Listening and Learning from Rangatahi Māori: the Voices of Māori Youth

Mere Berryman, Elizabeth Eley & David Copeland, University of Waikato

Abstract

This paper presents three stories-over-time of the secondary schooling experiences of New Zealand's rangatahi Māori–or Māori youth. The stories span fifteen years of New Zealand schooling and are told from three perspectives: the experiences of the students as told in their own words; the voices of youth within the prevailing political contexts of government policy; and, the reframing and repositioning of researchers listening to the experiences of rangatahi Māori who believe they have succeeded as Māori. In reality, the stories are interwoven, however, in an effort to make sense of the various methodological dilemmas, risks, and entanglements across the three points of learning, we have endeavored to disentangle these different threads from the whole and follow these independent of each other. We then weave these threads together again, as we sense-make across this complexity to identify implications for other educators, policy makers and researchers.

Keywords: student self-determination; equity excellence and belonging; relationships; culturally responsive pedagogy; policy

Introduction

New Zealand's indigenous Māori people comprise 15 percent of the population—with 26 percent under the age of 15. Although this represents a significant decrease from a 100 percent of the population only 200 years ago, this proportion is significant enough to remain constantly at the forefront of New Zealand's national consciousness. Sadly, this is more often for negative reasons or connotations because, as Western dominance has taken hold, the over-representation of Māori in almost all of our nation's negative statistics has come to define one of our major national challenges (see the Department of Statistics NZ website, 2017). For example, Māori comprise 51 percent of New Zealand's male prison population and 58 percent of the female prison population. The unemployment rate for Māori is 15 percent compared to 4 percent for European New Zealand. In 2015, 10.6 percent of Māori students left school with 'little or no formal qualifications' compared to 3.7 percent of European New Zealand students (Ministry of Education, 2016).

This has resulted in many measures, some well-intentioned and others not, to "fix the Māori problem." The resulting deficit theorizing and pathologizing practices, especially through the education system, has had a disastrous impact on New Zealand's rangatahi Māori. As New Zealand schools attempt to "fix" the problem of Māori under-achievement, Māori cultural identity and self-

efficacy have been eroded. For many rangatahi Māori, the vision of equitable and excellent out-comes for all within our education system turns out to be a hollow promise. The gap in achieve-ment results between Māori and non-Māori students has persisted across generations of learners. At the same time, there is a strong voice from Māori communities calling for *rangatiratanga*—Māori self-determination and self-leadership (see, for example, Durie, 1998). The prevalence of this discourse also holds out the expectation that these threads of change in our society will also be woven within our schools. However, as in many other countries where a majority culture wields the political power, the voices of our Māori students tell us that many experience an institutional resistance from within and across their schools, through the reproduction of racist values and par-adigms within the school curriculum and the political and social life of the school (see hooks, 1994).

This paper asks what the voices of Māori youth can teach us about responding more effec-tively to the challenges of disparity in education, and the place of policy and research in contrib-uting to this reform. This paper draws from fifteen years of research, involving the participation and achievement of Māori youth in response to their educators reforming classrooms and schools in more relational and culturally responsive ways (Berryman & Eley, 2017; Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth, 2014). Over this time, extended in-depth interviews, using kaupapa Māori and cul-turally responsive research methodologies (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013), were undertaken with these young people. A reanalysis of these interviews and the contexts in which they were gathered, identified three parallel contexts for change.

We present the information as three individual stories-over-time: the students' views on education as told in their own words; young people contributing to the changing education policy contexts; and our experiences and repositioning as researchers attempting to create more culturally responsive contexts for students theorizing. We conclude by weaving these threads together again to present the current status—including the celebration of progress made, the simultaneous frus-tration with progress not made and the hope that springs from trusting the future to the inspiring and determined rangatahi who have not given up on us.

The New Zealand Context

As a country, the prevailing rhetoric across New Zealand is that of equity, equality and equal opportunities. As a nation, our commitment to social justice is held in high regard. Unfor-tunately, for many people, particularly Māori, the reality falls far short of the rhetoric. Māori civ-ilization and culture were well established when the land was "discovered" by the British in the late 1700s. A deliberate colonization of the country occurred and, although this was largely peace-ful (in comparison to the British colonization of other nations within the 17th and 18th centuries), there were disastrous consequences for Māori (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). A key event in the colo-nizing of New Zealand was the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi by Māori tribal leaders and British Government representatives, in 1840. This Treaty mandated a partnership relationship and established British governance in return for Māori (tribal) ownership and protection of their land interests and *taonga* (cultural treasures). However, the sovereignty guaranteed to Māori was in-creasingly ignored, resulting in dire consequences for Māori cultural, social and economic well-being, well into the 20th century. As Crown policy, this Treaty continues to shape the bi-cultural relationship between Māori and Pākehā (descendants of the colonists) and influence government policy in contemporary New Zealand society (Tawhai & Gray-Sharp, 2011).

Impacts on the New Zealand Education System

In general, Māori students do not do as well in our education system as other students - they do not remain in schooling as long as other students nor are they achieving as highly (Office of the Auditor-General, 2012; 2013; 2015; 2016a; 2016b). Despite many initiatives to raise Māori student achievement, English-medium schooling continues to return lower achievement rates for Māori than for non-Māori students (Udahemuka, 2016). In 2015, 62% of Māori students left school with NCEA[1] Level 2 or above compared to 83% of European students (Ministry of Education, 2016). A significant contributing factor to this is the "culturally subtractive approach" to education policy that lasted into the 1980s (May, Hill, & Tiakiwai, 2004). The purpose of schooling was seen as assimilating Māori students into Western ways of thinking and succeeding; the retention of the Māori language, culture and values was regarded as a threat inhibiting the process of civilizing or influencing over Māori (Barrington, 2008).

A movement of resistance to colonization by Māori in the 1970s, and at the same time towards revitalizing and reclaiming things Māori through self-determination, has become known as Kaupapa Māori. Smith (1999) contends Kaupapa Māori approaches involve retrieving the space to undertake research that Māori believe will be of value to them and where the traditional (powerful) research communities are open to "the need for greater Māori involvement in research" (p.183). In doing so, Kaupapa Māori research must attend to the legacies of past researcher imposition on Māori by ensuring issues of power are addressed (Bishop, 2011). Therefore, while attention must be paid to the ways in which the colonial education system has continued to underserve Māori youth, this paper begins from a position of decolonization and Māori self-determination by listening to the voices and metaphors of these young people as guides into future policy and research.

The Use of Māori Metaphor

In our paper, we make deliberate use of Māori metaphor and terms. One Māori term for youth or young people, and the term we use, is *rangatahi* Māori. The word *rangatahi* has its roots in the verb *raranga*—the Māori word for weaving. We posit this term as a metaphoric indicator that our young people stand as both the result of the influences, including the impact of significant people in their lives, and their own position and actions of agency and self-determination. We propose that our weaving brings together three key components. As we have constructed this metaphor we have thought of these rangatahi Māori as *ngā whenu* (warp threads), weaving through their engagement with others. Adults (such as educators and researchers) who, through their various spheres have influenced rangatahi Māori in their education journey, we have thought of as *ngā aho* (the weft threads). We use this raranga (weaving) metaphor within an image of the political environment that continues to be dominated from a Western worldview—the policies and practices that are the (often unseen) structures that underpin and interplay in the weaving together (or not) of the contributions from rangatahi Māori and their educators. It is only when these threads can be effectively woven together that a new, unique creation can emerge.

Our research began in 2001, when we (a researcher, a civil servant and a videographer) were working to understand education as a context for equity and excellence. As Māori and non-

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1. National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is the official secondary school qualification in New Zealand.

Māori professionals, we were deeply involved in education, and as parents we believed the education system should be providing the best foundation for our youth and, through them, our country.

Method: Weaving Together Three Stories of Experience

We present three stories that move iteratively from classrooms and schools, to the education system itself and finally to research methodologies. We express this story by building from an Indigenous, decolonizing, kaupapa Māori theoretical framework to kaupapa Māori and critical theoretical perspectives brought together in a new framework, culturally responsive methodologies (Berryman et al. 2013). We use an iterative process of building on learning from one study to the next. Authors have been part of all studies.

Story 1 draws from the schooling experiences of rangatahi Māori. These stories were gathered at three different times: 2001; 2005-2009; and in 2015. The three research events were all undertaken within appropriate ethical procedures. In 2001 and then again from 2005-2009, the perceptions of rangatahi Māori were gathered using Kaupapa Māori methodologies undertaken by experienced and respectful interviewers. All interviews were transcribed and a thematic analysis of the transcripts was undertaken employing a grounded theory approach. While prioritizing confidentiality, there were opportunities for rangatahi and schools to review the analyses and they confirmed that the resulting themes and collaborative stories captured the intent of their messaging. The group-focused, interviews-as-conversations were held on the school grounds, and were to become instrumental in bringing deficit theorizing and discursive repositioning into the education landscape in New Zealand (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). However, while Māori researchers were involved each time, adults with perceived authority led the questions and despite benign intentions, may well have replicated the same power dynamics of the students' schooling experiences.

Story 2, locates students' experiences within a movement towards greater social justice in education, portraying the political climates impacting on minoritised students and families. From an analysis of relevant educational policy and literature, we discuss the macro-climate of government policy changes and how these were derived and have been implemented for Māori. The 'default positions' of schools to align with and to reproduce middle-class, Western values across the schooling system continues to be the challenge. In response, the themes from rangatahi Māori voices reveal their priorities.

Story 3, gathered in 2015, learned from our earlier interview experiences. This research utilized a relational and culturally responsive framework, a merging of both kaupapa Māori and critical methodologies (Berryman et al. 2013). The students, as participants, knew they were the knowledge holders and would be sharing their messages under the mantel of their tribal leaders and *whānau* (families and extended families). Story 3 constitutes the changing researcher positioning that led us to pay careful attention to the cultural contexts in which rangatahi Māori shared their theorizing.

Our conclusion attempts to triangulate our iterative learnings from the three stories. We look at what these young people taught us about the cultural resilience and self-determination they drew on in order to survive and, sometimes, to flourish within the school system. The two-fold role of adults, both Māori and non-Māori, is explored—both in supporting, encouraging and freeing rangatahi Māori within the system; and, in working with leaders and teachers to resist negative practices within schools. We conclude by looking at the possibilities and promise for these young people and for our society as a whole when our youth can lose labels that "minoritize" or "marginalize"; and can stand proud, having succeeded *as Māori*—the vision of the New Zealand Government's Māori Education strategy (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Story 1: The Experiences of Rangatahi Māori within New Zealand Schools

In 2001, principals, teachers, whānau members and Year 9 and 10 Māori students (12 to 15 years) from five secondary school communities were asked what, in their experience, would engage Māori students in learning. Teachers were asked to identify two groups of students; those engaged and those who non-engaged with learning. Both groups spoke in depth about the deficit positioning they endured merely for being Māori. The quotes below are from students interviewed in 2001, and reported in Bishop and Berryman (2006).

> Being Māori. Some teachers are racist. They say bad things about us. We're thick. We smell. Our uniforms are paru [dirty]. They shame us in class. Put us down. Don't even try to say our names properly. Say things about our whānau. They blame us for stealing when things go missing. Just 'cause we are Māori. (p.11)

The major difference between the two groups came in how they determined to respond to the overpowering and deficit discourses being perpetuated by their teachers and non-Māori peers. Engaged Māori students talked about leaving their culture at home in order to succeed at school and this discourse remained in 2005-2009 when cohorts of other students in the same reform initiative were also interviewed:

> Being at a school that has a lot of Pākehā (non-Māori mainly of European descent) teachers, I'm not really putting them down, but it's something that you have to do, you kind of have to leave your Māoritanga (all aspects of being Māori) at the door, because you can't really...they don't understand you as much…it's hard to carry on with your Māoritanga in class.

Non-engaged students in 2001 talked about actively resisting when they felt they had been wrongly treated but being powerless to do anything other than be removed from learning or remove themselves from learning:

> Our art teacher is…like dumb, and she doesn't teach us anything, so the whole class talks, but it is only the Māori that get kicked out. Well she will come over to us and tell us to stop talking, and then we will go, "But the whole class was talking." And she will say, "No, you stop talking." Mr. H kicked us out [the Head of Department], and we tell him that she doesn't teach us and that is the whole class, but he just kicks the Māori out. Yeah, we have been kicked out for the rest of the year. We just sit in these other senior art classes, and we do nothing. (Bishop & Berryman 2006, pp. 18-19)

And also in 2005-2009: "if we don't get along with a teacher our whole class shows it." The analysis from 2001 showed that for both engaged and non-engaged students, school was a negative experience that the researchers described as "overwhelmingly awful, year after year" (Bishop & Berryman, 2006, p.255). While giving up their cultural identity resulted in marginalization, many engaged Māori students accepted this as the price to pay for remaining at school and achieving academic qualifications. Those not prepared to compromise their cultural identity went in search of less hostile communities within which they felt they could belong.

Similarly, from 2005-2009, groups of students from 12 different schools reported another poignant message about the moments within their schooling that held promise, albeit set against a background of micro-aggressions (both overt and covert) that challenged their language, identity

and culture. They, too, talked of the likelihood of experiencing pedagogy of variable quality across their school: "She rocks, she's a mean [great] teacher. Need some more like her. Yeah true, it's dumb just passing in one class and failing in all the others" (2005-2009). When rangatahi Māori believed that teachers were not fulfilling their professional responsibilities, they were likely to reciprocate similarly. Sometimes, they did not attend the classes of these teachers on a regular basis and, when they did, they lacked any real effort. Despite this, a picture of what would engage Māori students with learning was emerging and, over the years, these discourses have been reinforced and strengthened.

Self-determining pedagogy of relations

To engage in learning, groups of students from over the years have told us that educators need to provide a pedagogy that is relational (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Sidorkin, 2002) but from which they could also be self-determining (Young, 2004):

> …you get to know her and she gets to know you and stuff like that and she'll talk to you and stuff and you feel comfortable around her…she's not making you feel kind of awkward. Like if there was something wrong she would like warn us and tell us that we're doing it wrong, but like our other teachers don't know our class as well and that's why, I don't think they tolerate our class much because they don't know us like how she knows us, but she's got to know everyone, like she knows everybody in our class, she knows everything. (2005-2009)

Students described positive relationships with teachers as those where they were not talked down to, where power was shared and where teachers were committed to their students' success.

> You can tell he respects us, because when it comes to learning big time he's always there, if we don't understand something he doesn't talk to us like little babies, he talks to us like young adults. Mrs. D talks to us like we are the same level. And everyone really respects her because of it and like everyone knows she's the teacher and the boss but she also most of the time she doesn't make herself feel dominant over the rest of the class but at the same time she is still the teacher. But other teacher's talk like I am the teacher and you are the student. And they think they are better than us. "You [have to] listen to me, I don't [have to] listen to you." (2005-2009)

Relational pedagogy is reinforced when teachers actively reject negative stereotyping and raise students' own expectations of their abilities to realize their own power in the learning space:

> At the start of the year we were like "we're dumb, we're the dumb class, the dumb lot." She goes "no, no you're not dumb." She said from now on we're not allowed to say that word. We're bright, she reckons. Yeah, she wants us to strive, to go to the next level. (2005-2009)

In the same way as the 2001 students, the 2005-2009 students were clear about the teachers they could work with and those they chose not to work with. Often this was because they had failed to find a way to get along.

> We need a teacher that we get along with, we don't learn anything if we don't get along with the teacher. None of us get along with [Teacher 1] and she just sends us [out of class] and like lots of people go [out of class] every day and don't learn.
> She makes things so it's better for us more than for her.
>
> They don't have to do any of this stuff but, yeah, they just do it and I think it's awesome that they do it, especially towards the Māori students in this school. Yea, it's really gives us like a sense of whānau in this school.
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> She wants to be like a good teacher. She doesn't want to be your friend or that sort of thing. She's like a friend, but not a friend. He's firm and lenient and very, very positive, positive thinking, like if you do something wrong he's always there to back us up. (2005-2009)

Students talked about the teacher's response to absenteeism as being an indication of an improved relationship.

> Yeah, I have wagged [absented themselves] math. He went to my class and called me over, "why weren't you at math? Wagging?" You got to tell the truth eh! He cares that we're in class. That means you've got to be straight up with him. (2005-2009)

Students consistently argued relationships as being essential and foundational to their engagement. Bishop, Ladwig and Berryman (2014) were later able to statistically verify their argument.

Culturally responsive pedagogy

Once a relational pedagogy has been established, students wanted a pedagogy within which they can construct new learning from their own prior knowledge and cultural experiences. Rather than marginalize their prior knowledge and experiences, or try to impose a transmission model of learning, rangatahi wanted to bring their own funds of knowledge to their learning (Gay, 2010; Sleeter, 2011). In 2001, this was seldom their experience:

> We do a unit on respecting others' cultures. Some teachers who aren't Māori try to tell us what Māori do about things like a tangi (cultural rituals of mourning). It's crap! I'm a Māori. They should ask me about Māori things. I could tell them about why we do things in a certain way. I've got the goods on this, but they never ask me. I'm a dumb Māori I suppose. Yet they asked the Asian girl about her culture. They never ask us about ours. (Bishop & Berryman, 2006, p.76)

Through all the interviews between 2001 and 2009, rangatahi Māori articulated a collective call for successful engagement in education for them and their peers: "As Māori, you want everyone to be there with you to help you along the way, and to help them along the way. You don't just want to succeed for yourself, but you're taking everyone with you" (2005-2009).

By altering the power relationships and pedagogies within classrooms, teachers found that the students' cultural values could enhance cognitive engagement and subsequent achievement.

Reciprocal dialogic pedagogy

Bringing their own experiences to the learning, through active social engagement with others, requires determined opportunities for dialogue to occur throughout the learning. Contexts such as these allowed learners the opportunity to both seek advice and ask questions of other students without fear of embarrassment or reprimand. Thus, all of the expertise in the class was activated instead of relying solely upon the expertise of the teacher.

> Mrs. R changed like everything she could. We're all used to teachers teaching us all together. But what she does is she teaches us to teach other people. She puts us in groups and then we learn this and that and we go on to our group and teach them that and then that group will teach the rest of the group. (2005-2009)

Students increasingly spoke of the power of this more dialogic way of working. In schools this brought about dramatic shifts in both the quality of the education experience for rangatahi and their achievement.

> Last year I was in like the naughty class and yeah, our class was just like naughty, our class didn't do work, we didn't get anywhere, but this year this class is like pretty safe, we do our work, pass our grades, we come together. At the start of the year we were separated but we all came together as a team.

> There is like a family bond in here but it's like we're accountable to each other so if we see someone who's not actually being responsible it's like we have the responsibility on ourselves to make them accountable for what they are doing. (2005-2009)

Story 2: Reforming New Zealand's Education System

The experiences of the students recounted above, occurred against a backdrop of historical and political injustices that impacted on the lived experiences of all parties, and underwrote the prevailing discourses across New Zealand society. Most of the learning of our nation's history has come through the curriculum taught within the schools—the same agency and institutions that perpetuated the misinformation and misconceptions about differences between cultures. The positioning of Western (White) culture and values as superior to the 'native' (Brown) culture continued for many decades. This had dire consequences for Māori youth in schools. By the beginning of 1960, publicity about social maladjustment in the cities had focused the government's attention on Maori issues, particularly the "disproportionate numbers in the Court records" and evidenced by "their educational achievements (but not their capacity) [being] below par" (Hunn, 1961, p. 98).

The response of the state to this problem of 'social maladjustment' was to look for solutions that the New Zealand Ministry of Education came to acknowledge as "well-intentioned but disadvantageous actions" (Ministry of Education, 2015). Many of these actions were pathologizing, seeking to address and compensate for perceived deficits within the students and their home life. For example, the Chapple Report (Chapple, Jeffries, & Walker, 1997) concluded that the differences in achievement resulted from Māori socio-economic status rather than ethnicity and "there

was therefore nothing significant about 'being Māori' that affected education success." These findings significantly affected the way teachers thought about the educational achievement of Māori and contributed to many of us adopting a "blaming" attitude and an abdication of responsibility—providing tacit approval for the poor teaching, put-downs and derogatory comments experienced by the students as 2001 and 2005-2009. Ten years later, a re-analysis of the Chapple Report data demonstrated that ethnicity is a significant factor in achievement over and above socio-economic status (Harker, 2007).

Māori were not passive bystanders during this upheaval but were active determinants of the pathway education should take for rangatahi Māori. Māori kaumātua (elders) became increasingly strident in voicing their discontent with an education system where rangatahi Māori consistently neither enjoyed nor achieved education success. A series of four Hui Taumata Mātauranga (Education Summits) were hosted by Ngāti Tūwharetoa, a central North island *iwi* (tribal group). Education officials and politicians attended the hui and listened to kaumātua (tribal elders), Māori parents and grandparents spoke of their aspirations and hopes for their children though our education system. A second Hui Taumata was held in November 2001, focusing on leadership in education and the place of Māori in education authority. A third, held in March 2003, looked at the quality of teacher education and Māori experiences in the tertiary sector.

The fourth and final Hui Taumata Mātauranga was held in September 2004 and centered on the views of rangatahi Māori themselves. From the voices of these young people, the following determinants of success were derived:

- relationships for learning;
- enthusiasm for learning;
- balanced outcomes for learning;
- preparing for the future;
- being Māori.

Their experiences and the themes that ensued paralleled the challenges raised by the young people whose voices comprise our 2001 and 2005-2009 stories. The collective voices of rangatahi Māori were also very much in line with Māori politicians and scholars who increasingly advocated that all state-funded schools needed to ensure Māori students' language and culture were present in their schooling experiences. All advocated that rangatahi Māori must not have to leave their language and culture at home in order to succeed at school, and they have continued to advocate that strong cultural identity is a prerequisite for education success (Barrington, 2008; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Durie, 2001).

In response to the growing understandings, including at these Hui Taumata, that a system-level response to Māori underachievement was required, the Ministry of Education embarked on a series of policy initiatives. The first strategy, launched in 1999, recognized that Māori educational success was a Ministry-wide responsibility. The term Ka Hikitia translates as "to step up"—the name of the policy being a call for the system to "step- up" to meet the needs of Māori. The first document (in 2006) *Ka Hikitia: Setting Priorities for Māori Education* was published as an internal document within the Ministry, setting out the proposed Māori education priorities for the next five years. In 2008, *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012* was released, a four-year strategy document for the public and mandated policy for schools. A subsequent four-year strategy *Ka Hikitia—Accelerating Success 2013-2017* was released. The vision statement for Ka Hikitia is: Māori students enjoying and achieving education success as

Māori—a vision statement that grew out of the voices of Māori through the Hui Taumata Mātauranga and continued to be reinforced through the voices of rangatahi Māori.

The above recitation outlines the political desire, voiced by rangatahi Māori and supported by Māori leaders, to both own the issue of intergenerational underachievement by Māori students and to mandate the need for schools and the education system to 'step-up' to address the issue. However, despite over 20 years of policies and strategies entitled "The Māori Education Strategy," there is little evidence of changes inside educational settings, including schools. The effectiveness of Ka Hikitia has been evaluated by the Office of the Auditor General (see Office of the Auditor-General, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016a, 2016b). The Auditor General was reasonably positive regarding the *potential* of the policy: "overall, I found reason to be optimistic that Ka Hikitia will increasingly enable Māori students to succeed." However, the report also states:

> The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) introduced Ka Hikitia slowly and unsteadily. Confused communication about who was intended to deliver Ka Hikitia, unclear roles and responsibilities in the Ministry, poor planning, poor programme and project management, and ineffective communication with schools have meant that action to put Ka Hikitia into effect was not given the intended priority. As a result, the Ministry's introduction of Ka Hikitia has not been as effective as it could have been. (2013, p.7)

Story 3: The Researchers' Journey

In Story 3, culturally responsive research methodologies allowed the researchers to gather the stories of rangatahi Māori from across the nation (who had succeeded as Māori at school) to add to the weaving without compromising their cultural identity. This story alludes to changes over time in the researchers' positioning and ways of working. While we have always understood the moral imperative to make a difference for students underserved by the education system, many of whom are rangatahi Māori, we have not always understood the ways that this might be best achieved.

When the rangatahi Māori voices from 2001 were first shared with educators in New Zealand and then later published (Bishop & Berryman, 2006), they were considered ground-breaking. For the first time, educators and policy makers could see and read about the impact of their practices on rangatahi Māori. Thus, began a drive by many educators to seek solutions by "gathering student voice." Immense care had been undertaken in the 2001 research to develop non-dominating power relations with the research participants. Yet, an unanticipated consequence has been a number of educators gathering students' views, using traditional western research frameworks and without following ethical requirements—potentially, opening up acts of societal oppression. Until educators understand how power plays out in these conversations, they will continue to be problematic.

Acts of research such as these give "little regard to participants' rights to initiate, contribute, critique, or evaluate research" (Berryman et al. 2013, p.1). Berryman et al. go on to say that "traditionally, the ''right to-be-studied (or not)'' and decisions about how the study would be carried out have not been maintained by the researched community, rather they have been sustained by groups of outsiders who have retained the power to research and to define." The wide acclaim given to the inclusion of "student voice" in the early research had opened up the need to better understand how to create contexts for students (and others) to be heard through research methodologies in ways that were participatory and empowering for the students and did not inadvertently perpetuate oppression.

This dilemma is a familiar one for those who seek to understand the experiences of young people, especially those of non-Western cultures, in our education system. For example, Tillman (2002) refers to research that allows "opportunities for collaboration, insider perspectives, reciprocity, and voice" (p. 3). However, despite this positioning, it is still possible for a caring researcher/educator to sit outside of the experiences of the students, to question or to comment on their experiences and not truly and respectfully hear them or even draw on the knowledge, experience and full contribution of the participants.

By 2015 we understood that the relationship and positioning of the researcher and the students were pivotal, consequently we deliberately created a "research stance where establishing respectful relationships with participants was central to both human dignity and the research" (Berryman et al. p.1). And, out of respect that all participants identifed as Māori, there was an explicit attendance to the notion of "situated cultural practice" (see, for example, Goodnow, 2002; Lee, 2007; Rogoff, 2003; Rosaldo, 1993). The notion of research as situated cultural practice proposes that "what drives research, its purposes and uses, how meaning is made during the implementation of research practices, and the knowledge and representations that are produced are culturally and socially mediated and negotiated processes" (Arzubiaga, Artiles, King, & Harris-Murri, 2008, p.310).

The students interviewed came from schools that were participating in a school reform program called Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success.[2] In the context of an educational policy (Ka Hikitia) that requires schools to ensure that Māori students enjoy and achieve educational success as Māori, Kia Eke Panuku found a great deal of confusion and uncertainty in schools about how to interpret, let alone implement, the mandated policy. To gain understandings and provide some guidance for school communities, Kia Eke Panuku sought input from two groups. The first group comprised eight experienced educational experts (both Māori and non-Māori). The second group comprised over 150 senior rangatahi from 58 secondary schools who were part of the Kia Eke Panuku initiative—that is, these rangatahi were attending schools that had demonstrated a commitment to making a difference for Māori students as evidenced by their willingness to participate in Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success.

Neither group worked towards a definitive definition or application of the phrase: Māori students enjoying and achieving education success as Māori, but rather worked to produce a set of ideas as starting points for on-going reflection and sense-making by school communities[3]. This was an important construct within the research methodology. Culturally responsive methodology was selected as the means for engaging with rangatahi Māori and, although culturally responsive methodology shares the same goal of involving all stakeholders in the research as in participatory research and public sociology, it differs in intention. Culturally responsive methodology is not always about transformation: "one does not enter the relationship with the explicit intention of changing the other but rather to honor and support the other" (Berryman et al. 2013, p.107).

To ensure a respectful, agency-enhancing research stance, set in a cultural context that privileged Māori ways of working over more traditional Western ways of information gathering, the researchers hosted students in a series of nine hui (meeting/s run following Māori cultural

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2. Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success is a New Zealand secondary school reform initiative, funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, however, this paper represents the view of the authors and is not necessarily the view of the Ministry. The initiative was implemented in 93 secondary schools (approximately one third of all New Zealand secondary schools.

3. Fuller details of the process followed and discussions undertaken, can be found on the Kia Eke Panuku website: http://kep.org.nz/student-voice/about-the-themes.

procedures), on marae (iwi cultural spaces) across New Zealand. The researchers did not directly select the student participants, but schools were asked to invite up to three senior Māori students to participate. In most cases, the schools talked with their senior students about the request and the questions under discussion. This resulted in 158 rangatahi attending the hui, accompanied by at least one adult, most frequently the adults involved a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team but also included teachers, whānau and iwi members.

Prior to the hui, rangatahi received three questions and had opportunity to think and talk about the questions with their peers, their whānau or other people. The questions were:

- What have been your successes in this school?
- Who has helped you with this success?
- In your experience, what does Māori students enjoying and achieving education success as Māori mean?

Rangatahi from each school were interviewed by their accompanying adult (from their school) who posed the questions. The responses were often in the form of conversations between the students as they interacted with each other and built on previous responses. Rangatahi frequently referred to speaking on behalf of others who were not present but speaking with their permission and their blessing. Their accompanying adults did not join in these conversations but listened respectfully. We observed many school leaders being emotionally moved by the powerful stories told by their rangatahi, who fearlessly took us all to task for injustices and inequities perceived within education and, in equal measure, praised and endorsed the steps taken to redress those injustices.

By 2015, rangatahi Māori reported that across schools there had been a re-positioning of how their own culture could be more equitably recognized and developed by some of their teachers. Students saw in the actions of these teachers something more than cultural appropriation of knowledge and skills, but rather a response to them as individuals, as culturally located learners.

> We have teachers who have come from England and from other countries who have no te reo Māori (Māori language). They learn te reo Māori and try to understand it. I can help them. That's important for me because it shows that they have motivation, they have a passion to understand students at a deeper level. It shows me that they take into consideration my culture and who I am as a person, as a Māori person. It shows that they appreciate that as well.

> There's a huge drive on excellence, but there's also a huge drive on keeping your culture, keeping your culture alive...making it known to you and to everybody else that you are Māori and you're proud to be Māori. And yeah, I think that's an important thing you need to have whilst going through education, you need to have that bit of culture just to bring it all back home. (2015)

For some the school environment had become an opportunity to recover what had been taken through generations of colonization and separation from tribal homelands and whānau connections. For others there were receptive, non–Māori taking steps to acquire the knowledge, skills and experiences they needed to understand the circumstances and world-view of their students:

> I was fortunate enough to be able to share my culture with the teachers and teach them a little bit of te reo Māori, and it was really cool to see how they were responsive to what I was trying to teach them.
>
> This year has been really good, with teachers stepping up and including Māori culture in what we learn in class. It's been really good. And so, for me, that's what I think is Māori success, being able to have that connection in your subjects to really get the proper understanding that you need. (2015)

Students were moved to take direct and collective action where they saw Māori students being under-served:

> My culture's very important to me, so if they're not offering it at our school, if they're not giving students the opportunity then I'm going to fight for that, and I'm not going to let that go away. So, I talked to the principal, talked to teachers and nothing was happening with te reo. I wanted to know why, so I ended up going on to the wider community...and I ended up going on to TV cause the community actually were concerned that there wasn't any reo in our school, and so I pushed for that…and now Māori will be offered next year at school, because it's something they deserve to learn, and if it's not being offered, and it's not fair. (2015)

In one school community, rangatahi Māori initiated a national petition to require schools to include within their curriculum matters pertaining to the "Land Wars." This period of New Zealand's colonial history was marked by armed invasion, by British militia and subsequent widespread confiscation of Māori land. While the government declined to prescribe the curriculum in the way requested it subsequently lent support to a call for the reinstatement of a commemorative day. Encouragingly, others, celebrated their new-found agency and defined this in terms of Māori values and practices.

> From a Māori perspective, it's about manaakitanga (building the respect of others), whakawhanaungatanga (making connections as family), tautetanga (supporting others who rely on you), all those things, and āwhina (care). At my school now the teachers tell us, mahi ngā tahi—work as one. And definitely I do....working in pairs, or in groups. So, the teachers aided me with not working alone...to put myself out there towards others. And, you know, kaua kei whakamaa: do not be shy. Just work together. (2015)

Success as Māori' as Described by Māori Students

Despite each hui being totally independent of the others, there was remarkably high consistency of experiences across the nine hui. Across all rangatahi and across all groups, common experiences and understandings were shared. The following ten themes emerged:

- Being able to resist the negative stereotypes about being Māori
- Having Māori culture and values celebrated at school
- Being strong in your Māori cultural identity
- Understanding that success is part of who we are
- Developing and maintaining emotional and spiritual strength

- Being able to contribute to the success of others
- Experiencing the power of whanaungatanga (family like relationships)
- Knowing, accepting and acknowledging the strength of working together
- Knowing that you can access explicit and timely direction
- Being able to build on your own experiences and the experiences of others

These themes were understood as strongly inter-related. For example, the strongest message from rangatahi was that to be successful as Māori within the school system, they had to be able to resist and overcome other people's low expectations and *negative stereotypes about them being Māori*. Many articulated this as an area where adults and non-Māori could and should be supporting them. Māori students clearly understood that their success required more than their own personal strengths, achievements, values and connections. Some rangatahi directly attributed their success to the support they had received from a school environment where their own culture and values were explicitly celebrated, modeled and thus valued by others. This was essential to being able to be *strong as Māori*, rather than believing they had to compromise their own cultural identity by trying *to pass* as someone else. Understanding that success was a part of who they were and what other Māori were, or could be, required their being emotionally and spiritually strong. These rangatahi understood that at times this had not been the case for them, nor was it the case for many of their peers, friends or whānau, some who had resorted to suicide.

Many rangatahi talked about being the first of their family to attain success, whether it was cultural success, in the arts, languages, academic and/or sporting success and whether it was at a school, regional, national or international setting. Many rangatahi talked about their success across a number of these indicators and across the range of these settings.

Some talked about not having seen themselves as successful until fairly recently. Across all of the groups, students clearly articulated that their personal success was fully intertwined with their *contribution to the success of others*. Being able to relate to others in a *whanaungatanga* or familial way meant that they understood and took *strength from working together*. Rangatahi understood that by working together, they would be more able to do things on their own in the future. They all talked about benefitting from being provided with *timely and explicit guidance and direction,* which had helped them to *build upon their own experiences* but also the experiences of others.

Weaving the Stories

Our weaving now brings the voices of different groups of rangatahi Māori together, through their engagement with others. In story 1, youth engage with and speak to educators; in story 2, with Māori elders and policy makers; and in story 3, with educators and researchers. In order to ensure our weaving does not privilege our own voices, as policy makers, videographers and researchers, over those of rangatahi Māori, we have attempted to undertake this work by adhering to culturally responsive methodologies. We have worked to enhance our understandings of the contexts in which these voices were first heard and understand them in culturally respectful ways. This has enabled us to re-listen to the voices of rangatahi Māori within dialogic and culturally responsive spaces.

Back in 2001, the researchers concluded that: "despite reporting that their experiences in education were overwhelmingly awful, year after year, these students understood and were still optimistic about the possibilities that education offered them" (Bishop & Berryman, 2006, p.255). There are hints here that, in line with the prevailing political climate, students believed that the

education system and what it offered them was okay—the problems with lack of achievement were down to personal responsibility or personal failure. While they could point to individual teachers who did not meet their expectations of good teaching practice, they did not look for whole-scale system change.

Previously the opinions of rangatahi Māori were neither sought nor valued in education, nor were they clearly heard in the prevailing policy space until 2004 at the Hui Taumata. Since then we have learned that rangatahi Māori have many solutions but first those who maintain the power must create contexts where it is safe for them to speak, then we must be prepared to listen and act accordingly (Berryman et al., 2013). If rangatahi Māori are to be truly self-determining then those who hold the power to reform the contexts of education, must be prepared to listen and learn. Within these contexts a new, ongoing and consistent story of rangatahi Māori self-determination has emerged which needs to influence not only teachers and leaders in schools but also the political contexts in which education still continues to marginalize rangatahi Māori and many other diverse groups of youth across the world.

Conclusion

In 2015, a pattern of change was beginning to emerge from our collective weaving. However, as the Auditor General concluded about the Ka Hikitia policy itself, the potential for transformative change for our students has not been realized. The voices of these rangatahi Māori agreed, they shared their ongoing need to overcome negative stereotyping around their potential; to be strong in their own cultural identity and to be able to access support from the adults in the school who are culturally aware and responsive to their needs. They also identified the need for personal strength and resilience—the need to develop strong conceptions of themselves as successful, to have the emotional and spiritual strength to see them through adverse contexts, and to know and understand the extent of whanaungatanga (strong and supportive ties to other Māori in their schools and communities). Our successful Māori students felt that luck had played a part in their success; there were times when they could have fallen away and abandoned their education due to the weight of the pressures and the negative factors impacting on them. They knew that this had been the case for many of their peers and, in many cases, their family members. While they could celebrate personal successes, they still longed for transformative change within their schools to make a difference for all Māori.

Overall, it appears that school is a more positive place for our 2015 rangatahi Māori. And, while the gap between rangatahi and non-Māori student achievement remains, there are some indications that this gap is beginning to reduce. However, our students still face the challenges in that the prevailing rhetoric (now supported with over a decade of "Māori Education Strategies") suggests that the problem is 'in hand', implying perhaps that students who are not doing well in the system are still, somehow, personally to blame. And, with the Ka Hikitia strategy due to finish in 2017, who can say what will happen to this prevailing discourse.

Undoubtedly, much of the social change that has taken place over the past 15 or so years in New Zealand's education is due to the bright threads within our weaving, our rangatahi. We have learnt of their courage and determination to change the schooling experience, knowing that they may not experience this change themselves but that they could make it better for those who follow them. In 2001, rangatahi voices told of the deficit positioning, underlying the fabric of schooling, of which, many educators, researchers and policy-makers were ignorant. Many rangatahi were not only marginalized within their classrooms but often were undermined, put-down and had their potential ignored. Then at the Hui Taumata in 2004, rangatahi Māori took their messages

to the educational decision-makers and policy-setters. Finally, in 2015, we hear how their voices and their stories have begun to bring about important changes. Our rangatahi became the agents of change, despite all the factors that worked against them, including their youth, their race, and the conditions of oppression under which they operated.

Part of our narrative as researchers has been how we, with the best of intentions, perpetuate the status quo when we sit as the lone authority on what is best for students. However, when we draw on the knowledge and experiences of our young people, and honor the self-determination and activism that they bring, the very change we are seeking begins to emerge. The narratives of the students' and the researchers' experiences are set within the less-visible framework of government policy—a pattern with many twists and turns; a story of good intentions, lofty rhetoric and major initiatives. Sadly, it also tells a story of promise and potential that has languished and continues to fall short.

All is not lost. The young people tell us of their own responsibility to support the students following them so that they will feel a sense of belonging in education. Students have told us that when education builds from a foundation of relationships that respect them and who they are; when their own cultural experiences, in dialogue with others, are able to contribute to the construction of new knowledge; then we can determine our future together and we will be in good hands.

We conclude our paper with another translation of the term rangatahi, that of a new fishing net, traditionally woven from flax. A common whakataukī (proverb) is Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi, translated, the worn net is cast aside, while the new net goes catching. This whakataukī signals the important responsibility of preparing rangatahi for their significant future roles. In the words of Barack Obama (2208):

> One voice can change a room, and if one voice can change a room, then it can change a city, and if it can change a city, it can change a state, and if it can change a state, it can change a nation, and if it can change a nation, it can change the world. Your voice can change the world. (Speech, November 3; Manassas, Virginia)

By sharing power with students, by listening to them and seeking to follow their advice, we have learned that educators, researchers and policy makers are more likely to promote contexts through which the voiceless have voice, the powerless have power and from such spaces hope can emerge (Freire, 1994). Only then might their voices change the world.

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Mere Berryman, ONZM, PhD, Med, is an Associate Professor at the University of Waikato. Her early research involved collaborative work with schools, Māori students, their families and communities through the formation of culturally responsive relationships. This work merged with the inception of Te Kotahitanga, and was further built upon in 2014 with Kia Eke Panuku. This iterative professional development initiative aimed to promote Māori students' educational success as Māori by combining understandings from kaupapa Māori and critical theories with policy. Ongoing evidence of educational disparities for Māori continues to make this work a priority. Mere publishes in this field.

Elizabeth Eley, MEd, BEd, DipTchg, comes with wide experiences from across the education sector. She is currently Associate Director of Poutama Pounamu: Equity, Excellence and Belonging within the University of Waikato. Poutama Pounamu focuses on making a difference for Māori students so they can truly enjoy and achieve education success as Māori. Her Master's thesis and subsequent research investigated the impact of assessment practices on student achievement. Her PhD research explores how to enhance the teacher's role as the 'More Knowledgeable Other' within a student's 'Zone of Proximal Development' in order to enhance student classroom learning and experiences.

David Copeland, LLB, documents significant educational reforms in New Zealand schools, employing a range of media. He has contributed as a researcher and as a communicator for the WISE Award winning Te Kotahitanga program and the more recent Kia Eke Panuku initiative. His insider's perspective and commitment to co-constructed outcomes ensures both veracity and participant safety. His portfolio of collaborations with academic and government agencies includes contributions to New Zealand's Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis programme (BES). In recognition of his work in education David was elected a fellow of the World Technology Network in 2003.