



**Transitioning from secondary school to university:  
Māori Students and kapa haka – an AUT case study.**

**Lyndiana Rosieur**

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## Whakaeke<sup>1</sup>

*He aha te mahi mō runga  
I te marae e tau nei  
E ko te tui, e ko te tui  
E ko te noho ki te kotahitanga  
Ki te Kīngi Māori e tū nei  
E tū nei i runga i te mana Māori Motuhake  
E tū nei Whiti! Whiti! Whiti ki te tika Whiti ki te ora,  
Whiti ki te rangamārie  
Titia iho Au! Au! Aue hā! Au! Au! Aue hā*

What is the role to be played?  
On the marae before us  
It is to align  
And to involve ourselves in a spirit of unity  
With the Māori King standing before us  
Standing before us with the authority of Māori independence  
Let us adopt that philosophy!  
So that rectitude, well-being and peace  
Will be part of our very being  
(Kāretu, 1987, p. 14)

## Abstract

This study takes a unique approach to Māori tertiary engagement by exploring the potentiality of *kapa haka* (Māori performing groups) to facilitate Māori student transition from secondary school to university. Accordingly, the question is posed: What role does kapa haka play in Māori students' transitions from secondary to tertiary education? The case study involved the kapa haka group Titahi ki Tua (TKT), from the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). This approach enabled an in-depth investigation into how kapa haka influenced the lived experiences of Māori university students involved in the group. Kaupapa Māori theory provided a cultural framework that permeated all aspects of the study. Māori ways of thinking and doing ensured that the qualitative interviews were delivered under the auspices of a Kaupapa Māori agenda. The key findings from the study reveal how students' multifaceted transitions are supported by the cyclic relationship between TKT and the AUT *marae* (courtyard surrounded of culturally significant buildings), Ngā Wai o Horotiu. Ngā Wai o Horotiu is AUT's cultural refuge and backdrop to TKT kapa haka activities.

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**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.

Signed:

Date: 29/11/2020

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## **Ethics Approval**

On 25 March 2019, this research gained ethical approval 19/77 from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

This research aspires to contribute meaningfully to the discourse and strategic developments that support Māori students' transition from secondary school to university. University kapa haka groups (groups who execute Māori performing arts, standing in uniform rows), such as Tītahi ki Tua (TKT), provide a Māori-centric environment that can help first year Māori university students adjust to university life. The study could provide a case for the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and other New Zealand universities to develop and sustain relationships with groups such as TKT, to best support their students.

Māori student transition and retention in New Zealand universities is a challenge (Jefferies, 1997; Mayeda, Keil, & Mills, 2012; Nikora, Levy, Henry, & Whangapirita, 2002; O'Rourke, 2008; van der Meer, Scott, & Neha, 2010). However, Theodore et al. (2016) compellingly argue that Māori university experience challenges fall into three key categories:

1. Family and community responsibilities.
2. Institutional barriers including monocultural learning environments and systems.
3. Inadequate preparation, including transitioning difficulties (from school to university).

These factors are exacerbated by statistical evidence relating to Māori student retention rates in the first year of study (Education Counts, 2016). In 2017, the Academic Quality Authority for New Zealand Universities (AQA)<sup>2</sup> implemented Cycle 6 of its audit rounds of New Zealand universities. One of the aims includes "Access, outcomes and opportunity for Māori students and for Pasifika students" (AQA, 2017a). The intention is clearly to address continuing disparities between Māori and non-Māori educational outcomes, particularly in higher level education (Chauvel & Rean, 2012).

This study employs a unique, indigenous-centric approach to this problem by determining the role of kapa haka in Māori students' transition from secondary to tertiary education. Kapa haka involves performances of traditional and modern Māori items (Papesch, 2015; V. Smith, 2003).

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<sup>2</sup> The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) was established in 1993 by the Vice Chancellors Committee to audit New Zealand universities (Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities & Universities New Zealand Te Pōkaitara, 2013).

Kapa haka is steeped in rich history and traditions that uphold Māori identity (Mazer, 2011). The term “kapa haka” refers to a dance group—in its most literal use it refers directly to a group standing in rows, performing Māori dance (Papesch, 2015; V. Smith, 2003). However, kapa haka has become a vehicle in preserving and upholding *Māoritanga* (Māori culture, Māoriness) and language in contemporary times; it also allows a platform for Māori to communicate outside “mainstream Pākehā [NZ European] discourse,” creating a safe setting to express culture without outside judgment (Mazer, 2011, p. 43). This presents a platform for the study that is deeper than performance. It takes into consideration Māori beliefs and values, and acknowledges that kapa haka is the conduit that facilitates the transition process for Māori entering university from school.

As a case study, AUT’s kapa haka group, TKT, provides a space for Māori students to collectively meet the challenges they face in their first year of university. TKT includes undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and alumni. The name TKT pays homage to a well-known Ngāti Whātua<sup>3</sup> chief, Tītahi (A. Grace, personal communication, January 20, 2019). Tītahi is the *tekoteko* (carved figure) at the front of the marae and Te Pūrengi is the *wharehau* (meeting house). With this connection to Ngā Wai o Horotiu, Tītahi represents not only TKT but everyone within AUT. Tītahi ki Tua translates as “AUT and beyond.” The word tua is also deliberately chosen to reflect the fact that, in reverse, it spells AUT backwards (A. Grace, personal communication, January 20, 2019).



Figure 1. Ngā Wai o Horotiu marae. Photograph from author’s collection.

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<sup>3</sup> Ngāti Whātua are recognised as holding *mana whenua* (territorial authority) over the land on which AUT is sited.

It is apparent that there is an inextricable connection between TKT and the marae. Ngā Wai o Horotiu sets the environment that is a safety net, particularly for first year Māori students. TKT provides a *whānau* (family) based community for Māori and non-Māori students within AUT. The marae is familiar territory in an unfamiliar environment, offering cultural, social, emotional and spiritual nurturance. Reciprocity is a tenet of *te ao Māori* (the Māori world), and in return TKT undertake prominent roles in formal *pōhiri* (welcoming ceremonies) for university events and are called on to lead and support *pōhiri* at national and international conferences in central Auckland. It will become apparent that the kapa haka plays a pivotal role in the connection between TKT, the marae, and Māori student engagement at university.

## **1.1 Structure of the Thesis**

### **Chapter 2 Positioning the Researcher**

My passion for kapa haka was the catalyst for this study. Kapa haka led to my association with TKT, which helped my own transitional journey from secondary school to university. Kapa haka was the portal to a rich and supportive environment based on the marae, Ngā Wai o Horotiu. It provided a continuum from my time at Auckland Girls' Grammar School (AGGS), where I enrolled in the school's bilingual unit, Ngā Tūmanako o Kahurangi ki Maungawhau (KKM) as I actively participated in AGGS' kapa haka.

Kapa haka was more than performance, it helped develop social skills and reinforced my understanding and knowledge of Māori language and culture. When I entered university, I was recruited into TKT by multiple class members. As an active member it soon became apparent to me that kapa haka had the potential to change the university experience for Māori, many of whom have found university an alien environment.

### **Chapter 3 Literature Review**

Embedded in Kaupapa Māori theory, the literature canvassed provides a broad context for this study. Kapa haka is also explored, documenting its history in a range of settings, including university contexts, and more specifically AUT. Māori students' experiences in the tertiary sector with reference to strategies that can make a difference are examined. The review investigates the place of marae in *te ao Māori* and their significance for Māori cultural identity. AUT's marae, Ngā Wai o Horotiu, is discussed as an extension of TKT and the centre of Māori culture at AUT. The

literature review brings together themes of student transition, education, Māori identity, and kapa haka.

#### **Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology**

A Kaupapa Māori paradigm overarches the entire study, ensuring that Māori beliefs and values dominate all aspects of the process. According to Henry and Pene (2001), Kaupapa Māori is “the Māori way or agenda, a term used to describe traditional Māori ways of doing, being and thinking, encapsulated in a Māori worldview” (p. 235). Qualitative research methodology and methods were also employed to conduct eight semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Qualitative research methods, which included demographic information collection and semi-structured interviews, were adopted to carry out the research process.

Purposive sampling was adopted to select participants in a deliberative and non-random fashion (Tongco, 2007). This method was used to recruit voluntary participants, which consisted of second to fourth year undergraduate students, postgraduate students and alumni. These interviews focused on their experiences transitioning from secondary school to AUT.

#### **Chapter 5 Key Findings**

The findings from the research indicated that student transitions to university were in fact multidimensional. Kapa haka provided a range of support. Emotional support was described as *whakawhanaungatanga* (fostering relationships), being connected, and engaging with other Māori students. *Tikanga*, *karakia* (prayer), *waiata* (songs, chants), and marae were all aspects which encompassed the students’ experiences of feeling supported spiritually. The cultural needs of transitioning students being met through kapa haka was also strengthened by the “fun” or enjoyment of kapa haka. This was expressed as a reason for engaging in university studies and continuing the journey, despite the challenges. The AUT marae was also identified as an important physical space that provides the cultural nurturance TKT needs to function as a Māori association.

#### **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

Lastly, the conclusion brings together all aspects of the research, with an overview summarising the thesis. Limitations are identified to reflect on the research process and what could have been improved. After the interviews were complete, it became apparent the pool of students should

have been larger, with fewer criteria. From the gathered data, three recommendations were identified to further expand on this research. They include a need for more research on marae in tertiary settings, a wider pool of interviewees, and further research on how kapa haka impacts Māori students' retention and completion rates.

## Chapter 2 Positioning of the Researcher



Figure 2. Author performing with TKT at te Huinga Tauira 2017. Photograph from author's collection.

As a young *wahine Māori* (Māori woman), I affiliate to the *iwi* (tribes) of Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngā Puhi. I am typical of most of the TKT members who descend from tribes that are not Ngāti Whātua, described as *ngā hau e whā* (from the four winds). I am also part of the diaspora, those whose families migrated to the city from their tribal homelands. Although I was raised in Auckland, transitioning to university was daunting: an experience shared by many young Māori, especially those from beyond the borders of Auckland, who leave their *whānau* in the hope of better prospects.

Family are identified as critical to Māori academic success (Nikora et al., 2002; Theodore et al., 2016; Van Der Meer et al., 2010). Māori cultural identity is defined primarily through *whakapapa* (genealogy, to create layers) or genealogical ties, which allow Māori to foster and establish relations or connections (Ngata, 1972). According to Hudson, Ahuriri-Driscoll, Lea and Lea (2007), *whakapapa* is the “foundation of traditional Māori social structure and it perpetuates a value base that locates people through their relationships to the physical and spiritual worlds” (p. 3). Pere (1982) recalls that Māori are all descendants of Papatūānuku (the spiritual earth mother) and Rangi-nui-e-tuiho-nei (the spiritual celestial father), and the unity between the two deities, as parents of the spiritual world, reaffirms the importance of metaphysical enlightenment in Māori identity.

Despite European colonisation, Māori people have made immense efforts to maintain connections with identity- and cultural-based values (Maaka, 1994). TKT offers *whānau* support to Māori students entering university for the first time. Metge (1995) introduces the idea of modern *whānau* relationships that are not based on *whakapapa*; TKT fits that classification. It can be argued that modern *whānau* membership has the advantage of support without the demands or

responsibilities of *whakapapa*. There have been instances where TKT *whānau* have rallied around a member in times of stress, providing material, spiritual, and emotional support. The notion of reciprocity runs deep in Māori culture, beyond traditional constructs of *whakapapa*, *whānau* and *iwi* relationships. The relationships formed in TKT demonstrate that kapa haka provides a sense of social cohesion, and this underpins the entire study.

I had the advantage of a supportive *whānau* as well as TKT. The motivation for this study was to make a difference in Māori students' experiences at university, especially after being privy to the experiences of many students in TKT, who struggled with the transition from secondary school to university. Here again, my schooling at Auckland Girls' Grammar School (AGGS) helped me transition more easily than others. I was enrolled in the school's bilingual unit, Ngā Tūmanako o Kahurangi ki Maungawhau (KKM). There I was fully immersed in AGGS' competitive kapa haka group. It became the focus of my secondary schooling and kept me engaged in other aspects of education. Similarly, the findings from this study strongly indicate that involvement in TKT kapa haka is a factor in successfully completing academic studies.



Figure 3. Author at Kapa Haka Nationals with KKM. Photograph from author's collection.

This aspect also brings to the forefront the role of the *atua* (god) Rehia in performing arts. Kapa haka is often referred to as “ngā mahi a Rehia,” the arts of Rehia, the god of pleasure and entertainment. Kapa haka is something I have always participated in and enjoyed immensely. I first joined a kapa haka in primary school and continued throughout my schooling years until I



finished high school. Kapa haka allows me to participate and engage in my culture while having fun. I've made lifelong connections with people I have met through kapa haka.

Ka'ai (2008) examines the crucial role of kapa haka as a strategy for the revitalisation of *te reo Māori* (the Māori language). One of the most devastating changes for the performing arts has been the decline of *te reo Māori*. For example, it follows that as the number of Māori people fluent in *te reo Māori* has declined, so too have the number of potential composers of *waiata* and *haka* (traditional dance). Experts in this field have continually placed emphasis on the language and the important role and function that it plays in maintaining the *mana* (authority, power, influence, prestige, status) of the Māori performing arts (Ka'ai, 2008, p. 165).

My experiences at secondary school and university reinforced my commitment to *te reo Māori*. This has culminated in my securing employment teaching *te reo* in Te Ara Poutama (the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Development) at AUT. TKT kapa haka has been the springboard for employment opportunities throughout the university. The current spotlight on the revitalisation of *te reo Māori* is yet another benefit of participating in kapa haka.

Kapa haka helped me settle into university as a first year student, and the research aims to address if this is a common factor that could possibly improve other Māori student transitions as well.

## Chapter 3 Literature Review

### 3.1 Introduction

This purpose of this chapter is to canvass existing literature that adds insights and provides a broader context to the study. As already intimated, the intent is not to provide an *alternative* strategic model for Māori student retention, but rather to explore the possibilities that promoting kapa haka can provide for Māori students to achieve successful educational outcomes.

Kaupapa Māori underpins the entire thesis, so the review opens with the theory and its relevance to this study. This is followed by a brief discussion of kapa haka, its origins, and the benefits it brings to performers and audiences—in essence to humanity. According to V. Smith (2003), kapa haka is now an expression of Māori identity, and includes the display of culture through performance and storytelling. The marae is intimately connected to TKT kapa haka at AUT. Therefore, a short overview of the development and role of marae within universities establishes marae as significant cultural spaces for Māori students.

An evaluation of Māori in tertiary education, with particular attention to strategies to address and improve Māori participation and retention, complements this study. The review then focuses on Māori students' transitions to university and the impact of being the first whānau member to attend university. Key statistics are addressed, which leads to an overview of the Academic Quality Authority (AQA) and the purpose of the Cycle 6 audit. This audit is significant because it is university-led, impacts directly on Māori students, and opens future possibilities to improve Māori educational achievement.

### 3.2 Kaupapa Māori

Kaupapa Māori is difficult to define, as it is dynamic and can be interpreted in many ways (M. Durie, 2012; Hiha, 2016; Keegan, 2012; G. H. Smith, 2012). Kaupapa Māori is a Māori worldview grounded in tikanga Māori, which incorporates Māori customs, existence, and worldviews in a theoretical framework (Henry & Pene, 2001; G. H. Smith, 2012) and it is not fixed but adaptable. Kaupapa Māori was established by Māori, for Māori (Barnes, 2000; M. Durie, 2012; Henry & Pene, 2001). Royal and Hauora (1998) summarise *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge) and its contribution to Kaupapa Māori as a framework:

He mea hanga te mātauranga Māori nā te Māori. E hangaia ana tēnei mātauranga i roto i te whare o Te Ao Mārama, i runga anō hoki i ngā whakaaturanga o te *whakapapa* kia mārama ai te tangata ki tōna Ao. Mātauranga Māori is created by Māori humans according to a worldview entitled 'Te Ao Mārama' and by the employment of methodologies derived from this worldview to explain the Māori experience of the world. (p. 83)

Kaupapa Māori became prevalent in academic research in the late 1980s, when Māori were fighting for change in the NZ education system, the health sector, social welfare, and justice system (Hiha, 2016). According to G. H. Smith (1997), parents of pre-schoolers in Te Kōhanga Reo<sup>4</sup>, Auckland city, were the first to develop the political stance which is now known as Kaupapa Māori. Since then, Kaupapa Māori has been exercised in numerous spaces to reclaim and reaffirm Māori culture. It is a constantly evolving framework that addresses the “exploitation and oppression” (Smith, 1990, p. 65) of Māori in New Zealand communities (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

The implementation of this worldview as a methodological framework in research is a more recent practice. However, Kaupapa Māori is ancient, as it draws on traditional understandings of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, which are vital pillars of Māori cultural identity (Pihama, 2001; G. H. Smith, 1997). Kaupapa Māori can act as a catalyst to reject cultural assimilation, as an indigenous framework that “challenges the oppressive social order within which Māori people are currently located and does so from a distinctive Māori cultural base” (Pihama, 2001, p. 6). It has been common for Western research to reflect inaccurate accounts of Māori culture, customs and practices (A. Durie, 1998; Murchie, 1984). As G. H. Smith (1997) argues, with respect to Māori education:

Kaupapa Māori strategies question the right of Pākehā to dominate and exclude Māori preferred interests in education, and assert the validity of Māori knowledge, language, custom and practice, and its right to continue to flourish in the land of its origin, as the *tangata whenua* (Indigenous) culture. (p. 273)

Over 20 years later, it remains vital for Māori to have a research framework designed to address cultural issues within the realm of tikanga and mātauranga Māori (A. Durie, 1998; Murchie, 1984; L. T. Smith, 1999). The *kupu* (word) “māori” can mean ordinary or normal (Barnes, 2000; Cowell, 2013; Ryan, 1995). Therefore, the practice of Kaupapa Māori itself is to embed cultural normality in a research framework that prioritises Māori in all aspects. According to L. T. Smith (1999) and Cowell (2013), Kaupapa Māori research should be conducted with the intent of making positive

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<sup>4</sup> Te Kōhanga Reo is total Māori language immersion early childhood education.

contributions towards Māori communities. L. T. Smith (2015, p. 48) identified a set of questions to establish the guidelines of Kaupapa Māori research:

- i. What research do we want to carry out?
- ii. Who is that research for?
- iii. What difference will it make?
- iv. Who will carry out this research?
- v. How do we want the research to be done?
- vi. How will we know it is a worthwhile piece of research? Who will own the research? Who will benefit? (p. 48)

These questions also provide ethical principles from a Kaupapa Māori perspective that resonate with this study. G. H. Smith (1997), whose work is seminal in this field, classifies the six main principles of Kaupapa Māori: *Tino rangatiratanga*, *Taonga tuku iho*, *Ako Māori*, *Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kāinga*, *whānau*, and *kaupapa* (pp. 466-473). However, G. H. Smith's (1997) earlier set of principles also apply to this study. These principles remain valid and relevant in Kaupapa Māori research to this day, in particular this research. Each is outlined below, with a brief commentary to explain the contribution that they make to the philosophical framework of this study.

#### 1. *Tino rangatiratanga* (the 'self-determination' principle)

This principle was established in response to the discourse of Māori peoples' experiences as a result of the Treaty of Waitangi. Among other meanings, *tino rangatiratanga* can translate to "sovereignty," "autonomy," or "self-determination" (G. H. Smith, 1997, p. 466). The term *tino rangatiratanga* can embody one's own self-determination and pursuit to have control over one's life and cultural well-being (Pihama, 2001, p. 34). In this research, the concept is reflected through a desire to represent Māori students as experts in their own experiences, who exercise *tino rangatiratanga* over their own learning journeys by contributing their experiences to the research. Participants mention how TKT provides a cultural setting for them to attend, and to maintain and practice their cultural identity. They actively search for cultural spaces within the university to connect with their culture and other Māori students, showing how they exercise their *tino rangatiratanga*. It is important that these perspectives are guided and represented with the intent of providing positive solutions for the transition struggles some Māori students face.

## 2. *Taonga tuku iho* (the 'cultural aspirations' principle)

The principle of *taonga tuku iho* affirms the importance of being Māori. It validates *tikanga* Māori, *te reo* Māori, and *mātauranga* Māori as important aspects of Māori cultural identity (Pihama, Cram & Walker, 2002; G. H. Smith, 1997). *Kia Eke Panuku* (n.d.) highlight the importance of *taonga tuku iho* and Māori cultural engagement in educational settings. According to G. H. Smith (1997):

Māori cultural aspirations, particularly in a wider societal context of the struggles for language and cultural survival, is more assured. One of the common faults of most previous (Pākehā defined) interventions has been the inadequate or lack of serious attention paid to this aspect. (p. 467)

This principle, within research, validates a Māori researcher's position, undertaking research for the betterment of Māori. Pihama et al. (2002) argue that this principle is an intervention in the educational crisis Māori face, by legitimising the spiritual and emotional factors *Kaupapa* Māori research entails (p. 36) and which Western education ignores (Penetito, 2010). This principle locates students as ancestral entities engaged with the research process. In the interviews, the participants mention that they are searching for a cultural space to connect with. This shows the importance of being Māori and having Māori spaces available to connect to, for these students.

## 3. *Ako Māori* (the 'culturally preferred' pedagogy)

Unlike its English equivalents, the word *ako* means both to learn and to teach in a single term; the words are interchangeable and link the relationship between the two activities. According to Pihama et al. (2002) this principle acknowledges unique "teaching and learning practices" (p. 37) that are embedded in *tikanga* Māori: "The important points here are that Māori are able to choose and influence what pedagogies are to be used, and that Māori language, knowledge and cultural values are not undermined and that they are supported by the chosen pedagogies" (G. H. Smith, 1997, p. 468). Even though the research aims to identify *kapa haka*'s role in students' transitions, Māori "teaching and learning practices" are not confined merely to classrooms in educational settings. This research views *kapa haka* as a learning tool that supports students holistically, which then helps them in their academic studies, as a flow-on effect. According to earlier research by the Ministry of Education, "Māori students articulated the connection between strong cultural identity and education success; not just success by the individual but success for other Māori as well" (*Kia Eke Panuku*, n.d., para. 4).

#### 4. *Kia piki ake I ngā raruraru o te kāinga* (the ‘socio economic’ mediation principle)

As a result of colonisation, Māori have been in a state of oppression, with many “socio-economic” implications (Pihama et al., 2002, p. 38). This has caused intergenerational trauma, and this principle emphasises the need for Kaupapa Māori to benefit Māori communities (Cowell, 2013). The research aims to provide AUT with Māori students’ experiences to inform a possible response to the AQA audit. The research is taking the participants’ experiences to reinforce the importance of the findings, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

#### 5. *Whānau* (the ‘extended family structure’ principle)

The principle of whānau is vital when applying Māori cultural values and Kaupapa Māori. It is the core of Kaupapa Māori itself (Pihama et al., 2002; G. H. Smith, 1997). In its most simple interpretation, whānau translates as “family”; however, it brings together many key elements of Māori culture in its entirety (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). The practice of whanaungatanga is fundamental when practising Kaupapa Māori research, as Māori identity is shaped within whānau and collective identities (Harris, Blue, & Griffith, 1995; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Peterson, 1989).

According to Walker (2020), “whānau can be multi-layered, flexible and dynamic. Whānau is based on a Māori and a tribal world view. It is through the whānau that values, histories and traditions from the ancestors are adapted for the contemporary world” (para. 1). This research considers each participant’s unique situation and acknowledges the mana, whakapapa, and identity of the student. TKT association and kapa haka are both centred around the AUT marae, which is founded on the idea of whānau and whakapapa, fundamental aspects of Māori cultural identity.

#### 6. *Kaupapa* (the ‘collective philosophy’ principle)

According to G. H. Smith (1997), research conducted under Kaupapa Māori is shared through common responsibilities to a “philosophy or utopian vision” (p. 472). This principle reflects a collective understanding, displayed most vividly in Te Aho Matua (Pihama et al., 2002; G. H. Smith, 1997). Te Aho Matua is a philosophical document which was established by Te Kohanga Reo, as a vision which provides measures to improve Māori education in New Zealand (G. H. Smith, 1997). The principle of Kaupapa Māori is applied in the research, as it seeks to identify ways in which universities can better support Māori students in their transition to higher education.

## Traditional Kapa Haka

Traditional aspects of kapa haka include *haka* (traditional dance), *poi* (ball on a string), *waiata ā ringa* (action songs) and *waiata tawhito* (traditional Māori songs) (Paenga, 2008). The haka is often described as a war dance: it was used by Māori men going to war, not to intimidate, but to prepare and “work up the performer” (Gardiner, 2007, p. 27). The oldest records of haka are shared through *pūrākau* (traditional narratives) that embody “the values and beliefs of the people and ultimately reflect human qualities, essentially a society's principals, values, traditions, customs and human qualities are learned from their *pūrākau*” (Ware, 2009). *Pūrākau* are vital to Māori culture, as they are a form of ancient narrative that continue to uphold Māori history and tikanga in contemporary society.

The birth of haka is recounted through the art of *pūrākau*. “Traditional teachings encompass knowledge that has been passed down through generations. Knowledge acquired through revelation, such as dreams, visions, and intuition, is sometimes regarded as spiritual knowledge, which is understood as coming from the spirit world and ancestors” (Lavallée, 2009, p. 22).

It is told through the story of Tānerore (Best, 1976). The Māori sun god, Rā, was exceptionally powerful. He had two wives, the soul of Winter, Hine-takurua, and the soul of Summer, Hine-raumati. Hine-raumati soon fell pregnant to Rā, and she gave birth to a son. Together they named him Tānerore (Hemopereki, 2015). On hot shimmering days there are glimpses of light dancing, and according to Gardiner (2007, p. 6), “Tānerore performing for his mother and the *wiriwiri* (trembling, shimmer) is today reflected in the trembling of the performer’s hands.”

According to Gardiner (2007), Grey (1956), and Kāretu (1993), the first haka in Māori history is depicted in the ancestral narrative of Tinirau and Kae. Tūhuru-huru was the newborn son of Tinirau and his wife Hineteiwaiwa. Tinirau travelled to Te Tihi-o-Manono to ask his close friend Kae to baptise Tūhuru-huru. Tinirau and Kae returned to Te Motutapu-o-Tinirau to perform the ceremony. Once this was complete, Tinirau cut off a piece of flesh from his pet whale Tutunui to repay Kae for his kindness. Tinirau offered Kae a *waka* (canoe) for the journey back to his island; however, Kae wanted to ride home on the whale’s back. Tinirau agreed, but when Kae reached his home destination he beached the whale and cut him up into pieces, cooking him for his tribe to eat.

Tinirau smelt the burning flesh and sent a group of female *keira* (assassins) to retrieve the pet whale. The female assassins did not know what Kae looked like, they only knew he had rotten teeth. They paddled to the island and performed for the men, to seduce them. They entertained and performed an erotic haka, with skirts up, doing handstands—this made the men laugh. The assassins were able to identify Kae as he smiled, they then chanted to put the men in a trance, and returned Kae to Tinirau. Kae was killed in Tinirau's *whare* (house) for killing Tutunui the whale (Gardiner, 2007; Grey, 1956; Kāretu, 1993).

Typical of traditional ancient pūrākau, the demise of Kae captures the best and worst of human nature, as it tells of kindness, betrayal, revenge, laughter, and death. Kāretu (1993) maintains that haka, commonly associated with war and death, is in fact “about the celebration of life” (p. 37). This accords with the influence of the atua Rehia, who, as mentioned in the previous chapter, personifies pleasure and has jurisdiction over the performing arts. However, the association with warfare is difficult to quash (Condevaux, 2009; Whitinui, 2008). Kapa haka can be found in many forums: war, pūrākau, and pōhiri; and still maintains its cultural relevance.

### **Contemporary Kapa haka**

Kapa haka is described by Mazer (2011) as a “post-colonial invention” (p. 41). Rather, the practice of kapa haka is ancient and deeply embedded in Māori culture (Papesch, 2015). Papesch (2015) argues: “Composed, as *kapa haka* is, from bits and pieces of various traditions, it has evolved over several generations into its current form” (p. 36). Post-colonial discourses in Māori society prompted Māori to develop a cultural solution to maintaining authority over the future of te ao Māori. According to Mazer (2011), kapa haka is now “a way of maintaining ownership and agency over their traditional forms of expression and also over the evolution of their identity as a post-colonial people” (p. 42). She also maintains that kapa haka has been used as a vehicle to revitalise te reo Māori, maintain mātauranga Māori, and ultimately assist in the re-growth of *te ahurea Māori* (Māori culture). These positive influences are a part of contemporary kapa haka. Kapa haka has now extended to encompass tourism, modern entertainment, competitions, and cultural learning in schools.

The establishment of marae in tertiary institutions is a development that is reminiscent of the way that kapa haka has evolved. Māori student associations and kapa haka groups are formed under the traditional concepts of whakapapa and tikanga, concepts closely linked to marae.



### 3.3 University Marae

Before colonisation in New Zealand, marae were communal and at the centre of Māori tribal culture (Pohatu, 2007). Traditionally, located outside of the marae would be a fire, referred to as *ahi-kā-roa*, the fire that never goes out, which symbolises the life force of that marae (Pohatu, 2007). Marae are communal, spiritual, cultural spaces where Māori identity is upheld and practised (Mulholland & Bargh, 2015). Customarily, the term marae only referred to the space in front of the whareniui, which was sometimes called the *pā* (Mead, 2003), a term now part of New Zealand English. This is extended by Williams (1971), who explains:

‘*Pā*’ was the common term used to describe the place where the *marae* was located. Nowadays the word ‘*marae*’ encompasses the whole complex.... Today we use the word *marae* to describe the complex of the land, buildings and facilities as they exist today. (p. 243)

Marae still uphold the landscape of Māori identity in contemporary New Zealand; however, as a result of colonisation they have changed. Traditionally, marae were located in rural areas connected to specific iwi and *hapū* (subtribes) (Mulholland & Bargh, 2015). Every Māori person connects back to a marae, which can be referred to as their *tūrangawaewae*, a place where someone has the right to stand. In contemporary times, there have been adaptations, as there are now pan-tribal marae, university marae, marae in schools which have given the public of New Zealand a better understanding of what marae are and their importance to Māori (Ka’ai, 2008; Mulholland & Bargh, 2015).

Ka’ai (2008) identifies the role of marae in tertiary institutions, stating: “The ‘space’ was an identity or cultural marker for the observance of, and respect for, a Māori world view by all who entered the complex” (p. 201). Marae are more than physical spaces, they reinforce Māori cultural identity (Mulholland & Bargh, 2015; Pohatu, 2007). In 1980, the first marae in a university setting was established, Te Herenga Waka. The marae itself was positioned inside a refurbished building within Victoria University of Wellington’s campus, situated on Kelburn Parade. Six years later, the 6th of December 1986 saw the opening of the newly carved meeting house, Te Tumu Herenga Waka, which was constructed by Professor Mead, along with Wiremu Parker and the *tohunga* (expert) Ruka Broughton. The marae symbolises the university’s commitment to te reo Māori and tikanga Māori. The marae is paramount for whānau on campus in providing a *tūrangawaewae* for students and staff of the University. By doing so, they can encourage, disperse and maintain the use of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.

The marae provides a platform that enhances and nourishes the teaching and research, learning and cultural requirements of Māori at the University. It is a setting that facilitates a forum where Māori academic issues at the university that are significant to Māori are able to be discussed, and where students are able to congregate to celebrate academic and social occasions. Hence, it provides a teaching and gathering space for students at the university. In addition, the marae offers resources, affordable lunches through its *wharekai* (dining hall), and whānau housing.

More recently, the marae has been used as a lecture theatre for the university's Te Kawa a Māui/School of Māori Studies faculty. Te Herenga Waka marae was later joined by Ako Pai marae, at the Karori campus. This occurred when Wellington Teachers' College was integrated with Victoria University in 2005. This integration saw the addition of Te Kura Māori as another of the university's Māori academic units, offering a programme in Māori education (Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka, n.d).

The construction of the AUT marae started in 1996 with the wharenui, Te Pūrengi, which was opened in 1997. In 1998, the wharekai was completed and named Te Kaipara. Until 1998, the marae, as a complex, was not named; however, when the wharekai was complete, *kaumātua* (male elders) from Ngāti Whātua decided to name the marae Ngā Wai o Horotiu. Ngā Wai o Horotiu translates as “the waters of Horotiu,” which refer to a fresh *puna* (spring of water) that runs under central Auckland, where “the water flows and meets with other streams that flow down the hill from Myers Park, in Upper Queen Street, and finally forms a larger stream which is now Queen Street” (AUT, 2017). This is where the name of the marae originates from.

Ngā Wai o Horotiu holds together the AUT Māori community, and is closely linked to TKT and Te Ara Poutama (TAP), the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Development. The marae facilitates many papers and classes in TAP: there are held *hui* (meetings), celebrations, conferences, and study *wānanga* (educational gatherings). For TKT, the marae provides a space for Māori students to gather. This study advances the notion that participation in kapa haka within the ethos of the marae encourages engagement in other aspects of university life, for better outcomes. This includes affiliation with Māori student organisations that agitate for a Māori student voice in the university sector.

## **Te Mana Ākonga: National Māori Student Body**

Te Mana Ākonga is the National Māori Tertiary Students' Association, whose purpose is to "represent the collective interests of Māori Tertiary students, with the objective of making Tertiary Education more accessible to Māori" (Te Mana Ākonga National Māori Tertiary Students' Association [TMA], 2010, p. 2) and provide Māori students with a voice to raise issues of concern on campus and in Parliament. Te Mana Ākonga is grounded in and asserts *Mana Motuhake* and *Tino Rangatiratanga*, as reaffirmed in the Declaration of Independence (1835) and in the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). The evolving policy aspirations of Te Mana Ākonga are thus, to engage and make real guarantees when barriers manifest and disrupt Māori learners from accessing mātauranga. This includes the ability of Māori to pursue self-determined development, with respect to exercising the voice of their *tipuna* (ancestors) when and where required (TMA, 2010).

Te Mana Ākonga holds an annual conference, Te Huinga Tauira, for all tertiary Māori associations within New Zealand. This conference facilitates Māori students in a Māori space to celebrate shared successes, discuss issues affecting Māori students, and unite as one (P. Pewhairangi, personal communication, January 25, 2019). Te Huinga Tauira involves a range of competitions, which include kapa haka, sports, speeches or debates (*manu kōrero*), as well as discussion on Māori development and struggles within tertiary education in New Zealand. New Zealand's eight universities, along with other tertiary institutions participate and, all have established Māori associations:

- Auckland University of Technology (Tītahi ki Tua)
- University of Auckland (Ngā Tauira Māori)
- Massey University (Manawatahi)
- Victoria University (Ngai Tauira)
- University of Canterbury (Te Akatoki)
- Lincoln University (Te Awhioraki)
- University of Otago (Te Roopū Māori)
- University of Waikato (Te Waiora)
- UNITEC (Mātātupu)
- Ara Institute of Canterbury (Te Pou Herekā Waka)
- Massey University of Wellington (Kōkiri Ngātahi)
- Eastern Institute of Technology Napier (Te Tira Ākonga)

- Massey University Albany (Te Waka o ngā Ākonga Māori)  
(P. Pewhairangi, personal communication, January 25, 2019).

All of the listed *rōpū* (groups) function from conceptions of whānau and whakapapa, and in most cases are actively involved in supporting the marae.

### 3.4 Māori and Tertiary Education

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) (n.d.) identifies tertiary education within New Zealand as “private training establishments (PTEs), Te Pūkenga, wānanga, universities and workplace training” (para. 1). According to Walker (2016), educational gaps between Māori and Pākehā were first raised by Apirana Ngata. Since then, there have been many strategies, reports, and initiatives set in place to assist Māori educational development and success (Sciascia, 2017). The following section highlights some of the important reports, initiatives and strategies that have been produced with the intention of improving Māori tertiary students’ success and development. Depressingly, most have failed to make a significant difference to retention and completion rates for Māori in tertiary education.

In 1997, Te Puni Kōkiri released a commissioned report identifying the barriers Māori students face within the NZ education system, including the tertiary education sector (Jefferies, 1997). According to Else (1997), this report was commissioned to address the education gap between Māori and non-Māori students. The research included 138 in-depth interviews with tertiary and secondary school students, to investigate the degree and nature of the obstacles Māori students experience in tertiary education.

Jefferies (1997) identified earlier reports (see Hirsh, 1990; Simon, 1992; Walker, 1990; Smith, 1990; Benton, 1987) criticising the “Pākehā System” (p. 131), which highlighted the lack of Māori teachers in New Zealand’s education system. All of these earlier reports emphasised the importance of supporting more Māori to work in education to teach content which caters specifically to Māori needs (Hirsh, 1990; Simon, 1992; Walker, 1991; G. H. Smith, 1990; Benton, 1988). However, according to Jefferies (1997), Māori students were constantly let down by the Ministry of Education, as the curriculum was built in favour of Pākehā, and therefore it did not cater to Māori students’ cultural or learning needs. This contributed to the low levels of retention, participation and achievement from primary to tertiary level (Jefferies, 1997).

Jefferies (1997) identified seven barriers Māori students experience in secondary school; these have flow on effects for students who wanted to study at tertiary level.

- i. Lack of success achieving pre-requisite grades for university entrance – Many interviewees received good secondary school grades but not sufficient for university entrance requirements.
- ii. Absenteeism - Māori students had the highest rates of absence in secondary school. Absence among Māori girls – staying home to look after whānau members contributed significantly to high absenteeism.
- iii. Lack of support from parents – For some interviewees, parents preferred their children to work and earn income for the household. Others didn't support their children studying in the "Pākehā system" (Jefferies, 1997, p. 131).
- iv. Financial issues - This was the smallest issue out of all barriers for the Māori students. Jefferies (1997) noted that student loans and student allowance alleviated some but not all financial stress.
- v. Abusive home environments – Some interviewees disclosed abusive situations they experienced at home: physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect, negative environments, or unpredictable living arrangements.
- vi. Negative teacher experiences or teacher expectations - Although there were some positive teacher experiences, the negative comments and attitudes a large number of interviewees encountered in secondary school affected their decision to carry on to study in University.
- vii. Pregnancy - With parenthood approaching many young parents decided it would be best to work and earn money, over university study.

Else (1997) argues that the lack of Māori family resources and income is the key issue creating the education gap between Māori and non-Māori students: that Māori students do not achieve at the same levels as non-Māori because Māori parents have less money to support their children's education; and therefore, "the gap begins at birth" (p. 3). In comparison, Walker (2016) maintains that the disparities between Māori and non-Māori are a result of New Zealand's "colonial history" (p. 36). He claims that "Māori, of necessity, must struggle to close the gaps and liberate themselves from Pākehā hegemony, as they have done in education for most of the 20th century" (p. 37).

This highlights the challenges Māori students face when transitioning to tertiary education. Jefferies' (1997) sole recommendation to close the gaps between Māori and non-Māori students was to suggest more research, conducted on what types of education work best for Māori, and the success of programmes aimed to support Māori students. As a retort, Penetito (1997) counter-claims, "Education has a key role to play empowering Māori. The truism that education cannot cure all of society's ills is recognised ... Accordingly it needs to play an even more important role in redressing those ills" (p. 61).

### **Tertiary Education Strategy**

New Zealand Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) are responsible for providing Māori students with the support needed to achieve and excel in higher education facilities (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014). TEOs are also obliged to support Māori in their cultural learning aspirations, directing research priorities to mātauranga Māori and revitalisation of te reo Māori. To that end the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) proposed:

- the creation of a tertiary education commission – a new government agency to allocate government funding;
- the creation of a tertiary education strategy and statement of tertiary education priorities to ensure better alignment of tertiary education with national priorities;
- a system of charters and profiles to help the commission influence the direction of tertiary education organisations and to improve alignment with the strategy;
- the separation of research funding from funding for teaching and learning.

The Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) was a strategic plan that was implemented over a five-year period from 2002–2007 (Ministry of Education, 2002). It identified issues that hinder academic success of students, and developed strategies in six areas of importance:

- Strategy One – Strengthen system capability and quality.
- Strategy Two – Te Rautaki Mātauranga Māori – Contribute to the achievement of Māori - development aspirations.
- Strategy Three – Raise foundation skills so that all people can participate in our knowledge society.
- Strategy Four – Develop the skills New Zealanders need for our knowledge society.

- Strategy Five – Educate for Pacific Peoples’ development and success.
- Strategy Six – Strengthen research, knowledge creation and uptake for our knowledge society. (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2)

Strategy One aimed to improve research outcomes and “the quality of learning” within the New Zealand tertiary sector, in hopes that “the financial viability, strategic capacity, leadership and international orientation of our tertiary education system will be stronger” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 21). Strategy Three addressed foundation skills, which include basic literacy, numeracy, communication skills, and computer skills (Ministry of Education, 2002). Strategy Four addressed skills needed for the workforce, which in turn improve economic growth and social outcomes that benefit “individuals, communities, employers, ethnic groups, regions” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 44). Strategy Five’s goal was to complete the 2001 Pasifika Education Plan (PEP), which aimed to “increase Pacific achievement in all areas of education through increasing participation, improving retention and focusing on effective teaching strategies” (p. 51). Strategy Two is the main theme that fits with this research, highlighting the need for more Māori support within tertiary institutions.

The objectives of this strategy were: to provide programmes that acknowledged Māori perspectives, and increased enrolment and participation of Māori students; to employ more Māori staff within universities; to provide tertiary education leadership which considers Māori communities; to strengthen Kaupapa Māori research; and to develop a system that contributes to regional iwi, hapū, and whānau. The Māori Tertiary Education Framework provided a Māori perspective on how to achieve these objectives.

### **Māori Tertiary Education Framework**

The Māori Tertiary Education Framework was a report by the Māori Tertiary Reference Group (MTRG) (2003) to inform the Ministry of Education on Māori students’ experiences within tertiary education. The framework examined how “the tertiary system could work ‘better’ for Māori and what Māori think that means” (Māori Tertiary Reference Group, 2003, p. 5). The framework aimed to assist Māori students by providing “a resource for Māori and iwi organisations, policy and operational policy makers and tertiary providers, including Māori providers, and industry training organisations” (Māori Tertiary Reference Group, 2003, p. 8). This framework builds on strategy Two of the TES, which is “Te Rautaki Mātauranga Māori – Contribute to the Achievement of Māori

– Development Aspirations” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2), and provides a Māori perspective on how to achieve the objectives outlined in this strategy. There were four tiers to this framework, which are displayed in Figure 4.

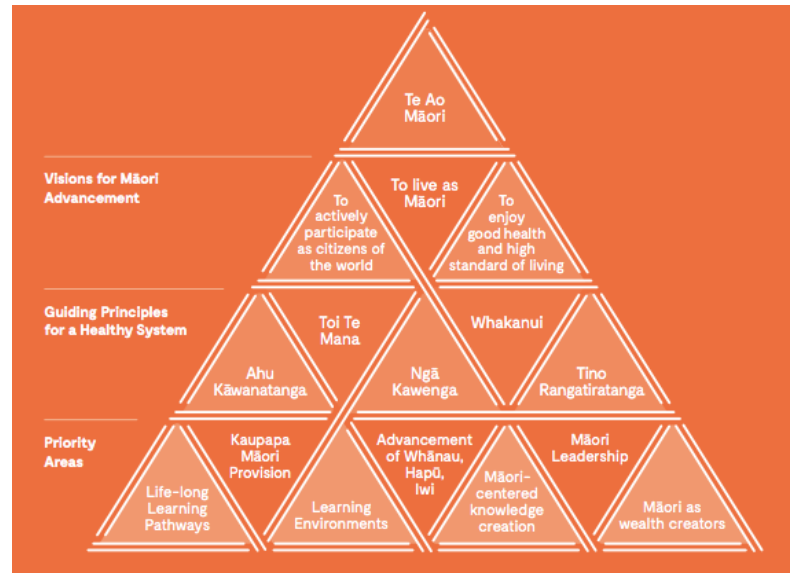


Figure 4. Māori Tertiary Education Framework, using niho taniwha pattern. From *Māori Tertiary Education Framework*, by Māori Tertiary Reference Group, 2003, Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education. Copyright 2003 by Ministry of Education.

The top tier is te ao Māori, which, conceptualised in the framework, is symbolic of the ultimate educational aspirations and goals for Māori to achieve and reach at their highest potential. The three visions presented in the next tier down, “Visions for Māori advancement,” are a foundation for the framework, which are: to live as Māori, actively participate as citizens of the world, and to enjoy a high standard of living (Māori Tertiary Reference Group, 2003, p. 18).

According to the report (MTRG, 2003), these three visions are not restricted to Māori education, but are a group of goals for the progression of Māori people in all aspects, i.e., workforce, education, socio-economic concerns, and cultural factors. The third tier sets out five guiding principles to underpin the framework. These principles embrace Māori values, that, if implemented and not merely decorative, would truly impact on Māori success at many levels.

- Whakanui - respect/inclusiveness
- Toi Te Mana - influence/empowerment
- Ngā Kawenga – responsibility



- Ahu Kāwanatanga - contribution/partnership
- Tino Rangatiratanga - authority/self-determination (MTRG, 2003, p. 8).

The final tier highlights seven priority areas for Māori tertiary education:

- Lifelong learning pathways
- Kaupapa Māori provision
- Learning environments
- Advancement of whānau, hapū and iwi
- Māori-centred knowledge creation
- Māori leadership
- Māori as sustainable wealth creators (MTRG, 2003, p. 8)

It is difficult not to review these strategic intentions as aspirational. However, there is evidence to suggest that implementing kaupapa Māori is an effective strategy to support Māori success at university. There are steady increases in Māori participation and achievement in New Zealand universities, with increasingly higher levels of qualifications, where there are evidence-based initiatives underpinned by Kaupapa Māori, and whose goal is to build capability whilst expanding the knowledge base of our society and achieving positive outcomes (Theodore et al., 2016).

### **Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success**

Ka Hikitia is a cross-agency strategy (Ministry of Education, 2020) to improve Māori education over a fourteen-year period (Ministry of Education, 2013). The title “Ka Hikitia” represents strengthening or lifting, and its purpose is to deliberately encourage the education system to ‘step up’ and do better for Māori students in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2013). The strategy was targeted at Māori education, from early learning to tertiary level education and organisational success, all of which are inclusive of the five targeted focus areas for improvement. According to the Ministry of Education (2013), Ka Hikitia is grounded by important principles to guide the strategy, which include:

1. Treaty of Waitangi
2. Māori potential approach
3. Ako—a two-way teaching and learning process
4. Identity, language and culture count

## 5. Productive partnerships (pp. 14–18)

To summarise the principles, collectively they strive towards the betterment of Māori in education, and provide guidelines and goals for Ka Hikitia to succeed. The strategy comprised three phases intended to accelerate the success of Māori students in universities:

- Phase one: Phase one was implemented from 2008–2012, and consists of “direction setting and building momentum” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 7).
- Phase two: Phase two was implemented from 2013–2017, and was “a focus on action by all key stakeholders” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 7). The role of phase two was to raise the performance of Māori students. Tertiary providers were provided with resources to assist them in doing so. Contributions from Māori organisations, students, whānau, and iwi were also encouraged, to provide as much support as possible (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 8).
- Phase three: The final phase is designed for 2018–2022, and builds on the previous two phases. The Ministry of Education’s goals are to achieve “1. Sustaining system wide change. 2. Innovative community, *iwi* and Māori led models of education provision. 3. Māori students achieving as least on par with the total population” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 8).

The Ministry of Education (2013) claims that there has been an increase in the proportion of Māori students’ participation and enrolment in New Zealand Qualifications Framework, Bachelor’s degrees, or higher level qualifications. However, research by Education Counts (2016) finds a continuing disparity between Māori and non-Māori:

The significant participation and achievement gap at higher levels (especially for younger students) between Māori and the rest of the population has not reduced. This means further work is needed to ensure the education system is delivering the levels of success we would like to see (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 44).

Education Counts (2016) identified key actions required to improve the current state of Māori education, which was inclusive of transitions. These included:

- Expanding trades training for Māori.

- Maintaining a strong performance element to tertiary funding to ensure providers are accountable and have the incentives to support better education outcomes for Māori students.
- Continuing to improve the information available on tertiary education—particularly on careers advice, employment outcomes and skills in demand—for Māori students, whānau, communities, and iwi, to enable them to make informed education choices.
- Examining existing support for research based on mātauranga Māori, as part of the reviews of the Performance Based Research Fund and the Centres of Research Excellence. (Ministry of Education, 2013)

The TES (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2014) has encouraged TEOs to provide more support to transitioning Māori students and their whānau, to improve participation rates, as well as contribute to supporting *tangata whenua* (indigenous people, people of the land), as partners with the Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi.

### **Māori Transitioning to University – A Discussion**

According to Amundsen (2019), transitioning to tertiary education for Māori students involves a “reciprocal interplay of identity, agency and structure that can support or restrict transition experiences” (p. i). There are multiple layers that impact students’ successful transitions.

Transition to university is even more difficult for students who have transitioned from *kura Māori* (Māori schools) (Webb-Liddall, 2020). It is vital for New Zealand universities to be inclusive, and adopt culturally responsive practices that encourage and support Māori students to achieve the best learning outcomes (Amundsen, 2019). Students’ experiences in their first year of study ultimately impact retention and completion, highlighting the importance of successful transitions from secondary schools to universities (van der Meer et al., 2010).

What appears to be missing, in order to facilitate a successful transition, is an overall educational theory to guide tertiary educators on how to promote equity, as well as being inclusive of Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the tertiary learning environment. Positive relationships are a crucial component for successful transitioning experiences to occur. Positive relationships allow tertiary providers to fulfil their roles as educators, thereby reducing any educational gaps, and thus promoting equity (Fraser & Hill, 2016). A whānau-like learning environment promotes a sense of belonging and inclusiveness in Māori students, and this supports their successful transition into

tertiary study, with more chance of improved and sustained educational outcomes. This allows the students to be engaged while having their self and cultural identity validated and supported (Ministry of Education, 2013).

According to Bishop, Berryman, Cavanaugh & Teddy (2009), a key element to encourage successful learning is allowing students the freedom to express who they are, culturally and as individuals. This validates their own experiences and worldview. Using this type of approach improves educational results for Māori students, as well as allowing Te Tiriti o Waitangi to be honoured. Through using a positive relationship-based theory to connect with students, tertiary providers are able to focus on the individual; with a holistic approach therefore improving transitional experiences for students (Drewery & Claiborne, 2014).

According to Bishop et al. (2009), education reform needs to focus on promoting equity, as this will prioritise the reduction of educational gaps between Māori and non-Māori. Reducing the gaps is crucial to allow for more Māori students to experience successful transitions to tertiary education. Focusing on productive partnerships between Māori students and universities will enable deficit theorising to be challenged and addressed. Once this is achieved the culture of the student can be incorporated into the learning environment (Bishop et al., 2009). There are many elements which determine a successful transition to university. However, first in family to attend university is a phenomenon that has far reaching impacts on whānau.

### **First in Family**

A first in family university student is a student who is the only person in their immediate family to attend university (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Gofen, 2009). There is an intergenerational change when a first in family student attends university; a “new educational cycle” begins within the wider family, as it encourages “other family members to view it as a possibility” (O’Shea, 2015, para. 13). There are numerous factors that influence first in family university students to pursue tertiary education; the most common are economic prosperity and social mobility. Therefore, university provides a pathway for these students to build better futures for themselves and their families, it expands their cultural and social experiences, and allows them to explore themselves and pursue their interests (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

First in family university students can face many challenges, such as low socioeconomic backgrounds, educational discipline expectations, low levels of family support and prior secondary school preparation, and the difficulties of navigating the university application process, along with experiencing feelings of fear and apprehension (Berkner, Horn, & Clune, 2000; Gofen, 2009; Oldfield, 2012; O'Shea, 2015). Collectively, it is common for first in family students to “cope” with university, and they tend to feel a lack of belonging within the university (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013).

Some first in family students have come from backgrounds where the consensus is “people like us don't go to university”; therefore, a high value was not placed on tertiary education. Instead, it was assumed that once they had finished high school, they would immediately enter the workforce (Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2013, p. 3). According to Soria and Stebelton (2013), this mentality usually leads to a lack of parental support. In contrast, where social capital is passed on from parents to children, students with university educated parents tend to have a clear understanding of tertiary education and the impact it has on personal growth and career development (Gofen, 2009; Soria & Stebleton, 2013).

First in family university students may experience higher levels of stress and pressure, (Davis, 2010), as they do not have any older whānau members who have lived through the same experiences. Their backgrounds consist of a focus on interdependence, and this is reflected within their academic activities. However, this does not align with the middle-class norms regarding individualism and independence, in turn allowing for inequitable opportunities for success (Davis, 2013). As Pearce, Down and Moore (2008) argue, “students' futures are bound by their social class habitus, rather than shaped by their individual abilities or aspirations” (p. 263). Therefore, additional stressors can be created through the misalignment of background values with institutional values (Davis, 2013).

According to M. Durie (2006), research indicates four influential contributing factors that encourage first in family students to complete a qualification at university. These include: positive whānau relationships that play a crucial role in the students' success while at university, social and academic factors, and future financial stability (M. Durie, 2006).

### 3.5 Māori University Statistical Reporting

In 2016, the Ministry of Education released a report on Māori enrolments and pass rates from 2010 to 2015 in the tertiary education sector (Education Counts, 2016). Table 1 shows reported data on the number of Māori enrolled in certificate level to doctorate level qualifications. From 2010 to 2015, the number of students enrolled in certificate levels 1-4 dropped significantly, but enrolments in Bachelor's degrees increased. Enrolments in graduate programs increased, except for graduate certificates and diplomas, which declined. Therefore, overall, there are minor improvements in the number of enrolments in Bachelor's degree qualifications, and nearly all postgraduate qualifications. However, the disparity between the Bachelor's degree enrolments and the doctoral enrolments are extremely concerning, with only 515 Māori students in 2015 enrolled in a doctoral degree (less than 5% of total Māori student enrolments).

Table 1

#### *Māori Enrolment Numbers from 2010 to 2015*

Qualification level	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Certificate level	60,025	54,570	53,180	55,765	55995	54490
Diploma	13315	11775	10735	10900	10580	10980
Undergraduate	16370	17200	17620	17720	18155	18425
Postgraduate Diploma	3105	2995	3000	2955	2975	3260
Masters	1225	1235	1320	1395	1425	1575
PhD	450	455	450	485	485	515
Total:	94,490	88,230	86,305	89,220	89615	89245

*Note.* Adapted from "Tertiary Participation," by Education Counts, 2016 (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/participation>).

Table 2 indicates completion rates for the same period. It is worth noting that not all programs are full one-year courses, so the number of students who complete a qualification will be less than the number enrolled. Table 1 showed that in 2010, 94,490 Māori students enrolled in a tertiary level course, but according to Table 2, only 27,410 of those Māori students completed their qualifications. With completed qualifications at 31,560 in 2015, this indicates that, although fewer

Māori were enrolled in tertiary studies, the completion rate improved. While this is an extremely rough and simplistic means of comparison, it does begin to indicate the size of the disparity.

Clearly, this disparity between enrolment numbers and completion rates of Māori students' needs ongoing investigation. Indeed, there might be imperatives other than addressing disparity for moral and social justice because in 2018 the Tertiary Education Commission warned that universities displaying "poor results for Māori and Pasifika students could result in funding reductions" (Gerritsen, 2018) and the TEC will "be asking tertiary institutions to demonstrate how they would close the gaps" (Gerritsen, 2018), within five years. It is likely that this scrutiny has had a direct influence on the AQA enhancement theme for the next few years. In research using a comprehensive amalgamation of different data sets, Meehan, Pacheco and Pushon (2017) note that despite considerable policy effort for more than a decade, "ethnic gaps" in New Zealand's tertiary sector are still "substantial" (p. 6), as the data in Table 2 illustrates.

Table 2

*Completion Rates for Māori in Tertiary Education 2010 to 2015*

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Māori qualification completions	27,410	28,405	30,020	32,230	33,105	31,560

Note. Adapted from "Tertiary Participation," by Education Counts, 2016  
(<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/participation>).

The Education Counts (2016) statistics emphasise the importance of AQA acting in the interest of Māori students in tertiary education. The number of students enrolled versus the number of students who complete qualifications is concerning. This research is in this space, as it aims to identify and assist a particular cohort of Māori students to successfully in their transition. Promoting kapa haka as a transition, retention, and completion strategy has the effect of revitalising te reo me ngā tikanga Māori. This cultural collateral contributes to the wellbeing of students on many levels. However, as already mentioned, it is only one strategy. The issue of Māori tertiary success requires a collaborative approach. At university level, the Academic Quality Authority (AQA) Audit Cycle 6 specifically targets Māori and Pacific students.

### **3.6 The AQA Audit Cycle 6**

In 2017, the Academic Quality Authority (AQA) implemented Cycle 6 of its audit rounds of New Zealand universities. Cycle 6's ten aims or objectives include a thematic enhancement topic on the "Access, outcomes and opportunity for Māori students and for Pasifika students" (AQA, 2017b, p. 1), to respond to continuing disparities between Māori and non-Māori educational outcomes, particularly in higher level education, as revealed in Table 1 and Table 2 (Chauvel & Rean, 2012, p. 4). New Zealand Universities have used Scottish Universities' enhancement themes for guidance and reassurance (AQA, 2017b).

An enhancement theme is a topic of national significance, and is important to all universities, in that eight of New Zealand's universities are required to focus on a common time period. Universities are not expected to do the same thing or take the same approach to the theme, but they are expected to be working on the theme topic, sharing good practice and providing constructive peer review of developments and plans (Matear, 2017, p. 1). Most New Zealand Universities have incorporated transition initiatives into their plan. The initiatives cover:

1. Pathway and transition programmes in universities including discipline-specific programmes and specific transitions support programmes.
2. Recruitment and admissions in terms of awareness, outreach, and support and whether processes are facilitative or impeding.

### **3.7 Current Strategies Promoting Māori Participation and Achievement**

When Māori students experience success, this indicates success for everyone. Improving successful education outcomes for Māori students is a continuous priority for New Zealand's universities. Priority 3 of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014–2019 and Challenge 2 of the Blueprint for Education System Stewardship (2016) highlight the government's priorities for Māori achievement. Through research, teaching and learning initiatives, and student support activities universities are ensuring these priorities are promoted.

Universities have reported increases in Māori participation and achievement. Increasingly higher levels of qualifications have been achieved by Māori students. This result has been attained through universities adopting the approach of a Kaupapa Māori foundation, using evidence-based



initiatives that targets building capability and expanding the knowledge infrastructure of our society, to achieve positive outcomes.

Te Kāhui Amokura (Universities New Zealand's Committee on Māori) has a strong focus on promoting and accelerating the mutual interests of New Zealand's universities to enhance outcomes for Māori university students and Māori scholarship. There are three integral goals of Te Kāhui Amokura's current strategic plan. These are improving outcomes for learners, improving outcomes for current and future Māori staff, and increasing universities' role in the revitalisation of te reo Māori (Universities New Zealand Te Pōkai Tara, n.d.).

Currently Māori students make up 12% of all domestic university students. There are 17,245 Māori students: 11,205 females (65%) and 6,005 males (35%), which indicates an increase of 12% since 2010. Statistics suggest 23% of Māori students are studying at postgraduate level across the university sector, which is an increase of 20% from 2010. Māori equivalent full-time students (EFTS) have seen a steady increase of 17% since 2010.

In addition, Māori doctoral students have increased by 24%, and Māori Bachelor's degree EFTS have increased by 18% since 2010, with nearly 50% of recent Māori university graduates being the first in their whānau to attend university. One third of these are parents and 70% are female. However, whilst the number of Māori enrolling in tertiary education has seen growth since 2010, enrolments of Māori students decreased by 2.8% between 2018 and 2019 (Education Counts, 2020).

Despite the challenges listed above, in recent times there has been advancement in participation and achievement at higher levels in tertiary education for Māori students. There are a larger number of Māori students enrolled in qualifications at Bachelor's level or higher than previously noted, and course completion rates for Māori students at all levels have additionally seen an increase. However, the number of Māori students studying at NZQF level 4 and above remains consistent. Interestingly, there is still a gap in participation and achievement at higher levels between Māori and non-Māori students. This suggests that further development is required to ensure our education system is delivering the best possible education outcomes and desirable levels of success for Māori students are achieved. Tertiary education has a crucial role to play in sustaining and revitalising Māori language and mātauranga Māori, a valuable resource that will

contribute significantly to innovation, productivity, and economic growth, to benefit all New Zealanders.

Through raising educational achievement, the government's goal of raising living standards may become achievable. Incorporated into the government's current long-term strategic direction for tertiary education is a goal to address the development aspirations of Māori. This has seen a range of work implemented to improve educational and employment outcomes for Māori.

Some of this work involves tertiary providers having the appropriate incentives to achieve better outcomes for their Māori students, and increasing the accountability of tertiary providers to the government and their communities. They can achieve this through the Tertiary Education Commission placing a strong focus on advancing Māori learner participation and achievement, to advance equality in student population, as well as granting additional funding and resourcing for those tertiary providers that have displayed acceptable outcomes for their Māori students (Ministry of Education, 2020).

The benefits of tertiary education for Māori students are manifold. The literature identified better employment prospects, higher incomes, and longer life expectancy. Therefore it is imperative that more Māori successfully participate in and complete tertiary education.

## **Conclusion**

The literature review began with an analysis of the ancient narratives of kapa haka, to set the scene for the discussion on Kaupapa Māori. The theoretical principles detailed in the overview are focused specifically on their applicability to the research question. The research outcomes clearly identified the cultural connection between kapa haka and the marae and TKT students. Therefore a brief examination of the literature on marae development was carried out. The approach captured the holism of cultural beliefs and practices that the marae carries, and how the space is intellectually, spiritually, physically, and emotionally nurturing.

The objective of this research sits within a range of strategic initiatives to address Māori participation and retention in the university sector. As such, it necessitated an overview of the literature around government initiatives and frameworks committed to improving educational outcomes for Māori tertiary students. The frameworks, for the most part, remain aspirational,

although the statistical evidence suggests that there has been some improvement in Māori student completion rates. Perhaps the most fitting conclusion to this chapter is the whakatauki that calls for collaboration and co-operation, to achieve the best outcomes.

*Mā tō rourou, Mā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi*  
With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive

## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

A Kaupapa Māori theoretical approach frames and guides all aspects of the methodologies used in this research. More significantly, it is a Kaupapa Māori ethical framework that provided a practical guide to implementing the qualitative interview component of the study. Qualitative research is designed to acquire a knowledge and understanding of other people's experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Malterud, 2001). It is used to comprehend the context of realities and experiences relayed by participants or interviewees (Holloway, 1997; Merriam & Tisdall, 2015). The combination of these two theoretical approaches allow for the researcher to conduct qualitative interviews guided by Kaupapa Māori.

Eight semi-structured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with TKT members. Table 3 highlights important demographic information about the eight participants.

Table 3

#### *Participant Profile and Demographic Information*

Participant code	Iwi	Gender	Programme of Study
A	Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa	Female	Māori Media
B	Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa	Female	Business
C	Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu, Whakatōhea	Male	Physiotherapy
D	Ngāti Porou	Male	Māori Development
E	Ngāti Kahungunu, Te Arawa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi te Rangi	Female	Māori Development
F	Ngāpuhi	Male	Māori Development & Education
G	Te Arawa	Male	Spatial Design
H	Ngāpuhi	Female	Business

The profile shows that the participants are affiliated to a range of iwi. This is not surprising, given that Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand, and, because of colonisation, hosts diasporic *taurāhere* (other tribes). Participants acknowledge tribal connections to Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Tūhoe, Whakatōhea, and Te Arawa.

Transcripts of the eight interviews and demographic information were used to produce data for the findings, using the main methodological approach, qualitative, in-depth interviews. Māori ethical codes, derived from Kaupapa Māori theory, are discussed here, and the following ethics were applied throughout the interview process, to ensure a Māori worldview was maintained.

The purpose of conducting qualitative research is to acquire a knowledge and understanding of other people's experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004; Malterud, 2001). Qualitative research, broadly defined, is "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). According to one description, it is used to comprehend context of realities and experiences relayed by participants or interviewees (Holloway, 1997; Merriam & Tisdall, 2015). Furthermore, qualitative research "involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004, p. 2). My role when interviewing participants, was to guide the interview with a set of indicative questions and prompt where clarity was needed.

As a case study, this presents an opportunity to explore lived experiences of Māori students navigating their first year at university with AUT's kapa haka group, TKT. As an undergraduate student I was a member of TKT, and, from this perspective, can claim inside researcher insights. This was the most appropriate framework to guide the interviews, as it overlaps with both my and the participants' worldviews. My lived experiences helped me connect and understand the participants holistically through a Māori lens.

According to Loxley and Seery (2008), insider research is when a member of a group studying or researching is from or within the same group (Hewitt-Taylor, 2002; Loxley & Seery, 2008). The individual will often share the same attributes, characteristics, or a common society: career, cultural, biological, club, and so forth (Greene, 2014). Gummesson (2000) maintains that "Pre-understanding refers to such things as people's knowledge, insights and experience before they engage in a research programme" (p. 57). However, L. T. Smith (1999) considers that indigenous insider research can be problematic:

...there are a number of ethical, cultural, political and personal issues that can present special difficulties for indigenous researchers who, in their own communities, work partially as insiders, and are often employed for this purpose, and partially as outsiders, because of their Western education or because they may work across clan, tribe, linguistic, age and gender boundaries. (p. 5)

This problem is somewhat mitigated by the fact that the TKT students recruited for this study are both Māori and also Western-educated. We are all cross-tribal and of a similar age, living and studying in an urban environment. Personally, I think that the advantages of insider research outweigh the negatives. The rapport between researcher and participant is established, and potentially allows for more open conversation, creating richer data.

## 4.2 Kaupapa Māori Driven Ethical Framework

According to G. H. Smith (1990), there are kaupapa-driven ethical codes which fall under Kaupapa Māori research. G. H. Smith (1990, p. 121), discusses the seven main ethical principles which ultimately guide the nature of the research, more specifically the qualitative interviews:

### 1. *Aroha ki te tangata* (Be respectful)

It was important that the researcher was respectful towards the participants' views, opinions, privacy, and willingness to participate in this research, with the option to withdraw at any time if they desired to. It was crucial to acknowledge the participants' contributions, effort, time and mana, by listening to their experiences and interpreting them accurately for the research and data set of interview transcripts.

### 2 *Kanohi kitea* (Face to face)

Qualitative research methods were adopted to conduct eight semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The research relied on the interviewees' responses to the five key questions. A face-to-face interview with human and cultural interaction allows for rapport exchange, which is beneficial for both the researcher and interviewee. This is where *whakawhanaungatanga* (fostering relationships) came into play, it allowed me to gain the students' trust, which meant the answers they gave were genuine. Reciprocal relationships were developed between myself and the participants because of the face-to-face interactions. The participant, their cultural background, and their unique lived experiences were viewed holistically through a Māori lens.

### 3 *Titiro, whakarongo, kōrero* (Look, listen and speak)

I have an important role, as the researcher, to listen and interpret the information given by the participants, accurately. I am representing the students' *kōrero* (discussion) to highlight their experiences, so it is important this is done respectfully and accurately. This is an advantage, for, as

an inside researcher, I have experienced the same transitions as most of the participants, and I also understand the Māori cultural realities at university that the students expressed. This was useful when transcribing and coding, as it was easier for me to understand and interpret the participants' discussion.

#### 4 *Manaaki ki te tangata* (Share and host people)

With each interview, I provided *kai* (food) as a *koha* (gift) for the interviewee, to acknowledge them for their time and contribution to the research. Prior to each interview, participants were unaware there would be any form of *koha*. From a Māori worldview, a *koha* acknowledges the reciprocity between two groups and usually comes in the form of a gift (Andrew, 2020). This indicates that there was no coercion, and participants were interviewed on their own accord. In TKT, the concept of *tuakana* (older student)/*teina* (younger student<sup>5</sup>) was acknowledged, knowing whānau relationships and connections are valued and nurtured through concepts of *tika* (being correct), *pono* (truth) and *aroha* (love).

Sharing a meal created a relaxed environment and made the interviewees more comfortable around me during the interview process. *Manaakitanga* (hospitality) was also exercised, with ongoing appropriate communication that allowed for participants to cancel or postpone interviews at short notice, and also withdraw from the study if needed, making sure the participants' needs were always met.

#### 5 *Kia tūpato* (Be cautious)

I had to be cautious of my position as an insider researcher, maintaining a good balance of professional conduct while interviewing the participants of TKT as their *tuakana*. Before each interview commenced, I reminded participants of the purpose of the research, and what my role was as a researcher, to ensure we were both clear on how our roles contributed to the research. Clear and common understandings of the research purpose set the tone for the interviews.

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<sup>5</sup> *Tuakana/teina* are terms usually used for older/younger siblings of the same sex but they are often used to describe relationships that are not restricted to whānau.

## 6 *Kaua e takahi te mana o te tangata* (Do not trample over the power of people)

The mana of the kaupapa and the participants was expressed and maintained through the research. As a researcher, it was important for me to ensure that everyone's mana and lived experiences were respected. It was a privilege for me to kōrero with participants sharing their experiences, so, as a researcher, it was my role to keep participants safe and uphold any promised expectations—showing humility and respect, to ensure tikanga was followed throughout the whole research process. This included maintaining anonymity and not adjusting any kōrero for the benefit of the research.

### *Kaua e māhaki* (Don't flaunt your knowledge)

Flaunting personal knowledge on the research topic might have impacted the interviews and the participants' responses to the questions. The approach when conducting these interviews was to learn from the students' perspectives and experiences.

## **4.3 Qualitative Research Interviews**

Qualitative research was used to conduct the interviews, guided by Kaupapa Māori principles and ethics. The two methodologies worked in conjunction with each other to draw out the best possible findings for the research. I located the qualitative research methods in a Māori worldview by adhering to Kaupapa Māori principles and ethical codes throughout the entire research process. The first step was to determine who to interview.

### **Participant Selection and Criteria**

Purposive sampling selects participants in a non-random approach (Tongco, 2007) to ensure selected participants can provide rich understandings of the research topic. The aim was to select eight Māori students in TKT who had transitioned directly from secondary school to tertiary education. It was crucial to select an equal number of females, males, and year levels, to gain understandings of lived experiences of as many types of TKT members as possible. First year members were excluded from the study, as their transition was still underway. The following criteria were developed for choosing students who:

- Transitioned directly from secondary to tertiary education



- Identify as Māori
- Were from any courses/disciplines within AUT
- Had a mix of student experiences: 2 first year students, 2 second year students, 2 third year students, 2 fourth year/postgraduate or alumni students
- Are, or were, active members in AUT's kapa haka group TKT

The students were approached in a Māori space: either in the Te Ara Poutama faculty or on the AUT marae, Ngā Wai o Horotiu. The participants were told that it was not compulsory and were not offered the koha, to avoid any coercion. The face-to-face interaction was important, as it follows research practices under Kaupapa Māori: acknowledging the mana and presence of the students. Potential participants were told they could take a week to decide if they wanted to participate or not.

Unexpectedly, it took five months to complete the eight interviews. Multiple complications arose during the interviewing stage. Attempting to recruit the eight specific candidates I was looking for proved to be difficult, as there was not a wide pool of Māori students, even in the wider AUT Māori community, who fit the specific criteria. Seven of the selected eight participants fit the criteria, however, I was unable to find a second year wahine who had transitioned directly from secondary school. This wahine was replaced with a third-year student who had transitioned directly from secondary school; who contributed meaningful and insightful kōrero to the research. This wahine was selected as a replacement as it was important for me to find participants who were secondary school leavers and had transitioned directly to AUT.

Availability was a common issue among most interviewees. Organising dates and times to conduct interviews, with constant rescheduling, drew out the interviewing process much longer than anticipated. Communication was very important over the process of finding students to interview. I had to be flexible, persistent, and follow up constantly to ensure the interviews were carried out. Through the process of finding voluntary participants and interviewing each student, the participants' wellbeing always came first.

As the researcher, I made sure I accommodated the students by rescheduling when important issues arose for each participant. Eight candidates were eventually selected and interviewed, and although one student did not fit into the original selection criteria, they all made valuable contributions.

## **Interviewing Process**

Any questions the participant had were answered before the interview began. The participants all agreed that I could voice-record the interviews, to ensure the transcripts were accurate and could be revisited anytime. The interviews lasted 10-25 minutes, depending on the participant's answers and depth of discussion. Five research questions guided the interview process.

1. Why did you join Tītahi ki Tua?
2. What is your understanding of Tītahi ki Tua's role in the university?
3. How has being in Tītahi ki Tua helped or hindered your academic progress?
4. What has been the biggest challenge of transitioning from secondary school to tertiary education?
5. What role has kapa haka had in your transition from secondary school to tertiary education?

## **4.4 Conclusion**

Kaupapa Māori was adopted as a framework to guide and underpin all aspects of the research, which situated participants in a Māori worldview. It was vital for this research to adhere to tikanga Māori throughout the research process. Qualitative research was used within a Kaupapa Māori framework to conduct eight qualitative, in-depth interviews. This research process worked well with the two methodologies; however, there were some limitations to the research that will be discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the data and key findings.

## Chapter 5 Key Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

Thematic analysis was the tool used to identify patterns and themes within this data set, in a thorough, ordered manner. According to Rice and Ezzy (2000) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996), the process of thematic analysis begins with extensive research and a literature review. This gives a foundation for the research, and guides which methods the researcher uses to collect data.

Once the coding of the eight interview transcriptions were complete, they were reviewed several times to identify the inductive and deductive themes. Braun and Clarke (2017) argue that thematic analysis allows researchers, using a coding system, to identify relevant “features of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2017, p. 297), which in turn provide insight on the research question. According to Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2014), thematic analysis adopts the technique of segmentation to first document and assess the data, and then thematically analyse the data, looking at similarities, difference, and relationships between themes.

According to Tuckett (2005) compiling and analysing themes is done through comparison, whilst “accompanied by continuing simultaneous reading of literature” (p. 84). This method is commonly adopted by researchers to analyse and interpret a data set of transcribed interviews. By careful reading and re-reading of the data and through recognising patterns, “themes become the categories for analysis” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). Organising data is an essential step when analysing a data set (Tuckett, 2005; Van der Heide, 2001). The demographic information was vital in connecting the themes and experiences using background information.

The following themes came from re-reading and coding the transcripts, which were considered like a *puna* (spring of water), or a source of rich information and stories that reveal students’ perspectives. The reiterative coding process created three key themes: support within TKT, whānau, and transition. Analysing and defining these terms led to the two major findings discussed in Chapter 5.

### 5.2 Theme One: Support Within TKT

This key theme is one of the deductive themes that refers directly to the research question. Participating in kapa haka is part of being in TKT (the association); even though the two groups are

separate, they use the same name and frequently work as a collective. The following section illustrates how the roles of the two TKT groups (the association and the kapa haka group) contribute to the transition. Although the research question refers back to the kapa haka group, the data set of interviews reveal the close connection between TKT kapa haka and association, as the participants kept grouping them together. The groups work in a reciprocal relationship and are interchangeable, as students unintentionally link them together because they work so closely with each other. Therefore, this section will analyse the role of both the kapa haka and association as one unit, rather than differentiating the two roles as separate.

In the interviews, the participants were asked “what role does TKT kapa haka play in the university?” Participants responded by identifying several types of support they received from being part of TKT, which were categorised into four sub-themes: Cultural; Emotional and spiritual; Academic; and Social support. In reality, these forms of support are closely interlinked, and are only categorised here to highlight participants’ comments in relation to their transition experiences within TKT.

According to the participants, two important Kaupapa Māori values are present within the TKT community, i.e., the values of manaakitanga and whakawhanaungatanga, which are embedded and embodied in TKT’s student support, and are important concepts to consider in how support is framed from a Māori worldview.

### **Cultural Support**

In the data, cultural support was identified through references to participants’ own cultural background. The cultural support took the form of “being able to get together as Māori students to get together, have a kai, sharing meals” [Participant A, female] and “to find more who are Māori, who think like me” [Participant A, female].

Six of the participants felt that being part of TKT was a space for them to feel comfortable, as it resonated with their past environments, whether it was their bilingual high school setting, a secondary high school with a high Māori roll, their rural marae, or their own home. According to Participant A:

All through my life I’ve been involved with Māori, I was in a bilingual unit in primary and intermediate and high school and I guess it was my bilingual for university. I went because

I wanted to find more friends who are Māori, who think like me. It was really nice because I found a great support system which I've always had throughout my years, so it was really nice to see that university had that as well. [Participant A, female]

The feeling of having a “home away from home” [Participant G, male] contributed to some students' (n=5) overall positive experience with TKT and, by extension, the university. This was particularly important for students who had moved from rural areas to attend the university. Referring to TKT, Participant C [male] observed unequivocally that “it's [TKT] basically keeping me grounded, back to my roots and connections.” Participant G [male] noted that feeling connected back to his own culture was an important aspect:

I joined Tītahi ki Tua because I originally come from Whangārei, and Whangārei is quite heavily immersed in Māori culture. I was looking for that in Auckland, especially coming from a small town like that. I found that in Tītahi ki Tua, because of its Māori population, Māori support, it's pretty much why I joined. To have a connection back home, to have a connection here, another home here. [Participant G, male]

The word connection appears multiple times in the transcripts, which indicates that, while the participants might not be in a space physically, they can maintain cultural connections by being part of practices and groups that feel familiar; a “space to connect with Kaupapa Māori” [Participant D] is a way to maintain cultural identity. One student, who was pregnant while studying, acknowledged that she received appropriate cultural support from TKT, who “looked after me how you would look after someone who was pregnant at a marae” [Participant E, female]. On a marae, pregnant women are seen as the future of the iwi. They know that they are important, valued and part of daily life. In TKT, Participant E [female] joined a group with a shared understanding of her role in her whakapapa's future, being with people who apply to her special forms of *manaaki* (hospitality) and *awhi* (support), and keep a closer eye on her.

On marae, pregnant women are part of the fabric of daily life and as such can still take part in marae activities that support the expression of manaakitanga, such as working in the kitchen, child minding, performing in kapa haka, and executing other routine tasks on the marae. TKT students who are familiar with marae life would take care of her, as a normal practice.

The majority (n=7) of the students found they were able to connect strongly to their identity and Māoritanga by participating in the TKT kapa haka group, specifically. Participant B [female] emphasises how TKT kapa haka is a way for her to actively participate in her culture, with her rural upbringing and boarding school experiences:

We did kapa haka every day at boarding school so it's kind of been the heart of me being active in my culture because I don't come from a strong Māori family or anything like that. So, kapa haka has always been not only a passion but it's like an outlet for me to engage and just stay true to my Māoritanga. [Participant B, female]

This is also supported by Participant G [male], who identifies kapa haka as a “foundation” in his life, which ultimately helps him identify who he is, individually. Kapa haka assisted Participant G [male], by maintaining his Māoritanga. As a rural student, it was important for him to have a group to connect with, to actively engage in te ao Māori.

I look at hakas being my foundation in who I am, how I hold myself is all to do with kapa haka. [Participant G, male]

A lot of my whānau always tell me to give up hakas and I always tell them nah, hakas is what keeps me grounded and what keeps me true to myself. Without hakas, being up in Auckland, without Tītahi ki Tua is my only connection to my Māoritanga and I feel it plays a huge part in who I am and how I do things. [Participant G, male]

One student [Participant E, female] felt TKT kapa haka did not help with her transition at all; this student believed the TKT association was what helped her transition smoothly to university, but not the kapa haka group. However, Participant E [female] also explained how TKT kapa haka helped her regain a love she lost for kapa haka. The act of performing kapa haka for fun and entertainment allowed this student to reconnect with her Māoritanga.

If I'm being honest kapa haka hasn't really helped me. More so *mau rākau* (Māori weaponry) has helped me because kapa haka has changed a lot. When I think of kapa haka I sort of, because of external things I lost my passion for it but once I came back and I was in TKT I liked the vibe of doing kapa haka as a ngāhau type thing instead of a competition. [Participant E, female]

Another student [Participant D, male] agreed that the kapa haka group successfully helped them transition; however, the amount of time spent practising in the group impacted on the amount of time this student had to study for university.

I think in some regards it can be more of a hinderance in that way, in terms of the amount of time we would commit to whether it be in the kitchen or running over actions or choreography work or whatever. There's a time commitment that you have to make to that, well you don't have to, but you should. And in that regard, I think it can be quite impactful in a negative way. [Participant D, male]

Participants' use of the word connection appears multiple times, reaffirming that occupying a Māori space (the marae) and participating in TKT aids students in receiving cultural support, by actively participating in Māori practices, guided by tikanga Māori.

### **Emotional and Spiritual Support**

Just over half of the students (n=5) referred explicitly to the emotional and spiritual support they received from TKT. It was decided to combine these two types of support because, from a Māori world view, they are closely linked. The emotional support students discussed included the concept of whakawhanaungatanga, which is being connected with their identity and engaging with other Māori students. Tikanga, karakia, waiata, and marae were all aspects which encompassed the students' experiences of feeling supported spiritually. This section will discuss how they are visible to and experienced by students. In interpreting the responses, I drew heavily on my own student experience. The theme of emotional and spiritual support is closely linked to the cultural support discussed in the previous section, as the students are referring to the kinds of "Māori support" [Participant G, male] that is highly valued, as it links to important concepts such as *wairua* (spirit, soul), *taha hinengaro* (mind, conscience) and *manaaki tangata* (caring for people). These concepts all refer to how we support and look after each other within a Māori context.

Unsurprisingly, the emotional and spiritual support from TKT was discussed in positive terms. Recollecting their experiences in TKT, they used terms such as a sense of "relief" [Participant A, female] and "release" [Participant A, female], and identified participation in kapa haka as a vehicle to reduce the ongoing emotional stress of university life [Participant A, female]. The participants referred to the importance of having access to the marae, being able to do kapa haka with friends, and feeling comfortable around "like-minded" people who made them feel mentally supported.

So, the role it had for me was I guess a nice release. It was really nice for me, it was a nice break I guess, it was therapeutic, it was therapeutic for me. Being able to just have an outlet for my frustrations or things like that. Doing kapa haka made me feel mentally and physically ok. [Participant A, female]

It's helped a lot, it's kept me sane I guess [referring to TKT kapa haka], it's kept me coming to university. [Participant A, female]

It's like a place where I can just be Māori and I love it and enjoy it. [Participant B, female]

How I see Tītahi ki Tua ... is an active Māori body for Māori students to find another home, a place of belonging within Auckland. [Participant G, male]

The use of te reo Māori is also an important component of kapa haka, which half of the participants felt had an emotional and spiritual connection to their identity. Participant D [male] mentioned that TKT is a useful space for Māori students to engage in te reo Māori, especially if they're not learning te reo or taking Māori language classes. Being in a space surrounded with te reo Māori, which includes karakia, waiata, students speaking te reo Māori, pōhiri, and whaikōrero (oratory), is a great way to engage, practise, and retain the language if you are not actively learning it.

...being in TKT I've been able to learn lots of different *mōteatea* [traditional chants] and waiata which, in some regards, may not have directly impacted my academics, but supported me ... holistically. [Participant D, male]

I would say as a space to connect, as a space to connect with Kaupapa Māori, as a space to take a break maybe from academics or not if you're learning te reo, I think that's where it is. [Participant D, male]

Half of the students (n=4) felt that they were able to further their reo Māori engagement through participation in TKT kapa haka. Learning new items, learning about other iwi and different dialects gave students the opportunity to engage with and learn more about Māori culture and identity, in an appropriate environment “kapa haka has always been not only a passion but it's like an outlet for me to engage and just stay true to my Māoritanga” [Participant B, female]

The spiritual support from TKT that students refer to is the kind of support that students can only receive from other Māori students and staff, the TKT organisation, and, by extension, the marae, which is discussed in more depth in the section 5.6.2. Having the establishment of TKT in an appropriate place made students feel mentally and holistically supported as they argued they need a Māori space in the university to “be Māori” [Participant B, female]. This too is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six.

### **Academic Support**

If we consider that a student's primary activity at university is to acquire academic credits, locating academic support within TKT is an important theme. This theme arose after careful reading of students' descriptions of the support they received through being part of TKT. However, only three out of the eight participants [Participant A & H, females; Participant D, male] identified their engagement with TKT as directly and positively affecting their academic studies at AUT. For these three students, having a place to meet allowed a space (the marae) for students to study and



assist each other, if they needed it. Furthermore, these three students recognised that they were motivated by their older TKT peers to complete their work. Therefore, while TKT kapa haka itself did not play a huge role in students' academic studies, networking with other students provided support, encouragement, and motivation for some. Witnessing other members succeeding academically in TKT motivated these students to also create good study habits and thrive in their degrees. For example, Participant A, a young female student, recalled, "So, people say, 'Oh are you all good with your essays? Like how's uni going, if you ever need anything just hit me up,' that's the vibe I have with Titahi ki Tua." She then went on to remark on the impact of being around students who were in their third or second year.

Just having them there and also hearing them say "oh I'm doing really good" makes me go, "Oh cool, if they're doing good, I need to make sure I'm doing good." It gives me inspiration. I think the great thing about Titahi ki Tua is that it's all year levels, so first years, second years, third years. In my first year I had a lot of third years I could look up to, who had just finished their degree or were just finishing their degree that year ... to see where I could be in the next three years was awesome! Like just visually seeing these people was amazing. So, I was like, yes, I can do this! [Participant A, female]

Participant D [male] acknowledges benefits of being with TKT: "probably providing allocated time and space where you could go, I guess. As well as networking, academic support, building relationships, and those sort of just helped me in my words to navigate my way through not only studies but the entirety of university life."

Participant H, a young female student in the Business faculty, reflected,

For me, it helped me heaps because it helped me with my studies. I do business, so being a predominantly centred degree, it had empowered me to be more Māori with my work. I always thought about my work from a Māori perspective but wrote in a way that they would want me to write, so I think this year there was a shift in my work that started challenging more of the pedagogies and structures. [Participant H, female]

Out of the four types of support discussed by participants, academic support was the least acknowledged. Two questions arose from this observation, do students in TKT expect academic support from TKT? Are the cultural support and friendships formed the factors that help them transition to university? As Theodore et al. (2016) identifies, "mono-cultural university environments" are an institutional barrier to Māori tertiary students (p. 2). Being surrounded in Māori environments, particularly by more Māori staff and role models, has positive effects on Māori students (Theodore et al., 2016). Surprisingly, from the participants' comments it would

appear that the networking side of TKT and kapa haka is what helps some students with their academic studies, by bringing students from across the university together, rather than through direct practical support.

However, several students [Participants D, male; H & A, female] expressed another impact of TKT and taking part in kapa haka. They referred to it as “a hinderance” in response to the question, “How has being in TKT helped or hindered your academic progress in university?”

Participant D [male] talked about the impact of the time commitment required to do kapa haka properly, noting the range of activities around kapa haka, not just the performance, which include being “in the kitchen or running over actions or choreography work or whatever,” and that,

There’s a time commitment that you have to make to that, well, you don’t have to, but you should. And in that regard, I think it can be quite impactful in a negative way. That’s, unfortunately, I think a consequence of our culture in terms of well, to put on a good show. You have to commit time to it. [Participant D, male]

Another participant, Participant F [male], was quite clear about the positive and negative impacts of being part of TKT.

It helped and hindered. I definitely have to acknowledge both. While I know the support and the resources are all there and the time and the space, there’s a lot of self-control in how you progress in terms of your academic studies. But I think to say that it doesn’t hinder your progress, or it doesn’t support it is incorrect. I think they both definitely have their roles in it. I guess it’s up to the individual and how they channel their to do list and what they need to do. [Participant F, male]

One male participant didn’t make a direct connection between TKT’s role and providing academic support. He felt,

Titahi ki Tua doesn’t really play a huge role in our students’ educational stuff but it’s more to do with the environment they’re in, and just providing a loving and supportive whānau for them while they’re at uni. [Participant G, male]

Interviews revealed that academic support was not present in TKT kapa haka for all the participants. Although support from peers encouraged some participants to engage in their academic work, the TKT kapa haka group itself did not have any explicit academic support in place. However, the participants who discussed this indicated that there is a role for TKT in providing students with a place to study, for self-directed learning.

So, it's not just for Māori, but it's also a space where you can go and study but also feel comfortable. [Participant B, female]

It's a good place for Māori to get a home space when they are away from home and you'll find most Māori in TKT aren't from here. [Participant D, male]

Being Māori, you're brought up around a whānau based culture, so you always rely on others to move forward and you always surround yourself with whānau. I feel having a Māori space or even a Māori body like Tītahi ki Tua definitely helps. [Participant G, male]

## **Social Support**

Social support refers to how TKT supports students' social engagement with the university. This includes sharing kai together at Wednesday night *noho marae* (marae stayover), socialising in the marae, studying in the wharekai, doing Wednesday night activities together, and attending Te Huinga Tauri, the annual National Māori Students' Conference.

Seven out of the eight students agreed that they felt socially supported by their TKT peers and the TKT kapa haka group. One student [Participant C, male] thought initially it was "just an excuse to get drunk," but found that his perception changed as he became an active member of the group.

Most of the participants (n=7) enjoyed being a part of the kapa haka, whatever their original perceptions. The bond the students created with their TKT whānau motivated them to attend university. The need to connect with their peers was clarified by Participant A [female]:

I feel as if I didn't go to Tītahi ki Tua I wouldn't have been as excited about university as I had, like if I didn't have it. It made me genuinely happy to turn up to uni and see my fellow Tītahi ki Tua members around. [Participant A, female]

But it's helped me because it's given me a reason to actually come to uni to see my friends. Because we're all going through the same journey it's helped too. [Participant E]

In response to the question, "why did you join TKT?", Participant H [female] revealed that TKT provided a familiar social environment:

I got bored with studies and couldn't relate to all of my friends. I could relate to them with uni and work but there was no one I could hang out with outside of uni and do Māori stuff. My family is really Māori, so I felt like I wanted someone to understand me. That's probably why. [Participant H, female]

Interestingly, one male participant acknowledged honestly that close social relationships can have other consequences, and he experienced toxic relationships which ruined the whānau experience for him.

I felt like by the end of the year I was so engrossed in it I just wanted to pull away completely. It was just a lot surrounded by these relationships 24/7. It could become quite toxic. [Participant F, male]

### **Summary of Theme One: Support**

In summary, this theme reveals the types of support students identified that they receive, as members of the group. All sub-themes under support are interlinked, and work closely together to provide students with an environment that makes them feel safe, supported, and culturally engaged, which in most cases positively impacted their experience of transition. It was revealed that TKT is a very important group to the students, a group whose potential the university needs to utilise to help support Māori students, especially in their transitions to university. This is discussed more in the next section: Theme Two.

### **5.3 Theme Two: Whānau (Family)**

The theme of whānau (family) was discussed by participants in response to the questions, “Why did you join TKT?” and “What is TKT’s role in the university?” Their responses indicate that being part of a whānau was an important motivator to join TKT and to take part in kapa haka. They discussed how being a part of TKT united them with a new university whānau. The term whānau is now part of New Zealand English (NZE). The term itself is not only restricted to whakapapa-based connections (Ministry of Education, 2020) but is also used to describe groups who exercise whakawhanaungatanga (Durie, 1994).

This means that the term can be used within and across institutions, schools and organisations. For example, at AUT there is an inclusive whānau group connected to our marae, known as Te Whānau o Horotiu, which is made up of all staff connected with the marae, this includes Māori and non-Māori academic staff, students, librarians, allied professional staff, cleaners and contractors. Members of TKT are considered part of the wider whānau of the marae. The following concepts are important elements of TKT as a functioning Māori group: 1. *kāinga* (home); 2. *whanaungatanga*. The terms are identified in the following sections.

## Kāinga

According to Māori Dictionary.co.nz, “kāinga” refers to “home, habitation, habitat,” among other meanings. In this research, kāinga refers to TKT and the marae, as the participants’ home at university. Just over half of the students (n=5) discussed that being part of TKT and its connection to the marae, Ngā Wai o Horotiu, meant that Māori students had an accessible kāinga to go to, on the university grounds. While participants might not have used the direct term “kāinga,” they used other terms, such as “home away from home,” or “home,” and this was associated as a safe place for Māori students to be Māori on the grounds of university.

For the rural students experiencing a major shift in environment [Participants B, C, E, F & G], having a kāinga meant having a place they could go to seek comfort.

I joined because I came from a Māori boarding school and it just seemed like my new home away from home, all my friends were there, all the people that I lived with were going there and it was in my opinion the best place for Māori to come and be comfortable [as] Māori in the big city. [Participant B, female]

Participant G [male] observed that, coming from a town that was “immersed” in Māori culture (clearly a positive thing for him), he joined TKT “to have a connection back home, to have a connection here, another home here.”

The three urban students articulated a different experience; they noted that TKT was the university “version” of their high school experience. The following statement is representative of the three urban students.

For me, I came through a bilingual study in high school, so I wanted that Māori feel. I wanted to feel like I belong somewhere. At school I was always at the marae, I was always with my teachers hanging out in the Māori space. [Participant H, female]

TKT, its activities, its responsibilities to the wider AUT community, and its connection with the marae provided all eight students with a sense of connection, a culturally familiar space, and the opportunity to take part in and be part of a whānau within the university. However, it is important to note the participants’ need to connect not only to a kapa haka group, but to a space that is comfortable and familiar to them, which feels safe for students to socialise, study, practise kapa haka, or relax. This important aspect is discussed in more depth in section 5.6.2.

## Whanaungatanga—Fostering Relationships

Whanaungatanga and the ability to create intimate supportive relationships is closely related to the first theme of support. This is considered an important theme in its own right, as almost all of the students (n=7) believed that the environment created by TKT kapa haka allowed strong whānau-based relationships to form. The students knew that TKT was a safe space for them to turn to when struggling, needing personal or academic reassurance.

Students' references to whanaungatanga included a variety of terms, such as “building closer connections” and “developing relationships” [Participant C, male], and “connecting with the community” [Participant D, male].

The biggest draw [to TKT] is that it's a Māori space for students which is good for some people who are interested in connecting, but a lot of Māori people aren't. It's a good place for Māori to get a home space when they are away from home and you'll find most Māori in TKT aren't from here [Participant D, male]

I knew that's what would get me through uni if I was going through a rough patch. Having somewhere to go, when I was at uni I would know I could always go to the marae. [Participant H, female]

The fostering of relationships within TKT forms friendships and whānau-based connections that help and sometimes motivate students to get through their studies. As Participant D [male] states, “it's a place to connect with people.” TKT would not be able to function as an association without the attendance of its students. TKT supports the students by providing them with a group and space to interact, and the students support TKT by allowing the association to exist.

Unfortunately, one student [Participant F, male] did not experience the full extent of whanaungatanga in TKT, as he had a bad experience in his last year of university. Participant F [male] was a student who transitioned from a rural area to AUT. The reason he joined TKT was to find a comfortable place at AUT to ease the transition.

Coming from Northland, as well as a not so central location of the university I was searching for friends. Something to make my university experience a bit more comfortable. [Participant F, male]

Eventually I think TKT had a lot of big personalities that kind of scared me at first but as time progressed, I guess I felt a bit more comfortable and started attending more regularly. [Participant F, male]

I felt like by the end of the year I was so engrossed in it I just wanted to pull away completely. It was just a lot surrounded by these relationships 24/7. It could become quite toxic. [Participant F, male]

I just think the key to a successful TKT is all about balance. [Participant F, male]

### **Summary of Theme Two: Whānau**

In summary, the majority of the students felt they had positive whānau experiences within TKT kapa haka. The students referred to TKT as a home away from home multiple times; however, this includes the role of the marae rather than TKT as a kapa haka group. The marae and TKT work intrinsically together to provide students with support, but the marae plays a larger role in students' whānau experiences in TKT. Whānau, kāinga and whanaungatanga all work together to provide students with support in a Māori way—the students are used to this, which is why it makes them feel “safe” and “comfortable.”

The following statement from Participant G [male] summarises this theme and brings together the sub-themes of whānau, kāinga and whanaungatanga:

Being Māori, you're brought up around a whānau-based culture, so you always rely on others to move forward and you always surround yourself with whānau. I feel having a Māori space or even a Māori body like Tītahi ki Tua definitely helps. [Participant G, male]

### **5.4 Theme Three: Transition Challenges**

This theme relates directly back to the research question and was the focal point of the research. Initially, I wanted to know specifically about participants' transitions to university from secondary school, as if there was only one transition; when in fact the interviews revealed that there were many other life-changing transitions. This section discusses the challenges participants acknowledge in their transitions, and the section 5.6.1 identifies the types of transitions participants experience as a result of these challenges.

The participants were asked what the main challenges were in transitioning to university. The most common response was “fitting in” and adapting to a new environment, and, unsurprisingly, almost all of the students (n=7) struggled with their transition from secondary school to AUT, in some form. This includes a rural to urban transition, financial struggles, social transitions and cultural struggle.

The one student who did not struggle transitioning to university [Participant D, male] believes his personality and home environment had a major impact on his transition. Participant D [male] is a confident Māori speaker with very important commitments to his marae and iwi; he is also very accustomed to Western institutions and frameworks due to his hometown and upbringing.

I guess it wasn't particularly hard making the transition in terms of schooling but becoming acclimatized to the way that university in general works. That's a shock, didn't take me too long. [Participant D, male]

His combined experiences assisted Participant D [male] in his transition, as he felt very comfortable at university and also in TKT. The remaining participants expressed that they were searching for a place to feel comfortable, in an unfamiliar environment.

I think it was just moving away from home really, like I was quite comfortable, always been an open person but yeah. Never been a fan of big cities. That's probably the main challenge. [Participant C, male]

Even the three female participants [A, E, H] who went to a bilingual secondary school in Auckland joined to find similar individuals and make new friendships.

While Participant D [male] emphasised that his transition was easier due to his experience and confident personality, this wasn't the case for the rest of the participants. As Participant E [female] explained, it was hard adjusting as a Māori student in a Western institution, coming from a secondary bilingual unit where the students had a strong sense of Māori identity. Two participants expressed that APA referencing and the lack of monitoring and motivation from teachers were also something they struggled with.

Knowing that I wasn't going to be pushed to do assignments, I had to self-manage. That was a little bit different and just that they didn't even account for you being present really, so it was just a whole transition from being pushed and monitored and watched to achieving. To now then just being self-motivated and what not. [Participant B, female]

Being at university was hard trying to be Māori in a Western paradigm. [Participant E, female]

It might sound simple, but, bibliographies and referencing. I remember submitting my first two or three assignments and I didn't have this random thing that they were telling me to put in which was called a bibliography. I didn't know how to use citations or referencing. [Participant F, male]



This is also supported by Participant H [female], who agrees that she found it hard “finding friends and balancing what I wanted to be academically and what I wanted to be socially.”

### **Summary of Theme Three: Transition Challenges**

In summary, these multiple challenges contributed to the different types of transitions that the participants have experienced. The transition types that I identified, based on the interview transcripts, include: rural to urban, secondary to tertiary, Māori space to Western institution, bilingual to English speaking institution, student to parent, and young adult to adult.

## **5.6 Key Findings**

Two key findings emerge as paramount from the interviews. The first uncovers the multi-dimensional transitions Māori students encounter as they transition to university. The second finding identifies as critical the role of marae for Māori students: Ngā Wai o Horotiu as the centre of Māori life at AUT.

### **5.6.1 Māori Students’ Transition to University is Multi-dimensional**

This research initially focused on the participants’ transitions from secondary school to tertiary education. The purpose of focusing on educational transitions was to address AQA’s thematic enhancement topic on the “Access, outcomes and opportunity for Māori students and for Pasifika students” (AQA, 2017b), and to respond to continuing disparities between Māori and non-Māori educational outcomes, particularly in higher level education (Chauvel & Rean, 2012). The two key findings can not only inform AUT’s possible response to the AQA, but reveal important understandings of the support Māori students need in all NZ universities.

Students may go through several transitions, which include: secondary to tertiary education, rural to urban, student to parent, young adult to adult, family to individual, Māori space to Western institution, and bilingual education to English speaking education. Table 4 shows the transitions experienced by the participant group.

Table 4

*Identified Transition Types*

Identified Transition Types	A (F)	B (F)	C (M)	D (M)	E (F)	F (M)	G (M)	H (F)
Transitioned directly from secondary school to tertiary education (inclusion criteria)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rural to urban		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Student to parent					✓			
Young adult to adult				✓	✓			
Māori to white space	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
From Bilingual education to English-speaking institution	✓	✓			✓			✓

**Transition 1: Secondary School to Tertiary Education Transition**

The transition from secondary school to tertiary education was one of the criteria for participation in this study, as well as a key element of the research question. According to most participants (n=7), the transition from secondary school to tertiary education was challenging, especially learning how to be more independent and to manage study time wisely. Interestingly, only one student mentioned financial difficulties. As a rural student he had to learn how to manage and budget his finances to live comfortably in Auckland [Participant D, male]. This was surprising to me; however, every participant had whānau that supported their studies at AUT, and this played a huge role in assisting the participants in their transitions.

Participants also had to learn how to look after themselves, not only physically and emotionally, but mentally and spiritually as well. TKT kapa haka was something that helped them cope, being Māori students in a Western institution. Half of the participants were also the first out of their whānau members to attend university. Therefore, the transition from secondary to tertiary education came with challenges that require cultural support and the whānau-based environment that TKT provides. All universities should provide some type of cultural support for Māori students to engage in, as the main challenge the participants faced was feeling culturally comfortable at AUT. This transition was discussed first because it was the most commonly experienced transition; this was predicted as this transition was in the participant criteria.

### **Transition 2: Rural to Urban Transition**

The second transition highlights a social and environmental transition, with over half (n=5) of the students having experienced a shift from a rural to urban environment; interestingly, all of them were male. For these students, this meant transitioning from living at home with whānau to flatting situations, living with other whānau members in a new city, or student accommodation, which all came with different challenges. The transcript data revealed that students felt “a little bit of a shock” [Participant D, male], and experienced a “different feel” [Participant D, male] moving to Auckland and out of home. TKT kapa haka played a role in providing a new support network for these students, which interlinks with the “home away from home” environment several participants discussed. These students have roles and responsibilities on their own rural marae, and also developed similar responsibilities as members of the TKT association and kapa haka. This means they might have speaking roles on their marae, and have to travel to sustain their commitments to their communities. Two of the four male participants have prominent speaking roles within TKT and AUT’s marae, as well as rural marae, and this places a huge demand on them for *hui* (gatherings), anniversaries, *tangihanga* (funerals), and other tribal events. The two students have to juggle this with their studies and other commitments, which can mean balancing significant whānau responsibilities with their academic workload.

This can sometimes be difficult to balance, as not all faculties in AUT are understanding when it comes to the importance of contributing to your own marae. This is recognised in Te Ara Poutama, the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Development, where there is a greater understanding of what cultural duties may entail. Unfortunately, according to participants and my own personal experiences, this cultural awareness and understanding is not displayed in all disciplines at AUT.

The one female who came from a rural environment attended a boarding school for secondary school education, so the move to Auckland was easier to adapt to, as she was used to living away from whānau and being independent. Overall, the rural to urban transition is one of the biggest challenges identified in the data set.

### **Transition 3 & 4: Māori Setting to Western Setting & Bilingual to English Transitions**

The third and fourth transitions are connected and are discussed together, to avoid repetition. It is important to look at these two transitions separately, as they are both important issues; however, the amount of overlap in experiences made this difficult. The third transition reflects on participants' experiences transitioning from a Māori space to a Western institution. All female participants (n=4) discussed this transition, but only one male participant. This is interesting, as most (n=3) of the male students transitioned from schools heavily immersed in Māori or Pacific Island cultures. However, the female students who were from bilingual urban settings discussed this in their interviews.

The difference between male and female responses is interesting, as it shows a clear divide between urban and rural transitions and adaptation. Urban female students who discussed their experiences in a bilingual unit were seeking a place of comfort, like their school experience. Participants also discussed the "space" TKT provides, which is Ngā Wai o Horotiu, AUT marae. Having an accessible "space" to be able to connect to their culture and relax with their TKT whānau really makes the difference in students' experiences, and this is discussed further in section 5.6.2, the role of the marae.

### **Transition 5: Student to Parent**

The fifth transition reflects only one participant's experience. Even though this section may identify the participant, she was happy for me to discuss her experiences becoming a parent and consented to this. This participant had two children while studying and being a member of TKT kapa haka. She said the TKT kapa haka group was very supportive of her as a mother and they treated her "like how you would treat a pregnant woman on a marae" [Participant E, female].

This is evidence of the whānau environment that TKT kapa haka cultivates. Her experience with TKT kapa haka group is reflective of her own experiences on her own rural marae, which made the student feel comfortable, accepted, and supported. According to Universities New Zealand Te

Pōkai Tara (n.d.), “Almost half (48%) of recent Māori university graduates were the first in their families to attend university, one third are parents and 70% are female” (para. 4). With such high numbers of Māori parents who are the first in their whānau to attend university, support systems such as the TKT kapa haka and association are essential for students to utilise, providing them with more appropriate, whānau-based cultural support. In this participant’s case, the way she was treated within TKT and on the marae was important for her and impacted on her overall experience at AUT.

### **Transition 6: Young Adult to Adult**

The sixth transition acknowledges the students’ transition from a young adult to adult. Surprisingly, only one student explicitly discussed “growing up” and becoming an adult. This student had also moved from a rural area and had to experience a whole lifestyle change. Many of the experiences and struggles students discuss do relate back to issues when transitioning to adulthood. Participants’ transition experiences into adulthood include moving out of home, becoming a legal adult, taking on leadership roles in TKT and the university, getting a job, and becoming a parent. These are all real experiences that participants discussed in the interviews. The participants did not discuss this transition explicitly because they felt that the biggest struggle they encountered in their transition was cultural. Like the previously discussed transitions, this only reinforces the importance of having cultural support systems in place for Māori students.

The transitions listed in Table 4 are only those transitions that were explicitly stated by the participants. However, as a TKT member, I witnessed other transitions students experienced that were not discussed, including radical transformations. For some, this involved sexuality and gender transitions which are still being explored in the realm of kapa haka, in terms of maintaining cultural gender roles while adhering to tikanga. Māori students can struggle with their identity and place in te ao Māori because of their sexuality. TKT kapa haka not only embraces these students, but encourages them to use the kapa haka group to help navigate their sexuality. The kapa haka group provides a space for students to perform as their preferred gender.

The kapa haka group has not only provided support, but has ultimately helped these students navigate this journey, which shapes who they are as individuals. I also witnessed a workforce to student transition, with students transitioning from working full-time to studying full-time. These

students appeared to cope well with university life because they were used to routine, managing expectations, different work environments, and being put in situations under pressure.

In summary, the transitions that are experienced by Māori students in TKT are multi-dimensional. The research based on the transcripts and coding indicate that Māori students receive important cultural support within and from AUT. The next finding is connected to each of the transitions, and reveals how the intricate relationship between the marae and TKT benefits most Māori students.

### **5.6.2 The Role of the Marae**

The second key finding highlights the underacknowledged importance of the AUT marae for Māori students. Marae are important physical environments, where Māori cultural realities, tikanga, and tribal heritage are the foundation for celebrating noted ancestors and relationships within iwi (Kawharu, 2010). And as such, Māori culture and communities are inextricably connected to marae, which are the centre of Māori life (Pohatu, 2007; Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986). According to Mulholland and Bargh (2015), “marae are unique spaces where Māori culture is expressed and upheld to its fullest extent, Māori dot the contemporary landscape of Aotearoa” (p. 5). This surprising finding was arrived at by a combination of participants’ responses to the indicative questions surrounding TKT kapa haka and the demographic information sheet [Appendix C], all viewed through a Māori worldview. If marae are distinct places where tikanga and Māori culture are upheld to the highest level, it is AUT’s role to support this. Traditionally, marae were tribal centres, which have evolved over time, with pan-tribal marae, marae in schools, wānanga, and tertiary institutions (Ka’ai, 2008; Mulholland & Bargh, 2015). Ka’ai (2008) refers to students studying to be teachers at Otago University, providing examples of how the marae supports students and even staff members. They would naturally gather at the marae to rejuvenate their souls, to reaffirm their identity—often through kapa haka—to network as Māori in a pan-tribal context, and to support each other in their studies. The marae was, in fact, a natural gathering place for Māori staff and students to engage with each other, on many levels (p. 194).

This key finding was unexpected, as there are assumptions embedded in the marae. Having a marae is normal; I’ve never thought of having access to a marae as a privilege because it is a foundation of Māori culture that all Māori are able to access or experience. Ngā Wai o Horotiu (AUT marae) is a space for Māori and non-Māori students. It provides all AUT students the opportunity to immerse themselves in, or learn about, Māori culture and tikanga. But as this

research affirms, the marae is a Māori student's way of maintaining, reaffirming, or learning their cultural identity, and this has a substantive impact on their transition. The AUT marae is the face of Māori culture within AUT, and can be a way for the university to show support for Māori students in their academic studies. This highlights the fact that Māori students find more support from each other, not so much from the university. Most of the students (n=6) discussed the space TKT allows them to engage in at university, and from their responses TKT and the marae are inextricably linked.

Essentially, the TKT association, TKT kapa haka, and the AUT marae all work together to provide a culturally safe space for Māori and non-Māori students of AUT, and are impossible to separate. When asking the participants about TKT's role in the university, the students unintentionally grouped these three components together. The students referred frequently to TKT kapa haka and association providing "space" for them. Although it is the space they are referring to, it is in fact the AUT's marae, Ngā Wai o Horotiu. The quotes below emphasise the participants' views on the space Ngā Wai o Horotiu provides them:

It provides a healthy space for not only Māori, but people that are pro-Māori to come and learn about our culture and just be a part of it because you have the opportunity to not only do kapa haka but they've got a lot of resources and connections to go into reo classes. [Participant B, female]

It's not just for Māori, but it's also a space where you can go and study but also feel comfortable. Some people come from small towns and they're not comfortable in big cities and it's just like the perfect place to go as your little point of home. [Participant B, female]

Yeah, and just it's like a safe place for Māori to come and just be. Because we're in this big as curriculum and yeah, they just need something for Māori students. [Participant C, male]

TKT is a social space for Māori students to be Māori from the grounds of university, maybe, if they decide to be Māori that might help. Uh, it's a means I presume to relax from that whole university life and at the end of the day I like to say oh well you just come and have a feed. [Participant D, male]

I think it was probably providing allocated time and space where you could go, I guess. As well as networking, academic support, building relationships and those sort of just helped me in my words to navigate my way through not only studies but the entirety of university life. [Participant D, male]

I would say as a space to connect, as a space to connect with Kaupapa Māori, as a space to take a break maybe from academics or not if you're learning te reo, I think that's where it is. [Participant D, male].

Having a Māori space on campus just creates a whole better environment and a whole better atmosphere for our Māori students to thrive. Being Māori, you're brought up around a whānau based culture, so you always rely on others to move forward and you always surround yourself with whānau. I feel having a Māori space or even a Māori body like Tītahi ki Tua definitely helps. [Participant G, male]

Having that space for our students to be able to come here and be amongst a Māori space, wharenuī, wharekai. Being amongst like-minded people I feel helps our students get through the week. [Participant G, male]

In all of these quotes, the space is constantly discussed, emphasising the key role the marae has played in these students' transitions. During the university semester, the wharekai, Te Kaipara, is where students meet on Wednesday nights to have a shared meal for weekly wānanga, and also for students to study or exercise whakawhanaungatanga. The wharenuī, Te Pūrengi, is used for kapa haka practice, to hold hui, to accommodate students sleeping over on a Wednesday night, and to host *noho Marae* (Marae stays) for university papers. The marae allows TKT to exist as a successful association and kapa haka because of the physical space, cultural space and support it provides.

Even though the participants do not explicitly state that the marae is the "space" they are referring to, the role of TKT is inextricably linked to Ngā Wai o Horotiu, and therefore, to be a part of TKT is to engage with the marae space. Looking at the group and marae as one is normal in a Māori worldview, so it is not unexpected that the students grouped TKT kapa haka, TKT association, and the marae as one in their interviews. The multiple ongoing transitions the students faced affected them mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. The students used the marae and the people associated with the marae as their support system. The relationship between the space and the people is so close, it is questionable if TKT would be sustained if it were not at the marae. The "space" students identify would not feel the same if it was a classroom or hall. It is unlikely students would still want to join without a marae. TKT would not be able to function without the marae, and without TKT, the marae would struggle to find people to fill important roles.

The marae is not just a building TKT occupies—the building is carved using pūrākau, the *pou* (posts) are noted ancestors, the marae is founded on tikanga and cultural values that epitomise Māori culture. Without this rich history and cultural significance, TKT would not be a successful kapa haka group or association. Without the TKT kapa haka and association, the marae would only be a tokenistic space for AUT. TKT brings life to the marae, which is reciprocated by the marae, as



it is necessary for TKT as an association and kapa haka group. This finding emphasises the importance of marae in a university setting, as the role of the marae is to provide a safe cultural space and support system for Māori students and also Māori associations or groups. On multiple occasions, participants referred to the safe and comfortable space TKT and the marae provides. However, it should be noted that this identification of the marae as a safe place implies that the wider AUT campus is not a safe or welcoming space, and greater attention to this is required.

All eight participants made a direct or indirect reference to the importance of marae in universities, as participants inextricably linked together the TKT kapa haka, association and Ngā Wai o Horotiu. Some of the participants did not explicitly talk about the marae as the “space” TKT provides because, in their perspective, the two are connected in their discussion. It is assumed they refer to the marae, as I have also experienced this space and support personally and understand the relationship. TKT kapa haka and the association are centred around the AUT marae as a space that provides cultural support and normality for Māori or non-Māori students at AUT.

Students do better in education when what and how they learn builds on what is familiar to them, reflects and positively reinforces where they come from, what they value and what they already know. Māori students are more likely to achieve when they see themselves, their parents, whānau, hapū, iwi, and community reflected in learning and teaching (Ministry of Education, 2013).

## **5.7 Response to Research Question**

It is apparent from this research that Māori students undergo multiple transitions from secondary school to tertiary education. Transition, retention, and completion rates of Māori students are topical in the New Zealand education system (AQA, 2017a), with many initiatives and strategies set in place to help alleviate the disparities between Māori and non-Māori students (Sciascia, 2017), not just in tertiary institutions, but in secondary schools. In 2002, the Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2014) was established to help address Māori and Pasifika achievement in New Zealand, which targets students in tertiary education. TES works in conjunction with TEOs to consider how they can best support secondary students in their journey to university.

The Ministry of Education (2013) implemented the strategy Ka Hikitia in 2008 to improve education for Māori students from ECE to tertiary education. According to Ministry of Education (2013), one of Ka Hikitia's aims is to increase placements in universities specifically for Māori students, to increase in participation rates and encourage successful transitions. In the Ka Hikitia strategy, the Ministry of Education (2013) urges that:

All tertiary providers will need to focus on supporting students to attain qualifications that lead to better employment outcomes. In particular, we expect providers to use their research and networking capacity to develop and share information on what works for Māori students in education and implement this into their particular tertiary context. (p. 47)

In this chapter, there are seven different types of transitions that are discussed. Research brings new understandings to the type of transitions Māori students encounter. The research is not claiming to understand every transition Māori students may experience, only the types I have witnessed personally, through my insider knowledge, and the transitions mentioned by participants in the interviews. The transitions identified by the participants include: 1. Secondary to tertiary education; 2. Rural to urban; 3. Student to parent; 4. Young adult to adult; 5. Family to individual; 6. Māori space to Western space; 7. Bilingual to English. All participants have experienced at least two of the major transitions in their journey to university. It would appear that transitions, experiences, and struggles prove universities are not supporting Māori students well in their transition, specifically in their first year of university.

The lack of cultural support and "safe" spaces in the university was a common reason why students joined TKT. The students actually seek their own support because they aren't receiving it from the university. They are searching for a space that supports them holistically as Māori students because most of the participants (n=7) need a cultural space to feel "safe" and comfortable at university. TKT, the marae, Ngā wai o Horotiu, and the connection with other students in TKT is what helps the students feel culturally and holistically supported, in turn, helping them with their studies at university. The students enjoy coming to university because of their involvement with TKT and its members, which shows how important these types of connections are for Māori students. If the students are finding their own way to support themselves, the university should be encouraging this or finding further ways to support Māori students to support each other. AUT does provide a mentoring service through the AUT Māori Liaison Office for all disciplines; it would be beneficial for this service to be implemented in TKT

and utilise the marae. The data suggests that universities need to revise the types of support they offer to Māori students transitioning to university, by engaging directly with students.

The students feel comfortable and safe in the precinct of the marae because it is normal for them. They have grown up on marae, and having a dedicated space which replicates their own cultural backgrounds makes them feel settled and, in turn, helps with their academic progress. Correctly, the AUT marae is the focal point of Māori culture at AUT. According to the participants, TKT draws in Māori students who are seeking cultural support within the university and friendships with individuals who share similar worldviews. The marae plays a huge role in TKT and Māori students' transitions, and it is assumed research of a wider scope of participants at different levels would only reinforce this.

The findings highlighted the interconnectivity between Māori students' transitions and the role of the AUT marae in the TKT kapa haka group. All eight participants voiced reasons for their decision to join TKT when they were transitioning to AUT: they were wanting to find a university whānau, to find a home away from home, to make new friendships, and to have a space that was culturally comfortable and safe. Students described TKT as a place where they could take a break from university life and relax. TKT kapa haka is "therapeutic and a nice release" [Participant A, female]. Participants discussed the space TKT provides for them and emphasised how important it is for maintaining cultural identity and forming meaningful connections with other Māori students. This type of support is vital for Māori students as it provides an environment that supports them and their cultural identity holistically.

Ngā Wai o Horotiu provides cultural support for Māori students and, in turn, they help other students with their transition to university. Having cultural spaces at university for Māori students is vital. The kapa haka's role in Māori students' transitions is to work in conjunction with the AUT marae to support students and provide a unique space for them to meet. This research emphasises the importance of having Māori cultural groups or spaces in university to support each other, as AUT cannot provide this type of support for students. By improving students' experiences of transition, retention, and completion rates this will help Māori prosper in education and the workforce. This section has examined the analysis to identify two key findings. The first finding is that transitioning is not one-dimensional, it can include multiple transitions for the student to navigate. And the second finding makes a strong argument that students' individual experiences are mediated successfully not only through contact and support from other students, but through

being closely linked to the marae, as a specific space. Almost all the students identified the marae as “safe space,” with familiar codes and practices, understood more specifically as tikanga.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

The objective of this research was to explore a strategy that could support Māori students to transition from school to university. Students interviewed indicated that kapa haka was not a panacea for university success; the consensus was that it was a critical contributing factor. At AUT there is considerable institutional support for groups such as TKT. However, this can depend on personalities, such as empathetic staff. It is hoped that the study can provide a case for AUT and other NZ universities to embed institutional support for groups such as TKT, to ensure their sustainability.

This is insider research. Positioning myself in the research emphasised the central part I had in relation to it. As I stated in Chapter Five and Two kapa haka led me to membership of TKT, which in turn supported me transitioning from school to university. The relationships that buffered my academic journey and the supportive environment based on the marae, Ngā Wai o Horotiu, inspired me to undertake this study. The outcomes of this research have strengthened my belief that kapa haka has the potential to change the university experience for Māori.

The literature review brings together themes of student transition, education, Māori identity, and kapa haka. Surveying the literature made it obvious that a “one size fits all” won’t address the issue of Māori underachievement at university. However, kapa haka involvement is a strategy that has proved to be effective for many Māori, and this is supported in participant interviews. While the participant group is a small sample, the membership and active involvement in the group is testament to its popularity. The survey of other strategies indicate that a kaupapa Māori approach is more effective, in terms of positive outcomes.

A Kaupapa Māori paradigm overarches the entire study, ensuring that Māori beliefs and values dominate all aspects of the process. As this is a case study, recruitment was restricted to TKT members who had successfully completed their first year at AUT. This enabled reflection on the transition experience and the impact that kapa haka had during that period.

The findings from the research indicated that students’ transitions were multidimensional. The holistic nature of Māori thought was perceptible, as participants articulated their experiences from different aspects. The important cyclic relationship between the marae, TKT kapa haka and TKT association is a key outcome of the research. Students all identified the marae as their “safe

space” at university, highlighting the link between TKT kapa haka, TKT association and the marae. The three groups are seen as one, and have a reciprocal relationship that helps support students either culturally, socially, academically, or emotionally and spiritually. My interpretation of the students’ experiences is that they link both the marae and TKT kapa haka together, as they are viewed as one, and together they provide students with a more holistic university experience. Many of the participants argued that if it were not for TKT and the “space” it provided, they wouldn’t have completed or wouldn’t still be enrolled in their degrees.

### **Limitations of the Research**

A small number of limitations were identified after the completion of the eight face-to-face interviews. The first limitation was the participant criteria, which were as follows:

- o Two second year Māori students, one male, one female
- o Two third year Māori students, one male, one female
- o Two fourth year Māori students, one male, one female
- o Two alumni Māori students, one male, one female

These students also had to be members of the TKT kapa haka. Unfortunately, there weren’t enough second year female Māori students in TKT that were available to be interviewed. A third year female student was interviewed, as a replacement, because it was more important for the research to have an even spread of males and females. The second limitation was the small sample number of participants for interviews. A small group was selected to ensure the researcher was able to complete each interview with a holistic and Māori lens applied. It was more important to get a smaller group of quality interviews than a large number of interviews.

This allowed for in-depth coding and analysis; however, interviewing more participants could have provided more important perspectives on the topics. This would not have been possible, considering it was difficult to recruit participants within the specific criteria. The third limitation was in identifying data and findings from the participants’ interviews. There were only five indicative questions for the interviews, along with prompting for clarity or expansion. There was a limit of five questions to make sure the interviews were all focused on information that would provide answers on the research question. This also made coding and analysing the data tidier and more precise. If more questions were asked there may have been more important perspectives revealed.

An example of this issue would be that participants' multiple transitions were identified; however, I believe there were more that were not explicitly identified. A fourth limitation can be expressed in the question, could interviewing students who were not a part of TKT have provided interesting perspectives on these students' perspectives? This may have provided insights on how or why some students succeed, with or without cultural support, or support from entities within the university. Identifying these four limitations provides insight for future research. Although there were limitations to the research, the findings do still provide very important perspectives on a topical issue in New Zealand universities. Recommendations for future research will now be discussed.

Although the two data sets provided quality data, the interviews could have possibly been longer with added indicative questions. I would have liked to ask the following questions:

1. What further support do you think AUT could provide for Māori students?
2. Which groups in AUT were most supportive of your transition to university, and how?

I believe these are important questions that could have further solidified some of the key findings.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The research has provided interesting findings, with potential for further research outputs to benefit Māori tertiary students.

1. This research focuses explicitly on Māori students' transition to university—further research could expand on how successful transitions from secondary school to university could potentially affect retention and completion levels.
2. This research focuses on a small sample group from one university—further research could be carried out with a larger number of participants or across more than one university, to see if the experiences differ depending on universities.
3. The role of the AUT marae is described—future research could be presented on the importance of marae in all tertiary settings in New Zealand.
4. University marae should have access to more funding so they are able to support students more and even provide academic support.

I undertook this research in the hopes of making a positive difference in Māori students' transitions to university life, and hopefully there will be more support put in place for these students. I was the perfect candidate to do so, as I have experienced this transition first-hand and I have similar lived experiences to those of my participant group. This research is beneficial for Māori students and universities, as it provides recommendations on how universities can build better relationships with Māori students and support them, creating a stronger reciprocal relationship.

*Kaua e rangiruatia te hāpai o te hoe; e kore tō tātou waka e ū ki uta*  
Do not lift the paddle out of unison or our canoe will never reach the shore



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## Glossary

This glossary provides English translations for *kupu Māori* (Māori words) used in this thesis. These are translations based on the author's knowledge, contextualised within the research.

<b>ako</b>	learn
<b>aroha</b>	Love, respect
<b>atua</b>	god
<b>awhi</b>	support
<b>haka</b>	traditional dance
<b>hapū</b>	sub-tribe
<b>hui</b>	meeting
<b>iwi</b>	tribe
<b>kāinga</b>	home
<b>kapa haka</b>	Māori performing group
<b>karakia</b>	prayer
<b>kaumātua</b>	older male
<b>keira</b>	assassin
<b>kōrero</b>	discussion
<b>kura Māori</b>	Māori school
<b>mana</b>	authority, power, influence, prestige, status
<b>manaaki</b>	to provide hospitality
<b>manaakitanga</b>	hospitality
<b>Māoritanga</b>	Māori culture or Māoriness
<b>marae</b>	a courtyard or complex made up of different buildings
<b>ngā hau e whā</b>	from the four winds
<b>noho marae</b>	Marae stay
<b>pōhiri</b>	welcoming ceremony
<b>poi</b>	ball on a string
<b>pono</b>	truth
<b>puna</b>	spring of water
<b>pūrākau</b>	traditional story/myth/legend
<b>taha hinengaro</b>	spiritual side
<b>tangata whenua</b>	people of the land
<b>tangihanga</b>	funeral
<b>te ao Māori</b>	the Māori world
<b>te reo Māori</b>	the Māori language
<b>teina</b>	younger member of the group
<b>tekoteko</b>	carved figure
<b>tika</b>	being correct
<b>tikanga</b>	cultural practice/protocols

<b>tikanga Māori</b>	Māori practices/protocols
<b>tipuna</b>	ancestor
<b>tohunga</b>	expert
<b>tuakana</b>	older student
<b>wahine Māori</b>	Māori woman
<b>waiata</b>	song, chant
<b>waiata ā ringa</b>	action song
<b>waiata tawhito</b>	traditional Māori songs
<b>wairua</b>	spirit, soul
<b>whaikōrero</b>	speech
<b>whakapapa</b>	genealogy
<b>whakawhanaungatanga</b>	fostering relationships
<b>whānau</b>	family
<b>wharekai</b>	dining hall
<b>wharenui</b>	meeting house

## Appendix A: Participant information sheet

### ***Date Information Sheet Produced:***

07/04/2019

### ***Project Title***

The role of a University's kapa kaka group in Māori students' transition from secondary to tertiary education.

### ***An Invitation***

My name is Lyndiana Rosieur, and I am a Māori student at Auckland University of Technology completing research for a Master of Arts in Māori Development. This is an invitation to participate in research on Māori students' transition from secondary school to university.

I am conducting research on how the role of kapa haka in University contributes to Māori students' transition from secondary to tertiary education. I would like to interview eight Māori students, four male and four females, to find out how kapa haka has helped you transition from secondary school to higher learning.

### ***What is the purpose of this research?***

The purpose of this research is to detailed understandings of how universities can support and guide Māori students' transition from secondary to tertiary education. A Kaupapa Māori paradigm is adopted to guide all aspects of the research including data collection and analysis. This project will use face to face interviews with eight undergraduate/postgraduate or alumni students who attended university straight from secondary school and who are in the university's kapa haka group to explore kapa haka's role in your transition to tertiary studies.

Therefore, the aim of the research is to deepen the university's knowledge of Māori students' transition experiences, provide strategic direction towards enhancing Māori achievement in the tertiary sector and reflect more accurately the students' important role in the cultural life of the university.

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

You are being asked to participate in this research because you are a Māori undergraduate/ postgraduate/ alumni student who transitioned directly from secondary to tertiary education and participates (or has participated in the past – alumni) in AUT's kapa haka group Titahi ki Tua.

This research is only surveying a small group of people who are known to the researcher. Therefore, you are not anonymous to the researcher. If too many people agree to participate, priority will be given to PG and third year students and the length of time that the student has been in Titahi ki Tua. I would also to make sure that equal numbers of male and female students.

### ***How do I agree to participate in this research?***

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you in any way. After you agree to participate you are required to sign the consent form.

This research uses purposive sampling to target specific individuals that fit the criteria. You are able to 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. Your consent form will be destroyed. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

### ***What will happen in this research?***

If you agree to participate, you will be asked take part in a 45-minute face to face interview with the researcher and give basic demographic information. The interviews will be audio recorded and notes will be

taken. However, your identity will remain anonymous in the transcription process and in the final publication.

***What are the discomforts and risks?***

Some of the questions will ask you about the personal and academic challenges that you have faced at university and these may be difficult to tell someone else about. Interviews will be conducted according to *tikanga* (Māori customs and values) to recognise the wider forces and to take care of your spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Your name will not be next to any of your information and your identity will not be used in the final thesis. be protected from the interview process all the way through to the publishing of the thesis.

Often in large scale research, the researcher does not know the identity of the participants. However, because you have been approached directly by me, your identity will be known only by me and my supervisors. I will not discuss your information or responses with other participants, nor will I reveal your name or any identifying information in the final thesis. In line with *tikanga*, your responses will remain confidential to this project and will not be used again after the research is completed.

***How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?***

If you do feel any discomfort during the interview or feel there are any risks involved in answering an interview questions, you can choose not to answer any question and you can withdraw from the interview at any time and be asked for your information to be removed for the study.

***What are the benefits?***

This research has the potential to contribute to improved outcomes for Māori students in tertiary education and identify and reinforce the important role of Māori students' participation in the University life. An enhanced understanding and knowledge of Māori students' experiences is beneficial for universities, the Academic Quality Authority, tertiary education providers and secondary schools. The findings from this research will provide strategic direction towards enhancing Māori achievement in the tertiary sector and reflect more accurately students' realities and their important role in the cultural life of the university.

***How will my privacy be protected?***

Your privacy will be protected in the final output as the researcher will not reveal any participants' identity, nor will any data be personally attributed to an individual. The researcher, Lyndiana Rosieur and her supervisors, Dr Elisa Duder and Jamie Cowell, are the only individuals that will have access to the interview data/consent forms. These will both be kept in two separate, locked cabinets. This is to ensure that the data and the consent forms are separate.

***What are the costs of participating in this research?***

The survey will take 45 minutes of your time.

***What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?***

You have two weeks to consider this invitation.

***Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?***

Copies of a summary of findings will be made available for participants, they can be scanned and emailed out after the researcher has completed writing up the study.

***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](mailto:elisa.duder@aut.ac.nz), +64 9 921 9999 ext 6561

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 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:**

Lyndiana Rosieur: [lyndiana.rosieur@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lyndiana.rosieur@aut.ac.nz) or [lyndianarosieur@hotmail.com](mailto:lyndianarosieur@hotmail.com)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr Elisa Duder: [elisa.duder@aut.ac.nz](mailto:elisa.duder@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *8 April 2019* AUTEK Reference number *19/77*

## Appendix B: Consent Form

**Project title:** Transitioning from secondary school to university: Māori students and kapa haka – An AUT case study.

*Project Supervisors: Dr Elisa Duder and Jamie Cowell.*

*Researcher: Lyndiana Rosieur.*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 07 April 2019.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews 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, I accept that once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- 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 8April 2019 AUTEK Reference number 19/77**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## **Appendix C Demographic information sheet**

Demographic information (to be filled out by participant):

- Name:
- Iwi:
- Sex:
- Preferred method of contact:
- Phone number:
- Email:
- Age:
- High school you attended:
- Last year in high school:
- First year at AUT:
- First year in Titahi ki Tua kapa haka group:
- Discipline/degree:
- Current year/level at university:
- Are you the first member in your family to attend university?
- Highest secondary school qualification:
- How many whānau members have attended or are attending university?