibility.

This is where the title for this research was born. Whiria means to plait or braid. The title of this research refers to the plaiting or braiding together of children, parents, and knowledge. Whiria te tamaiti is about the children of Playcentre; Whiria te tangata is about the people in Playcentre; and Whiria te mātauranga is about the knowledge created in Playcentre.

1.3. Māori Identity

Māori identity begins with whakapapa, which has always been considered a way of explaining the world and everything that exists within it. Prior to colonisation whakapapa was pervasive within Māori communities, and often tribes had whakapapa experts who held highly respected positions within society (Mahuika, 2019). It is generally understood and accepted in te ao Māori that from an ontological perspective tangata whenua are descendants of ngā atua through the whakapapa of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, our earth mother and sky father. Whakapapa gives us our place in the world as descendants of Tāne Māhuta, atua of the

forests. We are people of the forests, of nature. From here we begin to look at whakapapa at an iwi level, then a hapū level, and finally a whānau level (Marsden, 2003). Māori are not homogenous, and our tribal identities are distinct and unique. Therefore, it is important to understand that Māori identity exists at a collective level within the wider context of society in Aotearoa under the term Māori, and at an individual level based on whānau, hapū and iwi.

Colonisation has also impacted Māori identity, and generations of tangata whenua in Aotearoa have been disenfranchised because of forced assimilation into Pākehā society. This was further impacted by the mass migration of Māori to urban areas after World War Two (Paringatai, 2014). The lack of whānau, hapū, and iwi social structures in the urban environment meant that many Māori experienced a weakening of language and cultural values through being assimilated into the Pākehā world.

Considering the nature of this research, it is important to deliberate on how traditional Māori pedagogy influenced identity in tamariki. Identity was traditionally created through time spent within the social structures of whānau, hapū, and iwi (Paringatai, 2014). Traditional Māori pedagogy centred on the child, and children were generally treated indulgently and cared for diligently by their parents and wider whānau (Hemara, 2000; Mead, 2016; Reedy, 2019). Children were often included in important hui and their questions were taken seriously, as it was seen that this was vital to their education as a functioning member of the wider hapū and iwi (Hemara, 2000). In this way traditional Māori communities fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment in children from a young age.

1.4. Ko Wai Au? Positioning Myself as the Researcher

Te Pā Harakeke is a metaphor for whānau, using a multigenerational model where the younger 'leaves' are surrounded by the 'elder' leaves for support and sustenance (Elder, 2020). A person's place in their whānau can be referred to in this way. Here I attempt to explain my place in my whānau and give context to who I am as a Māori researcher, Māori māmā, a Playcentre child, and a Playcentre parent.

Growing up in Aotearoa in the 1990s was challenging as a lighter skinned Māori child with ancestry that runs to Rangitahi on my father's maternal side, and Mary Queen of Scots on my mother's maternal side. I was fortunate enough to have strong connections to both sides of my whānau and know where I came from. I remain proud to be both Māori and Pākehā, of Scottish immigrant ancestors. However, living in both worlds and being connected to both spaces can often feel as though you are walking a tightrope of your own identity: afraid to fall

either way, always focussing intently on the balance of who you are, and where you come from.

On my father's maternal side, we whakapapa directly to Rangitahi. His kuia, Mere Te Ataauia Moore, née Ngatai, lived in Matatā with her six children in a whare that had no power, no running water, and a dirt floor. She would wash their clothes in the stream at Matatā and would collect water to take back to the whare. That is where my kuia Billie Kahurangi grew up. I am two generations away from that whare with the dirt floor. Considering where I live today, there is a vast difference in circumstances and rapid changes within those two generations of my whānau. Although this looks like progress to the outsider, it has come at a cost to my whānau. Assimilation into Pākehā society and urban migration from our turangawaewae to Tāmaki Makaurau means that as a whānau our identity as Māori has been somewhat urbanised. In addition to this, I did not know my kuia or koroua growing up, as they passed when I was three years old. I did have a good relationship with my kuia's two sisters and would correspond with my great aunts regularly. My Auntie Jess was my first pen pal, and we would write letters back and forth between visits.

On my mother's maternal side, we whakapapa to Mary Queen of Scots, through our Stewart bloodlines. My mother's Nan, Georgina 'Georgie' Simpson Stewart, née Clark, immigrated to Aotearoa in the early 1910s as a young child with her parents. I am a third generation Pākehā on this side of my whānau. My great-grandmother's family settled just out of Taumarunui, in Ōngarue, and this is where my grandmother, Leona, grew up. She spent a lot of her childhood at Te Rongoroa marae. Leona could speak some te reo Māori and was knowledgeable of the tikanga of the area. She was a champion of te ao Māori at a time when it was challenging to be so and a pioneer in many aspects of her life. Leona and her mother Georgie were the only grandparents I knew growing up. I was incredibly close with both, and they helped shape the wahine I am today.

Both of my parents grew up in Papakura, South Auckland. It is where I was born, and where I lived until five years old, before moving to a farm 10 minutes away in Hunua. As a young child I attended Papakura Playcentre with my mother. It is the Playcentre she attended as a child, where my grandmother Leona was a founding member. My brother also went to this Playcentre before me, and my sister after me. When I had my own daughter, I attended Titirangi Playcentre, local to where my whānau and I now live. I have a strong connection in my whānau through the maternal line to Playcentre. I believe the tohu in this is that the line of

descent from my maternal and paternal grandmothers are mana wāhine lines, built of resilience and a pioneering spirit.

It is also interesting that some form of weaving is present in both of my bloodlines. Leona was an expert crocheter, a form of weaving that has been passed down through many generations of her kin from her ancestors in Scotland. Her mother crocheted, and her mother's mother. I currently own a blanket that was crocheted by my great-great-grandmother. I too am a crocheter and learned this skill from Leona at the age of three years old, sitting on her sofa and using a French sewing bee in the shape of a tin solidier. These days my mother and I crochet tartan blankets together, connecting with our Scottish ancestry. I also crochet kākahu for my daughter to wear during winter, and I crochet toys for all the tamariki in my life to love and cherish. Importantly, I do not sell these crochet creations, I see my skill as a gift from my tūpuna that I can share amongst my community.

In my Māori whānau our whakapapa runs to Te Arawa, who have been known to be masters of raranga and whakairo (Mead, 1995). My father and brother both practice whakairo and are builders who work with carpentry tools daily. Recently, I have been taking classes in raranga and connecting to the Māori form of weaving using harakeke. Although I am not adept at this yet, it is a skill I am hoping to continue to hone, and I cherish connecting to my Māori whakapapa in this way. Therefore, weaving is a skill I bring with me to my research and how I approach my data. It is present in my whakapapa, both Māori and Scottish, and influences the way I see the world and interact with it. The concept of weaving raw materials together to form a pattern is familiar and a space of safety for myself.

I came into this research with an insider perspective of what it is to be Māori, Pākehā, mana wahine, māmā, a Playcentre kid and a Playcentre parent. All these intersections of being are present in my research and I own my subjectivity in these spaces. They are strengths that I carry with me.

1.5. Choosing Playcentre for Myself and my Child

Choosing Playcentre was both a considered decision for me, as I have outlined in section 1.1., and a homecoming to a space I felt familiar with. When my daughter was almost one year old, I was at a loose end and was somewhat isolated from my usual whānau support system in South Auckland. We had recently moved to West Auckland, and I felt I needed a space to connect with other mothers who were local to this area. Through my Plunket nurse I was

introduced to a playgroup that met every Wednesday morning. I attended this for some time with my daughter until she was older and almost walking and it was time to move on. This was when I knew I needed a permanent space we could be together outside of the home. While visiting the local library one day, I noticed the Playcentre from across the carpark and immediately fell in love with the ngāhere surrounding it, the chickens wandering around the perimeter, and the laughing, smiling tamariki in the playground.

Playcentre was a space I could be present with my daughter while she built relationships and connections outside of our whānau unit, and I could also build relationships with other mothers and their tamariki. I am grateful for this time of my life and the people who were part of Playcentre with us. They remain a cohort of people I trust and could call on if I were in need. It was important to me that we had this, as I knew I would not be having any other children. My daughter and I had found a space where we could survive and thrive together. Those years of my daughter's life remain the most precious of times.

1.6. Structure of this Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis discusses the position of the researcher as a Māori Playcentre mother giving an insider perspective into Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre. It outlines the research objective, which is to open a dialogue about Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre and uplift their kōrero in academia. Chapter 1 also provides some key ideas on Māori identity and contextualises the effect of colonisation and hegemony on the way Māori interact with Pākehā spaces. This chapter briefly provides a picture of the ECE landscape in Aotearoa and outlines the researcher's choice of Playcentre as an ECE model for their whānau.

The second chapter reviews literature on Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TTOW) and the effect this has on biculturalism in Aotearoa society. It discusses the role of partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti and, importantly, the role of TTOW in ECE. Chapter 2 also looks at the Playcentre model, its history, philosophy, and bicultural journey. Finally, this chapter discusses the history of the bicultural ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, how it is used, and its relationship with Playcentre. This chapter argues that biculturalism and partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti is pervasive in our society, especially in educational spaces. However, TTOW and bicultural partnership is often only articulated theoretically, and does not filter through into practical progressive action.

Chapter 3 outlines the chosen methodology for this research. It details the theoretical framework of kaupapa Māori theory, whakapapa, and narrative inquiry. It then outlines the ethics and methods used to capture the data set, which includes a literature review and the transcripts from six interviews with Māori parents, as well as a pilot interview with myself. Here I also introduce the participants and discuss their place in this research.

The fourth chapter of this thesis goes through the data analysis process. First, I describe the data sets, before discussing and justifying the use of reflexive thematic analysis as an analysis framework for this research. I then describe my transcription and coding journey, introducing the codes used and how they were applied. Finally, the themes that will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5 are defined.

Chapter 5 presents the findings by weaving together the participants' kōrero (their stories and narratives) with literature about whakapapa, partnership, and Māori resilience; including my discussion of each theme, which firmly situates the context of this research. I discuss the three main themes: whakapapa, positive partnership is empowering, and Māori resilience—from whakamā to whakamana, and conclude this chapter with an overall discussion about the findings. In this way, this chapter represents the weaving together of data to create a whāriki of Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre.

Chapter 6 revisits the research questions and discusses the implications of opening this conversation about Playcentre from a Māori perspective, by giving a snapshot of the participants' descriptions of their experience within Playcentre, as Māori parents. I discuss possible solutions and recommend further research avenues about Playcentre and government funding models which privilege teacher-led services and disenfranchise Māori parents from being present in the education of their tamariki. The strengths and limitations of the data are discussed, before concluding comments are made.

2 Literature Review

Ehara ko te ia o te wai, ehara hoki ko te pupuhi o te hau. Engari ko te whakatika kē o ngā rā ka tae ora te waka ki uta.

It is not the direction in which the current flows, nor is it in the direction which the wind blows. Rather it is the setting of the sails that enables a canoe to reach its destination.²

2.1. Overview

This chapter presents a picture of bicultural partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand through the foundational document, TTOW. I discuss the role of TTOW in education and then introduce Playcentre and discuss its history, philosophy, and commitment to biculturalism. Finally, I discuss the bicultural curriculum for ECE in Aotearoa, *Te Whāriki*.

2.2. Te Tiriti o Waitangi: A History of Partnership

2.2.1. Overview of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The Treaty of Waitangi is often referred to as the founding document of New Zealand and was signed between colonists and Māori in 1840. It is important to note that the Treaty of Waitangi refers to the English language version, which only thirty-nine Māori rangatira (chiefs) signed. However, Te Tiriti refers to the Māori language version, which, after the initial signing at the Waitangi grounds, was taken throughout the country and signed by over 500 Māori. Therefore, more Māori signed a version of the treaty in te reo Māori, understanding the content from a te ao Māori perspective. According to Mutu (2010), Pākehā historians, rangatira and now international law all recognise Te Tiriti, rather than the English language version, as the official treaty, and therefore it is the only constitutional basis upon which Pākehā, or non-Māori, are allowed to reside in Aotearoa. Māori consider TTOW a “sacred covenant” held between the Crown and Māori and have held fast to the understanding that TTOW documented the conditions, agreed upon between Māori and the Crown, under which Pākehā settlers were allowed to settle and remain in Aotearoa (Mutu, 2010, p. 13).

According to Orange (2013), in the English language version of the treaty it is claimed that Māori gave the Crown sovereignty over New Zealand and exclusive rights to purchase any land that Māori wished to sell. It also gave Māori the right of ownership over their lands, forests,

² This whakataukī talks of the journey, and how important it is to understand the equipment you have before you, and how it works in relation to the environment.

fisheries, and other important taonga and guaranteed them the full rights and privileges of British subjects. A second version written in te reo Māori did not convey the same meaning that the English version of the treaty did.

Historians have generally focussed on the differences between the two versions of Te Tiriti, circumventing the reasons for discrepancies existing between the two (Moon & Fenton, 2002). Pākehā understandings of the treaty remain contentious, and much of the debate and confusion over TTOW is due to European and Māori interpretations of the term sovereignty and how it was mistranslated by Henry Williams in Te Tiriti as *kāwanatanga* (Mutu, 2010; Orange, 2013). Although other scholars have widely accepted and reported that Williams did not know enough about the nuances of te reo Māori to provide an accurate translation of the term sovereignty (Fletcher, 2022; Orange, 2013), Moon and Fenton (2002) argue that this mistranslation by Henry Williams was deliberate. The main focus of this claim is William's commitment to the Crown, more specifically the Crown's commitment to turn New Zealand into a colony.

In 1840 Williams received instructions from the Archbishop of Australia that encouraged him to work alongside the Governor-designate, William Hobson, and persuade rangatira to voluntarily cede sovereignty to the Crown. Moon and Fenton (2002) discuss how Williams' Christian beliefs and these explicit instructions lend weight to the idea that he would favour the Crown in his translation of TTOW. This is compounded by evidence in the form of a letter that Williams sent to his brother-in-law, where he discloses his personal feelings about Crown rule in Aotearoa. In this letter Williams states that the British government needs to immediately intercede in the lawlessness being perpetuated by settlers. In addition to his patriotic sentiments, Williams also expressed a condemnatory attitude to Māori, and his general attitude to Māori seemed to be ruled by his perception of how well they conformed to his ideas around Christianity. Furthermore, evidence is given that shows Williams' understanding of te reo Māori was more advanced than has been speculated and draws on his translation of He Whakaputanga (the Declaration of Independence of New Zealand) in 1835, where he used the term *mana* to signify sovereignty. Although this is not an accurate translation, it is a closer translation of sovereignty than *kāwanatanga*.

Kawanatanga as a missionary neologism based on the English word "governor" (appearing as *kawana* to conform to Maori orthography). It had first appeared in early translations of the Bible. ... Not only was this word only partially familiar to the few Maori who had undergone missionary education, its context bore no direct relation to the notion of sovereignty. The other problem with the use of the notion of governor

(in either English or Maori) was that there had never been a governor in New Zealand. Therefore there was no way in which the Maori signatories could have established the power and jurisdiction of such a person. The more appropriate word would have been mana. ... Mana defies easy translation, but can include power, prestige, authority and sovereignty. However, Williams bypassed this obvious choice, one with which he was familiar, and employed a far more ambiguous term. Even the handful of chiefs who might have been familiar with the Biblical concept of governor could never have equated ceding this unknown extent of authority to the Crown with a surrender of their mana. (Moon & Fenton, 2002, p. 58)

Therefore, Williams' use of the term *kāwanatanga* to represent sovereignty casts doubt on his sincerity and intention to accurately translate the Treaty into Te Tiriti in a way that was fair and equitable for Māori. It was clearly understood by Māori that in signing Te Tiriti they were not ceding their *rangatiratanga* or *mana* over to the Crown, as these terms do not appear in Te Tiriti. Therefore, the translation of sovereignty to *kāwanatanga* is important, as this set the scene for race relations in Aotearoa New Zealand for the following 180 years.

2.2.2. What is Partnership?

TTOW was designed to bring about a level of partnership between Māori and the Crown, and to put the responsibility of governing the increasingly lawless colonial settlers back on the British government (Orange, 2013). According to Te Puni Kōkiri (2002), partnership is a well-established principle of TTOW that requires *tangata whenua* and *tangata tiriti* to act reasonably, honourably, and in good faith. However, it is clearly documented that many colonial settlers after the signing of TTOW in 1840 did not show good faith in their interactions with Māori (Fletcher, 2022; Moon & Fenton, 2002; Mutu, 2010; Orange, 2013). What ensued were decades of forced colonisation and assimilation for Māori into Pākehā society and a political stripping of their rights, language, and culture (Smith, 2012).

After an extensive history of protest by Māori against the Crown, the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 enabled the Waitangi Tribunal to be set up. According to the Ministry of Justice (2023), the Waitangi Tribunal is a “permanent commission of inquiry that makes recommendations on claims brought by Māori relating to Crown actions which breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi” (para. 2). The Waitangi Tribunal fulfils an important role; as a tribunal, they have the exclusive right to make decisions on issues that arise from the differences between Te Tiriti (Māori language version) and the Treaty (English language version), in terms of translation and context. Therefore, the Waitangi Tribunal essentially represents the balance of partnership under which TTOW was signed in 1840. Partnership between *tangata whenua* and *tangata tiriti* has progressed since the implementation of the Waitangi Tribunal, and

biculturalism is now a pervasive term used to describe the duality of society in Aotearoa. There are many contexts where bicultural policies theoretically underpin organisations. Playcentre Aotearoa and the bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki* are examples of these.

2.2.3. Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Early Childhood Education

Many authors have covered the intersections between TTOW and early childhood education in Aotearoa society (Jenkin, 2010, 2014; Ritchie, 2008; Ritchie & Rau, 2008). According to the Ministry of Education (2023), there are three levels of education in Aotearoa: early childhood, primary and secondary, and further education. Early childhood education is pre-compulsory, primary and secondary education is compulsory, and further education at a tertiary level is post-compulsory education. Within each level of education there are commitments to TTOW. However, here I will focus on TTOW in the ECE sector with an emphasis on *Te Whāriki*.

Te Whāriki, the ECE curriculum, is a bicultural curriculum and contains a commitment to TTOW.

Te Tiriti | the Treaty has implications for our education system, particularly in terms of achieving equitable outcomes for Māori and ensuring that te reo Māori not only survives but thrives. Early childhood education has a crucial role to play here, by providing mokopuna with culturally responsive environments that support their learning and by ensuring that they are provided with equitable opportunities to learn. The importance of such provision is underscored throughout *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum*. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 3)

Despite this commitment to TTOW, the implementation of Tiriti-based pedagogy is problematic. Jenkin (2010) discusses the barriers faced by kaiako in implementing a Tiriti-based curriculum. Her research found that fear over being perceived as tokenistic and concern over implementing Tiriti-based practices incorrectly were mitigating factors to successful delivery within their centres. Also, there were philosophical issues that kaiako perceived in implementing the spiritual aspects of the curriculum when their personal spiritual beliefs, or indeed lack of belief, did not align with a te ao Māori understanding of spirituality.

Sadikien and Ritchie (2009) found that a commitment from kaiako to implement Tiriti-based education in ECE can be positive. They outline a case study of Te Kura Mokopuna o Brooklands (Brooklands Kindergarten), showing how, through leadership of kaiako with the support of kaumatua, whānau, and colleagues, relationships with whānau Māori can be strengthened by allowing whanaungatanga, awhinatanga and aroha principles to guide their interactions with

each other. Sadikeen and Ritchie also found that having the presence of kaumatua was pivotal to developing and sustaining ongoing relationships between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti and creating partnership. Brooklands is an example of how a commitment to TTOW can be implemented positively and in a way that enhances partnership between all parties.

Partnership is an important aspect of both TTOW and ECE, and therefore should be embedded into the culture of ECE centres. It requires dedicated kaiako and a commitment from the leadership of a centre to achieve this. Partnership is a fundamental underpinning of society in Aotearoa because of TTOW and is therefore a responsibility of all parties to maintain and develop within ECE. This is especially important in ECE contexts such as Playcentre, where Māori parents and tamariki are intimately involved in their centres.

2.3. Playcentre: A Unique ECE Model

2.3.1. A History of Playcentre

It is generally understood that Playcentre began in 1941, during the Second World War, and was originally envisaged as a space for women (mothers) to commune with others, while providing education for their pre-school aged children (Morton, 1993). However, Stover (2003) claims this is an oversimplification of how Playcentre began. Stover paints a picture of Playcentre that considers the social and political landscape surrounding its inception. It is important to note that different movements with similar ideas were operating around Aotearoa at this time and were the catalyst for the initiation of the Playcentre movement. Stover points out that the roots of the Playcentre movement were in the progressive educational ideals of the 1930s, and the key figures associated with the creation of the Playcentre movement were forward thinking innovators within their communities. Stover claims that at the time early childhood education was seen as low status, had no form of government funding, and was generally seen as irrelevant to tamariki, their whānau and education generally. The Playcentre movement was indicative of women empowering themselves and their children through education, often while their husbands were away at the Second World War. This empowerment was in part a result of necessity due to the war, and in part a result of progressive educational ideals circulating in society. Therefore, the foundation of Playcentre was woven together from many strands of meaning taken from contemporary society and politics of the time.

According to Morton (1993), Joan Wood and Inge Smithells came up with the concept of Playcentre after spending a holiday together with their children, where they discussed the

need for mothers to have relief and for children to have companionship. This led to further conversations with Beatrice Beeby and eventually in 1941 the first Playcentre was opened in Wellington. Joan Wood, Inge Smithells and Beatrice Beeby, the pioneering women who created Playcentre, brought with them skills and talents as well as university training. Densem and Chapman (2000) extensively cover the role these three women had to play in the early years of Playcentre; they also outline the important influence of Doreen Dolton and Gwen Somerset on the parent education offered within Playcentre. They discuss how parent education became an important consideration for Playcentre parents as early as 1945, and how within ten years of its inception Playcentre began offering parents an education in child development. This is significant, as parent education is at the centre of Playcentre's philosophy 'Families learning together' (Playcentre, 2021b). The philosophy is based on these pioneering women's foundational ideas that ECE was a context where mothers were being neglected, not just as the first educators of their children, but also as potential learners in a space that was of direct interest to them as parents. This is part of what makes Playcentre a unique model of ECE. The involvement of parents in the education of their pre-school children in a space that also offers parent education has become the point of difference for Playcentre in New Zealand's ECE landscape (Densem & Chapman, 2000).

It is important to note that the initial playcentres were established in wealthy suburbs, championed by the well-educated, and relatively self-funded (Tearney, 2016). In 1948, the New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF) was established, which created an entity that would oversee regional playcentres being established (Tearney, 2016).

Since the 1940s Playcentre has endured in the ECE sector of Aotearoa. Stover (2003) suggests that this success is due, in part, to its simple and adaptable organisational structure. Playcentre retains the foundational blocks on which it was built in 1941, which rely on parents who believe in the Playcentre philosophy and are willing to volunteer their time to make it work. Stover (2003) sums it up perfectly when she says that Playcentre was "a community effort with a capable competent committee. It was self-financing. It was self-organising. It was a simple transferable model using basic resources found in every New Zealand community" (p. 3). However, Playcentre is currently in a precarious situation, with low membership which continues to decline each year (Education Counts, 2022).

Manning (2018) argues that in 1989 Playcentre was still considered a major contender within the ECE sector in New Zealand. However, since that time she believes that government policy and funding has been marginalising Playcentre. Manning argues that the current lack of

funding and support of Playcentre by the government is due to a rationale that focusses energy on developing those ECE options which contribute to human capital development. Therefore, the government favours ECE options which focus on the current economic productivity of parents, and the potential future economic productivity of children. This means that policy and funding is funnelled to those organisations which promote standardisation within the ECE sector. Furthermore, these rationales promote a workforce that is teacher-led rather than parent-led.

Playcentres, with trained parents being the educators on session, were problematic for the Taskforce. The Taskforce proposal was that funding should be targeted to high quality services, defined as teacher-led and centre-based services. Parent cooperatives and home-based services were to be minimally funded. (Manning, 2018, p. 100)

Significantly, Manning evaluates the ECE sector on a funding level and highlights the tension between the desire for a fully qualified ECE workforce and the promotion of diversity within it (which Playcentre provides). Manning's research is a timely reminder that Playcentre has a long-standing history within the ECE sector of Aotearoa and should be better supported at a funding level. However, despite the contribution that Playcentre has made to the ECE sector and to society over the past 80 years, the biggest threat to Playcentre lies in its philosophy that parents are the first and best educators of their tamariki, which appears to be in direct opposition to government funding policy favouring teacher-led services.

2.3.2. The Playcentre Philosophy

Parents are a child's first teacher, and this concept is a cornerstone of the Playcentre philosophy (Densem & Chapman, 2000; Somerset, 1990). It is also a concept that exists within te ao Māori, where the child is treated as a taonga and rangatira (leader) of their space (Hemara, 2000; Mead, 2016; Reedy, 2019). Playcentre provides a space for children to lead their play and be respected and supported on their learning journey by their parents. The parents are also respected and seen as fundamental in the process of early childhood education: "The playcentre movement believes that playcentre's purpose is to support the home, not usurp it, and that each should enrich the other" (Densem & Chapman, 2000, p. 18). The philosophy of Playcentre lies in the symbiosis between the home and formalised educational aspirations for young children.

The Playcentre philosophy is about empowering whānau to work, learn, play, and grow together. Hill et al. (2003) provide an important insight into where this philosophy has evolved from. They critique the idea of Playcentre being considered a unique ECE model in the world,

stating that the “self-conscious pursuit of ‘uniqueness’ can have the effect of maintaining existing philosophy and practice uncritically - seeing them as a non-negotiable legacy” (p. 30). They go on to discuss the educational theorists of the 1930s, such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Piaget, whose philosophies influenced the pioneers of Playcentre. They also discuss the major influences on Playcentre from within New Zealand, such as Lex Grey and Gwen Somerset. Importantly, they discuss how Playcentre has evolved throughout the past eight decades alongside ever-changing ideas as to the nature of education. Yet, the foundational philosophy of Playcentre has endured.

On their website, Playcentre Aotearoa (2021b) define their whakamātau (philosophy) through the following statements:

Playcentre Aotearoa is a family organisation which:

- empowers adults and children to work, play, learn and grow together;
- honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and celebrates people’s uniqueness;
- values and affirms adults as the first and best educators for their children so that whānau are strengthened and communities enriched.

Playcentre Aotearoa (2018) also acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a founding document of Aotearoa and commit to partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti, where all shall be given the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities. They include their definition of partnership within Playcentre Aotearoa and the responsibilities they have as an organisation to biculturalism:

- organise its affairs within the cultural tikanga/protocols of Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti;
- be diligent in identifying and keeping open all avenues leading to common ground;
- recognise, value and share each other’s knowledge, wisdom and experience;
- promote inclusive practices; and
- foster equitable collaboration between Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti.

Since 1941, Playcentre has remained a space for parents and children to grow and learn together. The Ministry of Education (2023) lists other parent-led services for the ECE sector in Aotearoa, including less formalised playgroups (which are certificated, rather than licenced) and Ngā Kōhanga Reo centres. However, Playcentre remains a unique model of education that firmly puts parents at the centre of their child’s education, while also providing parent

education. Part of the evolution of Playcentre's philosophy lies in its commitment to TTOW and biculturalism.

2.3.3. Playcentre and Biculturalism

In 1989 a Playcentre conference was held wherein members were asked to both publicly endorse TTOW, and make a commitment to biculturalism (Corry, 2003). It is generally understood that this is officially where Playcentre's bicultural journey, as an organisation, began. However, as Corry (2003) points out, there were factors at play within politics and society prior to 1989 that contributed to this decision within Playcentre, and which reflected a wider commitment within New Zealand society at the time to address issues of marginalisation and racism towards tangata Māori. According to Corry, it was the 1988 Conference where members attended a workshop on racism that ultimately sparked a movement within the Auckland Association and led to the first meeting of Te Rito, Auckland Playcentre Association, Māori Development Whānau, in June of 1988. Following this conference, the Canterbury Association in the South Island began offering Project Waitangi workshops, and in Taranaki April Humphries, alongside Beth Hocking, began to draft the remits which led to the 1989 decision within Playcentre Aotearoa to commit to biculturalism and TTOW. Although this gives an idea of some of the movement within Playcentre towards biculturalism, it in no way represents the journey of individual centres, only the formalised commitment at a national level and resulting actions by members.

Prior to these developments, Lex Grey was working with the Māori Education Foundation (MEF) during the 1960s, in rural pockets of Aotearoa, promoting ECE initiatives. According to Cleave and Deverell (2003) Grey was instrumental in the development of Playcentres in these rural communities whose populations were predominantly Māori. They detail how Grey's work in partnership with Māori, specifically in the Northern region of Aotearoa, would "eventually loom large in the renaissance of the officially subordinated Māori culture" (p. 65). However, as Cleave and Deverell (2003) explain, a great blow was dealt to these rural Māori Playcentres when Grey was unsuccessful in his bid to retain the position of preschool officer with the MEF, in 1967. They go on to outline the relationship between Playcentre and Ngā Kōhanga Reo:

Sir James Henare, a long-time supporter of early education for young Māori, ensured the establishment of Te Kohanga Reo throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. And many women whose eyes has been opened to a better future through Playcentre, followed his call to the marae to reclaim their children's right to Te Reo. (Cleave & Deverell, 2003, p. 67).

It was during the 1980s that many Māori families left Playcentre in favour of Ngā Kōhanga Reo, where language and culture revitalisation were the primary objectives. Therefore, many of the rural Māori Playcentres closed and the whānau there instead joined the Kōhanga movement. This is an important part of Playcentre's history, as the philosophy underpinning Playcentre was applicable to Māori in a way that felt tika for them even before Playcentre's formal commitment to TTOW and biculturalism in 1989.

Manning (2014) provides a comprehensive history of biculturalism in Playcentre that critiques Playcentre's journey from 1989 to 2011. Part of the problem with committing to TTOW and biculturalism was inherent in the democratic structure that Playcentre was built upon. According to Manning, there was tension between tino rangatiratanga and democracy. Despite both concepts being tied to ideas of 'fairness,' there is a deficiency built into the idea of democracy and how it is entrenched in the philosophy of one law for all. It is something that Manning claims every organisation, in a New Zealand context, has struggled with when implementing biculturalism. Playcentre's first move toward biculturalism came in the form of Treaty training for its members, alongside the parent education which until then had focussed on child development and leadership. Manning calls this the first Pākehā response and adds that a secondary Pākehā response was to form a working group to ascertain areas of improvement. However, the Māori response was to come together and offer each other support. Many associations throughout the country saw Māori caucus groups form, such as the Auckland Association Māori caucus, which came together by 1989. It takes the work being done at regional/association level before decisions are made at the national level. From this, in 1992, Puriri Whakamaru was formed as a Māori initiative in Playcentre and asked to be added to the constitution (this was unsuccessful at the time). At the 1999 Conference these tensions came to a head and many Māori walked out of the conference due to the complicated politics around the democratic voting structure. Manning details these events as the impetus for change to occur within Playcentre; from 2000 new consensus voting structures were adopted. Over the last two decades Playcentre has been making changes that give Māori more of a voice in decisions and empowering them in their rangatiratanga. In 2011 Tiriti-based co-presidents were elected and it was hoped at the time that this would usher in a new era of partnership within Playcentre between Māori and non-Māori.

However, these are all moves made at a Federation level, far above the average Māori parent within their centre. Despite a commitment to biculturalism and TTOW, there is still a

disconnect between the rhetoric at a federal level and the experience of Māori parents on the ground. This is investigated further within this thesis in Chapter 5.

2.4. *Te Whāriki*

2.4.1. Overview of *Te Whāriki*

Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa (Ministry of Education, 2017) is a bicultural and bilingual curriculum for early childhood education in New Zealand, encompassing Māori and Pākehā culture. *Te Whāriki* invokes the metaphor of weaving a communal whāriki. A whāriki is an intricately patterned mat that is woven using the whāriki weaving technique and is often placed on the floor of the whareniui. There are two main parts of *Te Whāriki* that are woven together, the principles and strands. These are outlined in detail in Sections 2.4.2. and 2.4.3. The way that the principles and strands are woven together by students, kaiako, centres, and communities will create a unique pattern in their whāriki of knowledge. This symbolises that all ECE centres are different and their approach to learning will create a pattern distinctive to them as a group.

Te Whāriki was developed in the early 1990s, and at the time of its inception educational reforms were taking place due to socio-political pressure on the government of the day to improve educational sectors, including ECE (Nuttall, 2013; Podmore et al., 1998). Prior to 1996 there was no single formalised curriculum for ECE, but rather Playcentres, Kindergartens, Ngā Kōhanga Reo, and other ECE centres had their own unique and separate approaches to curriculum (Nuttall, 2013). In 1996 *Te Whāriki* was published in consultation with the ECE sector, and with key input from Māori. According to Te One (2013)³, Dr Tamati Reedy and his wife Lady Tilly Reedy were influential in the development of *Te Whāriki* and were appointed to an advisory body, Rūnanga Matua, before work even began on the ECE curriculum. The Rūnanga Matua had already identified central concepts that would promote mana Māori in education and saw *Te Whāriki* as a way of fulfilling TTOW in an educational space. Therefore, from the beginning *Te Whāriki* was steeped in Māori philosophical and pedagogical beliefs. In 2017, after 21 years of delivery, *Te Whāriki* was revised, and this version remains the current curriculum used in the ECE sector of Aotearoa.

³ The 2013 version of this text is used as it includes information from Te One which was not used in the 2019 version.

Te Whāriki looks at children's education holistically, meaning that theoretically their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs are provided for under this curriculum. However, many scholars have critiqued the delivery of *Te Whāriki* and how it is applied in different ECE contexts (Chan, 2019; Cornhill, 2014; Heta-Lensen & Dunham, 2013; Jenkin, 2010; Rameka, 2011, 2015; Ritchie & Rau, 2008, 2010). All these authors agree that *Te Whāriki* is theoretically well-designed, but often misinterpreted or delivered in a one-size-fits-all way that does not empower tamariki Māori.

Te Whatu Pōkeka (Ministry of Education, 2008) describes the nature of children from a te ao Māori perspective: 1) Te wairua o te tamaiti: The child as an emotional being; 2) He mana tō te tamaiti: The child has potential and power; 3) He mauri tangata: The child as an energetic life-force. There is a provision within *Te Whāriki* to look at and care for tamariki in this holistic way. The key underpinning of *Te Whāriki* is the concept that tamariki are "competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 6). However, as Rameka (2015) states, "there is little to indicate that the spiritual dimensions of the child, or the world, are acknowledged and reflected in early childhood education practice" (p. 82). This means that, although in theory a child's holistic development is provided for, in practice the needs of tamariki Māori may be overlooked by non-Māori educators, due to a lack of understanding or training in te reo me ngā tikanga Māori (Māori language and culture). This is concerning, as the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* are taken from concepts that are prevalent in te ao Māori.

2.4.2. The Principles

The principles of *Te Whāriki* are designed to create the foundations of a centre and influence curriculum decision making while guiding all aspects of pedagogy and practice. The four principles are: whakamana (empowerment), kotahitanga (holistic development), whānau tāngata (family and community), and ngā hononga (relationships).

Principle One: Whakamana/Empowerment

Te Whāriki recognises that all tamariki should have the chance to experience a curriculum that understands that they possess mana and that their mana needs to be upheld; and this curriculum should provide opportunities for them to uphold the mana of others. This principle recognises that for a tamaiti to find empowerment in learning and reach their potential, they must be respected and valued (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Principle Two: Kotahitanga/Holistic Development

The principle of kotahitanga/holistic development is about looking at the whole person and how they can develop their capabilities across all the dimensions of human development: cognitive, physical, emotional, and spiritual (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Te Whāriki states:

It is important that kaiako have knowledge and understanding of the holistic way in which children develop and learn. They should also be aware of the different views that the cultures represented in their ECE setting may have of child development and the role of family and whānau. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 19)

This means that in any Playcentre there should always be a strategy and provision to ensure that the health of whānau enrolled in their centres is being nurtured holistically throughout all generations. Most of the participants became involved in Playcentre because they attended Playcentre with their parents during their childhood, so there is a familial and intergenerational connection to Playcentre at play here.

Principle Three: Whānau Tangata/Family and Community

Clearly linked to the previous principle, whānau tangata is about how the wellbeing of tamariki is directly influenced by and linked to the wellbeing of their whānau and wider community. It also stresses the importance of culturally appropriate approaches to communication and linking the ECE context to a child's everyday life with their whānau (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Principle Four: Ngā Hononga/Relationships

The final principle, ngā hononga, emphasises the importance of building respectful relationships with tamariki. *Te Whāriki* explains, "It is through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things that children have opportunities to try out their ideas and refine their working theories" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 21). Each of the four principles work interdependently towards this end, with each principle informing and expanding on the others.

2.4.3. The Strands

There are five strands of *Te Whāriki*, which all have Māori and English names. According to the Ministry of Education (2017), these concepts, although similar, are not equivalent to each other due to differing cultural connotations. Each strand has associated goals and learning

outcomes. The goals are for kaiako of centres and the learning outcomes for students. The strands are mana atua/well-being, mana whenua/belonging, mana tangata/contribution, mana reo/communication, and mana aotūroa/exploration.

Strand One: Mana Atua/Wellbeing

The strands of *Te Whāriki* operate differently from the principles. There are goals and learning outcomes for tamariki associated with the strands. Mana atua states that the environment tamariki experience at an ECE centre should nurture their emotional wellbeing, promote their health, and keep them from harm. Kaiako ascertain that tamariki are experiencing an environment that enhances their wellbeing when they can show through their behaviour an ability to care for themselves and others, and to communicate their feelings and needs.

Strand Two: Mana Whenua/Belonging

Mana whenua builds on mana atua and is concerned with how tamariki and their whānau should experience an environment where links are connected, affirmed, and extended between whānau and the wider world. It also emphasises the need for tamariki to know they have a place, to be comfortable with routines within their centre, and know what is considered acceptable behaviour. The learning outcomes associated with mana whenua result in tamariki who are able to make connections between places, things, and people in their lives, taking an active role in looking after their centres, understanding rules and boundaries and adapting to changes in them, and showing a healthy respect for the rights and rules of others.

Strand Three: Mana Tangata/Contribution

Tamariki can expect to experience an environment where they are affirmed as individuals, encouraged to learn with others, and have equitable opportunities for learning under the strand of mana tangata. This means that tamariki should be capable of appreciating their own ability to learn, use skills and strategies to play with others, and treat others fairly by including them in their play.

Strand Four: Mana Reo/Communication

Mana reo relates to an environment that tamariki experience where they can develop their verbal and non-verbal communication skills and use them for a variety of purposes. It also provides tamariki with a chance to experience the stories and symbols of their own culture and the cultures of others. This results in tamariki who can understand oral language and use it to

communicate needs or express their feelings, enjoy hearing stories and have an ability to retell them, and recognise and apply meaning to alphanumeric symbols.

Strand Five: Mana Aotūroa/Exploration

This strand of *Te Whāriki* advises the creation of an environment for tamariki where they gain confidence and control over their bodies, their play is valued as meaningful learning, they are taught strategies for thinking and reasoning through active exploration, and they develop working theories to help them make sense of their natural, physical and social worlds. This is shown through their play, which should exhibit evidence of invention and experimentation, strategies for problem solving, and an ability to challenge themselves to build confidence.

While the four main principles of *Te Whāriki* may underpin the culture of an ECE centre, the five strands of *Te Whāriki* are applied to children by kaiako daily in the context of learning stories, to ensure tamariki are meeting the learning outcomes that those strands represent. It is important to clarify that Māori parents in the Playcentre context can often interact intimately with these concepts, as the principles and strands presented in *Te Whāriki* are well-known concepts within te ao Māori that Māori parents already experience and interact with daily. For many Māori parents who are reclaiming their access to their culture within Playcentre, the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* allow access to concepts that are their birth right, through whakapapa. Therefore, the te ao Māori aspects that underpin *Te Whāriki* make it an important document that not only services the needs for all tamariki within ECE, but also empowers Māori parents and reaffirms their whakapapa. For this reason, *Te Whāriki* must be held in high regard by all kaiako, and used as it is intended, to empower biculturalism.

2.4.4. *Te Whāriki* in Playcentre

Te Whāriki was developed from extensive consultation with the ECE sector, including Playcentre (Nuttall, 2013⁴). Podmore et al. (1998) conducted a study of the implementation of *Te Whāriki* by different ECE centres after it became the official ECE curriculum in 1996. According to their research, *Te Whāriki* “sits easily with playcentre philosophy of observing and including family and community” (p. 11). However, at the time there were constraints observed in the Playcentre model that affected the implementation of *Te Whāriki*, such as awareness over the philosophical emphases of Playcentre, keeping confidential written records, and the realities of teaching *Te Whāriki* to parents where time constraints and

⁴ The 2013 version of this text is used as it includes information from Nuttall which was not used in the 2019 version.

difficulties understanding the language of *Te Whāriki* were at play. Since this 1998 study, learning stories, written recordkeeping, and introducing *Te Whāriki* to parents have been addressed, and these activities are now part of the daily running of a majority of Playcentres. Playcentre Aotearoa's first adult education paper entitled B401, "Let's Play," is an introduction for parent educators into *Te Whāriki* (Playcentre, 2021e).

After 1998, little research was conducted on the implementation of *Te Whāriki* in Playcentres, with the exception of a case study on Wilton Playcentre by Lee et al. (2013). In this case study, Wilton Playcentre is evaluated on their implementation of the principles of *Te Whāriki*. The findings show that mana whenua/belonging is found through the parent-cooperative model that Playcentre operates within. They also showed that mana atua/wellbeing is found through a culture of supportive relationships. In terms of mana aotūroa/exploration, Lee et al. discuss how in the Playcentre context parents are seen as learners too, and mana reo/communication was observed in children's letter writing play. This learning was extended by the parent educators, who created a letterbox to post the letters in. Mana tangata/contribution was achieved through the Playcentre model of consensus decision making within individual centres and at a Federation level. This shows that *Te Whāriki* works within the Playcentre environment and is found embedded in areas of Playcentre that existed well before *Te Whāriki* became the official curriculum in 1996. Playcentre has been operating in this way since its inception.

2.5 Summary

TTOW is a foundational document that contextualises the way that society in Aotearoa New Zealand operates. Te Tiriti informs policy making, organisational structures and, importantly, our education system and has been a contentious document where partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti is concerned, due to differences in Māori and Pākehā perceptions of what it contains. However, since the creation of the Waitangi Tribunal in the 1970s, there has been an official body who are charged with being the experts in deciphering the intentions of TTOW. Since this time, many organisations, such as Playcentre and the Ministry of Education, have made a commitment to publicly endorsing TTOW and implementing bicultural policies. In 1996 this culminated in the creation of a bicultural curriculum for ECE, which was informed from its inception by Māori philosophical ideas, te reo Māori, and tikanga. Playcentre's bicultural journey began with Lex Grey and his work with rural Playcentres (as preschool officer to the Māori Education Trust during the 1960s) and was solidified in 1989 when Playcentre made their commitment to TTOW and biculturalism. Playcentre is a unique space within the ECE landscape of Aotearoa which favours parents as the first teachers of their tamariki. Case studies have shown that this model of education fits

well within *Te Whāriki* and, when evaluated against the principles outlined, performs well. This is because the concepts within *Te Whāriki* have been present in Playcentre since it began.

3 Methodology

Tē tōia, tē haumatia.

Nothing can be achieved without a plan and way of doing things. (Playcentre, 2021d)⁵

3.1. Introduction

Kaupapa Māori theory informs and underpins all aspects of this research. My ontological approach also looks to the role of whakapapa in te ao Māori as a means of organising the world and understanding reality. This is reinforced by kaupapa Māori theory, and these ontological and epistemological paradigms of Māori reality explain a te ao Māori view on the creation of reality and knowledge through the tauparapara Te Kore Whakapapa. This approach was chosen to privilege Māori kōrero about Playcentre and to provide a culturally respectful and reflective space for Māori parents in Playcentre to express their realities. This chapter justifies the use of narrative inquiry for kaupapa Māori research and discusses how the ethical underpinnings of this research are deeply rooted in tikanga and manaakitanga. I introduce the five participants who took part in this research and generously gave their kōrero and wairua to this research project. Finally, this chapter details the processes used for data collection and data analysis, which apply mātauranga Māori to inform how the data has been coded during the process.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

3.2.1. Kaupapa Māori Theory

In Marsden's view, Māori epistemology is often dismissed as myth and legend and denigrated to the role of campfire stories told by a primitive culture (2003, p. 56). However, kaupapa Māori theory and research considers Māori epistemology as carefully cogitated constructs that condense philosophies within te ao Māori and the Māori experience of reality into a narrative that can be understood by all (Marsden, 2003; Stewart, 2021). A culture's worldview is the iho, or essence, of that culture, and from this worldview a value system is constructed (Czerniawska & Szydło, 2020). Ware et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of narrative storytelling to Indigenous people. They state that "Indigenous narratives explain their origins; locate them physically, socially, environmentally, culturally and spiritually; and often transcend

⁵ This whakataukī talks about the importance of having a plan before you begin the mahi. Without having a methodological framework in place, you could easily misrepresent yourself and others or be diverted down a different path.

time and space” (p. 46). Cultural narratives and storytelling have remained important methods used by Māori to impart tribal histories, values, and understandings from one generation to the next. Recording these narratives about the world often came in the form of whakapapa, where new knowledge is genealogically linked to current and past knowledge. In this way the new knowledge is woven into existing knowledge and realities about the world (Mahuika, 2019).

According to Ngā Wai a te Tūi (2020) the Māori and Indigenous Research Centre operating under Te Pūkenga (Unitec), kaupapa Māori theory was originally developed out of the Kōhanga Reo movement of the 1980s. Those involved in this movement identified a unique opportunity to capture mātauranga Māori through the medium of te reo Māori. It was not only about an aspiration to improve education for Māori through culturally appropriate pedagogy, but also to capture the Māori language, knowledge, and culture. In doing so, a paradigm for research about Māori began to emerge which was culturally reflective and responsive.

Research that takes place within (or about) Indigenous spaces, and is undertaken by Indigenous people, is an act of rebellion against colonising powers (Smith, 2012). ‘Research’ is viewed by a colonised Indigenous person with a healthy distrust of Western imperial paradigms of knowledge that have been impressed on their tūpuna (ancestors) for generations (Smith, 2012). Kaupapa Māori theory and practice is anti-colonial and concerned with transformation. It focusses on advancing Māori by challenging the ‘superiority’ of Western imperial paradigms, thus privileging Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (Mahuika, 2008). It has evolved out of an educational space and is a means for Māori to express their discontent with the colonised educational structures in place, which have contributed to a crisis of schooling underachievement and the erosion of te reo Māori, tikanga and mātauranga Māori. The use of kaupapa Māori theory in research is deliberate and is designed to allow comprehension, resistance, and the possibility of transformation to occur for Māori.

Furthermore, kaupapa Māori theory is in line with how Māori operate and interact with the world and challenges mainstream ideas of how knowledge is produced (Mahuika, 2008). It is a transformative praxis which empowers Māori researchers in their tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (Pihama, 2010). Generally speaking, kaupapa Māori can be, and is, applied to any plan of action that aspires to express and elevate Māori values and principles and is involved with a constant evolution and progression in its application (Royal, 2012; Smith, 1997). The bicultural early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* was informed by kaupapa Māori

theory from its inception, and Māori were deeply involved in its creation (Heta-Lensen & Dunham, 2013). Therefore, the appropriateness of kaupapa Māori theory as a paradigm for research undertaken in the ECE sector of Aotearoa is inherent in its own whakapapa.

This research focusses on providing a space for Māori parents to share their views and experiences of Playcentre. As a Māori Playcentre parent it was important to me that the approach taken to this research was based on methods that feel culturally safe and appropriate and brought kaupapa Māori theory into practice. There is an existing body of research that looks at how Māori parents and whānau Māori experience other forms of ECE in Aotearoa, such as Te Kōhanga Reo, Kindergarten and day-care (Cornhill, 2014; Jacobs et al., 2021; Rameka, 2011, 2017; Ritchie, 2008; Ritchie & Chan, 2020; Skerrett & Ritchie, 2021). However, there is little research about Māori in Playcentre. This thesis seeks to explore Māori parents' experience of Playcentre and the bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki*, filling a gap that exists within the literature.

3.2.2. Narrative Inquiry

Daiute (2014) describes narrative as accounts of daily life that include characters which are presented within specific contexts to share a meaningful idea or experience. In a narrative research context “a researcher focuses on what narratives do as much as on what they say. Consistent with this view, narrative researchers focus on narrative expression as it interacts with situation and purpose” (Daiute, 2014, p. 4). Narrative inquiry in research is a dynamic process wherein a researcher is focussed not only on the story, but how and why it is being told, and takes account of the wider social context that informs the narration.

Ware et al. (2017) talk about Māori approaches to research and how these approaches “locate Māori people, world-views and historical, cultural, social and political experiences as central to the research” (p. 46). They discuss the function of cultural narratives such as whakapapa: important tools that Māori utilise to analyse and understand environmental, historical, and social contexts. There are also narratives that surround cultural rituals, such as pōwhiri, hui, and raranga. Narratives are traditionally used in Māori society as a way of transmitting meaning, culture, values, and history from one generation to the next.

Narrative inquiry, in the tradition of oral narratives or kōrero will be used in this research alongside hui process to collect data via qualitative interviews. This is further outlined in Section 3.3.

3.2.3. Organising the World—Te Kore Whakapapa

Māori values around knowledge and how it is acquired are explored in Te Kore Whakapapa, a tauparapara that explains the creation of the universe from a te ao Māori perspective. This tauparapara is used by the Ministry of Education as a means of explaining knowledge acquisition for Māori learners in ECE. It is often used to illustrate te ao Māori understandings of how knowledge is experienced and produced. In *Te Whatu Pōkeka* (Ministry of Education, 2008) this tauparapara is used as a philosophical framework. It details concepts of learning that grow with an individual over the course of their lifetime. Te Kore Whakapapa talks about moving from the dark into the light, going from a void of meaning to learning and knowing. It is a foundational metaphor that explains how Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre are being highlighted and how this knowledge is filling the void in what we know about Playcentre. It is relevant because it bridges the gap between te ao Māori and modern views on ECE education.

Table 1

Te Kore Whakapapa

I te tīmatanga, ko te kore	In the beginning there was a void.
Ko te pō	Within the void there was night.
Nā te pō	From within the night, seeds were cultivated
Ka puta ko te Kukune	It was here that movement began – the stretching.
Ko te Pupuke	There the shoots enlarged and swelled.
Ko te Hihiri	Then there was pure energy.
Ko te Mahara	Then there was the sub consciousness.
Ko te Manako	Then the desire to know.
Ka puta i te whei ao	Movement from darkness to light, from conception to birth.
Ki te ao mārama e	From learning to knowing.
Tihēi Mauri ora	I sneeze and there is life.

Note. Adapted from *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning; Early Childhood Exemplars* (p. 3), by Ministry of Education, 2009, Learning Media. Copyright 2009 by the Crown.

Rameka (2017) further clarifies the importance of this tauparapara.

This understanding of the universe and the evolution from “nothingness, into the night, into the world of light” connects strongly to the unfolding of consciousness and thought as well as an unfolding of matter. The development of the physical world therefore paralleled understandings of the development and emergence of patterns of human thought. (para. 15)

This tauparapara uses the concept of whakapapa to explain the interrelatedness of the universe and reality. Whakapapa is a means through which Māori exercise intellectual control of the world around them. Whakapapa connects us (as people who experience the physical

reality of the universe) to te ao wairua, the spiritual world beyond the one we live within. It also explains our genealogical link to ngā atua from which we have descended. Whakapapa is therefore a means of classifying the physical world and ordering reality holistically. The concept of whakapapa underpins the methodology as it is a way to scaffold Māori identity, ways of being, knowledge creation, and narrative storytelling together. This is drawn upon further in Chapter 4 when discussing the themes that arose from this research and underpins the subjective approach of the researcher. The interpretation of Te Kore Whakapapa is therefore integral to the thematic analysis process.

3.3. Research Methods, Ethics, and Manaakitanga

In this section I outline the research methods and ethics that underpin this research. The chosen methods and ethical foundation are deeply rooted in kaupapa Māori theory. The methods are informed by Te Kore Whakapapa to place consciousness and maramatanga at the centre of the process.

3.3.1. Ethics and Manaakitanga

In te ao Māori an unborn child's physical and spiritual potentiality are connected at the point of conception through their whakapapa to ngā atua. The connection of body to spirit creates the individual and endows them with spiritual qualities such as tapu, mana, mauri, and wairua (Rameka, 2015). Therefore, respecting each of the intersecting qualities that are born from a person's spiritual nature and their connection to ngā atua is essential when interviewing Māori participants. The methods were chosen to provide protection for the participants while conducting our kōrero, and to ensure that they feel cared for and protected. In addition, the processes for research were aligned with those of the Ethics Committee of AUT (AUTEC) and approval was obtained (AUTEC reference number 22/182). This included informed consent and the permission to include, or not to include participants names in this thesis.

Smith (2012) outlines several kaupapa Māori practices that provide an ethical foundation to kaupapa Māori research, which provided the ethical foundation for this research and are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2*Expression of Ethical Principles*

Ethical principle	Definition for this research	How it was achieved
Aroha ki te tangata	A respect for people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy over transcripts • Choice of pseudonyms
Kanohi kitea	Being a familiar face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared connection through the Playcentre community
Titiro, whakarongo, kōrero	Look, listen, and then speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative inquiry
Manaaki ki te tangata	Share and host people, be generous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of kai (for kanohi ki te kanohi interviews)
Kia tūpato	Be cautious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koha • Insider research • Hui process

Note. Ethical principles and definitions applied by the researcher.

I am a manuhiri in the participants' kōrero, and I approached each participant's interview in this way. I was also mindful that, while not every participant will feel a strong connection to te ao Māori, it is still important to provide a space that is culturally safe, responsive, and reflective for them by using karakia. As part of the ethical underpinning of this research and to ensure that the participants' kōrero was reported faithfully, the transcripts were sent to participants before being analysed. Participants were also given the opportunity to remove any part of the transcript they did not want to appear in the final thesis and to correct or clarify their responses. Many of the participants chose to omit parts of their transcript or clarify statements they had made. One participant admitted that reading the transcript back to herself was confronting and allowed her some self-reflection.

On the consent forms (Appendix A) participants were given the choice of having their name used in the research or being assigned a pseudonym to protect their privacy. Initially all the participants chose to use their real names. However, understanding that people are within their rights to change their mind, an email was sent before the final submission of this thesis to ensure that each participant was still happy that their names be used. Some participants were happy for their name to be used, and others decided they would prefer a pseudonym. Many of the participants chose to whakamana their kōrero by being named in this research, which gave them a sense of power and ownership over what they had shared. One participant preferred

to maintain their privacy and were given the chance to choose a pseudonym they were comfortable with. However, by choosing anonymity they also have chosen a path of whakamana by protecting themselves and their whānau. By giving participants a choice of being named in the research, I was considering their tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake within the research process and balancing the power dynamics between researcher and participant.

3.3.2. Recruiting Participants

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, which is appropriate and justified under kaupapa Māori theory. As a past Māori Playcentre parent, I had pre-existing relationships with other Māori Playcentre parents from my past Playcentre in Titirangi. One of the participants was recruited in this manner. When I approached them to take part in this research it was through a mutual friend, as I didn't have their contact details. When the interview was taking place, this participant mentioned that they felt a calling from te ao wairua to add their kōrero to this research, and it was ultimately why they choose to take part.

My ethics application, advertisement, and participant information sheet (Appendix B) were sent to Playcentre Aotearoa prior to the recruitment of participants. This was in good faith and to ensure that I had access to official Playcentre channels such as their newsletter and Facebook page to advertise for participants if necessary. Playcentre asked for minor changes to the participant information sheet and advertisement which I amended, prior to approaching members throughout the country. The final five participants who took part in this research were recruited using this advertisement, which I had placed on the national Playcentre Facebook page. These five participants emailed me their details along with others. I replied to all potential participants. To those whom I wished to include as participants I sent the participant information sheet and consent form. I did not invite some potential participants to take part in the research because I had already recruited another participant from their local area. However, I emailed them to thank them for their time and explained to them the reason for not being chosen. From those who I did ask to be a participant, some did not respond. Therefore, I ultimately chose the participants based on, a) who responded to my follow up email, b) provided a consent form, and c) where in the country they attended Playcentre, to give my data geographic scope which allowed for a wider national experience to be captured.

Each interview began with a brief introduction to the participant. Then we discussed the consent form, and I asked if they had any questions before we began. After answering any

questions that arose, I reassured participants that this was an informal kōrero where there were questions I might ask, but these were prompts and our kōrero would flow and go where it needed to go. I made sure that participants were aware that they were under no obligation to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with. At the beginning of each interview, I offered the choice of karakia, and every participant was happy for this to be performed. I asked if they would like to perform the karakia or if they would like me to. For five of the interviews, I conducted the karakia and for one the participant chose to conduct her own. At the beginning of the interviews, I also shared my whakapapa with the participants and shared with them the experiences that had brought me to doing this research. They then shared their whakapapa, a bit about themselves, and why they were taking part in this research.

I considered the participants' kōrero a koha to my overall research project, and therefore I chose to provide a koha to them. Each koha was given with a card that was designed by a Māori artist and a handwritten note thanking them for their contribution to my research. Within each card was a \$100 Visa Prezzy voucher. For my friend who participated from my past Playcentre I also took two toys with me to the interview, one for each of her tamariki.

After completing the kaupapa and ending the audio recording, the participants and I would eat some kai (if it was a kanohi ki te kanohi interview) and chat about our general lives. Before leaving I thanked the participants again and let them know I would be in touch with any questions or clarifications related to their transcripts. I also made sure they were aware that they would be given the chance to remove any parts of their transcript they didn't want included in my final analysis and findings.

3.3.3. Data Collection

Primary data was collected in two ways:

1. A literature review that gives a foundational look at the role of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Aotearoa society, the history of Playcentre and the implantation of the ECE bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki*.
2. Narrative inquiry through informal interviews with six Māori parents who are currently or have recently been enrolled in Playcentre.

In addition to these data collection methods, I completed a pilot interview on myself prior to the interviews with the participants. This allowed me to understand my own experience of being Māori in Playcentre and allowed me to organise my own thoughts on where my subjectivity may lie. It also allowed me to reflect on my research questions, which came across as formalised and made me feel as though the kōrero was stalled each time a question was asked. This is not included in my analysis, except to explain and contextualise my own subjectivity. In response, I refined my interview questions to six main questions that I could use as prompts during the interview process to help the flow of the kōrero when there were natural pauses in the storytelling. These questions are included in Appendix C.

3.3.4. Interview Hui Process

The methods employed during the interview stage of this research are based not only on the formal process of hui in te ao Māori but also on the informal interviews. The interviews are based in a narrative approach of kōrero alongside the hui process to provide a culturally affirming space for the participants. The steps taken in my hui process are outlined in Appendix D.

The hui process allows Māori researchers tino rangatiratanga by operating within a framework that provides a culturally reflective and responsive space for themselves and their participants (Mead, 2016). It also helps to manage the power relations at play between the researcher and the researched, which is especially important for Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2012). The hui process allows the researcher to take the role of either manuhiri or tangata whenua depending on the location or setting of the interview, i.e., who is hosting, the flow of the kōrero and possible need to prompt further discussion through loosely based interview questions, and the choice of the participant as to which role they feel most comfortable in. This means that neither the participant nor the researcher always has the right of control over the proceedings. In this way, a balanced dynamic is created between researcher and participant.

When I organised interviews with participants, I was mindful that there would be constraints for them, such as childcare, how much time they would be able to devote, and when they could complete an interview. I organised interviews at times and in spaces that best accommodated them. The interviews took place both kanohi ki te kanohi and via Microsoft Teams. Three interviews were conducted in person and three online via Microsoft Teams.

I approached the interviews informally, but despite this there was some 'housekeeping' that needed to be done prior to beginning. This is where we went through the consent form, and I answered any questions that participants had about the research or interview. I also had to set up my recording equipment and test it to ensure it was working. Upon reflection I would have liked to have a checklist of the necessary housekeeping for organisational purposes. I would also have liked to have had more reliable equipment, as I did have some technical difficulties where the recording cut out (due to internet lag) or was not well recorded (positioning in the room) at two of the interviews. Also, upon reflection I am glad that I included karakia as I felt that it settled the mauri of myself and the participants. For some participants the demographic questions felt like I was ticking boxes on a form. This was most often in the online interview context, perhaps because I was seated at my computer typing into a spreadsheet. So, it felt very much like an interview, rather than a narrative, because there was a disconnect and less of those natural interruptions you get when you are kanohi ki te kanohi. However, this feeling often faded during the kōrero, as the participants and I began to chat and share our experiences within Playcentre. I would have liked to have been able to complete all the interviews kanohi ki te kanohi. However, funds did not stretch as far as plane tickets around Aotearoa. I felt that the koha was a successful part of the hui process and my only reflection here is that I would have liked to be able to send toys to each of the participants' tamariki. However, it was the personal nature of my relationship with my friend that compelled me to do this for her whānau. The whakakapi was harder to achieve online as there was no kai to be shared to move the space from tapu to noa. Also, in an online setting it is harder to just continue to chat, as it feels like once the work is done there is a pressure to sign off. Perhaps this is an unconscious pattern of behaviour that remains from COVID-era working from home. The whakakapi felt more rushed in an online context.

3.4. Data Analysis Process

3.4.1. The Data Sets

The data sets for this research include the transcripts of six interviews, notes from the interviews, and demographic data. Three of the interviews took place kanohi ki te kanohi and three took place online via video conferencing software.

The interview notes recorded tone, intonation, and intention, interpreted based on the audio files and on my experience of the interviews. Participants' demographic data was recorded in a spreadsheet to reveal and provide insight into the participants as individuals and as part of a group.

3.4.2. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) describe thematic analysis as an activity in pattern making where a search for themes that are important to telling the story of the data are identified. Essentially, thematic analysis involves a methodical process of coding the data to develop themes, which are then used by the researcher to explore, interpret, and reveal stories in the data set. My data analysis process evokes te ao Māori metaphors of weaving to create patterns of meaning, which is relevant to kaupapa Māori research, and research that involves *Te Whāriki*. However, there is no rigid and homogenous way to approach the use of thematic analysis, but rather a variety of ways to approach its use and, where appropriate, draw on the methodological and ontological frameworks the research is grounded in. One of these varieties has been termed by Braun and Clarke (2022) as reflexive thematic analysis, which draws on the researcher's reflexivity and their positions, ideals, choices, and practices within the research process—recognising that there is value in a researcher who is subjective, situated, aware and questioning their processes, research practice and role as a researcher. This means that a researcher's subjectivity is not something to be mitigated through the process, but is a strength the researcher brings with them into the data analysis process.

Qualitative researchers value reflexive thematic analysis because it embraces subjectivity and aligns with a fully qualitative approach that is not encroached or limited by positivist assumptions (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Reflexive thematic analysis challenges me as the researcher to constantly critique my approach to the data set in relation to my bias as a researcher. Therefore, I chose the use of reflexive thematic analysis, considering that I am also a Māori Playcentre mother and would be bringing a set of assumptions and bias to this research. My subjectivity as a Māori Playcentre mother is a strength of the research.

Kaupapa Māori research demands not only working on the semantic meaning given by participants in their interview, but also drawing on the cultural underpinnings creating that meaning, as a two-way process between interviewer and interviewee. The social structure in te ao Māori of whānau, hapū, and iwi pre-dates colonisation and represents ancient relationships that are based on whakapapa. This begins with Te Kore Whakapapa and our connection to ngā atua. In this way, many Māori researchers use their insider knowledge of te ao Māori to apply culturally appropriate attitudes and tikanga to their participants and the resulting data sets, based on their understanding of these social structures and ancient relationships that break through the pervasiveness of colonisation. Therefore, the use of

reflexive thematic analysis aligns well with kaupapa Māori methodology and sustains a researcher's tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake, allowing the appropriate tikanga to be applied in an organic way. Reflexive thematic analysis also provides a space for me as a researcher to critique my approach to the data, as Māori, while valuing the kaupapa Māori principles of taonga tuku iho and ako, which uphold a Māori researcher's right to assert that all things Māori are normal, natural, and an heirloom given to them by their tūpuna. They are aspirational principles which posit that it is a Māori researcher's right to uphold their culture within academic spaces.

Braun and Clarke (2022) provide a set of important considerations that allow a reflexive researcher to uncover their bias about how they interact with the world. These considerations include:

- a) Your personal characteristics, such as gender, sexuality, socioeconomics, ethnicity, ability, age;
- b) Identifying where you may occupy a space of social privilege or social marginalisation in your society;
- c) How a) and b) mould your assumptions about the world, about others, and how it may inform how others view you;
- d) How all these considerations shape your worldview.

Far from being restricted by their worldviews, Māori women in Playcentre are empowered by their subjectivity of being a Māori parent and, perhaps most importantly, by some of the complex social assumptions driven by colonial constructs of Māori mothers, Māori parenting, and Māori participation in ECE. Reflexive thematic analysis allows the researcher to explore how these intersections of reality inform their position as a researcher and how these impact on who is creating and interpreting the data set. Applying reflexive thematic analysis to my data required constantly reviewing and critiquing my approach to the data through a critical lens, to ascertain where my bias lay. This process has allowed me to understand how critical insider knowledge creates deeper understanding of the participants' stories and experiences, portrayed in a nuanced, culturally driven coding schema, which is discussed further in Section 3.5.

3.4.3. Transcription

I transcribed the interviews to familiarise myself with the data and start to develop a coding schema. I used an online AI programme, Otter.ai, as the first step of transcription. Transcripts

were then reviewed for accuracy and to add intonations and inflections. The transcripts were reviewed a second time for proofreading. Through multiple reviews of the transcripts, I was able to gain an intimacy with the data. The transcripts were then stored securely in a password protected file on my computer. The final step with the data was to upload them in to NVivo to organise my analysis and begin coding.

3.5. The Coding Process

Thematic coding is a technique for the analysis of qualitative data which employs flexibility throughout the analytical process and allows a highly interpretative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Coding can be inductive, deductive or a mixture of both. Inductive coding relies on a researcher interpreting codes from the data as they begin to familiarise themselves with it (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Deductive coding involves applying pre-conceived codes from a 'codebook' to the data set to test the data against existing theories or phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The deductive codes were initially applied to the dataset and are discussed first.

3.5.1. Deductive Codes

I used deductive codes in my first approach to the data sets. The deductive codes represent the four principles and five strands from *Te Whāriki*. I used the strands as deductive codes because I was interested in ascertaining if aspects of *Te Whāriki* underpin Māori parents' experience of Playcentre, as well as how participants talked about their journeys as Playcentre parents.

As a person who was familiar with the social and cultural beliefs of the participants, I felt that these codes from *Te Whāriki* were representative of the many intersections of reality that the participants would experience as Māori parents operating within Playcentre. Each principle and strand represent a Māori concept and the Pākehā equivalent. This is relevant to Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre because they are Māori operating in a Pākehā institution and are often statistically a minority in that space. They are also often Māori of a generation that is working to reclaim access to Māori culture. Therefore, the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* represent a duality of experience in this space. The four principles and five strands of *Te Whāriki* are discussed next and their relevance as a deductive code is explored.

It is important to note that when these codes were applied there was no differentiation between the principles and the strands of *Te Whāriki*. They are therefore, not segregated from

one another in the following table. The principles and strands were seen as individual concepts that stand alone, outside of their meaning within *Te Whāriki*. They are used individually to gauge how a Māori parent subjectively describes their experience in relation to either a te ao Māori definition or a Pākehā definition of that code. Often these codes intersected and were applied together. I explore how I used each code and give an example of the type of text I was looking for in my transcripts in Table 3.

These deductive codes helped with the initial steps of analysis, as I was able to apply a familiar framework of assessment, one I was comfortable using and was used to applying to tamariki through learning stories at Playcentre; only this time, I was applying them to Māori parents. Beginning my analysis in this way was relevant, as it encompassed a holistic perspective of Māori parents from a culturally reflective and responsive set of concepts that they are also familiar with and comfortable using in Playcentre. It often felt like these codes organically appeared throughout the dataset and were present in a way that intersected with what became my inductive codes, which I discuss next.

Table 3

Deductive Codes: The Principles and Strands of Te Whāriki

Principle	How this code is being used	Example
Whakamana/Empowerment	<p>Whakamana, means to legitimise, enable or give authority to.</p> <p>Empowerment, means to give authority to someone, to make someone stronger and more confident.</p> <p>In both senses the principle is about authority, but not control.</p>	<p>Where the participants had felt that their mana had been upheld and where they have been given authority as Māori in the Playcentre space.</p> <p>Where the participants talked about feeling disempowered.</p>
Kotahitanga/Holistic development	<p>Kotahitanga is about collective effort, a unity and togetherness. Collective action.</p> <p>Holistic development is about the interconnection and dependence of concepts of development on one another. This takes into account mental, physical, spiritual, and social factors.</p> <p>The Māori sense of this principle invokes the concept that an individual's development is intimately tied to the development of their community around them, whereas the Pākehā equivalent is more focussed on the individual; only one aspect of it focusses on social development.</p>	<p>When a participant discussed seeing themselves as parents who are learning alongside their tamariki within the Playcentre, such as when a participant would affirm that Playcentre has made them a better parent.</p> <p>When a participant discussed a lack of balance in their lives, both inside and outside of Playcentre, especially when discussing relationships with others.</p> <p>When participants described the impact of their Playcentre journey on their tamariki, whānau, or Playcentre community.</p>

Whānau tangata/Family and community	<p>Whānau means not only family, but to be born. Tangata represents a person. In the Māori sense, whānau tangata can be seen to be a person who is born into a family and thriving community that predates their existence.</p>	<p>Whenever a participant discussed their Playcentre community or their whānau and especially when the two intersected.</p>
	<p>Family and community in a Pākehā sense is about the people around you. The people who live in a close proximity or have shared values with you.</p>	<p>Whenever a participant discussed their sense of belonging in their Playcentre community.</p>
		<p>Also, where participants described feeling isolated and unsupported by their Playcentre community.</p>
Ngā hononga/Relationships	<p>Hononga means union, bonds. It is a join, where two items are linked together. Ngā hononga are joining places.</p>	<p>When the participants discussed the importance of their relationships with other kaiako or tamariki within Playcentre.</p>
	<p>Relationships in the Pākehā sense are about how we interact with one another, and the value we place on the space that individuals occupy in our lives.</p>	<p>When participants described the breaking of bonds between one another, or when these bonds were tense and being tested.</p>
Mana atua/Wellbeing	<p>Mana is a supernatural quality given to humanity by ngā atua. Tangata whenua are the vessels through which mana is channelled. It is about the prestige, power, and authority gifted to a person from ngā atua through their whakapapa.</p>	<p>Where a participant was able to articulate their feelings about their Playcentre environment in both a positive and a negative way.</p>
	<p>Wellbeing is a simplified concept that is more palatable and less spiritual in nature. It is a state of feeling comfortable, happy and healthy.</p>	<p>Whenever participants talked about being Māori and how this affected their sense of identity.</p>
		<p>Generally applied to all discussions of mental, cultural, physical, spiritual, and social health.</p>
Mana whenua/Belonging	<p>Whenua means land. Therefore, mana whenua means power, prestige, and authority over the land or,</p>	<p>When participants' kōrero showed where they drew boundaries in their discussions of Playcentre between</p>

	<p>metaphorically, the space we occupy in the world. Where we find a place to make our home. Whenua in te ao Māori is a foundational concept that encompasses whakapapa, turangawaewae, pepeha, and, importantly, how these inform identity in whānau, hapū, and iwi groups.</p> <p>Belonging refers to an affinity an individual has for a place or situation.</p>	<p>what they felt was appropriate and inappropriate behaviour from fellow non-Māori Playcentre parents.</p> <p>Whenever it seemed as though a participant was drawing those connections between Playcentre and their wider world.</p> <p>Where participants described their connection with Playcentre and the space that it occupies in their lives.</p>
Mana tangata/Contribution	<p>Tangata represents a person. Therefore, mana tangata represents the power, prestige and authority that an individual has over themselves and their actions.</p> <p>Contribution is defined as a part played by an individual to bring about a result.</p>	<p>When the participants talked about the mahi they do in their centres and when they talked about others who they felt were not potentially pulling their weight or avoiding the mahi altogether.</p> <p>Applied to individual's understandings of what work must be done to have a successful and thriving Playcentre environment.</p>
Mana reo/Communication	<p>Reo is language. Te reo Māori is the Māori language. Therefore, mana reo represents the authority, power and prestige an individual has over their language.</p> <p>Communication is defined as an exchange of information through many mediums such as writing and speaking.</p>	<p>Where participants discussed their need within Playcentre to hear and speak te reo Māori.</p> <p>Where a participant began to kōrero mai i te reo Māori (speak to me in te reo Māori) to emphasise their point or communicate an experience that didn't translate into te reo Pākehā.</p> <p>Where a participant described communication breakdowns with each other.</p>

Mana aotūroa/Exploration	<p>Aotūroa represents the light of day, or the nature of the world. Therefore, mana aotūroa is about how we exercise power or authority over the nature of the world.</p> <p>Exploration is about a thorough examination of a thing, subject or place.</p>	<p>Where I felt, in the transcripts, that a participant was pushing themselves to explore a new element of their journey as a learner and parent educator in the Playcentre context.</p> <p>When a participant used language that suggested they were building confidence in a new skill set they acquired through Playcentre.</p>
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Note. This table shows how I applied these deductive codes to my transcripts

3.5.2. Inductive Coding

In addition to the deductive coding approach outlined above, I also used an inductive approach to understand what the participants experiences were and highlight their voices. These codes came directly from the transcripts and represent how the participants described their core experiences of being Māori in Playcentre. This is where my insider knowledge of being a Māori Playcentre parent was crucial. I was able to understand through the lens of my own experience how and potentially why the participants described their experiences in the way that they did. The pilot interview I had conducted on myself also helped to give me this insight. I felt a sense of catharsis after answering my own interview questions; it was as though my wairua needed to let go of what I had been holding on to. It can be hard to find a space to voice your concerns as Māori when you are the only one in your Playcentre. I often felt during the interview process that I was a sounding board for the participants, who had mamae from their experiences at Playcentre but no outlet to begin to voice and heal from it.

My insider perspective and my intimacy with the data from the interview and transcription process allowed me to begin to name and apply inductive code labels during the process of deductive coding. Initially the code labels I chose were common threads, or ideas I had noticed were present in many of the transcripts. These codes underwent critical evaluation throughout the data analysis stage and organically these codes moved between active and archived codes, or merged to become more concise codes. Eventually, nine codes that I felt best represented the story of the data remained.

Code Label One: Whakapapa

Whakapapa is potentially the most important code that was applied to the data set. It speaks to the interconnectedness of life. The main reason this code was created and applied to the data set was to capture who the participants were and where they had come from. What emerged from the application of whakapapa was a picture of each participant's connection to te ao Māori through their tūpuna, a picture of their connection to Playcentre through other whānau members, and an idea of how participants described themselves in relation to being Māori. There were also some stories that were captured which provided important historical contexts around participants' whānau history. Whakapapa set the scene for the story that my data set was beginning to tell.

Code Label Two: Wairuatanga

Wairuatanga was one of the most prolific codes I used during the coding process. Throughout the six transcripts I used this code to capture and begin to understand each participant's holistic experience of being Māori in Playcentre. Underpinning this code are the concepts of mana, mauri, and wairua. During the coding process these were coded separately, until upon critical reflection I realised that they cannot be experienced in a vacuum from each other and therefore grouped them together under the overarching concept of wairuatanga. I wanted to understand every instance where a participant discussed themselves or their experiences in a way that related to te ao wairua. There were experiences that included things unseen, unheard, or untouchable that are still tangible for Māori. I also wanted to map and gauge all the things that were being left unsaid by the participants. Wairuatanga in te ao Māori specifically looks at the building blocks of consciousness, and a person's spiritual nature.

Code Label Three: Manaakitanga

As coding progressed, this code became an overarching code label created from four other codes I had been using separately. The initial codes were aroha, whanaungatanga, tautoko and awhi. When I looked at those four codes critically, I realised they did not need to be captured in isolation from one another. Instead, I used manaakitanga to capture what those original codes were capturing but under a unified concept. Manaakitanga was applied to the dataset when a participant talked about a sense of belonging, contribution, and love from their Playcentre. Therefore, this code applied to times in a participant's kōrero where they felt supported, held, understood, and loved by the culture their centre had created. I also applied it where the other parents in their centre showed these traits towards the participant. As with other codes, I also applied it where participants discussed a wish or need to have more of that for themselves in Playcentre or in their everyday lives.

Code Label Four: Whakamā/Mamae

It was obvious early on during the interview process that this would be an important code. It is essential to point out that this code was applied to the data set with the culturally appropriate meaning behind it. Mamae/whakamā are specifically applied to this data set where semantic and latent occurrences of hurt, shame, and embarrassment over being Māori are present in the participants' kōrero. The implications of coding anything incorrectly in my transcripts to this code was constantly at the forefront of my mind throughout the coding process. Whakamā is outlined in detail in section 4.6.

Code Label Five: Parental Fatigue

When this code came to me, I applied it while considering my own experience and therefore my subjective mindset of being a Māori parent in Playcentre. Parents overall have many responsibilities to manage, with households often requiring both parents to work. Fitting Playcentre into your schedule as a parent is often a juggle and the time required outside of sessions can be a lot on top of everything else. I applied this code using insider knowledge of what Playcentre can begin to feel like when you are already dealing with a full plate of responsibilities. I applied it when the participants talked about not having time to complete important jobs or projects for Playcentre because their metaphorical cups were empty.

Code Labels Six & Seven: Cultural Challenges, Cultural Successes

These two codes were applied to any discussion where a participant described an important success or challenge they had encountered within Playcentre, and where it specifically related to identifying as Māori. This was to track participants' experiences in a concrete manner. Additionally, one of the prompt questions I had prepared during the interview process related directly to this code.

Code Label Eight: Tuakana–Teina

Much of what you learn at Playcentre comes from an older member who 'buddies' you and helps you to learn the expectations, processes and policies associated with their centre. Again, applying insider knowledge, I used this code to capture discussions from the participants where they talked about their relationships with other Playcentre parents in these terms.

Code Label Nine: Tikanga

Tikanga was applied as a code when a participant discussed the use of tikanga at their Playcentre. I also applied this code where a participant was consciously or unconsciously commenting on tikanga that was specific to them, their iwi, or their Playcentre.

After completing the coding process, I created a whāriki of my codes, with my deductive coding forming the strands woven on one axis and my inductive codes forming the strands that were woven on the other. This is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

3.5.3. Defining Themes

During the coding process I saw initial themes starting to develop and jotted these down in my research notes. After completing the whāriki of codes and the data whakapapa, I was clear

about the story I wanted to highlight from this data set. I settled on three themes which I discuss further in the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis, but present initially here in Table 4.

Table 4

Defining Themes

Themes	Characteristics
Whakapapa	Connection to te ao Māori and Playcentre
Positive partnership is empowering	Positive partnership between tangata tiriti and tangata whenua in Playcentre in empowering for Māori
Māori resilience: whakamā to whakamana	The cycle of whakamā and how Māori resilience is key in turning that into whakamana

Note. Definition of themes from the researcher.

3.5.4. Reflections on the Coding Process

Throughout the process of coding my six interview transcripts, I began to get a picture of where my data was leading me. The process itself was gruelling and tedious at times, and during the coding process I struggled to find a balance between the mahi required to complete the analysis and what my whānau needed from me as a wife and mother. However, despite the struggle I also found that the process of coding gave me a deeper insight into my data set, and I was able to begin to see the bigger picture held within my transcripts.

While completing the coding, I consistently focussed my analysis through a kaupapa Māori lens and chose code labels that best described what was present in the data, from a te ao Māori perspective or a Playcentre perspective. The strength of my data analysis relates directly to the strength of my methodology, and meant I was constantly working within a space of tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake for both myself and the participants. Next, I will introduce the participants who gave their kōrero to this research.

3.6. Participant Profiles

Rachelle is a 43-year-old mother of two: a 5-year-old son and a 7-month-old daughter. She identifies as Māori/Pākehā and is of Ngāti Hikairo and Tainui o Tainui descent. Her husband and two children resided with her in Tāmaki Makaurau at the time the interviews took place, but they have since returned as a whānau to Rachelle’s turangawaewae in Whaingaroa. With

her tamariki, Rachelle attended Playcentre, which is where I initially met her. When asked about her connection to Playcentre, she mentioned that her aunty had attended the same Playcentre with her cousins, and there is a chance she was brought along at some point as a child. When I asked Rachelle if she subscribes to any religion she answered “te ao wairua,” and this was present throughout our kōrero. For context, te ao wairua refers to the spiritual realm of Māori. The signs, or, in her words, tohu, were there for her to choose Playcentre as an ECE option. Rachelle has a master’s degree. When she was approached by a fellow Playcentre whānau member about taking part in my research, she felt a calling to participate—again it was described by Rachelle as a calling from te ao wairua that this was something that she needed to do.

Sam is a 27-year-old transgender person. They are of Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa descent and are a single parent by choice. Sam has a 3-year-old daughter. They have a whakapapa to Playcentre through Sam’s mother, who was a Playcentre coordinator at the same Playcentre that Sam and their daughter attended. They have since left and are now attending a local Te Kōhanga Reo. Sam has a bachelor’s degree and works within the academic space while also recovering from the effects of long COVID. When we discussed their reasons for taking part in this research, Sam explained that often giving your opinion on issues in Playcentre hui can feel a little like talking into the void, but by having this kōrero with me about Playcentre their voice could be heard in a meaningful way.

Alyssa is a 31-year-old mother of two tamariki. Her daughter is 4 years old, and her son is 2 years old. Alyssa identifies as Māori, Australian and NZ European. Her iwi is Te Arawa and her hapū Ngāti Pīkiao. Our whanaunga connection is what compelled her to take part in this research. When I advertised for participants on the closed Playcentre Facebook page I included my own pepeha (tribal introduction of self). Alyssa saw from this that we were whanaunga (kin) and felt compelled to contact me about it. During our kōrero we talked about these commonalities we share from our tūpuna—specifically the mana wāhine bloodlines we are tied to, having whakapapa connections to Te Arawa. Alyssa has a bachelor’s degree and is currently a stay-at-home parent. She believes that she was a Playcentre kid herself at some point, but is unsure if this continued when her whānau moved away from Rotorua.

Krista is a 39-year-old mother of two daughters, who runs her own business with her husband. She has also been in the role of coordinator at her local Playcentre and involved as a national representative. Krista is currently reviving the local Māori rōpū (group), who had their first

kanohi ki te kanohi meeting on 18 November 2022. I came to know of Krista from a friend of mine at Playcentre, who passed on an email from Krista about the Māori rōpū that Krista was involved with. I was interested in being able to come along and speak to the rōpū about my research. When I had a kōrero on the phone with Krista about this research and a chance to speak at the rōpū, Krista and I chatted for a while about the issues facing Māori parents in Playcentre. It was then that I asked if she would be interested in taking part in the research. After the official interview concluded for this research, Krista and I sat and talked for hours. It was refreshing to have that immediate connection. Krista is of Ngāti Apakura descent and she has a bachelor's degree. She did not attend Playcentre herself as a child, but her mother did attend Playcentre with her younger siblings.

Briar is a 32-year-old mother to two biological tamariki and two stepsons. Her children, with whom she attended Playcentre, are her 2-year-old daughter and 11-month-old son. Briar is of Tuhoe descent, and her husband is Cook Island Māori. In her own words she has “dabbled in tertiary study,” enrolling in a te reo Māori course through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. She is currently a stay-at-home parent. Briar has whakapapa with Playcentre, having attended Playcentre herself as a child. After the interview concluded, Briar said that the process of the interview and the nature of our kōrero felt cathartic for her. She was able to express things that perhaps she could not express in her daily life as a Playcentre parent, giving her agency and the sense that her opinions and experience matter.

Kama is a 32-year-old mother of two: a 4-year-old boy and an 18-month-old girl. Kama is of Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa descent. She has a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and has a background of working as an ECE kaiako, but is currently a stay-at-home parent. Kama also attended Playcentre with her mother when she was a child and knew this was something she wanted to do with her own children. At the time of the interview Kama's children were at home with her and were mauiui (unwell). We completed the interview online and had some technical difficulties at the beginning to get the video working with the Microsoft Teams app. However, after much perseverance we managed to get it working and were able to have our kōrero.

A summary of the demographic information about each participant is presented in Appendix E. What the demographics show is that the participants in this research range in age from 27 to 44. Five participants identify as female, and one described themselves and identifies as takatāpui (non-binary/trans). Four participants (Alyssa, Briar, Rachelle, and Sam) described

their ethnicity as Māori and Pākehā, while two (Kama and Krista) described themselves as Māori. Interestingly, Rachelle described a connection to spirituality through te ao wairua, and Krista described herself as agnostic, while Alyssa, Briar, Kama, and Sam all said they are not religious. Most of the participants have a household income between \$70,000–\$100,000 per annum. Rachelle did not provide her income details and Sam advised they were on a sole-parent benefit. Five of the participants were educated at a university level; only Briar did not have a formal tertiary qualification, although she did advise that she has undertaken some tertiary study and expressed a desire for further education at this level. Most importantly, all the participants described themselves as stay-at-home parents, and only two participants said they also work part time. Interestingly, when looking at their iwi and where they live (which I did not include in Appendix E for privacy reasons), all the participants live outside of their tribal rohe.⁶ It is important to note that Alyssa, Briar, Kama, Krista, and Rachelle are not using pseudonyms, whereas Sam has chosen for their identity to be anonymous and is using a pseudonym.

3.7. Summary

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are deeply rooted in te ao Māori, through kaupapa Māori theory and an exploration of how knowledge is created using the metaphor of Te Kore Whakapapa. These theoretical frameworks therefore situate and focus this research through a lens of te ao Māori at all times. Kaupapa Māori theory has informed the choice of methods, the ethics, the use of reflexive thematic analysis, the coding process, and, importantly, my subjectivity as a researcher. Te Kore Whakapapa has informed my approach to the data and the context within which this research has been created. This is a strength of this research, as it allows the researcher and participants tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake over the academic conversation about Māori parents' experience of Playcentre.

This research is about the weaving together of Māori parents' stories and experiences of Playcentre. In raranga, the raw material made up of individual strands of harakeke is woven together to create something new that can be utilised by the weaver and their community. In this sense, each interview contains numerous strands of stories and ideas, and, like the harakeke, can be woven together to create that participant's story. Therefore, data analysis is about working with the individual strands of each person's story and weaving them to create patterns that can be combined and interwoven with the strands of others' stories.

⁶ Since gathering this research Rachelle did advise me that she has moved back to Whāingaroa to live within her tribal rohe.

The concept and practice of weaving strands of harakeke or other fibres into a whole that transcends the simple origins of the materials is an important part of the data analysis process.

4 Findings and Discussion

Whiria te tangata ka puta he oranga, whiria ngā mahi toi ka puta he tino rangatiratanga.

Weaving together the people promotes well-being, weaving the arts promotes excellence. (Nathan, 2015)⁷

After restating my research questions, this chapter presents the result of my analysis and coding discussed in the previous chapter. It introduces the whāriki of codes and the whakapapa of the data. I present the findings from my dataset through the use of three main themes that were revealed during the data analysis stage. I also consider my research questions and seek to answer them through the presentation of these three themes and resulting discussion of each. The data was collected from five Māori māmā and one takatāpui parent who is a single parent by choice. Participants had the opportunity to speak to me about their experiences, challenges, and successes of being a Māori Playcentre parent during the interview stage. The interviews were not structured and were like having a chat with a new-found friend and ally. The kōrero flowed both ways and I felt that I was able to also share my experiences with the participants. Their struggles and successes touched my heart, and I feel a great affinity with each of them. The experience of each participant is underpinned by their whakapapa to te ao Māori and Playcentre. Therefore, this became the overarching theme within the data.

4.1. Revisiting the Research Questions

This research sought to answer the question: What are Māori parent's experiences of Playcentre? It also aimed to answer how Māori parents feel that their mana, mauri, wairua, and Māoritanga have been respected and honoured in Playcentre. Finally, I wanted to learn more about what Māori parents' understanding of *Te Whāriki* looked like. These questions remain at the forefront of the discussion sections of this chapter and each theme provides an answer or response to my overarching research question of how Māori parents articulate their experience of Playcentre.

My reasons for asking these questions and conducting this research was to begin a conversation about Playcentre from a Māori perspective within academia, as it appears there

⁷ This whakataukī was spoken by Pareaute Nathan, a renowned Māori weaver, while accepting the Tohunga Raranga award in 2015 at Te Waka Toi for her contribution to the Māori arts.

is no current literature about Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre. This seems to be an oversight, considering that *Te Whāriki* is a bicultural curriculum designed to empower tamariki of Māori descent in ECE settings, and Playcentre is a parent-cooperative whose philosophy is based on child-led play and play-based learning. Playcentre would therefore appear to be a tika space for a Māori researcher to explore Māori experiences of the Playcentre ECE context and the implementation of *Te Whāriki*.

To ensure that these questions are answered in this chapter, each theme begins with a discussion of how it was revealed through the data analysis process. Then I discuss the te ao Māori perspectives and the mātauranga Māori upon which that theme is built, before using quotes from the transcripts to illustrate each theme. Finally, each theme concludes with a discussion which interprets and speculates on why these findings emerged from the data set, what their context is and why these findings matter. Before an in-depth discussion of each theme, I present the whāriki of codes and whakapapa of the data.

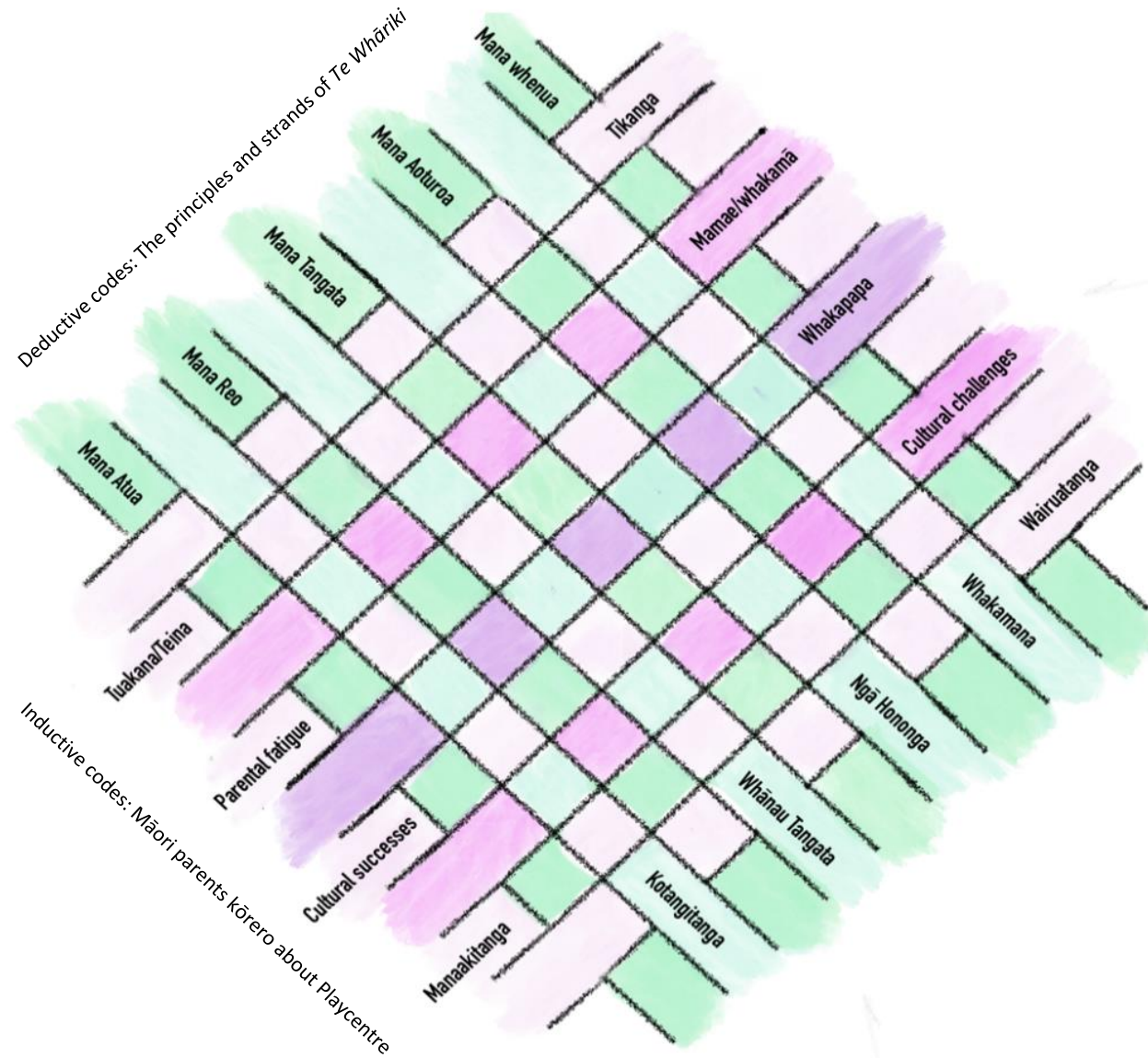
4.2. My Whāriki of Codes

The whāriki of codes allowed me to visualise and understand how my deductive and inductive codes could be woven to create multiple layers of meaning within the data set. It also helped me to understand the importance of creating a pattern that best represented the participants' kōrero and remained true to their experiences. The whāriki of codes was an act of contemplative intention in understanding my position and subjectivity as the researcher and the role I have in analysing the meaning behind the participants' kōrero.

Initially, I created the whāriki using strips of paper which I manually wove together, with the final nine code labels written on them. I then digitised this to create an image that represented a pattern of my data (Figure 1). There was great benefit in weaving a whāriki of codes in this way. It allowed me to visualise the data and begin to consider the wider context behind each individual code and how each code interacted with each other. It also allowed me to ponder the relationship between the deductive codes taken from *Te Whāriki* and the inductive codes that emerged from the participants' kōrero in the transcripts.

Figure 1

My Whāriki of Codes



While weaving this whāriki of codes, I considered the placement of the codes and how they would create the overall pattern. It was during this process that whakapapa was revealed as the core thread upon which the inductive codes were tied, and therefore I coloured this a deep purple to symbolise its importance. I also placed it in the centre of the inductive side of the whāriki. Tikanga and wairuatanga framed the conversations, and so these were included on the outside edges in pink. Mamae/whakamā and cultural challenges were coloured fuchsia as they were codes that dealt with some heavy topics, and I felt they were creating a pattern in the data that needed to be distinguished on a deeper level than the other codes. For the deductive codes I choose to represent the principles of *Te Whāriki* in a lighter green, and the strands in a darker green. They were woven in a repeating alternating pattern of strand, then principle. This symbolises how intertwined the aspects of *Te Whāriki* are, and how the principles and strands work together and are interdependent.

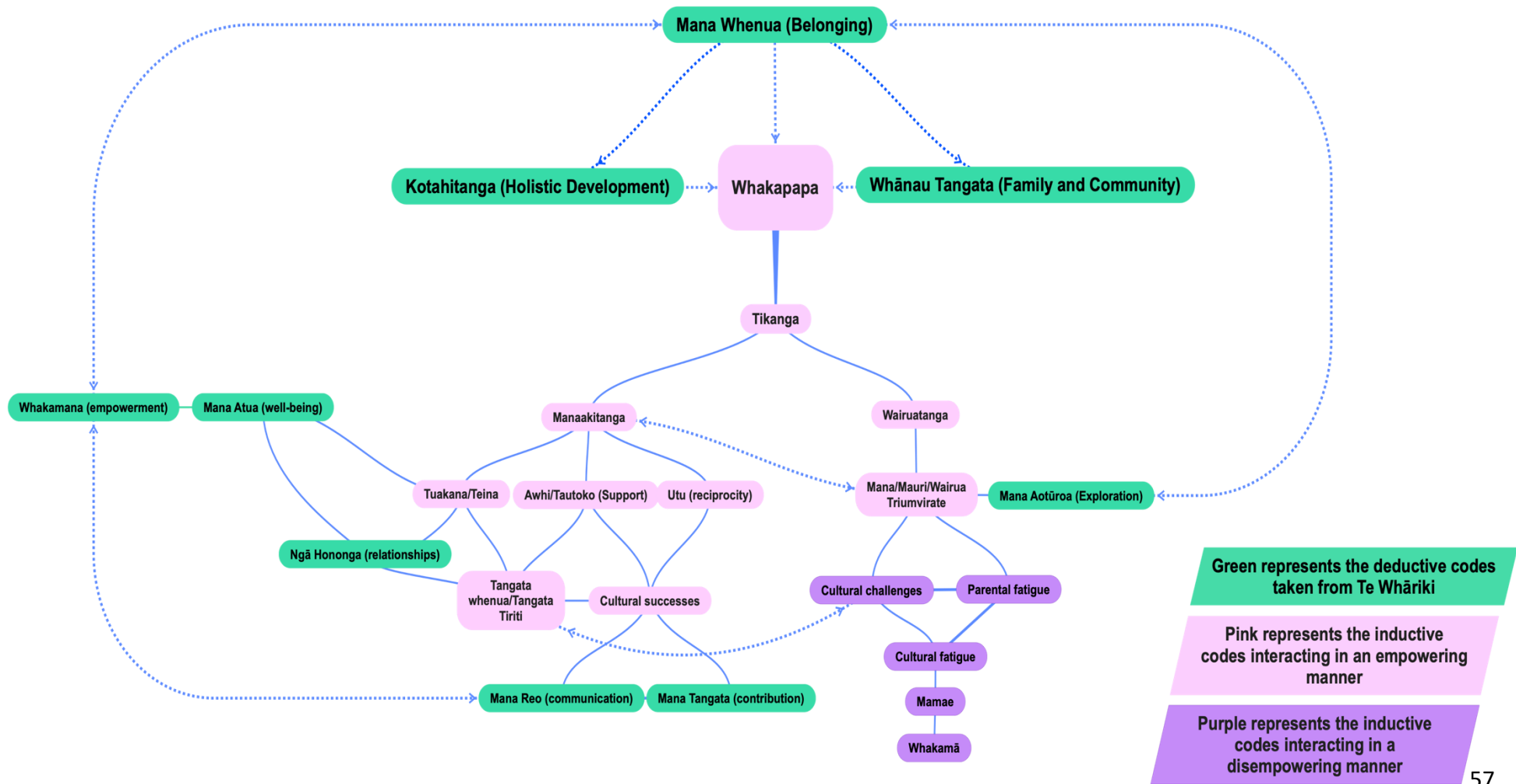
The whāriki of codes allowed me to think about individual codes and how drawing on them in isolation, or within the context of other codes, changed the pattern of the whāriki and what story was being told about the data. Considering the nature of reflexive thematic analysis, I thought about how to organise the codes in a way that best represented the story I discovered needed to be drawn out of the dataset. As a result of this process, I decided I needed more clarity on how these codes were interacting, so I could piece together and begin to define themes in the data. From this whāriki, I created a whakapapa of the data which allowed a more profound understanding of the pattern I was creating with the data.

4.3. Whakapapa of the Data

In the Māori world everything is interconnected through whakapapa, and this natural way of looking at things means I could begin to see how different concepts and codes were interacting with one another. This data whakapapa (Figure 2) is a visual representation of the deductive codes (the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*) and how they interact with the inductive codes derived from the participants' kōrero. It is important to note that this whakapapa is a subjective interpretation of the data, based on insider knowledge of being Māori and a Playcentre parent myself. It is also deeply focussed on representing the participants' kōrero through the lens of how they discussed their experiences. During the interview process I shared some of my experiences of being a Māori Playcentre parent with the participants, and as a result there was a sense of whanaungatanga which opened a safe space to share a deeper kōrero which would not have otherwise existed. This is a strength of my research and is represented through the whakapapa of data.

Figure 2

My Whakapapa of Data



As this data whakapapa (Figure 2) shows, there are two cycles of experience happening for Māori parents within Playcentre. Where participants focussed the discussion of their experiences through the lens of manaakitanga, they often reported positive relationships with other parents, a feeling of support, and reciprocity from tangata tiriti. This then led to discussions of positive partnerships between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in their centres, and participants were better able to articulate their cultural successes and feel empowered in their centres.

However, where a participant focussed their discussion through a lens of wairuatanga, they were more likely to report cultural challenges. From this, mamae, whakamā, parental fatigue, and cultural fatigue were the defining characteristics of their kōrero. Although, where some participants spoke of their cultural challenges alongside a culture of manaakitanga and support from their non-Māori peers, there was a sense of resilience present that did not present a disempowering view of the challenges they had faced.

This was all focussed through the lens of whakapapa and tikanga, as these were the underpinning characteristics of the participants' kōrero. Their whakapapa to te ao Māori and Playcentre strengthened their kōrero and created the basis of their experiences, whereas tikanga informed how we discussed manaakitanga and wairuatanga. This is why these appear at the top of the whakapapa, and it explains how they interact with other inductive and deductive codes. There are challenges in describing the codes in a written form, in that they are not all discrete and separate categories. Visual representation of the codes in this way allows more clarity.

What was revealed through a deeper investigation of Figure 2 was how the deductive codes acted as qualifiers by enhancing and/or limiting the inductive codes. For example, the inductive codes sit in the middle of the whakapapa of data and represent the core concepts within te ao Māori that I interpreted from the participants' kōrero; whereas the deductive codes sit on the outer fringes of this whakapapa and represent the wider implications of the participants' kōrero. Therefore, the deductive codes can be seen as outputs of the inductive codes, which represent Māori parents' core experience of Playcentre. However, the deductive codes also interact in a way that then becomes cyclical, as the outputs then qualify what is inputted by Māori parents into the Playcentre experience.

It is clear from the whakapapa of data that the inductive and deductive codes are interwoven in a way that clarifies how Māori parents experience Playcentre inter-generationally. Patterns in the participants' kōrero show that their experiences of Playcentre (represented by the inductive codes), create wider implications (represented by the deductive codes taken from *Te Whāriki*) which impact on their sense of well-being and belonging within Playcentre, and how this sense of belonging circles back to their whakapapa to te ao Māori and their whakapapa to Playcentre through their own parents. Therefore, their experiences of Playcentre will likely impact the choice that their tamariki make on an ECE option in any future generations. Capturing this is important, because whakapapa and a positive sense of belonging within Playcentre is therefore a key thread in what brings Māori parents to Playcentre to begin with.

In the following sections I will discuss the three themes: Whakapapa, Positive partnership is empowering, and Māori resilience: from whakamā to whakamana (see Section 3.5.3).

4.4. Theme One: Whakapapa

4.4.1. Defining the Boundaries of Whakapapa

Whakapapa refers to a genealogical organisation of the physical world that is present in te ao Māori. If interpreted literally it is about the layering of one thing on another and is the skeletal structure upon which mātauranga Māori is constructed (Mahuika, 2019). Prior to and following colonisation in Aotearoa, Māori used whakapapa to organise not only peoples' genealogies but also abstract ideas, cultural practices, physical items, and places (Marsden, 2003; Mahuika, 2019). As a concept, whakapapa deals with every aspect of life. It is what underpins mātauranga Māori on every level. Therefore, whakapapa as a concept encapsulates more than the simple 'family tree' model of descent that is common when discussing ancestral descent from a Western point of view.

Beyond this definition of whakapapa is the lived experience of being Māori and feeling a sense of belonging to te ao Māori. Kukutai and Webber (2017) discuss the creation of Māori identity through the components of race, ethnicity, and culture, and the ways that Māori identity is often negotiated through interactions with others. They also discuss the outside influences that shape and inform identity choices, such as social, racial, and economic politics. I mention this to draw a comparison between whakapapa, which is an individual's right to claim their descent and therefore connection to te ao Māori, and Māori identity itself. What this illustrates is that although whakapapa and descent within te ao Māori gives an individual the right to claim their whakapapa, Māori identity itself is not solely based on descent. This

definition defines the boundaries of whakapapa as a theme in this research. It captures an individual's choice and right to identify as Māori but does not comment on their identity as Māori through a cultural lens. When discussing whakapapa as a theme taken from the dataset, it is applied genealogically as a way to frame and discuss a participant's connection to te ao Māori or Playcentre.

As all the participants whakapapa Māori and this is covered under their participant profiles in Section 3.5, I will now present each participant's whakapapa to Playcentre, using quotes from my transcripts to illustrate how each participant described this connection.

4.4.2. Defining the Theme

The overarching theme that was revealed throughout the dataset was whakapapa. Whakapapa was identified as a theme early in the data analysis process. Every participant has a whakapapa to te ao Māori through their tūpuna, but most participants also had a whakapapa to Playcentre, either by attending as children, or through wider members of their whānau. Each participant described their connection to te ao Māori using pepeha or through a discussion of their whānau history. They also discussed their connection to Playcentre in answer to a question asked about their whakapapa to Playcentre when I was gathering my demographic data at the start of each interview.

Familial connection to Playcentre through a direct parent was present in five out of six participants in this study. The one participant who did not have a parental connection was instead connected through their Pākehā aunt, who was involved in the Playcentre that the participant attended with her children. This was an important finding that unveils a possible answer as to why Māori parents choose Playcentre for their tamariki. Ancestral connection to Playcentre can be seen an anchor point in their whakapapa, tying them to the concepts, learning, and values instilled from Playcentre during their childhoods. Many parents express fond memories of attending Playcentre as children, and this fondness leads them to want to attend with their own children.

Defining whakapapa as a theme came out of the creation of my data whakapapa (Figure 2), where it was revealed that whakapapa was a catalyst for a) what brought Māori parents to Playcentre, and b) how their connections to te ao Māori through their ancestry informed how they articulated their experiences. This was connected to individual understandings of tikanga and the role that tikanga plays in everyday life for Māori. Participants either consciously or

unconsciously focussed their discussion through a lens of manaakitanga and/or wairuatanga, which was dependent upon their understanding of what was/is tikanga for them and their whānau or their individual Playcentres. Those understandings of tikanga relate both to their whakapapa to te ao Māori and their whakapapa to Playcentre. Both whakapapa connections come with an inherited knowledge of cultural values surrounding each context, through generational understandings passed down from ancestor to descendant. Firstly, I will briefly discuss how participants described their whakapapa to Playcentre.

4.4.3. Whakapapa to Playcentre

Every participant in some way had a whakapapa to Playcentre and each participant described their connection in different ways. For Rachelle there was a whakapapa link through her Pākehā aunty who attended Playcentre with her cousins in the 1980s. When Rachelle had her first child, she was living in the same area that her aunty had lived and realised that the local Playcentre was the one her aunty had attended. Interestingly, her aunty was a teacher and then a child psychologist. Rachelle describes Playcentre as a place where her cousins grew up and somewhere she did not think much about until her son expressed a wish to go there.

He saw the playground and he was like, “I wanna go there māmā.” And the weird thing for me, the tohu for me in it was usually where there is kids and a playground, he would have been a bit like “ooohhh there’s other kids there. I want to go there but there’s other kids there.” But that he wasn’t like that. So, I was like, oh okay, I better check this place out. What is it? And I walked over and had a look at the sign and went oh it’s actually Playcentre. (Rachelle, Interview 1)

Rachelle’s whakapapa connection to ngā atua is invoked here where she uses the term ‘tohu’. The tohu she discusses is related to her son and his reaction to the Playcentre that she construes as a positive message. However, that guiding sign she is interpreting just so happens to be associated with the same Playcentre that her wider whānau has a whakapapa to. Later in Rachelle’s kōrero, she infers that sign as having come from te ao wairua. When gathering demographic data at the beginning of our kōrero I asked what religion Rachelle prescribes to, if any, and her response was te ao wairua. What this signifies is that her whakapapa connection to te ao Māori and belief in te ao wairua allowed her to open her mind to the idea of Playcentre. In this way her whakapapa to both Playcentre and te ao Māori are coming together in an interesting and organic way to inform her choice of attending Playcentre.

Krista, much like Rachelle, did not attend Playcentre as a child but has whakapapa with it through her mother, who attended Playcentre with Krista’s younger siblings.

Mum did Playcentre with my two younger sisters who are considerably younger than me. But no, I was a kindy kid. (Krista, Interview 4)

This is all that Krista said about her whakapapa connection to Playcentre, before moving on to talk about the demographics of Playcentre and a desire to understand where the whānau in Playcentre are coming from, as she is a National Playcentre Representative and runs her local Māori Playcentre rōpū. Krista is perhaps the most involved Playcentre parent I spoke to for this research, and her passion for Māori in Playcentre is immutable. Although her whakapapa to Playcentre is not from having attended herself as a child, there is still a connection through her mother. Krista, being the eldest child and potentially watching her mother go through a Playcentre journey with her much younger siblings, would have watched her mother's journey with a more mature eye than other participants. Therefore, it is possible that Krista's expectations of the mahi involved in Playcentre is more objectively focussed.

Another participant, Sam, also has a whakapapa to Playcentre through their mother. Sam described how their mother was a facilitator for many years and how it felt when they started at Playcentre with their daughter, which happened to be the same Playcentre their mother had been involved in:

It was the Playcentre that my mother had facilitated at for so many years. And so, there were little things when we came in, like the baby gate that she had painted – the really beautiful baby gate—it was still there, still in really good condition ... a lot of the toys that she had made or puzzles she had made were still there, it was a bit like coming home. (Sam, Interview 2)

This idea of Playcentre being a homecoming that Sam describes here is important. The way that Sam spoke about the familiarity of the space, as being somewhere that still had their mother's physical imprint on it, is nostalgic. It also highlights an important aspect of Playcentre: that parents invest time, skills, and resources into their centres to improve them for the next generation. These lasting imprints are present in every Playcentre that you attend and are often seen as taonga to be preserved. In this sense Playcentre can be a turangawaewae for whānau. Sam's whakapapa to Playcentre through their mother came up again later in their kōrero, but this time was highlighted in a negative way:

I distinctly remember entire school holidays that mum was busy writing learning stories and putting together portfolios. We lost our mum for entire school holidays, because she was so busy doing the mahi for Playcentre ... and newer, younger generations now are beginning to say, well, actually that's not okay. (Sam, Interview 2)

Here Sam talks about the cost of being a child to a Playcentre facilitator and the implication that although Playcentre itself is a good space for whānau, there are changes that they feel

need to occur to make it more manageable for parents whose labour is volunteered. Despite this, Sam did still choose to attend Playcentre with their child, so the remembered negative impacts are possibly outweighed by the inherently good memories they also associate with being a Playcentre child.

Briar was also a Playcentre child, and as a result had certain expectations of what Playcentre would be like before she began. She described feeling disappointed that the reality was different from her expectations.

I was a Playcentre kid, and my Mums always talked about Playcentre ... I kind of had an idea of what I thought it would be ... I love Playcentre because I love going with my children, but I don't feel that same wraparound village that you talked of. And that's what I expected from Playcentre because that's how my mum described it, was like a real village. (Briar, Interview 3)

When Briar talked about her whakapapa to Playcentre she still spoke of it with passion. Despite the disappointment that she experienced, she also clarified that she loves Playcentre as a space for herself and her tamariki. The disappointment lies in an expectation that Playcentre would be a homecoming, and a space to build community—which is how it was described to her by her mother. This again evokes a sense that Briar was expecting Playcentre to become a turangawaewae for herself and her whānau. That expectation remaining unfulfilled can be devastating for a new parent who is seeking a place where they can feel a sense of manaakitanga from their community. This is especially poignant, considering that the role of a parent is to care for their tamariki. Briar's expectation was to find a space where she could be nurtured as a new parent within Playcentre, however this was not the case in her experience. What is also interesting is the role of Briar's mother and the part that she had to play in Briar's choice to attend Playcentre with her tamariki. Her mother's description of Playcentre appears to have been pivotal in Briar's decision to join Playcentre.

Another participant, Alyssa, also discusses the role that her mother had to play in her choice to attend Playcentre, when discussing whether they had a whakapapa to Playcentre.

I think I was for a short period of time down in Rotorua ... Yeah, the only reason I heard about it was cause mum was like "you should go to Playcentre," otherwise I wouldn't have gone. (Alyssa, Interview 5)

What is interesting here is the statement "otherwise I wouldn't have gone." Alyssa is saying that without her whakapapa to Playcentre she would not have attended at all. Without the direction of her mother, who had a lived experience of Playcentre, Alyssa may have chosen a different path for herself and her tamariki. This speaks to an important aspect of the

intergenerational nature of Playcentre and the role that parents of parents have in passing on vital narratives about Playcentre.

My final participant, Kama, echoes this sentiment about her whakapapa to Playcentre.

I was also a Playcentre baby ... And like you, kind of always knew that when I had kids, I would want to do the Playcentre journey as well. (Kama, Interview 6)

For Kama there was little question that she would eventually attend Playcentre when she had her own tamariki. Her choice of wording here is telling, in that she discusses Playcentre as a journey and not a destination she has arrived at. Her background knowledge of Playcentre from her childhood experience and possibly even conversations with her mother, as in Briar and Alyssa's case, likely contributed to her decision to join Playcentre. Speaking from experience, the lingering memories of Playcentre persist well into adulthood, and the lived experience of attending Playcentre as a child opens you up to the idea of Playcentre when you have your own children. Although there are many reasons to join Playcentre, this is one of the overarching reasons that participants expressed. The connection between whakapapa and a parent choosing to join Playcentre is pivotal and is evident in more than one case where a participant explains their whakapapa to Playcentre while also discussing the importance of this in their decision to join and become a Playcentre parent themselves.

4.4.4. Reasons for Choosing Playcentre

A parent's choice of Playcentre over other ECE options is important to consider within this theme to ascertain further correlation between whakapapa and Playcentre. When discussing their choice of Playcentre over other ECE options, in answer to one of the prompt interview questions listed in Appendix C, the consensus was that Playcentre allowed them to be deeply involved in their child's educational journey and early learning.

When Krista discusses her Playcentre journey and reasons for attending Playcentre with her two tamariki, she talks about the tikanga space the Playcentre creates for Māori, by being a space where we come together as whānau.

But one thing that we have at Playcentre that we're nailing is that real Māori-ness of we come with our whānau ... So why did I choose Playcentre? ... I knew being a stay-at-home parent I didn't want just a playgroup ... So, I knew that I wanted to be committed to something where the commitment would be met. I wanted to be fully in my community because I don't have family in Auckland. And so, I wanted to make sure I created a family or space that felt like family right. (Krista, Interview 4)

Here, Krista describes Playcentre as a safe space to be, as Māori and as a space where her whole whānau are welcome. Secondly to this, Krista brings up an important kōrero about utu, and the importance of being involved in your local community and understanding that there is a level of commitment associated with communal success. This is a cornerstone philosophy of Playcentre. Finally, Krista talks about wanting Playcentre to be a space that felt like family; however, she talks about how there is mahi necessary on her behalf to be able to create that space.

Alyssa's choice of Playcentre centred around what was best for her child. What Alyssa discusses here gives some important context to her earlier kōrero about her mother asserting that Playcentre might be a good fit for Alyssa's whānau. Alyssa talks about her bond with her daughter and how her daughter's attachment to her impacted her decision to inevitably choose a space where she could be present while her daughter learned to build connections with others.

Playcentre was the only one with her. Leaving her with other people wasn't an option, like at all ... She was just attached to me, so the thought of like putting her in kindy or some other ECE it was just, it was not a possibility ... Playcentre being an option where I could actually stay and be present while she built relationships with people, that really benefited us. (Alyssa, Interview, 5)

There is a subtext to Alyssa's kōrero about trusting that Playcentre is a space where her tamāhine could thrive, and that she did not trust this would be the case with other ECE options. Rachelle also asserts this sentiment about Playcentre and frames her kōrero in a similar way, where she discusses that she chose Playcentre (amongst other reasons, to do with signs from te ao wairua) because she wanted to stay with her tamaiti.

I wanted to know, that the environment for my child would be meeting the needs, you know, of our whānau. And I wanted to see that in person and I felt like and I, and I still feel like transitioning into these institutions is really done in a way that just feels so abrupt and so unnatural. Your kids don't have a relationship with the kaiako. You don't build that up how you would build that up in a whānau or in the community, where you'd never just drop your kid off somewhere with people they don't know. And so, all of that didn't really sit right with me and the idea of Playcentre being a place where I could go too and build those relationships with the other parents and the other children and be aware of everything that goes on in the centre by being there. That was a huge kind of draw card for me. And I think trust was key with that. (Rachelle, Interview 1)

Here, Rachelle frames her choice of Playcentre around whānau and ngā hononga. Relationship building is a key discussion in both Rachelle and Alyssa's kōrero around the choice of Playcentre over other ECE options. However, Rachelle delves deeper into tikanga around whānau, hapū, and iwi dynamics where there is great import placed on whanaungatanga.

Strong relationship bonds between whānau, hapū, and iwi are essential in maintaining strength as a collective within te ao Māori. Rachelle also mentions trust and wanting to be aware of what her child experiences within ECE daily.

Both Sam and Briar talk about Playcentre as being a space where they can be included in the learning of their tamariki. Briar also discusses wanting that whanaungatanga with other parents.

I had my daughter, and I was like, I'm never ever leaving her ... She's never been away from me really. And Playcentre, because I've been there obviously, I was a Playcentre kid, so I was like, amazing! She gets to go to places, but I'm still included, and I can still go with her ... And because we're not from [here] we didn't know really anyone here. So, I was like, that's a way to meet people like around here. (Briar, Interview 2)

Here, Briar reaffirms that her whakapapa to Playcentre informed her decision to join. Sam echoes this in their kōrero.

It was the fact that, you know, I had come from Playcentre, and I didn't want to be leaving my child somewhere. And I wanted to be with her, I wanted to spend the whole five years of her ECE life with her. (Sam, Interview 2)

As an ECE teacher, Kama found it hard to find the right space for her tamaiti. When looking for the right centre she could not find a place that highlighted te reo Māori or tikanga, had links to te taiao, or spoke of respecting the children. Kama's choice of Playcentre was highly selective and she too spoke about whanaungatanga, ngā hononga, and whānau tangata as being essential to her decision.

I saw a lot of centres that had a lot of potential to be great, but they just weren't - they weren't for us. And so being at Playcentre and being able to share what was important and valuable for us, and to see that in practice daily was just amazing. And totally made me be like, well, why would we bother trying to go anywhere else, like this way I can be part of the journey ... we can learn together, we can grow together, we can find our people together. And that was awesome. (Kama, Interview 6)

Considering that Kama is an ECE kaiako, her choice of Playcentre is telling. During our kōrero she discussed how her insider knowledge of the ECE sector made her wary of sending her children to a teacher-led centre. Kama also talks about Playcentre being a space where she can share what is important and valuable for her whānau. In other ECE contexts you may choose to share your values with the kaiako, but there is no requirement for that ECE centre to absorb your personal tikanga and apply it, whereas in Playcentre this is essential to its success.

4.5.5. Discussion of Whakapapa

Whakapapa is an essential way for Māori to organise, build, and maintain connections in their worlds. These findings suggest that these Māori Playcentre parents are looking for a space for themselves and their tamariki where manaakitanga, ngā hononga, wairuatanga, turangawaewae, and whanaungatanga are present. These are all concepts that work in symbiosis with whakapapa in te ao Māori. Māori parents are seeking a space within ECE that can nurture them and their tikanga around being present in the lives of their tamariki. They are seeking a space where they can build and maintain connections with others and help to facilitate that for their tamariki as well. As a Māori Playcentre parent, I also chose Playcentre for these reasons, and while my initial reasons were to find community and a space where I could be present with my daughter, it was within Playcentre that I found I could explore my whakapapa to te ao Māori in a deeper way by sharing my Māoritanga with my tamaiti and the other tamariki present on sessions.

The Māori parents in Playcentre who took part in this research all have a whakapapa to Playcentre through their mother or wider whānau members, suggesting that whakapapa is an essential part of what is drawing them to Playcentre. For the participants this was through the testimony of a parent, memories of Playcentre as a child or, in Rachelle's case, a tohu from te ao wairua. Māori parents see Playcentre as a tika space for themselves and their tamariki, because they can be involved in their child's learning and find communion for themselves within their communities. My own whakapapa to Playcentre was a key aspect of my decision-making process when choosing an ECE for my daughter, as I had fond memories from attending as a child, and my mother spoke positively of her experience as a Playcentre mum. There was also a connection through Leona, my maternal grandmother, who saw the benefit of Playcentre and championed the cause by becoming a foundation member of Papakura Playcentre, where I attended as a child.

Ultimately, it appears that these Māori parents' choices to join Playcentre lie in its philosophy of 'families growing together' (Playcentre, 2021b). Historically, Playcentre has been a place where parents are able to educate their tamariki while also undertaking adult education themselves, making it a space where the whānau unit is central to any learning taking place (Densem & Chapman, 2000). The focus on the whānau unit means that parents are expected to remain on session with their tamariki and volunteer their time to run and maintain their centre while also undertaking education courses. In recent times the adult education papers that parents undertake can gain the parent a formal qualification from NZQA (Playcentre,

2021c). It is interesting that the participants did not comment on adult education as a reason for becoming involved in Playcentre; rather, their discussions focussed on trust and wanting to be present while their tamariki build relationships with other Playcentre whānau. The Māori parents involved in this research speak of wanting to build connection whānau to whānau, with the people that their tamariki are interacting with regularly and having relationships with other whānau on a deeper level.

It is important to note that these reflections from Māori parents on their choice to join Playcentre are retrospective. Therefore, their journey in Playcentre to date may have affected their answer. A positive or negative experience or current situation within their Playcentres could influence how they talk about their decisions around joining or how they compare it to their own experience of Playcentre as a child. It could also affect how they compare their experience to the testimony of others, such as in Briar's case where twice she compares her experience of Playcentre to her mother's testimony on Playcentre, and in response to me talking about my experience within Playcentre.

These findings are important because it helps to understand what is bringing Māori parents to Playcentre. Māori parents are a minority in Playcentre and often they are the only Māori whānau enrolled in their centre. Understanding that it may be a generational link to Playcentre through whakapapa that initially alerts Māori parents to Playcentre, is vital information. Secondly, understanding that Māori parents choose Playcentre because they see it as a safe space for their children to form and maintain connections outside of the home is important.

4.5. Theme Two: Positive Partnership is Empowering

4.5.1. Defining the Theme

This theme came out of a critical analysis of both the dataset and the resulting whakapapa of data (Figure 2). After analysing each code and how they were interacting with one another, it became clear that when participants focussed their discussion of being Māori in Playcentre through a lens of manaakitanga they also discussed cultural successes, positive relationships with non-Māori members, and a desire to contribute to their centre in a Māori way. At times participants did discuss cultural challenges they faced and the mamae associated with these challenges, which for some participants contributed to underlying whakamā they were experiencing. This is unpacked further in Section 4.6. However, where their discussion was focussed through a lens of manaakitanga, it appears that the relationships between tangata

tiriti and tangata whenua in their centre have an established culture of partnership, and therefore these challenges were mitigated.

4.5.2. Partnership and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides the foundational basis of partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti that underpins society in Aotearoa. According to Te Puni Kōkiri (2002) partnership is a well-established aspect of TTOW and is used to describe the relationship between the crown and Māori. Partnership in this sense uses the concept as “an analogy emphasizing a duty on the parties to act reasonably, honourably and in good faith” (p. 77). These duties are derived from other TTOW principles: reciprocity (utu) and mutual benefit (tauawhiawhi). Partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in Playcentre uses the concept in the same way. When referring to partnership within this theme, it is from a te ao Māori perspective on what good faith, reciprocity, and mutual benefit looks and feels like for Māori parents in Playcentre. Therefore, the terms manaakitanga, utu, and tauawhiawhi are used to discuss and further inform these concepts.

4.5.3. Partnership in Playcentre

Partnership with Māori is a foundation aspect of Playcentre and *Te Whāriki*. Playcentre’s history includes a legacy of pioneering women, both Māori and Pākehā, working alongside each other (Stover, 2003). Playcentre was also pioneering in the respect that it made TTOW part of its philosophy early on. This theme describes what the participants felt partnership looks like for Māori in Playcentre.

Many of the participants described their struggles with partnership in their individual playcentres and the effect that partnerships had in their sense of belonging and their willingness to contribute. For some participants there was a sense that the cultural challenges faced in their centres were managed through an established culture of partnership with tangata tiriti. However, for other participants there was a sense that tangata tiriti did not value te ao Māori nor make it a priority within their centres, which led to feelings of mamae and for some a subtext of whakamā. In the latter case, participants were more likely to talk about feeling fatigued in their centre and to discuss a desire that partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti would be a focus for their centre.

Alyssa described partnership in her Playcentre as being challenging. First, she describes how conversations around te ao Māori have been received historically within her Playcentre.

So, I've tried to raise a few things and some of the comments they've been well meaning but there's a lot of fear of being ... representing themselves and like cultural appropriation and things like that. So, it's been hard to even really connect on anything on a Māori level because people don't want to look like they're taking something that's not theirs. (Alyssa, Interview 5)

The language that Alyssa uses includes fear, cultural appropriation, lack of connection, and representation. She does not speak of the concepts of manaakitanga, utu, and tauawhiawhi; rather she speaks in antonyms of these. What Alyssa is describing here appears to be Pākehā paralysis, where partnership is halted by tangata tiriti, due to fear of not wanting to cause offence or appear tokenistic. Pākehā paralysis is the inability of Pākehā to distinguish their role in Māori-centric spaces and this in turn limits progression towards endorsement of TTOW by tangata tiriti (Tolich, 2002). Following this, Alyssa talks about her experience within the bicultural officer role, a role in Playcentre that is designed to foster and maintain connection to te ao Māori as a requirement of *Te Whāriki*.

I've been in and out of bicultural officer a couple of times. I'm going in it again now. So, trying to find space ... feeling more now like I actually have a right to say something. I signed on the first time was like, yeah, cool, totally passionate about that. And then anytime I tried to raise anything it was that "Oh well, we don't want to do things that are token, and we don't want to be appropriating things." I don't know if that person even realised that I did whakapapa Māori ... So yeah, dropped out because, nah can't do this. I don't have anything behind me to do it. (Alyssa, Interview 5)

Alyssa is describing the effects of Pākehā paralysis on her personally. Although previously she describes these interactions as well-meaning, here we see the cost of those comments to a Māori person. Alyssa describes doubting herself and her own connection to te ao Māori as a result of being dismissed within the bicultural officer role. Underlying Alyssa's kōrero here is the Māori concept of whakamā. This is unpacked further in Section 4.6. However, Alyssa does go on to elaborate on her personal feelings about a connection to te ao Māori by others in Playcentre, and why it is important.

Is there really any point doing any of that stuff or using [te reo Māori] because most of the people at the centre aren't Māori? Just that whole tokenism and appropriation and trying to explain that like, even if you're not Māori, it doesn't make it inappropriate to use te reo, because it's the language of the nation. The language of the whenua that we're on, whether you're Māori or not. (Alyssa, Interview 5)

Alyssa makes an important point about why buy-in from everyone in Playcentre is important for the success of *Te Whāriki* as a bicultural curriculum and Playcentre as a bicultural organisation. Briar had a similar experience at her Playcentre, and the language she uses echoes that of Alyssa's kōrero. She talks about the tikanga being "plastic," lack of engagement, and connection to te ao Māori. Again, with Briar, there is little representation of the principles

of partnership. She also discusses how she feels isolated, being the one who must lead the process of biculturalism due to a perceived lack of interest in it from tangata tiriti at her Playcentre.

There, it's very, I don't like to say we're plastic, but the tikanga there is like they have the basics; not allowed on the kai table, that sort of thing. But no further, and it has to be led from us, or from me ... There's no one else pushing that sort of kaupapa at all ... But I think [people] forget they're in Aotearoa. So, it should matter to them. But, you know, I'm not the one that's gonna stand up and tell them. I just can't be bothered. (Briar, Interview 3)

Briar and Alyssa have both had struggles with partnership in their Playcentres, and both use similar concepts to describe their experience. Importantly, they both point out that biculturalism should matter to anyone who is living in Aotearoa. However, Briar does not seem to internalise the *mamae* of her experience to the degree Alyssa describes in her *kōrero*. Briar and I spoke extensively of a feeling of cultural fatigue not only with Playcentre, but also from being Māori in the world, and how it can feel as though you are constantly fighting for validity. When Briar states, “I just can’t be bothered”, it is not a trivial statement in my experience, but rather a statement of apathy relating to those feelings of cultural fatigue.

In comparison, Krista described what positive partnership in Playcentre can look like, during an anecdote about one of her Playcentre colleagues. She describes her colleague as someone who walked alongside her and worked with her, sometimes paving the way forward.

So, what I loved as her being a treaty partner, because if you're non-Māori right in my head at Playcentre you are treaty partners, so you also have obligations as do I. And so, she was awesome ... she would walk, talk, work with me, but also, she would just pave the way. And so sometimes she was checking in, but she had already done her own research. She wasn't asking me for that information, she was doing the mahi to ensure she, as PEA⁸ officer, was adhering to bicultural practices, and really helping to guide our centre. And that's getting up to speed with tikanga and yeah ... It's everyone's job to ensure that we are working to ensure that the space is adhering to that tikanga. And while we establish our own tikanga in our spaces ... our partners are doing the research to ensure that they're bringing Māori practice in, right? Because that's their obligation as bicultural partners. (Krista, Interview 4)

Krista is providing a road map for partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in Playcentre. Her language encompasses the concepts of *manaakitanga*, *utu*, and *tauawhiawhi* (see Section 4.5.2). She describes her treaty partner as someone who is collaborative, a leader, a follower, self-aware; who comes prepared by doing the background research, takes responsibility, and understands their role as a treaty partner.

⁸ A PEA officer is someone who has completed the adult education in Playcentre up to the level of a Parent Educator Award.

Kama's experience of partnership in Playcentre has also been positive. She spoke about how she feels as though she has found her village and that everyone is "in it together." Kama spoke extensively about the bilingual sessions that her Playcentre runs once a week and how these sessions have played an important role in her sense of belonging at Playcentre. The language she uses reflects the principles of partnership outlined in TTOW (see Section 4.5.2).

I think probably that sense of community, is a really big one for me. So, I feel very much like we found our village and kind of everyone's in it together. Because we have the bilingual session at our centre, most of the families there are really, really passionate about using te reo Māori and incorporating all of the tikanga and stuff that we can. So, it just fits really well. And I feel like if we didn't have that, then it would definitely feel like something was missing. (Kama, Interview 6)

Kama, Krista, Alyssa, and Briar all describe what they feel they need from tangata tiriti in Playcentre as their treaty partners. However, partnership is about mutual benefit. In the next section Rachelle, Kama, and Briar describe how they show partnership as Māori in Playcentre.

4.5.4. Manaakitanga, Utu, and Tauawhiawhi in Playcentre

Manaakitanga, utu, and tauawhiawhi represent a te ao Māori view on how to act as a partner. It is important to embody these principles and values as a Māori person and to lead with the behaviour you want to see from others in Playcentre. In the previous section the participants described what they required from tangata tiriti as treaty partners within Playcentre. Here the participants describe ways they have shown partnership within their centres which embody manaakitanga, utu, and tauawhiawhi.

Briar discussed how using funding to purchase a wharenuī for her Playcentre was empowering for herself, her whānau, and her Playcentre.

There was funding and I proposed the idea of getting a wharenuī and that was a success. And my husband, we got it, it was a flat pack and my husband, he's a builder, built it ... We took it down to Playcentre and that was a really cool experience for me because my daughter, saw my husband building it here and then so she got to be like "My dad built that!" And then on Matariki night we unveiled it and we had someone come and do a karakia and everything and that was really cool ... Being involved in the building obviously I did nothing but ... [laughter] being like my whānau did it! I liked being involved that was really cool. And that'll be there you know, forever. (Briar, Interview 3)

What is important here is the language that Briar uses to describe this event. She talks about her husband putting in the mahi to build the wharenuī, which is a koha of his time. Briar also talks about the experience as being a positive event. She also talks about how this taonga for

her Playcentre will be there forever. It is a whakapapa link that one day her children may have to the Playcentre they attend as tamariki. Here Briar is showing manaakitanga and utu to her Playcentre, despite describing not feeling much partnership in return.

Rachelle had a similar experience where, as bicultural officer, she showed partnership by purchasing a kākahu for her Playcentre's tamariki to wear when they graduate. She talks about how important it is for her tamariki to experience a taonga like this, to ensure they understand that these parts of their culture are alive and not just a remnant of the past.

Our taonga need to be normalized, they need to be accessible ... they're living. These aren't like things that are in the museum behind the glass that our children see as this was once how it was. This is now and they get to if we give them the opportunity, they get to feel the mana of wearing a kākahu like, with real feathers and things when they graduate ... But yeah, so now we've got this wicked, it's so cool, beautiful kākahu. And when you mentioned the kōtare before I sort of thought of it straightaway, because the one that I chose was called The Kōtare. Yeah, and it's like, the blues and the greens sort of feathers and, it reminded me of that, you know, the waiata [singing] E rere kōtare ki runga pūwharawhara. And that's why I chose it, that song kind of came to me and like I kind of thought about the things that were, you know, when you're graduating and that songs about the rains coming, and like the flood and like, you know, those overwhelming feelings when change comes. And not just for like, you know, the child but for the, for the whānau and wrapping them in that [awhi/aroha]. (Rachelle, Interview 1)

Rachelle also talks about her decision-making process in choosing the kākahu. She did not just purchase one to tick a box or purchase the first one she thought looked good. It was a considered process where Rachelle thought about the meaning behind the kākahu and what it would represent for the child who is graduating and their whānau. Here Rachelle is showing partnership to her Playcentre through manaakitanga, utu, and tauawhiawhi. She has given them a taonga that not only benefits the Māori tamariki but everyone at her Playcentre through a genuine understanding of how a kākahu can represent the cloaking of the tamariki in te ao Māori. Rachelle is sharing her culture with others through good faith and reciprocity. Kama echoes this sentiment when discussing what the Māori whānau at her Playcentre bring to their bilingual days.

So, we've got everything. So, we've got whānau at the very beginning of their journey, we've got whānau who have grown up on their marae who speak fluently who, you know, Māori is the first language and it's the language that their children speak at home ... We have got lots of non-Māori whānau who have done the Wānanga o Aotearoa te reo courses. So, we've got lots of fluent speakers on session. And that's not just on our bilingual day, that's on most of our days. Which is awesome ... But yeah, a big part of that is Playcentre, and how much passion all of our families have towards being fantastic partners of te tiriti. (Kama, Interview 6)

Not only does Kama describe how the Māori whānau in her Playcentre are showing tauawhiawhi by supporting tangata tiriti on bilingual days, but that tangata tiriti are doing the mahi and learning, then bringing te reo Māori to their Playcentre. This is a perfect example of positive partnership where the principles of good faith (manaakitanga), reciprocity (utu), and mutual benefit (tauawhiawhi) come together to create an environment where te reo me ngā tikanga Māori can flourish and where te ao Māori is respected and valued.

4.5.5. Discussion of Partnership

Positive partnership encompasses many aspects of the Playcentre experience for Māori parents. It is not just embodied in the day-to-day workings of a centre or relationships between members but is part of the wider context of what manaakitanga, utu, and tauawhiawhi look like within their Playcentre. It is about empowering tangata tiriti through the sharing of te ao Māori in good faith; and tangata tiriti empowering Māori by being treaty partners who walk alongside Māori and do the mahi required by being self-aware and collaborative. It is also concerned with the role of Māori to make decisions around taonga and to uphold te reo me ngā tikanga Māori. These are what Māori parents are expressing as positive Māori successes within Playcentre.

Being a treaty partner requires positive forward action by tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in a way that continually builds momentum. Only in this way can true biculturalism be achieved in Playcentre. Even in centres where Māori are a minority, which they often statistically are in Playcentre, there must be a commitment to partnership regardless of the demographics within individual Playcentres. If tangata tiriti commit to partnership with tangata whenua there is good faith or manaakitanga on which to build reciprocity and mutual benefit. By doing this we can normalise te ao Māori for all people of New Zealand, as it is a rich part of our history and culture. However, partnership must be positive and empowering for all parties for it to be successful.

This finding is important because it outlines a Māori perspective on what partnership should look like within a Playcentre context. Māori voices are often marginalised in an institutional context. Waitere and Johnstone (2009) discuss how wāhine Māori voices are disregarded as a result of colonisation and hegemony:

The mana of Māori women continues to be calculated in terms of our physical presence and the conceptual absence of the messages embedded within our voices ... Often, however, we are absent in the forums that attempt to give us a voice to resolve

our dilemmas. Where we are physically present, we are often vocally absent, while in the spaces where we are vocal, the forces of the already powerful act to deny our physical presence. Hence, we continue to speak and to participate from the dominant group's margins that form our centres. (p. 19)

To move forward into a truly bicultural space Māori parents' voices in Playcentre need to be heard and acknowledged, and positive action taken to ensure that Playcentre is a safe space where Māori feel empowered.

4.6. Theme Three: Māori Resilience—From Whakamā to Whakamana in Playcentre

4.6.1. Outlining the Theme

In Section 4.5, I investigated the position that when participants focussed their kōrero about partnership through a lens of manaakitanga, they found it easier to mitigate cultural challenges that arose. In the third theme, I discuss the participant narratives when the focus was through the lens of wairuatanga, and where they discussed cultural challenges that evoked mamae and an overall feeling of cultural and parental fatigue (see Figure 2). For these participants their discussions about partnership were often underpinned by a subtext of whakamā. In this theme I reveal the relationship between positive partnership, whakamā and whakamana and why this is important to understand within the Playcentre context.

4.6.2. Defining Whakamā and Whakamana

Intergenerational trauma for Māori is a direct result of colonisation, loss of land, loss of language, and forced assimilation into European society (Smith, 2012; Thom & Grimes, 2022; Walker, 2004). The millennial generation of Māori in Aotearoa have been raised by parents whose childhood experiences of being Māori were often negative, due to discriminatory laws and social policies in housing and health (Houkamau et al., 2017). There is also lived experience from our mātua and tūpuna for whom, when interacting with Pākehā society, being Māori was often a negative experience. Despite social and political reform, systemic racism and inequality continues and is something that Māori must still navigate (Pack et al., 2015). These complex intersections of realities for Māori can contribute to feelings of whakamā. Whakamā is a complex concept that is not easily defined or expressed in English, however here I will outline its meaning in relation to how it is employed in this research.

According to a consensus of most writers on the Māori concept of whakamā, there is no equivalent concept in te ao Pākehā that fully embodies this experience (Knight, 2021; Metge,

1986; Sachdev, 1990; Smith, 2019). Within te ao Pākahā, there are a number of distinct and separate feelings and/or behaviours that are prevalent and experienced by Pākehā such as embarrassment, shame or inadequacy. However, whakamā encompasses these separate and distinct constructs into a singular concept, which speaks to how Māori perceive and/or order their human experience (Metge, 1986). As a result, whakamā is often translated into English as shame or embarrassment that relates to inadequacy (Knight, 2021; Metge, 1986; Sachdev, 1990). This is a superficial translation that only scratches the surface of the symptoms of whakamā and does nothing to encapsulate the complex causes.

Metge (1986) carefully explains how whakamā covers both the feelings a person experiences, and the behaviour they exhibit, and clarifies that mention of either the behaviour or feelings implies the other is also present for that person. She groups the inward feelings of whakamā into nine categories: feeling shy, feeling embarrassed, feeling uncertain, feeling inadequate, feeling incapable, feeling afraid, feeling hurt, feeling depressed, and feeling ashamed. She then organises the outward signs of whakamā into five groups which represent patterns of whakamā behaviour. The first outward sign involves the cessation of normal activity and interaction. A person may become unresponsive, frozen, and statue-like. Secondly, a person may attempt to cut off visual communication by covering their face with their hands, turning their back, or holding something against their face. The third outward manifestation of whakamā includes small repetitive movements that indicate unease, such as fidgeting hands and feet, scratching at a spot on the body, blushing and giggling, or only answering yes and no. This indicates a reduction in activity, rather than the complete cessation and, according to Metge (1986), is symptomatic of a milder case of whakamā. Fourthly, at times, whakamā manifests as a physical flight response where an individual will run away and hide themselves and their feelings and can be a sign of deep-seated whakamā. The fifth behaviour deals with a person's activity becoming excessive, rather than reduced. It is related to babbling language, boisterousness, laughing inanelly, or even becoming physically aggressive. However, in all cases the outward expressions of whakamā serve the purpose of reducing communication and interaction with others to a minimum (Metge, 1986).

According to Metge (1986), the causes of whakamā are dependent on three distinctions; 1) whether a person or group is whakamā on their own behalf or others; 2) whether the whakamā person or group incurred the whakamā through their own actions or the actions of others; and 3) whether or not wrongdoing is involved. Using these distinctions, Metge (1986) provisionally classifies the causes of whakamā (relating to an individual) into six groups:

perception of lower status, uncertainty and confusion, recognition of fault, being put down, being singled out, and feeling whakamā on behalf of others. Importantly, many causes of whakamā can also apply to social groups. Often this is concerned with the poor performance of a group, and the mistakes and/or offences of individuals within that group. In this sense the social strata of te ao Māori is evoked and relationships within whānau, hapū and iwi can be affected by whakamā. More importantly, these groups themselves can feel whakamā in relation to other whānau, hapū and iwi where they perceive themselves as inadequate, of lower status, or due to historical wrongdoing from one group to another. Of critical relevance in this project, are feelings of whakamā, as Māori, in relation to Pākehā, where it is perceived that Pākehā undervalue and marginalise Māori as a group (Metge, 1986). Feelings of whakamā are often tied to anxiety around language acquisition and inadequacy around tikanga which some whānau, hapū and iwi groups have lost as a result of colonisation, mass urban migration, and assimilation into Pākehā society (Ratima & May, 2011). This definition of the group dynamics between Māori and Pākehā in relation to whakamā is especially important to this research, where positive partnership between tangata whenua, mana whenua and tangata tiriti is a determining factor of success for Māori parents in Playcentre.

It is impossible to discuss whakamā without also discussing mana. Mana is a spiritual quality endowed in Māori from ngā ātua (Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2016; Metge, 1986). Whilst mana is often associated with the individual, it also interacts greatly with the society around them. An individual can increase their mana through good deeds and success in various areas of life. However, this increase in a person's individual mana also increases the mana of their whānau, hapū and iwi, once again revealing the social strata of Māori society where an individual is no greater than the sum of their wider social circle (Mead, 2016; Metge, 1986). Therefore, the same can be said about the diminution of mana. As Metge (1986) asserts, "Everything fell into place when I realised that whakamā is bound up with the lack or loss of mana in relation to others" (p. 42). Whakamā is based on comparison, and on comparing worth/mana, from one individual or group to another. It is about being conscious of a difference in status and a perception of a loss or lack of mana. A person's mana, and the perception of how much they hold, is not an objective measurement, but is dependent on inter-subjective assessment by both the individual and those who are part of the same social environment. At times an individual may believe they have more mana than others, and other times they will believe they have less. However, it is the assessment of a person's mana by the society around them that ultimately contributes to the accumulation or detracting of mana from an individual. This

is usually based on the person's performance and not their own assertions of the how much mana they hold (Metge, 1986).

Therefore, when looking at relations between Māori and Pākehā it is obvious that whakamā plays a crucial role in determining how positive partnership can occur. As Metge (1986) affirms, "It has become increasingly obvious that understanding *whakamaa* is of crucial importance in understanding and improving relations between Maori and Pakeha" (p. 19). Where some Māori, who perceive themselves to be lacking in mana, compare themselves with their Pākehā counterparts, whakamā is almost always present to some degree. However, on the other hand, there is whakamana. Whakamana means to create a feeling of empowerment, or to cloak and clothe an individual in mana. Therefore, whakamana is the antithesis of whakamā, and is concerned with disrupting the power imbalances that can reinforce feelings of whakamā (Knight, 2012). According to Knight (2012) this can be achieved by utilising whakawhanaungatanga to facilitate a connection to whakapapa and te ao Māori which increases an individual's mana, and therefore the mana of that individual's whānau, hapū and iwi.

4.6.3. Whakamā in Māori Playcentre Parents

Whakamā is a debilitating sickness that, if left untreated, can compound feelings of disconnection, shame, embarrassment, and guilt and lead to extreme depression in Māori individuals (Knight, 2021). As Smith (2019) explains,

Whakamā is sometimes qualified by the use of the terms mate and patu. 'Ka patu i te whakamā', where one is struck with shame, embarrassment or guilt, refers to an immediate reaction whereas 'ka mate i te whakamā', or to become sick or ill with whakamā, might refer to a reaction or response over time. (p. 28)

This definition is important to consider when exploring the whakamā present in the participants' kōrero. It is also important to consider the context within which the whakamā occurs, whether it is from an external circumstance or from interactions with another individual within Playcentre. The participants described instances where events or social interactions within Playcentre had caused feelings of whakamā.

Throughout her interview Alyssa's language was indicative of whakamā, which appears to be a response that is deeply ingrained in her reaction to identifying as Māori. She uses phrases such as not being "Māori enough," "not really being Māori" and "I don't know enough" throughout the interview. In one case, outlined earlier in section 4.5, Alyssa's whakamā appears to be a reaction to something that was said to her by another member. Alyssa felt that partnership in

her Playcentre was lacking because of Pākehā paralysis, which brought on feelings of inadequacy around her identity as Māori.

So, it hasn't been terribly positive from that side of things, especially because my own connection to our Māori heritage is tenuous that I have really tried to decide if I'm even Māori enough to consider myself Māori...

So, it's all sort of sitting in that same boat of not really being Māori, and none of us really having very much language...

I mean [Matariki] it's something that the centre in particular they seem to have celebrated for some time but not really with respect to its cultural origins. But I mean, I don't know that I know enough about it to even be leading that discussion...

I was interested in Kōhanga. But again, it comes back to that not knowing if I'm actually Māori enough to be able to go and do that. (Alyssa, Interview 5)

Alyssa also talks about her Māori heritage, and how the connection there is perceived by her as tenuous. She explained that this was due to strained relationships within her extended whānau. During the interview I reassured Alyssa that whakapapa is the only requirement for a person to claim their Māori heritage and shared some of my own experience around feeling like an “adequate Māori”. Whilst Alyssa’s kōrero showed many examples of language associated with whakamā, she also displayed language that suggested she was moving from that space into a space of whakamana. This is evident in these kōrero:

I started a debate over whether we should be having sparklers at Matariki. Reading all the commentaries that came out after this Matariki and even coming up to what and how fireworks and things like that, sparklers, glow sticks all that is the light pollution and noise pollution that takes away from what we're supposed to be considering at the time. Yeah, which is the remembrance and the stars and focusing on their meetings and things like that.

Even if you're not Māori, it doesn't make it inappropriate to use te reo, because it's the language of the nation, the language of the whenua that we're on, whether you're Māori or not. Just trying to define those boundaries and find what is Māori, what is tikanga. (Alyssa, Interview 5)

As Alyssa discussed in her kōrero, this change from whakamā to whakamana came as a result of her strengthening her own understanding of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga through the adult education opportunities offered through Playcentre, which in turn has strengthened her own whakapapa connections to te ao Māori.

Briar was another participant who discussed whakamā. However, her discussion was centred around language acquisition and knowing the appropriate tikanga on a marae in her life outside of Playcentre.

It's much harder to go back and learn it all, like even to learn te reo. Because I remember a lot from school and from going to Te Wānanga, but then if I got on a marae I'd be like, "Oh, God, I've got no idea." You know? And it's that fear, the fear and the guilt and the embarrassment of like, not knowing. (Briar, Interview 3)

Briar discusses feelings that are common in Māori whose whānau over generations have been disengaged from their culture due to colonisation. The language that she uses here includes fear, guilt, and embarrassment. The fear and guilt can be associated with feelings of inadequacy, such as those expressed by Alyssa. During our interview Briar also discussed whakamā in relation to Playcentre, and how she feels there is a balance that is struck between being seen as a disruptive Māori person, and maintaining your established relationships.

Well anyway, my centre and I think I wasn't prepared for it because when I first started there were these amazing [Māori] wāhine that were there, and they were so cool. And actually, one was, she spoke fluent and the other one was learning, and they had started their own Reo to go group when they left that was it. So, at the start, I was like, "Yes, this is my place. I love this!" You know? And [my daughter's] more around it and like, you know, and then they left, and it was up to me. And I was like I've just dropped the ball completely. And it is, it's cultural fatigue, you get over it. And I think, for us, especially dealing with a majority Pākehā it's really hard to explain where you're coming from without sounding like the angry brown mum. Which is, I don't know if it's silly, but it's, you know, you just think "Oh I can't be bothered." So, I just let so many things slide. So, when they stopped doing the karakia I was like, "well I'm not pushing for it every time if no one else wants to do it." (Briar, Interview 3)

The language Briar uses here, such as "angry brown mum" and "I don't know if it's silly," is indicative of whakamā. She also alludes to institutionalised racism as the cause and a lack of process within Playcentre that protects te ao Māori practices such as karakia. As with Alyssa, the whakamā present in Briar's kōrero appears to have built up over time. However, when she talks about the pronunciation of te reo Māori, Briar starts to use language that suggests whakamana of te ao Māori is important to her in the Playcentre space:

Are they going to be offended, and then it's going to be awkward? And I think sometimes, it's never worth it. They can say [Māori words] however they want. But then I'm like, no. Then no one's fighting for it. You know? No one's championing it. (Briar, Interview 3)

It is interesting that Alyssa and Briar both qualified their kōrero with statements about how it is important to maintain a connection to te ao Māori within Playcentre. Another participant who shares this feeling is Rachele. During our kōrero she mentioned a situation at her Playcentre where, during a special ceremony, she felt compelled to stand up and do a karakia which another member (tangata tiriti) had started. Rachele discussed throughout our interview that signs from te ao wairua come, and when they come, they cannot be ignored. This was one of those times for her. After the ceremony, however, she began to feel whakamā about it.

I was kind of feeling whakamā, you know, to like how do I sort of say sorry, but I didn't want to say sorry, you know, because I'm not sorry? Because I did what I felt like I had to do? Yeah. And I actually felt like I didn't have a choice. (Rachelle, Interview 1)

Rachelle shows how someone can move from whakamā to whakamana by empowering herself and cloaking herself in mana through her whakapapa connection to te ao Māori. Whakamā can manifest in different ways for different people. Often it manifests as self-doubt, failure, fatigue, or apathy and relates to a perceived lack of language acquisition and shame over not knowing enough te reo Māori or tikanga. This can lead to feelings of being seen as inferior by other Māori and Pākehā. There is also the issue of feeling inferior based on financial resources available, which is often related to systemic oppression of Māori (Sachdev, 1990). Sam's kōrero had a subtext of whakamā throughout, relating to a lack of financial resources, in comparison with other members of their Playcentre.

But we've been talking about how do we actually get our whānau back involved because there's all of these barriers—like we can look at best practice when it comes to pedagogy and when it comes to what we know is going to support our kids on and our whānau on that cultural journey. But I do think that the reality these days just makes that impossible for every whānau to do which is a shame because then we've got you know our lower class tamariki whose whānau are maybe working multiple jobs to survive they are missing out ... and our upper class whānau who have the time and have a parent spare a lot of the time to go and participate in stuff like Playcentre they don't always have the perspective to be able to look around the room and say well not every whānau here is in this position. (Sam, Interview 2)

During the interview with Sam, financial resources came up frequently as part of our discussion. Just before this extract, Sam had spoken about how the socio-economic profile of their Playcentre had changed. It is notable that Playcentres were initially established in wealthy suburbs, however the popularity of the Playcentre movement also saw many rural and urban Playcentres established in less affluent areas (Tearney, 2016; James & Aspden, 2022). A shift in the economic profile of Playcentre families likely lies in issues surrounding the current cost of living in New Zealand and the need to have dual-income households. Returning to the demographic information, Sam is the only participant who is a single parent on a benefit, whereas the other five participants are all in relationships where their partner's annual income allows one parent to stay at home with their tamariki. However, this is often not without some struggle and sacrifice also.

4.6.4. Finding Whakamana at Playcentre

Traditionally, Māori wāhine are seen as capable, strong, and essential to strong healthy communities and the wahine toa and mana wahine models are a testament to this (Pihama, 2020; Sharman, 2019; Simmonds, 2011). Māori women are often referred to as whaea, which

means mother or aunty, and, colloquially, teacher. It is interesting that one word can be used interchangeably to convey that Māori women are caretakers and educators. I refer to them as māmā toa: Māori māmā who are strong, resilient, and take care of their whānau and many Playcentre mothers, both Māori and non-Māori, are māmā toa. In this sense, and looking at the demographics of the participants, the type of parent who chooses to undertake Playcentre with their tamariki are educated, middle-class, capable, strong, and resilient parents who are reclaiming a space within ECE, not only for their children but for themselves. This is evident in the kōrero of the māmā I spoke to in this research. Although many of them have experienced whakamā, they continue to contribute to and to seek out education for their tamariki that celebrates Māoritanga.

In the previous section, Briar spoke extensively of whakamā, not only about Playcentre but also in her personal life, connected to her identity as Māori. However, she also shared some insight into the link between whakamā and intergenerational trauma. During our kōrero she discussed the idea of being seen as a ‘capable’ woman by others and whether this relates to culture.

Yeah, I do think that's a cultural thing. Because I think, because we're used to having to fight for everything. Even like in school, we're always going to be thought to be less or not as smart or not as rich or not as able to do everything. I think that's why we're like, "Okay, we'll try again. We'll try more. We'll do more to get on the same level I think, as Pākehā." Yeah, I don't think we mean to. I don't think we mean to think we're less, but I think that's that generational trauma. (Briar, Interview 3)

Briar makes an important statement about Māori women and the role that we play within society in Aotearoa. She is reflective about how wāhine Māori attempt to overcome whakamā through unconsciously working harder than their non-Māori peers. Combining this sentiment with the discussion Briar had on partnership within Playcentre, it is clear that she has attempted to embody this in the past. This is especially true in her kōrero about roles within Playcentre where she describes feeling compelled to take on more and more within Playcentre, despite feeling as though she did not have the time or energy to do so. It is a feeling I also felt during my time at Playcentre, but is not unique to that environment, I have felt those same feelings within my whānau, social groups, and workplaces too.

Following on from what was covered in Rachelle’s kōrero about feeling whakamā after following a calling from te ao wairua to deliver a karakia (see Section 4.6.3.), she explains how she finds whakamana for herself by following these callings.

And so that was like, kind of a big exchange because that was a spiritual thing that happened for me and to try and explain my spirituality or our spirituality as Māori that

sometimes you get a push or you get told, and you've just got to do something even if you don't want to. And you can't not listen, you don't have to do it. But the way I live my life was... I tried to do those things if I get the message. (Rachelle, Interview 1)

For Rachelle, her whakamana as Māori in Playcentre comes from a strong connection to Māori spirituality. Throughout her kōrero she spoke often about wairuatanga and the part this plays in empowering her Māoritanga. Rachelle draws on whakamana in her interactions with others in Playcentre. In this sense, Playcentre provides space for her to exercise her whakamana. She goes on to explain that after talking through her reasoning with the other non-Māori Playcentre parent, they understood where she was coming from and her reasons for stepping in to do the karakia. She does clarify during the retelling of this situation that she was asked to do the karakia prior to the ceremony where it was performed, but initially declined, due to being a newer member of the Playcentre at the time. However, during the ceremony, after hearing her fellow member begin a karakia she knew well, she felt compelled to stand and deliver it.

Krista, who is an experienced member of Playcentre, gave some important insights about mana, and how to whakamana yourself and others within Playcentre. We were discussing cultural challenges within Playcentre at the time and how mana, mauri, and wairua are respected by Maori and non-Māori in Playcentre.

I feel my mana 'cause it's mine. And I live it and model it, I think. I didn't used to, I used to let people treat me how they felt but yeah, it's mine to own and mine to uphold. One thing I've learned at Playcentre and finding who I am as a māmā, is learning to uphold it with others ... especially in conflict. So, when people talk about "oh, we're tearing mana down" I disagree ... They're tearing their own down, I think... So, if I feel disrespected ... I can address that.

But because I uphold my own mana, I can see other's perspectives; well why did they disrespect [me] and often it's their own mana feeling like it's wavering. So, I guess being an experienced member at Playcentre, I really feel like my mana is upheld more because I'm in a space where I'm mentoring, right? (Krista, Interview 4)

Krista is empowered and feels whakamana due to her tuakana role in Playcentre. She makes an important observation about disrespect in Playcentre. When a person is disrespected, it requires them to hold onto their mana, to whakamana themselves, and in this way they are able to avoid feelings of whakamā. If this is done successfully it is therefore not them whose mana is being reduced. Rather, it is the person being disrespectful who will be perceived to have a reduction in their mana by the group. Considering that Māori parents in Playcentre are describing whakamā about being Māori in Playcentre, this is an important observation, especially if the person being disrespectful to them is tangata tiriti. This shows that it is

important for Māori parents in Playcentre to find whakamana within themselves regardless of the external circumstances.

Kama has felt whakamā about her access to reo Māori but shared how she ultimately felt empowered through hearing te reo Māori used on session.

I didn't grow up around my Māori whānau. So, I always knew that I was Māori but I, and my mum tried her best to share my culture with me but understandably quite difficult to do when you're not Māori yourself. So, I have got lots of kupu, but I'm not in any way kind of fluent. I could follow along with basic kind of conversation, not necessarily answering te reo Māori, but I could follow along what was kind of being said.

It's just yeah, really supportive and really, I suppose, empowering. You know, it's, it's so cool being able to sit down and hear lots of conversations going on around and just to be able to hear te reo Māori being used so, I don't know what the word is, I suppose authentically, you know, like, just yeah, it's just a natural normal part of life. (Kama, Interview 6)

Kama expresses directly how her whakamā around language acquisition is ultimately mitigated through her Playcentre and their commitment to biculturalism and bilingual sessions. After further discussion with Kama, she explained that the bilingual sessions were initially started by tangata tiriti at her centre, which encouraged Māori whānau in the area to join Playcentre. Looking back at partnership, it is through this shared social capital that whakamana within Playcentre can occur on an individual level alongside a centre level.

4.6.5. Māori Resilience—From Whakamā to Whakamana in Playcentre

What these examples of whakamā and whakamana show is that moving from one space to the other relies on external factors, as much as it relies on individual resilience. Māori have a long history of resilience, going back to pre-European contact when our tūpuna voyaged around the Pacific, eventually settling in Aotearoa. There is also a history of resilience for Māori post-European contact that encompasses issues such as colonisation, language loss, loss of whenua, disease, and war (Kawharu et al., 2017). In part, Māori resilience can be tied back to the social structure of whānau, iwi, and hapū and our whakapapa to ngā atua.

In Playcentre, Māori resilience, and the ability of the participants in this study to move from whakamā into a space of whakamana, is related in part to the strength of partnership in their centres. Krista and Kama both discussed a strong sense of partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in their Playcentres, whereas Sam, Alyssa and Briar did not. Therefore, it is not surprising that Krista and Kama spoke about how their relationships at

Playcentre allowed them to move from whakamā into whakamana in the context of Playcentre. However, Rachelle finds whakamana from within herself and her deep connection to te ao Māori and te ao wairua. Her resilience comes not from external sources but directly through her whakapapa to ngā atua, and she draws on this when needed.

Māori resilience is dependent on multiple, strong, complex relationships between other Māori, tangata tiriti, and te ao wairua to thrive. In the context of Playcentre, this means that partnerships between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti must be positive and empowering for all parties. When this is the case, Playcentre allows Māori parents to build a group dynamic and social capital where they are better equipped when whakamā occurs. The participants' kōrero often suggests that Playcentre has been a space where they can be Māori without apologies and find that their resilience is built based on the strengths of their relationships with tangata tiriti. Playcentre has the potential to be a transformational space for Māori who are grieving the loss of access to their culture, while also reshaping their identity as Māori. It gives Māori parents a space to explore this while they are building their kete of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori.

This finding is important because it illustrates the challenges that Māori parents face within the Playcentre context. These challenges come from both an internal and external place, where whakamā is often triggered in relation to an external event that tests an individual's 'Māoriness,' whether intentional or not. However, as the participants show, where partnership and whakapapa are present, Māori parents are more likely to show resilience when feelings of whakamā surface. Therefore, Playcentre is a space where Māori parents face uncomfortable conversations or comments which can trigger whakamā, but if partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in their Playcentre is empowering they are able to move into a space of whakamana relatively quickly.

4.7. Discussion of Findings

Throughout this section I have woven the findings alongside some discussion of what these findings mean in the context of this research. The findings presented here are based on the subjective lens of myself as a Māori researcher and Māori Playcentre mother; they are accordingly based on what I bring to the table during the analysis process. Braun and Clark (2022) consider this a strength of the data: "Within a qualitative paradigm, researcher subjectivity—who we are, and what we bring to the research, ranging from our personal

identities and values, through to our disciplinary perspectives—is an integral part of the analysis” (p. 13).

It is evident when exploring these three key themes that they are all interconnected. They do not exist in isolation from one another. Each theme contributes further and builds on the previous theme to weave a bigger picture of what Māori parents’ experience in Playcentre looks like. There is a pattern woven within the findings of this research where whakapapa is the main strand.

The participants describe whakapapa to te ao Māori and Playcentre as being a central reason for joining Playcentre. They also spoke about how trust was a key factor in the choice of ECE for their tamariki. Being able to learn and build connections alongside their tamariki was a key aspect of their choice to join Playcentre. Part of the whakapapa connection that participants have to Playcentre is generational knowledge, either passed on from parents and extended members of their whānau, and/or lived experience of Playcentre as children themselves. It is a general consensus amongst the participants that this knowledge passed down from their tūpuna and lived experience from themselves shines a positive light on Playcentre and may have also influenced their decision to join. Whakapapa does not just influence a participant’s reasons for joining Playcentre, but also underpins their experiences within Playcentre.

Any person who is a resident of Aotearoa will encounter circumstances where partnership between themselves and tangata whenua needs to be navigated. Ignoring responsibilities around TTOW and therefore, biculturalism only marginalises Māori and reinforces systemic oppression of the Māori voice (Waitere & Johnston, 2009). Positive partnership, where tangata tiriti walk alongside tangata whenua by doing the mahi to learn te reo Māori me ōna tikanga, show self-awareness, and sometimes lead the necessarily processes for procedural change, is empowering for all. Partnership means that strong relationships (ngā hononga) are formed between individuals. This fosters a sense of community that can help to protect Māori parents in Playcentre when they are dealing with cultural challenges that arise in that space, and in their personal lives.

Where partnership is lacking, Māori parents are less inclined to feel empowered within their communities; therefore, when feelings of whakamā surface, it is less likely that they will be able to lean on the tangata tiriti within their Playcentre for support. This perceived lack of manaakitanga, utu, and tauawhiawhi may negatively impact that individual and enhance the

whakamā they are experiencing. Ultimately it makes it harder for Māori parents to feel the whakamana of being Māori in Playcentre and impacts negatively on their experience of Playcentre.

Therefore, these three themes, when woven together, present a whāriki of both negative and positive experiences of Māori parents in Playcentre, where whakapapa and partnership are key elements of their experience and whakamā/whakamana provide some context as to how whakapapa and partnership work together to empower Māori parents.

4.8. Summary

Throughout this chapter the voices of the participants have been at the forefront of the findings and resulting discussion. Given these emergent findings and their connection to the literature, a justifiable conclusion is that Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre are affected by their non-Māori peers in Playcentre. However, despite being affected by these relationships with tangata tiriti, Māori parents show a level of resilience that allows them to push through and whakamana their identity as Māori.

The focus of this research was not on finding any universal truth or multiple constructed truths from the participants. The focus of this research was to understand the varying and different experiences of Māori parents in Playcentres throughout Aotearoa. Credibility was achieved by grounding each interview in kaupapa Māori theory and ensuring that the tikanga of everyone was respected, which in turn assisted participants to share their stories and experiences in a safe space and provide a rich data set.

There is validity and reliability in the qualitative data set gathered from these interviews, as the participants gave their kōrero enthusiastically and willingly and have found agency in giving their voice to this research. When analysis was applied, it was led with manaakitanga for the participants to support their mana, mauri, and wairua, which was given willingly to this project. This research is not couched or grounded in deficit theory, but rather in empowering Indigenous voices through kaupapa Māori theory and practice. The next chapter will revisit the research questions and provide some context of the implications of this research.

Recommendations are made to Playcentre and the New Zealand Government for solutions to some of the issues that have surfaced through this research, then the strengths and limitations of the research are explored, before opportunities for future research are outlined. The concluding comments then draw this thesis to a close.

5 Conclusion

Moea te wahine o te pā harakeke

Marry the woman of the flax cultivation

Te pā harakeke is a metaphor for the extended family and for generations to come. So it makes sense to me that this whakataukī is about someone whose focus is firmly in the legacy camp. We are those people. We think about the future. And what kind of a future do we want to build for our younger generations, not only our own biological children, all children. (Elder, 2020, pp. 159-160)

This traditional whakataukī and Elder's (2020) explanation of the meaning speak to the importance of legacy and what we are leaving behind for future generations to uncover. As Māori Playcentre parents, we understand this legacy and the importance of nurturing culture in our children. This need to cultivate te ao Māori comes from many places within us as parents: an understanding that being Māori is to be celebrated; addressing mamae within ourselves at our lack of access and knowledge of our own heritage; and/or a calling from our tūpuna to strengthen our ties to te ao Māori. Whatever the reason, it is a common thread in the kōrero of Māori Playcentre parents. Playcentre becomes that space of safety for parents to explore this alongside their tamariki while reclaiming their culture. However, to be able to explore this effectively, Māori parents require positive partnership from their treaty partners in Playcentre. Without that partnership, Māori parents can become stuck in a cycle of mamae and whakamā, and therefore the cultivation of their identity as a Māori parent and their children's access to te ao Māori is halted.

5.1. Revisiting the Research Questions

The rationale in posing the research questions came from an insider perspective and knowledge of what it is to be a Māori parent in Playcentre. Despite extensive searches I could find no research at this time that looks at how Playcentre is viewed or experienced by Māori parents. Therefore, the following research questions were posed:

- *What are Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre?*
- *How do Māori parents feel that their mana, mauri, wairua, and Māoritanga have been respected and honoured in Playcentre?*
- *What are Māori parents' understandings of Te Whāriki?*

To answer these questions six interviews were conducted with Māori Playcentre parents from throughout Aotearoa. The interviews followed a narrative inquiry framework. There were interview questions that were used as prompts, however the kōrero was more focussed on telling stories of our time in Playcentre. The participants shared with me, and I shared with them. In this context, the theoretical framework of kaupapa Māori theory and practice was essential.

My primary research question asked about Māori parents' experience of Playcentre, and therefore, I thought about my own journey. My personal experience of Playcentre as a Māori parent was complex, and my feelings associated with this time in my life are complicated. As a mother it was a fantastic space to explore education with my tamāhine. As a Māori person, it was complicated. This is echoed in the narratives of the participants. Māori parents in Playcentre bring important skills and strengths to this educational space, and their value in Playcentre is undeniable. Importantly, their reasons for joining Playcentre were unanimous and echoed my own sentiments. Playcentre is a space that feels tika because it is a space where you can be involved in fostering your child's connection to the wider world. Also, each of the parents involved in this research had a whakapapa connection to Playcentre. As parents Playcentre is a warm, affirming space. However, as Māori parents there is an added level of complexity. When tangata tiriti and/or the culture of a Playcentre do not show partnership in a TTOW sense, this is disempowering for Māori. In Playcentre, we say that it takes a village to raise our tamariki, it also takes a village to create a truly bicultural space. This means that tangata tiriti partners in Playcentre have a responsibility to follow the examples set by Māori parents, and to help lead the way by fostering biculturalism regardless of the constituency of their Playcentre. As in Kama's experience, it was the efforts put in by non-Māori parents to create a bilingual session, that lead to more Māori whānau joining her Playcentre and contributing their mātauranga, tikanga, and kupu. Māori parents in Playcentre show that when this partnership is in balance, it allows them the space to connect to te ao Māori through their whakapapa and contributes to feelings of whakamana.

My second research question asked how Māori parents felt their wairuatanga and Māoritanga were respected and honoured in Playcentre. For this there is no clearcut answer. The participant's narratives about their mana, mauri and wairua were varied and dependent on the culture within their Playcentre, and circumstances within their everyday lives. However, a key thread of their kōrero was resilience, and how to move from feelings of whakamā into a space

of whakamana. From personal experience, I understand how hard it can be to whakamana yourself as Māori in Playcentre as this often means you are calling out things that may be offensive, racist, belittling, and inappropriate. However, the other parents in your Playcentre are often also your friends, therefore managing those relationships while also occupying a space of whakamana as Māori can feel difficult, and culturally fatiguing. What is interesting though, is the relationship between whakamana and positive partnership. Where a Playcentre's culture is fostering positive partnership, Māori parents expressed more language associated with whakamana instead of whakamā. Therefore, as Māori Playcentre parents, our relationships with tangata tiriti in Playcentre have a role in how we feel honoured and respected in our wairuatanga, and Māoritanga, and can play a role in the restoration of our mana, mauri and wairua.

For my third research question I wanted to look at Māori parents' understanding of *Te Whāriki*. It was obvious throughout the coding process that Māori parents interact with the strands and principles of *Te Whāriki* in an organic and authentic way. The concepts outlined in the pedagogy of *Te Whāriki* are inherent to Māori through their whakapapa to ngā atua and are embodied by Māori parents naturally. However, Māori parents' discussions about *Te Whāriki* were of little relevance to their experience of being Māori in Playcentre. Many praised it as a beautiful theoretical document. Others, despite praising it, felt it had little bearing on their Playcentre journey as Māori, or, criticised its non-prescriptive nature. Some of the participants admitted they did not know enough about it and needed to study it further. However, it was interesting that, despite being a bicultural curriculum, the participants' narratives' lacked mention of it. In summary, being a Māori parent in Playcentre is a complex intersection of many moving parts such as identity, whakapapa, parenthood, and wairuatanga, to name a few.

5.2. Implications of this Research

Māori parents experience Playcentre in a way that is unique from their peers. Being Māori in any space is challenging, as Māori are often the minority demographic when interacting in mainstream spaces. This research uplifts the kōrero of Māori parents in Playcentre, allowing them to share their true selves in a space that is culturally reflective and responsive, with a researcher who understands their outlook, because I have an insider perspective.

The parents to whom I spoke for this research expressed that whakapapa to both te ao Māori and Playcentre was instrumental in their choice of ECE. Connection to te ao Māori within the

millennial generation of parents in Aotearoa can be tenuous, and Playcentre allows Māori parents a space to operate within. Playcentre is a tika space for parents to explore their whakapapa and connect to te ao Māori, especially when their environment and peers accommodate that journey by being supportive of te ao Māori and leading through positive progressive action. The participants also expressed how important it was for them to be a part of their child's ECE education and journey, and that for various reasons they wanted to be able to build relationships within their communities, with likeminded parents, alongside their tamariki.

An important theme that came through the data analysis process was the need for partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti to be balanced. When balance is achieved a positive partnership is created, wherein Māori parents feel empowered as Māori. It also allows for a more authentic embedding of *Te Whāriki* and empowers tangata tiriti to become allies who will uphold te reo me ngā tikanga Māori within their individual Playcentres. In this way Māori parents felt their mana, mauri, and wairua are respected.

When the balance between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti is not achieved in a positive way, it can lead to mamae and induce whakamā in Māori parents. Every parent, in some way, described feeling both mamae and whakamā within the Playcentre space. Through analysis of the kōrero of the participants, it appeared that the key to turning that negative mauri into positive action was based upon the resilience of the participants, and this resilience was impacted by how much of a sense of belonging they felt in their Playcentre. The participants whose experiences were more positive with tangata tiriti tended to have a more resilient kōrero around these feelings of whakamā and mamae. However, this is not to say there is causation between the two, but rather a correlation was drawn through the analysis of the transcripts.

Parents' knowledge of *Te Whāriki* was varied, but during the data analysis process, when applying the strands of *Te Whāriki* to parents' experiences, it proved to be an effective tool for self-assessment and/or peer assessment. Learning is often focussed on the tamariki and not the kaiako; yet in Playcentre it is important to recognise that kaiako are also learning. If we do not take care of the needs of parents and ensure they too have a whāriki of mātauranga, then we cannot take care of the learning of our tamariki. If we do not do it for the parents, we cannot effectively do it for the tamariki.

By better understanding Māori as parents, their reasons for choosing Playcentre for their tamariki, and their collective experiences in Playcentre, the implication is that Playcentre Aotearoa can help to better support individual centres in creating spaces that Māori are able to thrive within. There is also an implication here for policy makers in government funding. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, government policy decisions around funding have historically favoured teacher-led services. This puts financial pressure on parent-led services such as Playcentre, which, compounded with the current cost of living crisis, means that fewer parents are financially able to participate in parent-led ECE models. This disenfranchises Māori parents who choose to be involved in their child's ECE journey through Playcentre.

5.3. Recommendations

The recommendations I suggest are aimed at addressing the implications for Playcentre and the government, discussed in Section 5.2.

Firstly, it is of vital importance to address the need of Māori Playcentre parents to have a safe space to air their grievances about issues surrounding te reo Māori, tikanga, te ao Māori, and interactions with other members that evoke whakamā. Many Māori Playcentre parents are the only Māori parent in the centre and need a designated person, space, or process to escalate these issues. This is a role that should be occupied by a current or past Māori Playcentre parent. Although this role may currently exist, it is not visible to the Māori parents I spoke to for this research. Higher visibility of this role is required.

A second recommendation to Playcentre is to facilitate and champion more research about the Māori experience of Playcentre. A 360-degree approach to this subject would help to understand the nuances of the Playcentre journey for tangata whenua. I would recommend interviewing korua, kuia, Māori mothers, Māori fathers, wider extended whānau, and Māori children. I would also recommend interviewing tangata tiriti partners in Playcentre about their understandings of *Te Whāriki*, biculturalism, and their obligations under TTOW. Research of this nature should be co-ordinated and resourced appropriately by Playcentre Aotearoa.

I also recommend that education on *Te Whāriki* and TTOW is mandatory for all parents in Playcentre and is completed within the first six months of joining. This would help tangata tiriti partners to understand their treaty obligations to Māori whānau at their individual centres and in a wider sense, within Aotearoa society. It would also bring that education to the forefront in a way that shows Playcentre is committed to making safe spaces for Māori to thrive within.

This is something Pākehā and non-Māori in Playcentre need to lead, instead of waiting for (or even expecting) Māori parents to champion those changes. Investment in educational development of parents in *Te Whāriki* and TTOW by Playcentre will contribute to positive partnership in individual Playcentres. In this sense I also believe it is important that Playcentre offers more educational opportunities for parents to learn and access te reo Māori courses. Subsidising, or facilitating free te reo Māori courses for Playcentre parents would mean more te reo Māori can be shared on session by all parents. This would be of great benefit to Māori whānau and would show a level of partnership that fulfils obligations under TTOW. It would also greatly benefit the tamariki of Playcentre to hear te reo Māori normalised and used in more than a nominal way.

A recommendation to the New Zealand Government is to address their funding models for ECE. Parents should be funded directly if they choose to attend a parent-led service. This would firmly place the power of the choice back in the hands of parents. Currently, due to the rising costs of living and a requirement in many families to be a dual-income household, choices around ECE are harder than ever for parents. Funding parents to remain at home with their tamariki and educate them through parent-led services, such as Playcentre or Ngā Kōhanga Reo, would help alleviate financial pressure for whānau. More Māori parents could then be empowered to choose the ECE option that truly fits their worldview and philosophies around childcare, which were factors that were at the forefront of the participants' decision to join Playcentre.

5.4. Strengths and Limitations of the Data

This research focussed on Māori parents' voices first and foremost, and, interestingly, the participants focussed their kōrero on themselves, rather than their tamariki. Many described the process as a form of catharsis and were glad to have a space where they could decompress about their experiences with someone who is outside of their Playcentre, but who understood where they were coming from. Māori parents in Playcentre are in a position where it appears they are struggling with balancing their identity as Māori and wanting to protect Māori cultural aspirations for their tamariki, while managing relationships with other non-Māori Playcentre members. Māori people in Playcentre are empowered by their subjectivity as Māori, not restricted by it, and should not be limited by some of the complex social assumptions that are driven by colonial constructs and attitudes towards Māori identity. I see this as a strength within the data, as it affirms that Māori parents in Playcentre are struggling to feel that their voices are being heard.

Playcentre is a space that these Māori parents have expressed is tika for their whānau. They want to have the option to choose a space where they can experience ECE alongside their tamariki while empowering themselves in their tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. Playcentre is a unique space that can be utilised to explore how positive partnership between parent educators in the ECE space creates better outcomes for all. Empowering our Māori parents in Playcentre is a collective effort that will lead to true partnership. Where there is partnership, there is success, and this could be a model for other Playcentres to adopt.

The participants for this research were from different parts of Aotearoa and this dispersion allowed a wider range of Māori experience to be captured. While this is a strength of this data, it is also a limitation. Due to the small sample size of six interviews, this is not wholly representative or encompassing of the experience of Māori parents in Playcentre. This research simply opens the conversation.

There is also a definite socio-economic profile sampled within this research, where the majority of participants are well educated, higher-income earning, heterosexual, cis-women, and mothers. Therefore, one key limitation within this research and data set is the lack of Māori fathers or grandparents, lower income whānau, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+. Within this research, one participant does identify as takatāpui, and I honour and respect their kōrero. However, a more diverse demographic would be appropriate for any further research conducted.

The strengths of the data lie in its theoretical underpinnings and the whakapapa of the participants and the researcher. Kaupapa Māori has provided a foundation upon which the data is built and formed into a mat of Māori knowledge through the analysis process. Weaving the whāriki of Māori knowledge by using inductive and deductive coding allows for a te ao Māori perspective to be applied the data. Whakapapa to te ao Māori and Playcentre mean that the data and the analysis of the data is coming from an insider perspective. I consider this a strength and a provision under kaupapa Māori theory of tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. It is also the first research that I am aware of about Māori parents in Playcentre, and therefore adding the voices of Māori to the wider conversation about Playcentre is timely.

5.5. Identifying Further Research

Wider research needs to be conducted on Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre. This research focussed on a small sample of six participants and as discussed in Section 5.4, there is a definite socio-economic profile within this research. To best understand Māori parents within Playcentre a wider net should be laid, and a wider, more diverse demographic sampled. In section 5.2 I outlined what this research should look like, and how it should be a 360-degree project that investigates numerous perspectives on Playcentre.

Further research should also be conducted on the application of treaty principles within individual Playcentres and how this contributes to positive partnership. This research should look at the intersections between TTOW, use of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga, and *Te Whāriki* in the Playcentre context. This research, and the research recommended above, should be appropriately resourced, funded, and co-ordinated by Playcentre. A key challenge in further research into Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre, is the voluntary nature of mahi that Playcentre is built on. In the current cost-of-living crisis this is especially poignant.

5.6. Concluding Comments

This research aimed to highlight Māori parents' experiences of Playcentre and emphasise the unique opportunities within Playcentre to support te ao Māori. Findings showed that this was possible when Māori parents felt manaakitanga from tangata tiriti at their Playcentre and positive partnership was established. However, Māori parents who did not feel the tautoko and tauawhiwhi of tangata tiriti in their Playcentre, reported feeling culturally fatigued by the pressure of constantly pushing a Māori agenda. For some participants this meant feelings of whakamā surfaced, and, without support from their peers, whakamana was harder to find. However, the resilience of Māori parents was key in turning whakamā to whakamana in the Playcentre space. The findings also showed how whakapapa was an important catalyst in Māori parents' choice of ECE services. Intergenerational, predominantly female relationships are key for Māori parents in Playcentre. Our relationships with our māmā and kuia are spaces of safety we go to when parenting our own children, their advice, narratives, and experiences are valid, and help to guide us in our own decisions as parents.

As a Māori Playcentre parent myself, it is my hope that this thesis has highlighted some of the common experiences of Māori parents in Playcentre. I truly believe that Playcentre was the best ECE option for my own tamāhine, and when positive partnership is present it is a space that is tika for many Māori parents. However, there is work to be done in increasing the

visibility of Māori parents in this space. There is amazing work being done in Playcentre by Māori parents, and that is especially true of the Māori wāhine, māmā and takatāpui who chose to take part in this research. Suffice it to say that, warts and all, I would not hesitate to choose Playcentre again for my tamāhine. The relationships I built in Playcentre are still active today, and I know that these māmā of Playcentre are safe spaces for my tamāhine. If required they would care for her in the same way, and with the same values, that I employ in parenting her. Playcentre is all about manaakitanga, connection, learning, and being together. In a way it is a space that harks back to an older form of society our tūpuna thrived in where whakawhanaungatanga was relied on to survive and thrive.

Finally, this research is my love letter to myself, the participants, and other Māori parents in Playcentre. It has been an undertaking that comes from a space of great respect for Playcentre and the importance of Playcentre in my life, as a child and as a mother. Playcentre truly is about whānau tupu ngātahi, families learning together. We never stop learning and reaching to be better. “Whaowhia te kete mātauranga” Fill your basket with knowledge.

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Glossary

ako	learn/study/instruct
aroha	love/kindness
atua	deity/god
awhi	embrace
awhinatanga	(to be) in service of others
hapū	subtribe
harakeke	New Zealand flax
hui	traditional meeting
iho	essence
iwi	tribe
kai	food
kaiako	teacher
kākahu	feathered cloak, clothes
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
karakia	prayer
kaumātua	elders
kaupapa Māori	Māori approach/topic
kaupapa	the work
kāwanatanga	government/dominion/rule
koha	reciprocity and gratitude
kōrero	talk/speak
koroua	grandfather, elderly man
kotahitanga	unity/togetherness, a principle in Te Whāriki referring to holistic development
kōtare	New Zealand kingfisher
kuia	grandmother, elderly woman
kupu	words
māmā	mother
mamae	trauma
mana	power
mana aotūroa	learning outcome or strand in Te Whāriki referring to exploration
mana atua	learning outcome or strand in Te Whāriki referring to wellbeing
mana motuhake	independence/governance over oneself
mana reo	learning outcome or strand in Te Whāriki referring to communication
mana tangata	learning outcome or strand in Te Whāriki referring to contribution
mana wāhine	strong woman/ Māori feminism
mana whenua	learning outcome or strand in Te Whāriki referring to belonging
manaakitanga	hospitality
manuhiri	a guest
Māoritanga	Māoriness
marae	the area in front of a wharehau
Matariki	Māori new year
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge

mātauranga	knowledge
mate Māori	Māori sickness
mātua	parents
māuiui	unwell
mauri	lifeforce
mihi	greeting
mihimihi	introductions
mokopuna	descendant
ngā atua	the gods
ngā hononga	a principle in Te Whāriki referring to relationships
Ngā Kōhanga Reo or Te Kōhanga Reo	Māori language nests – total immersion Māori language early childhood settings
ngā puna kōhungahunga	Māori playgroups
ngāhere	forest, bush
ngā hononga	relationships
Pākehā	non-māori new zealander of european descent
Papatūānuku	earth mother
pepeha	tribal introduction of self
pōwhiri	traditional welcome ceremony
rangatira	leader
rangatiratanga	leadership
rangi tūhāhā	realms of heaven
Ranginui	sky father
raranga	process of weaving
rohe	region
rōpū	group
takatāpui	lgbtqia+ person
tamāhine	daughter
tamaiti	child
tamariki	children
Tāne Māhutā	god of the forests and birds
tangata Māori	Māori people
tangata tiriti	people of the treaty
tangata whenua	Indigenous people or people of the land
tāngata	people
tangata	person
tangihanga	funeral ceremonies
taonga tuku iho	treasures passed down from ancestors
taonga	treasure, precious and prized possession
tapu	sacred
tauawhiawhi	mutual support, partnership
tauwiwi	non-Māori
tauparapara	incantation
tautoko	support
te ao Māori	the Māori world/worldview
te ao Pākehā	the western world
te ao wairua	the spiritual world
te kore whakapapa	ritual incantation used in whaikōrero to explain the birth of the universe
te pā harakeke	a metaphor for whānau using a multigenerational model – also a plantation/stand of harakeke
te reo Māori me ōna tikanga	Māori language, grammar and syntax
te reo me ngā tikanga Māori	Māori language and customary practices

te reo Māori	the Māori language
te taiao	the natural world
Te Wānanga	kaupapa Māori tertiary providers
Te Whāriki	New Zealand early childhood education curriculum
tika	to be correct/true
tikanga	cultural values
tino rangatiratanga	self determination
toa	strength
tohu	sign
tuakana/teina	older/younger sibling. used to explain mentor roles
tupuna/tūpuna	ancestor/ancestors
turangawaewae	ancestral home, place to stand that is based on whakapapa connection
utu	reciprocity
wahine	woman
wāhine	women
wairua	spirit
wairuatanga	spiritual nature
whaea	mother/aunty/teacher
whakairo	carving
whakakapi	closing
whakamā	shame/embarrassment
whakamana	to give authority to, a principle in Te Whāriki referring to empowerment
whakapapa	genealogical connections
whakataukī	Māori proverb(s)
whakawhanaungatanga	relationship building
whānau	main family unit
whanaunga	kin
whanaungatanga	relationship/kinship
whānau tangata	a principle in Te Whāriki referring to family and community
whare	home
wharenuī	traditional meeting house
whāriki	woven communal mat
whenua	land
whiria	plaited or braided together

Appendix A: Tools

a) Consent Form

The logo for AUT (Auckland University of Technology) is displayed in white text on a black rectangular background.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Consent Form

Project title: *Whiria te tamaiti, whiria te tangata, whiria te mātauranga: Māori parents' experience of Playcentre*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Elisa Duder & Dr Chris Jenkin*

Researcher: *Talena Hansen*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 24th May 2022.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I wish for my name to be used in the final thesis.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on the 12th of August 2022 AUTEK Reference number 22/182

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

24/05/2022

Project Title

Whiria te tamaiti, whiria te tangata, whiria te mātauranga: Māori parents experience of Playcentre

An Invitation

Ko Matawhaurua te maunga.
Ko Te Arawa te waka.
Ko Waitahanui te awa.
Ko Ngāti Mākino te iwi.
I whānau mai au i Papakura.
Kei Titirangi tōku whare.
Ko Talena tōku ingoa.

Kia ora, my name is Talena. I am a master's student at Auckland University of Technology and this research will help me to attain a Master of Arts degree with a research focus in Māori development. I am currently looking for participants to take part in research about Whānau Māori involvement in Playcentre and would like to invite you to be one of them.

What is the purpose of this research?

The benefits of this research to the participants, researcher and wider community lies in gaining further understanding of how Māori parents experience the Playcentre model of early childhood education (ECE).

Participants

Participants will benefit as their kōrero, their Māori voice, will be privileged in the wider academic conversation on Playcentre. They will be able to offer a unique perspective of what it means to be Māori in Playcentre.

Researcher

The primary researcher will benefit from this research through gaining a Master of Arts qualification. She will also gain knowledge of how Māori parents experience Playcentre.

Wider Community

The focus being specifically on the Playcentre model of education from a Māori perspective is timely considering the current precarious nature of the organisation, with government funding reducing, and many Playcentres throughout Aotearoa closing as a result. There is little to no research that has been competed about Playcentre from a Kaupapa Māori perspective. This research will benefit the wider community by giving a Māori perspective on Playcentre and information from which to develop future responses to Te Whāriki and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were identified through either a relationship with myself from my involvement with Titirangi Playcentre, or from another member who has been contacted about this research. You are being invited to participate as you meet the criteria for this study:

- You are currently enrolled in a Playcentre or have recently been enrolled between January 2021 and January 2022.
- You identify as Māori

It is therefore possible that you may know some of the participants in this study. If you wish to take part in this study, it is important that you are aware of this and agree to take part knowing this.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you wish to take part in this research, then please contact me at talena.hansen@aut.ac.nz. From here if you are selected to take part, then I will contact you to set a time and day to complete the interview.

You should have received a consent form along with this information sheet. This outlines that your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

On the day, before we get started, we will go through the consent form together and I will have you sign it before we begin the interview process.

What will happen in this research?

This research involves a 90 minute Zoom interview, or a 90 minute in-person interview if you are within Auckland and prefer to meet kanoahi ki te kanoahi (face to face). The interview will include specific questions about your experience as a Māori parent in Playcentre. It is an individual interview between yourself as a Māori parent enrolled in Playcentre, and me as the researcher.

The location of the interview can be discussed beforehand and if it suits you, can include your home if childcare needs to be taken into consideration. I will take care to ensure that your privacy is respected, and you feel safe. Although your tamariki may be present at the time of the interview, they will not be interviewed or observed as a part of this research.

The interview will be audio recorded and the recording will be stored separately from your consent form. There will be no information included in the audio recording that can identify you unless you indicate on the consent form that you wish to be identifiable. The recording will be via iPhone or iPad recording apps or if the interview is via Zoom there will be audio recording. Written consent allowing audio recording to take place will be sent via email beforehand and reconfirmed at the time of the interview.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There may be some discomfort around questions relating to cultural competency and te reo me ōna tikanga Māori (te reo Māori and tikanga), which could bring up some mamae (trauma) for you. If at any time you wish to end the interview or do not want to answer a question, then let me know and we will stop the interview or move onto the next question. Your participation is voluntary.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

AUT Student Counselling and Mental Health is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- drop into our centre at WB203 City Campus, email counselling@aut.ac.nz or call 921 9998.
- let the receptionist know that you are a research participant and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet.

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling on <https://www.aut.ac.nz/student-life/student-support/counselling-and-mental-health>

For Kaupapa Māori based care there are other services available (which may be at a cost to yourself) and can be found here:

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/kaupapa-maori-7/>

What are the benefits?

This research will benefit me by helping me to attain my Master of Arts from AUT. It may also benefit Māori who are enrolled in Playcentre, and those who may enrol in the future by helping to understand what your experience is within this ECE environment. Information about your experience of Playcentre from a Māori perspective will be shared with Playcentre Aotearoa and may help those in charge to make decisions about Playcentre that benefit Māori families.

This research is in part funded by Ngāti Māhino Iwi Authority through a scholarship awarded to me through their tertiary scholarship programme. There is a benefit to them as my iwi through their support of postgraduate Māori education for their people.

How will my privacy be protected?

You will not be identified by name in the research and procedures in place will ensure that no identifying details about you are included in the final thesis, unless you indicate on the consent form that you wish to be identified.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no monetary costs associated with this research, but the time required would be for a 90-minute interview via Zoom or in person if you are in Auckland and COVID levels allow. You will be offered a koha for your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please let me know within 14 days of receiving this information sheet whether you would like to take part.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A summary of the findings will be made available to Playcentre Aotearoa, and to you, and/or a link to my completed thesis will be made available to you via a link send after it is complete.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Elisa Duder, elisa.duder@aut.ac.nz or (+649) 921 9999 ext. 6561

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, ethics@aut.ac.nz or (+649) 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Talena Hansen, talena.hansen@aut.ac.nz, 0279 595 959

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Elisa Duder, elisa.duder@aut.ac.nz or (+649) 921 9999 ext 6561

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on the 12th of August 2022 AUTEK Reference number 22/182

c) Indicative Interview Questions

Whiria te tamaiti, whiria te tangata, whiria te mātauranga: Māori parents' experience of Playcentre

NOTE: These questions are indicative only. As this is Kaupapa Māori research there will be room in the interview for the participant to share their kōrero in a way that is comfortable for them. This may mean deviating from the questions at points to discuss what the participant feels is important to share.

Primary Question:

What are Māori parents' experience of Playcentre?

Secondary Questions:

1. How do Māori parents feel that their mana, mauri, wairua, personal tapu, and Māoritanga have been respected and honoured at Playcentre?
2. What are Māori parents' understandings of *Te Whāriki*?

Note:

- *The interview will take place in one session and will take approximately **90 minutes**. There may be a follow-up interview to clarify any details at a later date.*
- *The interview will take place over Zoom or in-person if the participant is within Auckland and prefers a kano ki te kano (face to face) interview.*
- *At any time, a participant may stop the interview and withdraw their consent. They may also choose not to answer any question(s) at any time.*
- *This interview is designed to be a kōrero, so the following indicative interview questions are there to encourage discussion.*
- *At the beginning of the interview some demographic information will be asked; this will be informal and will be captured as part of the general kōrero. Participants will be informed that they are not required to give any information that they do not feel comfortable sharing*

Demographic Questions:

1. *For the transcript can you please state your full name, age and ethnicity?*
2. *What is your iwi affiliation (if known)? May be covered in pepeha*
3. *What is your chosen gender and pronouns you wish to be used?*
4. *What is the gender of your parenting partner (if applicable)? What are their pronouns?*
5. *What is the gender(s) of your child(ren)?*
6. *Where do you live?*
7. *What is your household's annual income?*
8. *What is your religion (if any)?*
9. *What is your level of education?*
10. *Do you still work?*
11. *What is your Playcentre whakapapa? Did you attend as a child?*

Interview Questions:

- 1. As a Māori parent, what are some important needs you have for yourself and your tamariki that Playcentre accommodates?***
- 2. Tell me a little about how, as a Māori person, your mana, mauri, and wairua have been respected in the Playcentre environment? How are your physical, spiritual and emotional needs met for yourself and your tamariki?***
- 3. As a Māori parent, can you explain why you chose Playcentre over other ECE options?***
- 4. Can you describe the successes and/or challenges you have faced as a Māori Playcentre parent?***
- 5. Can you tell me about your understanding of Te Whāriki, from a Māori parent's point of view?***
- 6. What is the most important aspect of Playcentre for you and your tamariki, and how does it fit with your worldview as a Māori person?***

Appendix B: Hui Process Table

Hui process	Definition	Use in this context	Observations from the interviews	Reflections from the process
Mihimihi – Introductions	To greet, pay tribute, speech of greeting at the beginning of a gathering ⁹	Mihimihi began the hui process by welcoming those attending. Thereafter, each interview began with a brief introduction to the participant, making sure they were happy to continue, and they had the time to be able to sit down and do the interview then and there. Then we discussed the consent form, and I asked if they had any questions before we began. After answering any questions that arose, I then went over what we would cover in the interview and reassured participants that this was an informal kōrero where there are questions I might ask, but these were prompts and our kōrero would flow and go where it needed to go.	<p>Two participants happened to have sick children at home with them, so I did offer to set another time for the interview as I did not want to impose on them, especially when children are ill. Being a mother myself I understand how complicated it can be when you are juggling illness and other responsibilities. However, both participants wanted to continue, and so I made sure not to make the interview drag out in these instances.</p> <p>For the kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) interviews the introductions were natural and I came with kai to share. The participants offered me a drink and we chatted about our children or motherhood. One participant chose to come to my whare, and so when she arrived, I made us a drink and plated the kai she brought with her while we chatted about politics in te ao Māori.</p> <p>For all of the kanohi ki te kanohi interviews where I brought kai, I made sure to check with them about food intolerances and preferences beforehand. This shows a commitment to manaakitanga.</p>	I approached the interviews informally, but despite this there is some ‘housekeeping’ that needs to be done prior to beginning. This is where we went through the consent form, etc. I also had to set up my recording equipment and test it to ensure it was working. Upon reflection I would have liked to have a checklist of the necessary housekeeping for organisation purposes. I would also have liked to have had more reliable equipment as I did have some technical difficulties where the recording cut out (due to internet lag) or was not well recorded (positioning in the room) at two of the interviews.

⁹ All definitions in this table are reproduced from *Te Aka Māori Dictionary* <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>

<p>Karakia – Spiritual and emotional protection</p>	<p>To recite ritual chants, say grace, pray, recite a prayer</p>	<p>Karakia is a cornerstone of Māori philosophical ideals. It provides spiritual and emotional protection and is a petition to te ao Wairua for guidance and support. It is also designed to bring strength and clarity to the hui (Mead, 2016). However, as I understand that not every participant may have wanted to engage in the karakia, I asked each participant what their preference was and if they preferred to perform the karakia themselves.</p>	<p>One participant chose to perform their own karakia for our kaupapa, the other five were all happy for me to perform the karakia on their behalf. Every participant was enthusiastic about the use of karakia for this kaupapa.</p> <p>At the beginning and conclusion of each interview I had a karakia prepared to provide protection for the participants and myself while the kaupapa was happening. The karakia I chose were traditional karakia and the same ones were used each time.</p>	<p>Upon reflection I am glad that I included karakia. Each participant was happy for the interview to begin and end with karakia. I felt that it settled the mauri of myself and the participants.</p>
<p>Whakawhanaungatanga – Relationship building</p>	<p>The process of establishing relationships, relating well to others</p>	<p>The process of whakawhanaungatanga is one of establishing relationship and finding common ground. It is an important principle in te ao Māori where the kin-based model of Māori social structure comes in to play and shared experiences create connections between individuals (Mead, 2016).</p>	<p>At the beginning of each interview, I shared my whakapapa with the participants and shared with them the experiences that had brought me to doing this research. They then shared their whakapapa and a bit about themselves and why they were taking part in this research. Many also shared some insights into what brought them to Playcentre. This was often where I began to ask my demographic questions, I made sure that participants were aware they were under no obligation to answer them and explained why I was capturing this information. I recorded these in a spreadsheet I had open in front of me. However, during this part of the hui process, participants naturally shared much of what I was hoping to gather about their demographics through their kōrero about themselves.</p>	<p>For some participants the demographic questions felt like I was ticking boxes on a form. This was most often in the online interview context, perhaps because I was seated at my computer typing into a spreadsheet. So, it felt very much like an interview. However, this feeling often faded during the kōrero as the participants and I began to chat and share our experiences within Playcentre.</p>

Kōrero – The interview	Speech, narrative, story, account, discussion, conversation, discourse	The interviews took place both kanohi ki te kanohi and online via Microsoft Teams. After following the hui process of mihimihi, karakia, and whakawhanaungatanga, the kaupapa began. I began by asking the participants some demographic questions. I explained that these demographic questions are simply there to get a picture of who they are, and where they come from so, I can best represent their kōrero.	The interviews themselves were informal and although I did ask some of the questions I had prepared, they were in no way perfunctory. Each question was often asked in relation to a discussion that evolved naturally about a particular topic, and the questions simply acted as a gentle guide along the way. More often the participants and I spoke deeply of our experiences, and we shared the space together, giving and taking from the conversation where it was needed.	I would have liked to have been able to complete all the interviews kanohi ki te kanohi. However, funds did not stretch as far as plane tickets around Aotearoa.
Koha – Reciprocity and gratitude	Gift, present, offering, contribution – especially one maintaining social relationships and had the connotations of reciprocity	The purpose of koha is to show gratitude and respect, and is about reciprocity (Mead, 2016). I considered the participants’ kōrero a koha to my overall research project, and therefore I chose to provide a koha to them. This showed them my gratitude and respect for sharing their experiences with me.	Each koha was given with a card that was designed by a Māori artist and a handwritten note thanking them for their contribution to my research. Within each card was a \$100 Visa Prezzy voucher. I choose to provide this amount to each participant in the spirit of aroha and manaakitanga. The rising cost of living in Aotearoa is affecting us all and asking parents to find time in their lives to speak to me between all the different roles they already occupy required an equivalent koha. For my friend who participated from my past Playcentre I also took two toys with me to the interview, one for each of her tamariki. There was a ruru (owl) and a taika (tiger). Something compelled me to choose these toys. During the koha stage of the hui I gave the toys alongside the Visa Prezzy card and my friend told me how significant the ruru is for her in her whānau, as it symbolises her tūpuna. Also,	The koha was a successful part of the hui process, my only reflection here is that I would have liked to be able to send toys to each of the participants tamariki. However, it was the personal nature of my relationship with my friend that compelled me to do this for her whānau.

			after the interview I received an email from my friend saying that the taika was her son's new favourite toy.	
Whakakapi – Closing and farewell	To conclude, complete, finish (speeches, writing, lectures) – especially in the sense of tying together the ideas that have been said or written earlier or by other speakers	The whakakapi represents the end of the hui and is not something that ought to be rushed. After completing the kaupapa and ending the audio recording, the participants and I would eat some kai and chat about our general lives or decompress from the often difficult conversations we had during the kōrero. I found that this allowed for a settling of the mauri and wairua of the participants.	<p>With a few of the participants the whakakapi was extensive, as after the kaupapa of the kōrero, when I had stopped recording the interview, we were able to chat and relate even more so on a personal level.</p> <p>One of the participants stayed and chatted for two hours following our interview. Another ate kai and talked with me about our mutual friends and where life is heading for us. It was one of the most rewarding parts of the interview process.</p>	The whakakapi was harder to achieve online as there was no kai to be shared to move the space from tapu to noa. Also, in an online setting it is harder to just continue to chat; once the work is done there is a pressure to sign off. Perhaps this is a remnant of the COVID era of working from home. The whakakapi felt more rushed in an online context.

Appendix C: Demographic Information

First name	Age	Ethnicity	Iwi	Hapū	Gender	Annual income	Religion	Level of education	Employment	Playcentre whakapapa
Alyssa	31	Māori, Australian, European	Te Arawa	Ngāti Pikiao	F	80-90K	None	Bachelor's w/ honours	Stay at home parent	Attended with mother
Briar	32	Māori, NZ European	Tuhoe	Waimana	F	90K	None	NCEA Level 2	Stay at home parent	Attended Playcentre as a child
Kama	32	Māori	Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa	-	F	70k	None	Bachelor of ECE	Stay at home parent	Attended Playcentre with her mum
Krista	39	Māori	Ngāti Apakura	-	F	100k +	Agnostic	Bachelor	Stay at home parent	Mother attended Playcentre with younger siblings
Rachelle	43	Māori, Pākehā	Tainui o tainui, Ngāti Hikairo	-	F	-	Te ao Wairua	Master of Art Management	Stay at home parent	Aunty attended Playcentre, participant went along with them
Sam	27	Māori, Pākehā	Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa	-	Takatāpui	Sole parent benefit	None	Bachelor of leadership for change	Benefit and part time work	Attended Playcentre and mother was a facilitator in PC

Appendix D: Ethics Approval

The logo for Auckland University of Technology (AUT) features the letters 'AUT' in a bold, white, sans-serif font against a black rectangular background.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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12 August 2022
Elisa Duder
Te Ara Poutama

Dear Elisa

Re Ethics Application: **22/182 Whiria te tamariki, whiria te tāngata, whiria te mātauranga: Māori parents' experience of Playcentre.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 12 August 2025.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The ATEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

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