

WHAKAWHITI TE RĀ

A whakapapa approach to protecting haka as a taonga within sport settings in Aotearoa

*Nicole Penetito-Hemara**

Anne-Marie Jackson†

Chelsea Cunningham‡

Abstract

Haka is a taonga that is steeped in whakapapa and has its origins in the creation of the universe, generating an abundance of meaning and value for Māori. On a national stage, haka is by far the most visible Indigenous ritual within the fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand's national identity and continues to have a lasting legacy within the realm of sport. However, a major source of contention is the impact of globalisation on haka in sport, which has seen increasing issues of misuse, commodification, appropriation and tokenism. Despite the cultural significance of haka to Māori and arguably to the nation as an expression of our national sporting identity, there continues to be a general lack of understanding about the importance of whakapapa in the customary practice of haka. This paper argues the need to protect the taonga that is haka by ensuring that whakapapa is upheld and better understood. A Kaupapa Māori research framework was adopted in order to privilege Māori knowledge and voices. Research methods included the use of haka pūrākau, which were thematically examined and used to frame the data, as well as semi-structured interviews with nine Māori participants. Three key themes emerged from the research, which formed Whakawhiti te rā—an approach that advocates for more concerted efforts to understand the notion of whakapapa as a protective mechanism when using Māori rituals and taonga such as haka in sporting contexts.

Keywords

haka, kaitiakitanga, pūrākau, sport, whakapapa

Positionality statement

Genealogical connections play a significant role in Te Ao Māori, both in the ways Māori identify themselves and the ways they relate to each

other (Mahuika, 2019). I position myself as a wahine Māori researcher of Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Ranginui, Te Whakatōhea and Ngāti Porou descent. Furthermore, my affinity to haka has come

* Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Porou, Te Whakatōhea. PhD Candidate, Te Koronga, Centre of Indigenous Science, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Email: nicole.timu@gmail.com

† Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Kahu o Whangaroa, Ngā Puhī, Te Roroa, Ngāti Wai. Associate Professor, Māori Physical Education and Health, Te Koronga | Centre of Indigenous Science, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

‡ Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Kāi Tahu. PhD Candidate, Te Koronga | Centre of Indigenous Science, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

from my love for kapa haka, and my involvement with haka in sport, in particular Māori netball (netball played by Māori, for Māori). Haka renders differing and often opposing views. This paper is based on my master's thesis *Ngā Tapuwae o te Haka—Māori Perspectives on Haka in Sport*, which sought to provide a distinct Māori view on the contentious topic of haka (Timu, 2019). To strengthen my whakapapa connection with you the reader, I begin this paper by providing background into who I am and the journey I embarked on with my research.

In choosing an appropriate name for my master's thesis, I explored Indigenous stories that can be traced back to my Ngāti Kahungunu whakapapa. The title of my thesis *Ngā Tapuwae o te Haka* recognises the seemingly impossible feat of my tupuna Rongokako during his time in the Whare Wānanga, a sacred institution of learning reserved for the preservation of ancient lore, histories, incantations, rituals and genealogies (Mitiria, 1972). Stories of Rongokako speak of his tremendous athletic prowess, which was demonstrated in his final test as a student of the Whare Wānanga, where he mastered the act of taking giant strides that mimicked flying. This action and these movements are now known as “ngā tapuwae o Rongokako” (the footprints of Rongokako) and are visible on the East Coast of the North Island in Aotearoa New Zealand. The title of my master's thesis therefore draws strength from and connects to this pūrākau. I share this story with you not only because it illustrates an amazing display of physical skill (befitting a paper such as this), but it also aligns with the central theme of whakapapa. Whakapapa is imbued in haka in both a physical and a spiritual sense (Pihama, 2010). It deeply permeates haka performances on the sports field, to ultimately give meaning to the words and sentiments being expressed.

Introduction

Time has settled since the submission of my thesis in 2019, and haka in sport remains a feature in media headlines globally (Egan, 2020; Foote, 2022; Hayden, 2018; Hepburn, 2021; Ramsay & Thomas, 2019; Sutherland, 2021). It persists in wielding audiences of “lovers” and “haters” when teams choose to express their pride nationally, and it continues to be a benchmark for the integration of other Indigenous rituals within sport globally (Pihama et al., 2014). Academics continue to report on the many benefits of haka in sport, as well as the risks associated with its use in these settings (Eruei, 2016; Hapeta et al.,

2018; Timu, 2019). While the incorporation of Indigenous rituals in sport continues to rise, we must also recognise that Indigenous cultures are becoming increasingly threatened by burgeoning globalisation challenges (Harmsworth, 2002). Major misconceptions around the role and relevance of haka in sport continue to exist (Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2002; Palmer, 2016), and there is a struggle to identify ways to maintain traditional knowledge systems and practices outside of Indigenous-led institutions (Harmsworth, 2002). This was the impetus for the resurrection of key findings from my master's research (Timu, 2019).

This paper advocates for a whakapapa approach towards protecting haka as an important taonga to Māori, especially within the context of sport. Participants as part of this study identified several tensions surrounding the use of haka in sport, which raised questions around how to safeguard, care for and protect haka in these settings (Timu, 2019). I will first introduce key concepts related to this research, including haka, whakapapa and kaitiakitanga, before outlining the Indigenous methods used in the research process. A Kaupapa Māori research framework was employed, and research methods included the use of haka pūrākau and semi-structured interviews with nine participants. I will then discuss three key themes that emerged from the research and urge us to consider using a whakapapa approach in the active protection of haka as a taonga within sport settings. You will notice that I weave literature with pūrākau and pūkōrero throughout the analysis of the key findings to provide a unique and renewed relevance on the topic of haka in contemporary times. Essentially, the idea centres on the importance of whakapapa in tracking origins of haka from atua and tūpuna, down to its introduction on the sports field, its evolution across sporting codes both nationally and internationally, right through to its continued application today.

Haka in sport

So what is haka? Karetu (1993) describes haka as complex, multidimensional and dynamic. Simply put, there are multiple definitions and views of what constitutes haka. Haka is used in ceremony, as a ritual, a challenge, a celebration, a means of physical activity, a symbol of honour, a form of entertainment, a tool to teach discipline and an expression of team unity (Armstrong, 2005; Gardiner, 2007; Karetu, 1993). Furthermore, Armstrong (2005) offers a robust definition explaining that “haka is a composition played by many instruments. Hands, feet, legs, body, voice,

tongue and eyes, all play their part in blending together to convey in their fullness the challenge, welcome, exultation, defiance or contempt of the words” (p. 119).

Haka has survived and evolved, and is an integral expression of Aotearoa nationalism, especially in sport (Karetu, 1993; Palenski, 2007; Pihama et al., 2014). It has adapted to contemporary times, while continuing to draw on and maintain traditional roots. Performances of haka in sport enable a unique way to express who we are as Māori, connecting whānau, hapū and iwi to their tribal lineage (Haami, 2013). Haka is a well-known ritual within the sport landscape, especially within rugby. For context, the All Blacks haka is usually performed immediately following the respective national anthems and is usually led by a senior Māori player in the team, although this has now evolved over time. It is important to note regarding the intersection of haka with sport that the philosophy behind haka in a traditional context (as related to Tūmataunga, battle and warfare) has been transferred into this sport setting, and considered relevant to the game of rugby. It is believed that the similarities between rugby and warfare perhaps formed the site whereby haka solidified a permanent place within the sport landscape. However, it has also been scrutinised for enabling an unfair psychological advantage (Gardiner, 2007). Palmer (2007) argues that Aotearoa’s identity as a sporting nation has been influenced significantly by Māori people and Māori culture, and this will be explored further as a key theme from the findings.

An expression of whakapapa through haka

Integral to a Māori worldview is whakapapa; therefore, the ontological and epistemological orientations of this research reflect the nature of a Māori worldview and whakapapa. According to Heke et al. (2018), “This knowledge and these connections go beyond connections to people, and include connections to places, to events, to a particular time or era and, most importantly, to ideas” (p. 2). Therefore, for Māori, the “nature of being” is determined by and through whakapapa, whereby the “nature of our human existence” is firmly connected to the environment. The “nature of knowing” is also informed by whakapapa and is perhaps more aptly explained using pūrākau. In applying the notion of whakapapa to haka, one explanation for the origin of knowledge pertaining to haka stems from Tama-nui-te-rā (Karetu, 1993). Tama-nui-te-rā had two wives, Hinetakuru and Hine-raumati. From this union with

Hine-raumati, a son, Tāne-rore, was born (Best, 2005). It is believed that Tama-nui-te-rā personifies his love for these maidens in the rising and the setting of the sun (Best, 2005). When Hine-raumati holds the favour of Tama-nui-te-rā, the physical manifestation is seen in the shimmering heat haze that rises from the ground on hot summer days—otherwise known as te haka a Tāne-rore (the dance of Tāne-rore) (Ka‘ai-Mahuta, 2010). Furthermore, during the execution of haka, the wiri is said to be a physical representation of the shimmering heat referred to in the proverb “Kua tū te haka a Tāne-rore” (the dancing of Tāne-rore has commenced). Pūrākau such as this that reference atua and tūpuna are particularly important to a Māori worldview because they help to explain our connection to the environment, justifying our belief system and epistemology. Among these narratives are valuable lessons used to guide whānau, which are all influenced by the oral traditions passed down through generations. This indicates that to better understand haka we must explore its whakapapa, delve deep into Māori origin stories and look to the past for knowledge and insight.

The impact of globalisation on haka and kaitiakitanga as a cultural practice

While haka is a vehicle for positive influence within sport domains, it also renders several risks for Māori whereby a tension exists between the use of traditional Māori rituals in contemporary contexts (Palmer, 2007). For example, haka in a traditional context does not symbolise any real connection to or belonging within the landscape of sport, raising questions related to its role and relevance in these settings. Misconceptions of haka as a war dance continue to challenge definitions of haka today (Gardiner, 2007). Esteemed Māori exponent Karetu (1993) argues that “Ka Mate” has become one of the “most abused haka of all time” (p. 65), urging that strategies be implemented to protect haka as a taonga within Te Ao Māori. A major source of tension surrounds the impact of globalisation. Participants in this study identified issues such as misuse, commodification, appropriation, ownership, tokenism and a general lack of understanding about haka as a customary practice that all had an impact on Māori and warranted further discussion.

Sharing Māori culture with the world comes hand in hand with kaitiaki responsibilities and obligations for Māori. Haka has in the past provided and continues in the present to provide an economic return for both Māori and non-Māori, for example, opportunities for employment, commercial gain and overseas travel. However, issues

are elevated when “borrowing from a culture” becomes exploitative (Kim Ho, 2017), robbing Māori of the recognition they deserve. Managing the consequences of increased access to our cultural practices and knowledge systems becomes important, especially when they are considered a commodity worldwide (Hapeta et al., 2018; Scherer & Jackson, 2013; Torgovnick, 1990). It has become commonplace to misuse haka and share it globally with the world (Hapeta et al., 2018; Karetu, 1993). This has surfaced tensions around non-Māori use of haka, which has raised questions surrounding safeguarding, protection and control. Therefore, this paper aims to shed light on the contested nature of the use of haka in sport, advocating for a whakapapa approach to protecting haka as a taonga.

Research methodology

This study adopted a Kaupapa Māori research framework whereby the research was conducted in culturally appropriate ways by Māori to give voice to Māori. Kaupapa Māori appealed as a research framework given it is not only about Māori philosophy but also about the practice of being Māori (Smith, 1997). This is particularly important when considering the physical nature of haka as an expression of whakapapa on the sports field. As explained by Waiti (2007), Kaupapa Māori draws on a variety of Māori aspects, such as mātauranga Māori, Māori pedagogy, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori to help frame and develop the research process. Therefore, while this research is strongly influenced by cultural concepts and tools such as whakapapa and pūrākau, Kaupapa Māori theory remains the overarching framework used to privilege Māori knowledge and amplify Māori voices and perspectives on the topic. Furthermore, the research question that is the focus of this paper is: What protective mechanisms can we put in place to mitigate any risks associated with the use of haka in sport?

Research methods

Research methods included the use of haka pūrākau, which were thematically examined and used to frame the data, as well as semi-structured interviews with nine Māori participants.

Pūrākau

Tribal stories related to haka in the form of pūrākau played a key role in the analysis of the research data. Lee (2009) asserts that pūrākau are “a traditional form of Māori narrative, containing philosophical thought, epistemological constructs,

cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori” (p. 1). A variety of pūrākau relevant to haka were examined for key themes as a way to foster critical thinking and creative expression, and draw knowledge and understanding from the past into the present. According to Kopua and Kopua (2022), pūrākau “fosters ... the ability to reconnect whakapapa while deep diving into a new way of being”. The themes and messages from the pūrākau provided key lessons that were subsequently used to frame the data in a whakapapa approach titled “Whakawhiti te rā”, which is an excerpt from the famous haka “Ka Mate”, composed by Ngāti Toa Rangatira chief Te Rauparaha. “Ka Mate” is regularly performed by the All Blacks before a rugby test match and tells a story that celebrates the triumph of life over death. The approach will be explained in further detail later in the paper. Pūrākau as a research method was therefore used in this study as a way to sustain and protect Māori knowledge pertaining to the whakapapa of haka.

Interviews

Qualitative research methods were also employed to collect and collate the research data because the research agenda warranted a data collection strategy that provided the ability to gather rich, descriptive data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Data were collected through a process of semi-structured interviews conducted with nine participants. Small interview sizes enabled participants to share freely and allowed me, the researcher, to elicit deeper understandings from the perspectives provided. The interviews centred on the overarching research question for the study, which explored Māori perspectives of the use of haka in sport with a particular focus on “risks” associated with its use. Key themes emerged from the data and participant vignettes are used in this paper aligned to the research frame.

Research participants

Participant selection was done through purposive sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011) initially, followed by snowball sampling (Silverman, 2001). Several authors refer to snowball sampling as an Indigenous method of sampling that has been likened to whanaungatanga in Te Ao Māori (Gillies & Barnett, 2012; Pihama et al., 2014). To gain multiple views and accurately cover a range of Māori perspectives on the risks associated with haka in sport, three key target groups were identified to provide deep insights into this research question. These target groups included:

1. Haka experts—Māori in a variety of roles pertaining to haka, including national and international kapa haka exponents, tutors, producers, performers, judges, organisers and advisors on the topic of haka.
2. Sport experts—Māori in a variety of roles pertaining to sport, including national athletes, coaches, key leaders, media professionals, business owners, administrators and academics.
3. Mātauranga Māori experts—Māori informants in relation to Māori concepts (i.e. kaumātua and kuia).

It is worthwhile mentioning that no one participant fell into a single key target group, and in some cases, participants were in fact experts in all three categories (i.e. national athlete, Matatini performer and proficient in te reo Māori me ona tikanga). To identify the participant data, pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to protect anonymity. The pseudonyms are described as pūkōrero and are listed in chronological order of when the data were collected, from Pūkōrero 1 (first interview) to Pūkōrero 9 (last interview).

Results and discussion

The purpose of the research was to understand what protective measures should be put in place to mitigate any risks associated with the use of haka in sport. After data were analysed, three key themes emerged to form Whakawhiti te rā—a whakapapa approach to protecting haka as a taonga within sport settings in Aotearoa. This section provides further context surrounding the approach and its alignment to the pūrākau that led to Te Rauparaha composing “Ka Mate”. This section also unpacks the key themes, which are supported by participants’ raw quotes.

Whakawhiti te rā

The name of the proposed whakapapa approach comes from a line in the popular haka “Ka Mate” mentioned earlier, which tells a simple story of pursuit and escape, fear of capture and exhilaration of ultimate survival (Gardiner, 2007). Upon the departure of his pursuers, Te Rauparaha shouts:

Ka Ora, Ka Ora! Tēnei te tangata pūhuru hū nā nei i tiki mai whakawhiti te rā!

I live, I live! For it was indeed the power of a hairy person that fetched the sun and caused it to shine again!

Upon analysis of the key themes that came from

the participant data, the following key considerations emerged that provide a starting point for raising levels of knowledge, awareness and understanding of haka, its relevance and its application within sport contexts. It uses a whakapapa approach to guide practice and demonstrate ways one can optimise one’s potential to perform haka, safeguard haka as a cultural practice and enable it to shine as the haka above suggests. It encourages the performer to harness the collective energy of ngā atua Māori and make decisions on the appropriateness of haka before engaging in it. To reap the full benefits haka has to offer the research proposed a three-stepped approach.

Ira atua: The intangible presence

The theme of ira atua encourages deepened levels of knowledge into the whakapapa of haka. When we follow the path of te ira atua we ask questions such as: What are the origins of haka? What are the lessons that are embedded in pūrākau?

Ira tangata: The tangible presence

The theme of ira tangata advocates for strengthened levels of understanding surrounding the whakapapa of the haka being performed. When we follow the path of te ira tangata we ask questions such as: What are the kupu to the haka? Where do they come from? Who composed it? What message is the haka portraying? Are there any metaphorical meanings associated? Which atua/tūpuna am I channelling? What are these atua/tūpuna characteristics and traits?

Haka as an expression of identity in sport

The theme of haka as an expression of identity in sport urges an increased awareness of our own whakapapa and appreciation of our individual journey. When we follow this path, we ask questions such as: What lands do my people come from? What environments are significant to me? What are the characteristics and traits of my tūpuna? How might those characteristics and traits play out in my own haka performance?

A whakapapa approach allows us to understand the connection we have as Māori to our ancestors, which provides a compelling argument to study the environment, and learn from the natural world and from the characteristics and traits of ngā atua and ngā tūpuna. Equally, knowledge of the whakapapa of the haka being performed allows deeper levels of understanding of haka as a customary practice and the purpose and message behind the words and actions. Finally, understanding their own journey by unlocking deeper levels

of knowledge of their own whakapapa, whether it is Māori or non-Māori, further enables performers to relate, contextualise meaning and grasp the potential of haka in various contexts, including sport. This paper argues that the following three key findings will enable us to better exercise our obligations as kaitiaki and protectors of haka as a taonga within the landscape of sport, and this will now be discussed, accompanied by participant insights and quotes in the section to follow.

Theme 1: Te ira atua: The intangible presence

Haka has a rich history and there are many versions of the whakapapa of haka. Some stories can be traced back to atua and tūpuna through pūrākau. Examples include narratives that reference ngā atua Māori, such as Tāwhirimātea, Tama-nui-te-rā (as previously mentioned), Rūaumoko and Tūmatauenga, as well as various tūpuna, such as Tinirau rāua ko Kae, Tamatekapua rāua ko Whakatūria, Ponga rāua ko Puhihuia, te haka a Wairangi, Te Rauparaha and many more (Karetu, 1993; Paenga, 2008). It is clear in these origin stories that haka has existed since the creation of the universe and that various haka have strong connections to ngā atua Māori and those ancestors no longer with us. These pūrākau help frame the relationship between ira atua and their contribution to haka. They emphasise ways we can tap into ancient knowledge to inform our actions in contemporary times. Underlying each of the pūrākau mentioned above is a rhetoric that reinforces the message that through whakapapa, atua have a natural connection to the way we identify with, execute and represent haka.

These stories and whakapapa connections were regularly referenced by participants in the study. For example, the significance of whakapapa and its relationship with haka was aptly described by Pūkōrero 7, who stated:

It is our responsibility when doing haka to channel generation upon generation of haka performed before us. We start from atua first, we roll that down to see the experiences and examples from tūpuna, and then it comes to us. Ninety-nine per cent of Māori think that it is me doing the haka and I'm connecting with atua, so they're working from the bottom up. Whereas we are following the whakapapa line from the origin down to us because we are the most insignificant part of it; we are the last in the chain. You are representing a whole lot more. Consider if we go back to the sun, you are representing all those people that the sun touches.

This description starting with atua, making links to tūpuna and then ending with the living is often heard when whakapapa is recited through pepeha. According to Hakopa (2011), pepeha are the foundation for a Māori cultural paradigm. They begin with reference to ancestral landscapes and sites of significance before ending with one's name. They also acknowledge the lives and deaths of tūpuna in this process which creates a connection between the physical and spiritual realms (Townsend, 2014). Haka can therefore create a channel for performers to draw energy and collective strength from atua and tūpuna. In effect, this act enhances the performer's sense of identity and reinforces their overall purpose during haka performances (Heke et al., 2018). This sentiment is often taken for granted when haka in sport is viewed merely for entertainment purposes.

While the participants who were performers of haka in sport found it hard to articulate in words the feeling they experienced post haka, many attributed this feeling to a metaphysical connection to their whakapapa. Whakapapa in this context refers to one's experience in harnessing energies not only from within the physical realm but also from the spiritual realm. What this tells us is that knowledge, awareness and understanding of the whakapapa of haka, the pūrākau, the role of ngā atua Māori and the stories of our tūpuna enable both the performer and the recipient to achieve different levels of connection. The deeper connection allows performers to traverse realms and essentially optimise the potential for their haka to have the intended outcome. That outcome is often varied: it could be to voice a collective opinion, confront various issues in the world, demonstrate support for a kaupapa, celebrate success, challenge the status quo or demonstrate a sense of unity, as is often the case for sports teams. Undoubtedly, **knowledge of the origins of haka** gives performers the power to portray their message in a powerful, passionate and Māori way.

Theme 2: Te ira tangata – The tangible presence

As an expression of cultural identity, haka is arguably an essential component of any sporting event (Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2002), and our identity as a sporting nation has been significantly influenced by Māori people and culture (Palmer, 2007). Many participants spoke of the haka being an “essential component of the game” and reiterated that it is “a big part of the team's identity and culture”. Aotearoa has made significant progress towards acceptance of Māori cultural heritage

over the years, especially in the public domain. Haka performances in sport often reach large and diverse audiences and, in some instances, they are televised, which significantly contributes towards the visibility of Māori culture on the global stage (Murray, 2000). However, the performances we see today are not necessarily reflective of those performed when the haka was first introduced on the rugby field by the New Zealand Native team that toured Britain in 1888–1889 (Gardiner, 2007; Palenski, 2007; Ryan, 1993). It would be fair to say that haka performances have been somewhat variable over the course of 100 years. In 1987 under the leadership of Sir Buck Shelford, more concerted efforts to restore and retain the mana of “Ka Mate” were prioritised and led to a shift in the way Māori culture was integrated into sport settings (Gardiner, 2007). The use of haka in sport as a national identifier raises tensions that surround questions of authenticity, access, protection, misuse, misappropriation, stereotyping and recognition of Māori cultural knowledge and practice, which has a profound impact on identity. Throughout the study, participants made constant reference to these tensions of haka performances. For example, Pūkōrero 8 emphasised that:

Others think haka is something we do to warm up or get going, but there is a whole deeper realm to it. Haka is more than a screaming match to build up adrenaline. It does do that, but in my opinion, without knowing the true origins of that haka, you can't fully harness what that haka can do for you.

And Pūkōrero 6 explained:

It's real what we do. There is a purpose. We are not just doing it to freak people out and we don't have guns and spears ready to throw. There is a reason why we do it. It's about culture. It's around tradition. We have been doing this for a long time now.

Additionally, Pūkōrero 4, referred to the importance of whakapapa when performing haka and said:

Haka in general has whakapapa, has history, so not only are we yelling and screaming words and physicalising it with actions, but there is deep meaning to it.

The comments above suggest that there is still much work to do to increase knowledge awareness and understanding of haka, especially in sport. It gives context to how our understandings of haka

and its use in various areas have evolved over time and ended up in the present. While participants seemed somewhat unphased and unsurprised by the appropriation of haka in the public realm, most were more concerned with the lack of understanding of haka, which reflected negatively on them as Māori. It is apparent that there is a danger in exploiting Māori culture through a lack of awareness, understanding, ignorance and respect. So where do haka performers begin to become educated or even to educate others? There are a number of strategies, including the increased introduction of cultural ambassadors such as kaumātua into sports teams to lift cultural competency and mitigate any risks, and involving the team in the design and composition of team haka so that they are personalised and speak to places, messages and topics of relevance to that team. While these are great strategies, this research suggests that a simple place to start is by learning the whakapapa of the haka being performed. The All Blacks' review of the use of “Ka Mate” provides a good example. Understanding the words, knowing the events leading up to Te Rauparaha composing that haka and visiting the sacred site of relevance all contribute to a **greater understanding and connection to the whakapapa of the haka being performed**. Therefore, perspectives on the impacts of haka on Māori identity are paramount and a vital discussion to this research and paper.

Theme 3: Haka as an expression of identity in sport

The haka is paramount in contributing to the legacy of Indigenous cultural knowledge and solidifying a distinct national, sporting and Indigenous identity both here and overseas (Armstrong, 2005). Being “Māori” has been made accessible through haka, which in turn has provided a connection back to tribal lineage for many and is an expression of identity locally, nationally and internationally. Pūkōrero 1 reinforced this view, stating:

Haka is an expression of who we are not just as New Zealanders, but as Māori.

Similarly, Pūkōrero 4 stated:

Haka is just sitting inside me and so if it's on, it's on, and if it's not, it's still on pretty much. So, it's that little burning fire in me.

Cultural rituals such as haka have been proven to create a sense of home for many Māori living overseas. The comments above reinforce the idea

that whakapapa *is* identity for Māori, and that sometimes rituals such as haka provide a deeper sense of connection to one's identity. The above comments allude to an intangible connection, rhythm or feeling that is further strengthened when performing haka. Much of that you can feel, but you cannot always see it. Te Rito (2007) calls this "whakapapa firmly embedded in Māori psyche" (p. 4). Whakapapa in this context is not bound by time, but rather exists as a deep connection that gives life to identities. Haka performances are therefore an example of this expression of whakapapa and Māori identity.

Throughout the study, I heard a constant reference made to haka being about something "greater than them" and something "distinctly different for Māori". Again, they repeatedly spoke about an intangible feeling that was not bound by time, but rather breathed life into an inherent sense of who they were. The importance of the meta-physical-spiritual realm as previously mentioned reinforced the notion that haka has the power to provide a deeper sense of connection that you can feel, but you cannot always see. For example, Pūkōrero 9 stated:

To me the haka electrifies the atmosphere. It charges the atmosphere. It extends out from your wairua, from your spiritual being and sending it out into the cosmos.

And Pūkōrero 8 emphasised that:

Some non-Māori can't ever comprehend. They don't understand that innate, that deep... it's embedded in our DNA. The connections that we have to the words that we say and the actions that we are portraying.

In addition, Pūkōrero 3 claimed:

When you're a Māori performing haka, that sense of *ihi* that you will get from it as a Māori performing for that team will probably be different to a Pākehā or any other nationality.

The above pūkōrero referred to a deep connection and deep meaning that is embedded in the DNA of Māori performing haka. According to Heke (2013), these connections are examples of how Māori identify with environmental cues and esoteric knowledge. This highlights that the genealogical descent of all living things from *atua* to the present allows us to better understand the connection we have with haka—to transmit their

knowledge of self orally, physically, spiritually from one generation to the next. Fortunately, haka serves as a vehicle for Māori to portray their expression of whakapapa to the world. It is particularly important at this point to note that this authentic Māori perspective on haka is not widely articulated across mainstream media in the same way that the physical performance itself is represented. So, while the power of haka is undeniable across Māori and non-Māori audiences, perhaps depth in understanding it from a distinct Māori worldview is lacking.

The above comments suggest that haka is in fact a meaningful cultural display of identity, unity and passion and that performances are improved when there is a greater understanding of and connection to the whakapapa of the haka being performed (Palmer, 2007). It pays, first, to have knowledge of the whakapapa of haka and, second, to know that the words, what they mean and where they come from form part of the preparation phase of a performance. Then, finally, **exploring one's own whakapapa connections to the haka being performed** is key in understanding one's place, one's purpose and one's connection to the haka being performed. Performers should ask themselves: Where do I whakapapa to? How did my family and I get here to Aotearoa? How was I afforded this opportunity to haka? What whakapapa connections do I have to this haka? What roles have my own whānau played when it comes to haka? These are key questions haka performers could ask to increase their knowledge, awareness and understanding of their role. If questions like these are not asked, uncertainty is likely to creep in. For example, a common misunderstanding as identified by the participants is the role of women in haka; another was understanding when it was and was not appropriate to perform "Ka Mate" (especially within the geographical boundaries of Ngāi Tahu). Not only will this knowledge empower performers and enable a deeper connection and purpose on field, it is likely to mitigate misunderstandings, which in turn will render more optimal performances.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to advocate for the importance and significance of a whakapapa approach as a *kaitiaki* mechanism for haka in sport. This research highlights the contested nature of haka and brings attention to the challenges Māori face in sustaining Māori cultural values and practices in contemporary times (Karetu, 1993; Palmer, 2007). The key theme throughout is whakapapa, which

encouraged a deeper understanding of the past and present to inform the future. We know that our ancestors created the formula to allow haka to flourish, and this dates back to the creation of the universe (Marsden, 2003); however, with the rise of technology and globalisation, traditional kaitiakitanga models have been tested. The new face of kaitiakitanga must now acknowledge our rich history (e.g. te taiao, ngā tūpuna, ngā atua), yet embrace the changing times we live in (e.g. the rise of YouTube and other media platforms).

This paper introduces Whakawhiti te rā, a whakapapa approach to protecting haka as taonga within sport settings across Aotearoa. It identifies three key findings, which have been translated into three steps for raising levels of knowledge, awareness and understanding of haka in sport. Whakawhiti te rā emphasises that increased knowledge of whakapapa can be an anchor from which performers draw support in times of confusion or crisis about appropriateness of performing haka. This paper celebrates that haka can be a vehicle for encouraging our children to seek to know their heritage, their culture and their identity. This is the legacy of haka and the reason why it will continue to be relevant across settings, including sport, into the future. While we recognise that using a whakapapa approach such as Whakawhiti te rā is one strategy, we acknowledge that further strategies will need to be put in place to safeguard the use of haka within the realm of sport. Finally, this paper acts as a way of shining a spotlight on the extraordinary but taken for granted power of haka as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, of the stories of our ancestors and of whakapapa.

Acknowledgements

He mihi nui ki taku whānau i tautoko i ahau i roto i tēnei haerenga — ka nui taku aroha ki a koutou! Thank you also to my supervisors for their guidance and to all the participants, it was a privilege to learn from, with and alongside you throughout this mahi.

I wish to acknowledge Te Rauparaha, chief of Ngāti Toa Rangatira as the original composer of “Ka Mate”, as well as Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated, who have certainly set a benchmark in providing a pathway for meaningful recognition of the significance of “Ka Mate”, from recognition of whakapapa connections to its cultural and historical importance to Ngāti Toa Rangatira. Ngāti Toa Rangatira, as legacies of Te Rauparaha, have demonstrated how to be strong kaitiaki of their taonga in the establishment of the Haka Ka Mate Attribution Act 2014, and so I thank them for

their guidance and for the privilege to draw on the kura huna within “Ka Mate” for educational purposes—he tino taonga ēnā.

Glossary

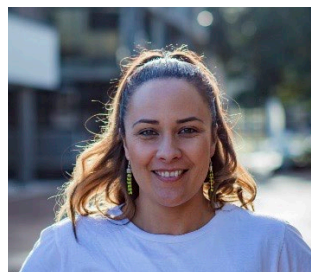
Aotearoa	New Zealand
atua	deity
haka	ceremonial dance
hapū	subtribal group
hauora	holistic wellbeing
Hine-raumati	Summer maiden
Hine-takurua	Winter maiden
ihi	essential force, excitement, thrill, power, charm, personal magnetism—psychic force as opposed to spiritual power
ira atua	intangible presence
ira tangata	tangible presence
iwi	tribal group
kaitiaki	guardian, minder
kaitikaitanga	guardianship, stewardship, protection
Ka Mate	haka composed by Te Rauparaha from Ngāti Toa Rangatira tribe
kapa haka	a row/team/group performing haka/waiata/poi
kaumātua	elderly person of status within the family
kaupapa	purpose, topic
Kaupapa Māori	by Māori, for Māori research
kuia	female elder
kupu	words
kura huna	hidden meaning
mahi	work
Matatini	national kapa haka festival
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
Ngāi Tahu	tribal group of much of the South Island
Pākehā	European New Zealander
pepeha	tribal saying
poi	a light ball on a string of varying length that is swung or twirled rhythmically to sung accompaniment
pūkōrero	a well-informed spokesperson, orator
pūrākau	traditional narratives, Indigenous creation stories
rangatahi	youth
Rongokako	founding ancestor of the Ngāti Kahungunu tribe

Rūaumoko	deity of volcanos
taiao	natural environment
tākaro	sport, game, play, recreational activity
Tama-nui-te-rā	sun
Tāne-rore	son of Tama-nui-te-rā and Hine-raumati
taonga	cherished treasure
tapuwae	footprints
Tāwhirimātea	deity of the weather and winds
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview
te haka a Tāne-rore	the dance of Tāne-rore
Te Rauparaha	composer of the haka “Ka Mate”
te reo Māori	Māori language
tikanga Māori	Māori customs, practices, lores
Tūmatauenga	Deity of war and people
tupuna	ancestor
tūpuna	ancestors
wahine	woman
waiata	sing, song, chant
wairua	spirit, soul
whakapapa	lineage, genealogy
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	building relationships
Whare Wānanga	sacred institution of higher learning
wiri	trembling, slight quivering of the hand

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This article is based on the lead author's master's research. Nikki completed her master's thesis titled *Ngā Tapuwae o te Haka—Māori Perspectives on Haka in Sport in 2019*. This paper is a dissemination of some of the key findings. Nikki is currently in her final year of a PhD programme, in which she is exploring the impact of pūrākau-derived physical activity programmes on hauora outcomes for tamariki in mainstream schools.