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# **Cultural leadership: The reciprocities of right relationship at Kia Aroha College**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Education, the University of Auckland, 2015.

## **Abstract**

The central aim of my research is to explore Māori and Pasifika students' cultural leadership in the context of Kia Aroha College, a designated character state-school in New Zealand that pursues a culturally-centred and critical pedagogy. The inquiry focuses on the students' understandings of their school-based, cultural leadership and how this is enacted.

My qualitative, emergent research design has an instrumental case study methodology, with Kia Aroha College selected as an exemplar of a culturally responsive school. The culturally responsive inquiry framework I employ helps to explain my choice of methodology, methods and strategies. The *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face) focus group interviews, and the guided walks, are of especial significance as culturally appropriate and safe research spaces. I view the case of Kia Aroha College as an integrated system, but one that is linked to wider social structures. Accordingly, I employ Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/morphostatic methodology.

The students' cultural leadership is named *whānau* leadership. The seven structural properties of *whānau* (family) leadership I identify broadly conform to the informal, flexible, relatively non-hierarchical, and shared leadership in the relevant literature. The case study students problematize their authority. I emphasize the cultural specificity of *whānau* leadership for the Māori and Tongan students respectively. Reciprocal causation between the social structures of the school and beyond, on the one hand, and the students as agents on the other, helps account for how and why student leadership is enacted as *whānau* leadership. The students' positive experience of a figurative *whānau* bond fosters *whānau* leadership. Student leaders reproduce the structure of *whānau* leadership via their social practices because *whānau* leadership is experienced as empowerment.

My research findings support those researchers who argue that youth prefer informal, non-hierarchical, spontaneous, and collaborative leadership. Māori and Pasifika youth perspectives on student leadership are aired and examined; a rare moment in the literature. The influence of school context on students is investigated, opening up the student leadership research field. The study explores the problematical nature of student authority, power, and hierarchy for the students—an under-elaborated issue in much of the scant literature on secondary-school student leadership.

**Dedication**

To my wife Christine for all her support; for my children, and other people's children.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 The research project

The central aim of my research is to explore Māori and Pasifika students' cultural leadership in the context of Kia Aroha College, a special character state-school committed to a culturally-centred and critical pedagogy. The focus of this inquiry is on the students' understandings of their school-based, cultural leadership. Their perspectives also provide knowledge on how student leadership is carried out. Adult perspectives also contribute key evidence.

Student leadership and culturally responsive education will be defined in Chapter Two. Critical pedagogy is predominantly linked to a critique of the dominant neo-liberal form of capitalism, and capitalism as such, and the ways it impacts on class, race, gender, education inter alia. Significantly, the transformative praxis of Paulo Freire (1993), the most important scholar in the critical pedagogy tradition, has been adapted and adopted by the Kaupapa Māori movement (G. H. Smith, 1997), and the case study school.

This inquiry has an emergent, qualitative research design and is an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), with Kia Aroha selected as an exemplar of a culturally responsive school. The culturally responsive inquiry framework I use helps to explain my selection of methodology, methods and strategies. An emergent design can be responsive to the aspirations of the Māori and Pasifika participants, and the “kanohi ki te kanohi” (face-to-face) focus group interviews, and the guided walks strategy, were selected and devised to provide culturally appropriate and safe encounters between myself as a monolingual, English-speaking, European New Zealander and the participants from this Māori and Pasifika bilingual school. I view the case of Kia Aroha College as an integrated system, but one that is linked to wider social structures and power imbalances. Accordingly, I employ Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/morphostatic methodology in my analysis to interpret student leadership as a cultural phenomenon in the local system of this one school, which in turn is enmeshed in wider social systems.



As a Pākehā<sup>1</sup> teacher in a mainstream setting of an urban school with a large Māori<sup>2</sup> and Pasifika<sup>3</sup> population, this project was inspired by my commitment to social justice in education. I pose this vexatious pedagogical question: How might teachers teach, and students learn, in ways that acknowledge the ethnic culture of Māori and Pasifika students, and challenge the status quo in terms of race and class as part of an emancipatory education? As the research project developed, I learned to attend more closely to the research-participants principles and aspirations, and less to my own concerns.

Although my research was revised in light of the Māori and Pasifika aspirations of the school, the research questions have remained very similar throughout, with the substitution of “cultural leadership” for “citizenship” being the key change:

### **Research questions**

The general question: (1) In what ways do students conceptualize their cultural leadership? The component questions:

- (1.1) How do students describe their conceptual frameworks of cultural leadership?
- (1.2) How do students enact their conceptual frameworks of cultural leadership?
- (1.3) How do teachers provide opportunities for students to participate in school-based cultural leadership activities?

## **1.2 Contextualizing and justifying the project**

The educational disparities between Māori and Pasifika students’ achievement and that of their Pākehā counterparts have been a source of concern to researchers since at least the 1950s (Amituanai-Tolosa, MacNaughton, Lai, & Airini, 2009). Māori and Pasifika are over-represented in the infamous “long tail” of underachievement in school, and are correspondingly over-represented in various measures of social deprivation (Durie, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, & Wearmouth, 2014), with negative consequences for those individuals, their families, and wider society. There is a great deal of controversy over the causes of these educational disparities, and solutions to them (Snook & O’Neill, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Pākehā is a term for a person of European descent, connected to the British-led colonization of New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand, differentiated by the tribal groupings of hapū and iwi.

<sup>3</sup> Pasifika is an umbrella term for Polynesian peoples who live in New Zealand, including Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Islands Māori.

The Ministry of Education supports the notion that culturally responsive pedagogy is the solution. The Ministry of Education sponsored the nationwide Te Kotahitanga programme (2001-2013) as a sustained attempt to close disparities through introducing culturally responsive pedagogy, but this is no longer centrally funded. The Ministry of Education's current Māori education strategy is *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013-2017*. Unsurprisingly, the Ministry has not sponsored a critical pedagogy that critiques structural inequalities by examining the links between race, class, neo-colonialism, and neo-liberalism, for example.

My thesis is based partly on the prima facie case for culturally responsive pedagogy. A staple of progressive educational thought has been the claim that to teach successfully, the educator must know “the whole child”. Knowing the whole child ought to require recognizing their ethnicity, related worldview, and personal experience, and therefore practising culturally responsive pedagogy (Aitken & Sinemma, 2008). In my view, the right of the child to self-development (academic and cultural success) and associated ethno-linguistic rights, including indigenous rights for Māori (Durie, 1998), provide further justification for culturally responsive education. Therefore this thesis aims to make a modest contribution to the question of how to practise culturally responsive pedagogy. Whānau-based<sup>4</sup> education constitutes the case study school's response to the problem of mainstream, culturally unresponsive pedagogy that alienates many Māori and Pasifika students. My imagined audience is composed of educators who may be open to the possibilities of culturally responsive and critical education, Duncan-Andrade's (2007) “Wankstas and Ridas.”

The research is also justified by the importance of cultural and youth leadership to New Zealand society, with relevance further afield. The resurgence in indigenous movements locally and globally (Durie, 2011; Meyer & Alvarado, 2010; L. T. Smith, 2012; Zibechi, 2010) and growing diversity in multicultural societies calls for an exploration of leadership outside the European models of the dominant classes. These changes help explain the emergence of critical multicultural education (Neito, 2009) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Bishop, 2011a). In addition to the cultural/ethnic forms of leadership, there are other fundamental, attendant questions about the legitimacy and efficacy of authority, power, and leadership in a century where we and future generations face unprecedented challenges. These grave, interconnected

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<sup>4</sup> Whānau is Māori for extended family.

problems are integral to the neo-liberal world order: financial crisis and instability; the erosion of popular participation and power in political life; inequality and poverty; war, imperialism, neo-colonization, terrorism and so forth. Mann (Mann & Haugaard, 2011) notes that the environmental crisis (anthropogenic climate change and ecological degradation) is a particularly novel one caused by the imperative of capitalist growth and profits, the nation-state's overriding commitment to growth in GDP terms, and the public's criteria for success being wedded to personal consumption. To solve such problems, or mitigate their effects, requires unprecedented cooperation between organizations and communities, and innovative leadership. The subtext to this inquiry is whether the role of education, and state education in particular, must be to reproduce the dominant organizations, institutions, and forms of leadership that have brought us to this conjuncture in history, or whether there are better, more libertarian, egalitarian, democratic, and peaceful educational and social alternatives.

### **1.3 The structure of the thesis**

In Chapter One, I outline what the project is about, why it is warranted, and adumbrate the remainder of the thesis. In Chapter Two, I address the literature on student leadership performed at secondary school. I identify four key gaps in the literature on student leadership. I also cover the related themes of culturally responsive pedagogy as necessary context for cultural leadership in the case study school.

In Chapter Three, I explain my choice of methodology and tools. I justify my qualitative research design and the single case study methodology on the grounds of eliciting the thick description needed to explore student perspectives in order to:

- (i) conceptualize the structure of student leadership; and
- (ii) analyse the causal processes at work in relation to student leadership.

I argue for the transferability of the findings from the case study school to other schools. I discuss the tensions between working alongside a whānau of interest and producing a trustworthy and credible thesis, and my resolution of these tensions. I explain how I employed an emergent design for my thematic analysis, and how trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability were addressed.

In Chapter Four, I present my findings. In addition to vignettes based on my observations, thick descriptions are provided via extensive selections of student quotes. I identify and explore three themes:

- (i) whānau grows leadership;
- (ii) managing social difference; and
- (iii) the reciprocity between self and other.

For Theme One, I mainly examine the distribution of student leadership (whānau leadership), and student agency. For Theme Two, I focus on how students manage cultural differences within the school, and how they deal with more powerful adults in their leadership activities. With Theme Three, I report how students view their leadership as compatible with personal and group ends, and its relationship to social justice. The core category of “Whānau leadership: the reciprocities of right relationship” is used to integrate the three themes and the findings.

In Chapter Five, I move to a higher level of analysis. First, I generate a model of the structure of student leadership at Kia Aroha College in terms of its properties. Second, I produce a morphogenetic/static (Archer, 1995) account of how agential and structural processes work within the school’s social web, and how they produce the students’ whānau leadership. I explain why student leadership is enacted as whānau leadership, and discuss the relationship between the literature and my study. Then I address the implications of the research, before drawing final conclusions, linking my study to the literature.

# Chapter 2: Literature review

## Introduction

This literature review consists of two sections. In 2.1, I investigate four key gaps in the literature on secondary school student leadership:

- (i) youth conceptualizations of secondary school-based student leadership;
- (ii) Māori and Pasifika perspectives on student leadership.
- (iii) a lack of research into the influence of school context on student leadership, in terms of adult influences, and those of students; and
- (iv) inadequate attention paid to the complex concept of authority in relation to student leadership.

In section 2.2, I explore the hotly contested field of culturally responsive pedagogy because it links to my study of cultural leadership in the context of a school committed to a culturally-based education.

## 2.1 Student leadership

Before addressing the literature's key lacunae, I first provide a working definition of student leadership.

Northouse (2010) defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p.12). This is a suitably vague definition for this literature review as it leaves the actual forms of leadership in the process undefined. It also invites a consideration of power in all its guises, including authority, and leaves open the nature of the common goal. As an initial, working definition for this study, student leadership refers to the processes students use to influence other people for common goals and in secondary school contexts.

### 2.1.1 Four key gaps, and related issues, in the literature

#### (i) Youth conceptualizations of secondary-school based student leadership

There is a paucity of research on student leadership in secondary school contexts, and a specific lack of research on student conceptualizations of leadership. Despite an increase in research on student leadership recently, McNae (2010) notes that researchers continue to focus on university contexts to identify successful student leaders “to ascertain the leadership

characteristics and skills required to fulfil prescribed roles within that institution” (pp. 677-678). Dempster and Lizzio (2007, p. 279) claim there exists:

an identifiable gap in our knowledge of students’ understanding of leadership and how they see, experience and interpret it in different situations. Indeed, much of the research writing deals with adults saying why student leadership is important and what those adult views define as leadership development or training.

Alchard (2013), Dempster, Lizzio, Keeffe, Skinner and Andrews (2010), Dempster, Stevens and Keeffe (2011), McNae (2011) and Whitehead (2009) each observe that there remains a need to explore student understandings of leadership.

There is some evidence that young people’s normative understandings and preferred practices of adolescent leadership are very different to adult conceptions of leadership. In the USA, Roach et al. (1999) concluded a large scale, ten year study on out-of-school leadership in youth organizations working with youth from under-served and at-risk communities. They describe how these young people understood and enacted leadership in markedly different ways to adult theories of leadership. Roach et al. (1999) are widely referenced in the student leadership literature because of such key conclusions as: “the young focus on *how* leadership happens, not on *who* leaders are as power figures, skillful managers, or individuals bearing specific traits” (p. 13). In relation to the distribution of expertise across youth, the authors observe:

The movement from role to role and the open interpretation of the rules to sustain the excellence of the group enabled the enactment of leadership that young people attested to in their usual out-of-school lives. In their time spent with peers, single leaders did not emerge, but instead leadership fell across older or more experienced members of the group, with younger members alert to learning how to become leaders. (Roach et al., 1999, pp. 15-16)

In the informal contexts of family and friends and in community organizations, Roach et al. (1999) observe that:

Instead of being explicitly assigned leadership roles that include structurally supported relationships of influence, youth constantly negotiate their roles within groups of peers and family in response to the multiple contexts of their daily lives.... the young people of this study attend to what may be termed *wisdom in spontaneity* - the ability to assess situations quickly and step forward or backward in taking direction for the benefit of the group. (p. 17)

Youth leadership, they argue, is orientated towards meaningful, high-stakes, group tasks accomplished with excellence, and for the benefit of the group. The authors explain that adolescent leadership in these non-school settings has these informal, flexible, and highly collaborative characteristics because it is derived from the everyday contexts of their lives.

Other research supports the claim that youth conceive their leadership in similar terms. Drawing on the Networked Learning Communities project of the National College of Student Leadership in the UK, McGregor (2007) argues that youth have “a preference for people based, relational forms” and accordingly we should view youth leadership as “a relational process of influence rather than of hierarchical power” (p. 86) and students can be understood as “enacting leadership through lateral forms of power, such as negotiation or persuasion” (p. 99), in this case with a focus on student-adult dialogue over learning. Dempster et al. (2010) suggest that “young people construct leadership in personal and relational terms and that cooperative and prosocial characteristics are central to their views of ‘good leadership’” (p. 88). These students expect good leaders to act ethically, and think this includes recognizing individuality while working towards common goals. In terms of using social influence, a good leader is one sharing authority and modelling the responsibility, autonomy and independence that all team members should possess. In contrast, “bad leadership” in this study is identified with being egocentric, bossy, and omnipotent. As the authors point out, there is an emerging consensus on adolescent leadership as understood by adolescents, but much more empirical work is required. To this end, Lizzio, Andrews, and Skinner (2011) draw out 10 principles of leadership; notably, the first is leadership distributed across all participants in a situation.

The challenge of eliciting the authentic views of youth has led to the adoption of a number of interesting methods to explore their conceptions of student leadership. Acknowledging that young people are likely to give answers they think adult researchers want to hear, rather than authentic responses that provide their actual understandings, Dempster et al. (2010) identify three approaches in the literature that address accessing student voice: the use of visual stimuli, narrative, and interview. The authors claim that studies using these approaches share four key features that appear to be useful when eliciting authentic student voice. Firstly, young people are positioned as co-researchers rather than treated as objects of inquiry. Secondly, assumptions about what constitutes leadership are minimized and adult conceptions of leadership are held back. Thirdly, students are engaged by the focus on their experience and the multisensory research process. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, the approaches are very respectful of, and open to, student experience which establishes mutual trust. Van Linden and Fertman (1998) observe that youth are likely to understand leadership in terms of adult conceptions of transactional leadership, when in fact the young people may be demonstrating different kinds of leadership without naming it leadership. These observations of Dempster et al. (2010), and van Linden and Fertman (1998) influenced my research strategies.

## **(ii) Māori and Pasifika perspectives on student leadership**

There is a general lack of inquiry into the influence of ethnicity on student leadership, and a specific shortage of research into Māori and Pasifika student perspectives on leadership. There is a widespread recognition that ethnicity influences student leadership, and so Kezar and Moriarty (2000) are widely referenced, but it has not been followed up by a wealth of relevant research in secondary school contexts.

Bishop (2011b) makes the case for the Te Kohatahitanga programme's Effective Teacher Profile based on a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations operating in the discursive classroom to create the conditions for minority students to assume leadership. He advocates co-construction of the curriculum and instruction as forms of student leadership, and incorporates the notion of distributed leadership. The perspectives of Māori students on their school-based leadership are not addressed by Bishop, and are in short-supply in the literature.

In a New Zealand tertiary context, editors Chu, Rimoni and Sanga (2011) collected the views of Pasifika and Māori undergraduates on the nature of leadership to offer insights "drawn from rich cultural understandings of leadership from the people of the Pacific" (Sanga, 2011, p. 9). Sanga and Sanga (2011) summarize the students' views and place them alongside the principles of the Leadership Pacific group they belong to. The mission of Leadership Pacific is to "enhance the leadership capacity of Pacific communities" (p.124), and they hope to influence schools as well as other organizations. The authors represent leadership by and for Pacific peoples as collective, relational, familial, contextual, and locate it in Pacific cultures, communities, the wider society and processes of change. Leadership is about "visioning, people-developing and change-making.... [and] emphasises leadership as the realm of ordinary people" (p. 119). It requires character, especially integrity, is underpinned by the service values of "purposeful privilege, ownership, appreciation and integrity" (p. 121), and serves communal purposes. Significantly, the more collective conceptualization of leadership is "unlike popular Pacific perspectives that tend to be more autocratic, theocratic or status-oriented in their emphases" (p. 125), although positional leadership is accepted.

## **(iii) The influence of school context on student leadership**

There is a gap in the literature on how school contexts' influence student conceptualisations of leadership. McNae (2011) addresses this lacuna in the context of a girls' Catholic school in New Zealand. She concludes that the Catholic culture of the school is a powerful influence on the leadership actions and dialogue of the young women, together with the perceived chances to learn and enact leadership. The students in her study strongly identify leadership with



justified rites of passage that restrict leadership to senior students who hold formal positions and exercise power. This provides some evidence against the contention that youth reject the adults' hierarchical prescriptions. In a single case study, Lizzio, Dempster, and Neumann (2011) argue that a positive sense of identification by the students with one another and the adults explained a willingness to take up student leadership roles. They conclude that the quality of relationships within student peer groups appears to be the most important factor contributing to their willingness to be student leaders. A second factor is the fair treatment of students by teachers, which also indirectly affects peer relationships. Being treated as "citizens of their school" is a third key factor. They also suggest that in a school culture where the administration treats staff with respect, teachers will be more likely to treat students fairly and respectfully, and model civic roles and promote civic behaviour by students.

Authors advocating forms of youth leadership in schools adduce various positive outcomes of empowering youth, and attend to the adverse as well as positive effects of school contexts. Youth leadership projects framed as student voice initiatives have engendered beneficial pedagogical, curricular, and teacher-student relational changes in case study schools (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2003). Such initiatives can work, in part, because they provide student knowledge that is vital to school improvement and otherwise inaccessible to teachers (Cook-Sather, 2002; Mitra, 2004; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Powerful barriers to student voice are identified, as are solutions to them. Mitra (2009) identifies the institutional climate of US urban high schools as adverse, attributing this largely to status and power differentials between students and teachers. Accordingly, she identifies three key ways to success. First, making it clear that change in student-teacher relationships means youth are expected to assume more leadership under adult coaching, with equality of respect and general responsibility, but different roles and responsibilities. She also observes that the more empowered the adults are, the more empowered the students can be. Second, rapid and visible victories are required to help establish the legitimacy of the student voice projects with students, teachers, administrators, and the community. Third, sufficient time and space is required for meaningful collaboration between adults and youth. Similarly, Goodman and Eren (2013) identify adverse conditions for student agency in US urban schools: poor student behaviour and lack of skills, the relentless pressure of high-stakes testing, and the various quandaries faced by teachers who would empower students, including identifying the legitimate boundaries of their influence over students, and a workplace hierarchy where employees are bound to show respect to the principal as the boss. Their proffered advice for successful student agency initiatives broadly

concur with Mitra when they argue for: a supportive school climate; a focused, bounded project with a culminating event; increased personal satisfaction for students, and social recognition; and a transfer of authority from the teacher to the students.

Divergences between the aims of adults and practices of students in the school context are raised in the literature on student leadership. McNae (2011) concludes that students in her study saw student leadership as helping others, but also as holding power and office with personal benefits; whereas the school strongly emphasized leadership as service to others as part of a Catholic social vision. Relatedly, Keeffe and Andrews (2011, p. 21) observe that:

Although schools value the student focused advantages of leadership experiences, it would be misleading to suggest they were the only imperatives in schools wanting successful leadership programs. Schools also seek to infuse shared values and beliefs through their school leadership approaches with the aim, at least, to provide organisational cohesion and possibly, a positive public image.

The authors also claim that the students in the two rural Australian high schools they studied in effect linked student leadership to the attainment of social and symbolic capital, but failed to connect leadership to cultural capital (through quality learning), contrary to the school's intention.

#### **(iv) Student authority**

Typically, studies on student leadership from the management and leadership field address issues of power, without explicitly interrogating the issue of student authority with the same degree of attentiveness. To cite a typical example, Lizzio, Andrews, and Skinner (2011) conclude that “students appraise and respond quite differently to horizontal (peer to peer) and vertical (status-based) situations, and that any effective approach to student leadership needs to consider their distinct challenges” (p. 97), and claim vertical situations are more problematic than horizontal ones for their case study students. Although the authors address vertical power relationships, student authority (a species of power) is not interrogated. In the same field, MacNeil (2006) bemoans the lack of focus on authority in the youth leadership literature and argues that youth authority is integral to authentic opportunities to enact leadership. The student voice or agency literature is more likely to address issues of authority. For instance, Goodman et al. (2011) address the challenge to student agency by autocratic principals in highly authoritarian urban schools in combination with the lack of student authority, arguing that student agents require authority. Nevertheless, student authority, and their views on it, remains largely unexplored.

## **2.2 Culturally responsive pedagogy**

In this section, I firstly define culturally responsive pedagogy. Secondly, I examine the division between those who argue culturally unresponsive schools account for Māori underachievement, and those who argue this “culturalist” argument is unsupported by the evidence, and offer alternative explanations. Accordingly, the former argue that the solution to Māori underachievement is for mainstream schools to become more culturally responsive. The latter are highly sceptical that this will work, and proffer other solutions. One intermediate position will be discussed which puts Pasifika students into the picture.

### **2.2.1 Defining culturally responsive pedagogy**

Culturally responsive pedagogy is concerned with changes to instruction and curriculum that replace the traditional approach with one designed to better meet the needs of students from ethnic minority and national minority (indigenous peoples, for instance) groups. In a US context, Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive pedagogy as:

a very different pedagogical paradigm [that] is needed to improve the performance of underachieving students from various ethnic groups – one that teaches *to and through* their personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments.... it does for Native American, Latino, Asian American, African American, and low-income students what traditional instructional ideologies and actions do for middle-class European Americans. That is, it filters curriculum content and teaching strategies through their cultural frames of reference to make the content more personally meaningful and easier to master. It is radical because it makes explicit the previously implicit role of [Euro-American] culture in teaching and learning, and it insists that educational institutions accept the legitimacy and viability of ethnic-group cultures in improving learning outcomes. (p. 26)

Building bridges between the school, home and the wider society are integral to culturally responsive pedagogy. Intrinsic to the basic pedagogical model is a commitment to social justice, with a focus on race or ethnicity, and the fostering of critical thought and action by students and teachers. Ladson-Billings (1995) proposes that “culturally relevant teaching must meet three criteria: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness” (p. 483). There is a potential overlap between culturally responsive pedagogy, and critical pedagogy.

### **2.2.2 Contested accounts of educational disparities and solutions**

There is a consensus on the magnitude of persistent educational inequalities in New Zealand. To illustrate the proportions of educational inequality, Bishop, Berryman, and Wearmouth

(2014, p.4) cite these statistics: in 2009 “23% of Māori boys and 35% of Māori girls achieved University Entrance, compared to 47% and 60% of their non-Māori counterparts” and “only 28% of Māori boys and 41% of Māori girls left school in 2009 with the third level of national qualifications or above, compared to 49% and 65% of their non-Māori counterparts.” However, the systemic properties and mechanisms that account for such disparities have provoked affective and intellectual controversy, and divided academics.

## **Culture and class**

When explaining educational disparities in mainstream schools, much turns on the contested concept of “deficit thinking.” Shields, Bishop, and Mazawi (2005) argue that teachers from the dominant European culture are culpable of deficit thinking where they effectively blame the student, their home, and culture for educational failure, when responsibility lies with the teacher and the school. Against this, Nash (2006) argues that social class explains much of the social variance in educational achievement because it strongly influences family resources and practices. In other words, it is argued that because Māori and Pasifika students are disproportionately working class, this largely accounts for their educational underachievement. Neither the students, nor their families, nor the schools are to blame. Using a “family resources framework,” Nash (2010) argues that social class generated family socialization practices are a key factor in explaining differences in educational outcomes, although they do not work deterministically on individuals, and the specific mechanisms at work are inadequately understood. Snook and O’Neill (2010) concur and argue that schools by themselves cannot close the achievement gap between working class and middle class students, and issues like poverty that are a barrier to learning need to be addressed by government policy.

Tunmer and Prochnow (2009) also take issue with deficit theorizing as represented by some proponents of culturally responsive pedagogy, arguing it conceals students’ educational needs. The authors’ argue that the New Zealand literacy achievement gap is explained by some children’s lack of literate cultural capital upon school entry. This is then compounded by the whole language, social constructivist approach to reading in primary school, based on the flawed multiple cues theory of reading acquisition which is inappropriate for these children. In turn, this has long term deleterious and cumulative effects on their literacy and learning. Children from low income families, including many from outside the dominant culture, are more likely to lack literate cultural capital than those from the dominant culture who are middle class and likely to succeed despite the whole language approach.

An intermediate position on this controversy is a study by Amituanai-Toloa, MacNaughten, Lai, and Airini (2009) on Pasifika schooling improvement initiatives in New Zealand. The authors' enumerate "compounding factors" and include students' abilities, socio-economic status, early childhood education, bilingual expertise and factors for school success including exposure to books and libraries, and the secondary and tertiary qualifications of the mother. The authors' cite Hattie's (2009) calculations that up to 30% of the variance in achievement can be attributed to teachers, and 50% of the variance to students. Some of the variance attributed to students is then linked to family literacy practices and the quality of community resources. Relatedly, an effective relationship between school and families includes a reciprocal sharing of knowledge and resources, but for parental involvement to have a positive impact on their children's skills and motivation they need appropriate advice from the teachers.

### **The politics**

The whole debate is highly politicized. For Russell Bishop (2011c), the Te Kotahitanga programme he helped initiate is about a shift in power relations to validate and legitimize Māori aspirations to succeed as Māori. The programme explicitly draws on the inspiration and metaphors of the political Kaupapa Māori movement that emerged as part of the post-war Māori revitalization. Te Kotahitanga was adopted by New Zealand's Ministry of Education. In opposition to the policies inspired by Te Kotahitanga, Nash (2006) claims policymakers and academics like Bishop are participants in the international "culture wars" who use "an extreme version of the dominance of cultural theory to explain educational differences between social groups.... [and] emphatically reject any other explanations and frequently accuse those using class approaches of being culturally insensitive and even racist" (p. 156).

For Bishop (2011c), the Te Kotahitanga programme requires teachers to discursively (re)position themselves as agentic professionals in line with Kaupapa Māori principles. Openshaw (2007) is sharply critical of Te Kotahitanga, claiming it is part of the paradigm of the global school effectiveness/school improvement movement that offers over-simplistic, coercive, and managerial solutions to educational underachievement, while undermining professional autonomy and the possibility of activist teacher professionalism for the benefit of students. From the opposite camp, Meyer et al. (2010) conclude that the Te Kotahitanga programme "can initially cause division amongst staff as some are resistant to change, although there is evidence that this dissipates over time" (p. 4), and state that teachers report increased job satisfaction, motivation and empowerment.

## **Does culturally responsive pedagogy work?**

As Christine Sleeter (2012) acknowledges, there is insufficient research that systematically documents the relationship between culturally responsive pedagogy and student outcomes. There is some small scale case study research to indicate that culturally responsive pedagogy raises academic achievement (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Lee, 2007). In a large scale study, Penetito, Hindle, Hynds, Savage, and Kus (2011) cite statistics for improved student outcomes due to the Te Kotahitanga programme. Openshaw (2009) argues that Te Kotahitanga has “not yet produced a satisfactory or unambiguous way of measuring effects on student achievement” (p. 140). He points out the failure to show which of the schools in the programme were also involved in literacy and numeracy projects, variables which might explain some of the effects.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is cited by Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2009) as one important contributor to academic student outcomes. Although they do not differentiate between the relative impact of culturally responsive pedagogy and other good teaching practices, the authors draw three conclusions germane to my study. First, the Pasifika student narratives in their study show strong appreciation for culturally responsive pedagogy, and this strongly resembles the Te Kotahitanga student narratives. Second, culturally responsive pedagogy is a feature of more effective teaching. Third, in addition to academic achievement, Pasifika success includes “personal attributes, community service, mental and spiritual well-being, cultural competence and identity” (p. 11). This is paralleled in the Te Kotahitanga project where the designers see the development of a culturally-grounded identity as an important student outcome, although this understanding is not shared by many of the teachers (Meyer et al., 2010, p. 9).

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## Introduction

The principal aim of my research is to explore Māori and Pasifika students' cultural leadership in the context of Kia Aroha College, a special character state-school that makes a strong and public commitment to a culturally-centred and critical pedagogy. At the heart of this study are the students' authentic understandings of their school-based leadership. Their perspectives also provide vital knowledge, some unavailable to the adults, on how student leadership is enacted. Although of secondary importance, the adult perspectives contribute key evidence. During the research, my position as a Pakeha outsider in Māori and Pasifika cultural contexts has been the central issue for myself and Kia Aroha College's whānau of interest who acted as my guide in matters of culture and the life of the school community. I have endeavoured to design and implement culturally responsive research to show cultural respect and satisfy academic rigour.

## Research questions

The general question: (1) In what ways do students conceptualize their cultural leadership?

The component questions:

- (1.1) How do students describe their conceptual frameworks of cultural leadership?
- (1.2) How do students enact their conceptual frameworks of cultural leadership?
- (1.3) How do teachers provide opportunities for students to participate in school-based cultural leadership activities?

The exploration of student leadership as a cultural activity will be linked to key educational issues in the literature and wider society.

## 3.1 Ontology, broad methodology, theory, and case study

In this subsection I define and explain the coherence between my world view, ontology, broad methodology, theory, and case study methodology. Concurrently, I explore the resonances and tensions between these elements of my interpretive framework in relation to the Māori and Pasifika research context of Kia Aroha College. My underlying purpose is to demonstrate that my qualitative research design was planned to address the issues of trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability in relation to my position as a Pakeha researcher in a school where Māori and Pasifika culture undergird the curriculum and the school community. As an outsider from the dominant culture, my research design had to address my (limited) cultural competence working with the research participants, and attempt to shift the locus of power away from the

researcher and towards the Māori participants as tangata whenua, and the Pasifika participants as ethnic minorities in New Zealand. I locate these local power relations in the wider context of a Pākehā dominated, neo-colonial, liberal society and state. In this wider context, members of the dominant society are relatively privileged and powerful in relation to Māori and Pasifika. Māori and Pasifika people occupy subordinate positions in the racial order; accordingly, their ethno-linguistic rights do not enjoy parity with Pākehā. My claim is an oversimplification, but it serves to identify the core issue with economy.

### **3.1.1 From social realism to a morphogenetic/static methodology**

I am committed to a realist stance which fits within a broad “critical realist” tradition. My realist position is approximated by Maxwell (2012, p. 5) when he concludes:

Critical realists thus retain an ontological realism (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories, and constructions) while accepting a form of epistemological constructivism and relativism (our *understanding* of this world is inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoint).

Admittedly, my own epistemological constructivism and relativism is at the weakest end of the spectrum. When Maxwell (2012) claims that critical realists “deny that we can have any ‘objective’ or certain knowledge of the world” I dissent, but I “accept the possibility of alternative valid accounts of any phenomenon” (p. 5). I accept that a person’s world view and particular perspective are important influences on constructions, but I remain committed to the idea that for beliefs “to be regarded as *knowledge* the belief must actually be true, and furthermore it must be warranted or supported by relevant evidence or an appropriate supporting argument” (Ruitenberg & Phillips, 2012, p. 4). I maintain the distinction between facts and values.

My realist position may be labelled positivist, or a post-positivist stance that fails to break with a domineering Western culture. Both forms of inquiry have been roundly and justly criticized by L. T. Smith (2012) for consistently producing research that marginalizes, silences, and misrepresents Māori—a position shared by many Māori who have been researched. While acknowledging that my realist position is Western, I planned my inquiry on the belief that I could work in a culturally responsive way that avoided researcher imposition. Provided my research findings had credibility with the Māori and Pasifika participants, I anticipated that my epistemological and ontological conceptions would not unduly compromise either my relationship with the school community, or with the production of knowledge.



Inspired by Margaret Archer (1995), my social realist ontology claims that society is composed of two radically separate phenomena: structure and agency. The proper object of study is this interplay between structure and agency over time. Analytical dualism follows logically. This in turn accounts for my idiosyncratic adoption of Archer's broad methodology: the morphogenetic/static approach which I explain in Chapter 5. The application of this methodology requires a compatible social theory, I describe mine below.

Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/static methodology helped me in several key ways that depart from the extant literature on student leadership. First, it allowed me to distinguish between (i) the everyday, experiential, and observable, social context, and (ii) the impersonal, abstract, causally efficacious social structures. Second, it permitted me to think of culture as a structure, analytically separate from, but causally connected to, communal structure. Third, it forced me to think through the abstract, structural roles and resources of the communal structure, and ideational assemblages in the cultural structure that influenced student leadership. Fourth, it allowed me to place the students in the centre of the interpretation as agents who made sense of the social web, (albeit not in my terms, or with my own insights) and activated the structural properties of leadership for their various reasons. In the context of Kia Aroha College, Archer's emphasis on agency and culture complemented my aim to benefit the Māori and Pasifika participants by addressing their uniqueness, capacity for self-determination, and cultural identity. The morphogenetic/static methodology also allows the study of a local system (Kia Aroha College) in relation to the wider social structures of power and culture of the dominant and the dominated.

My general methodology has also been influenced by Brian Morris' (1994) tripartite conception of the person as a natural human being, a cultural category, and an individual self. I borrow the concept of the person as a cultural being and an individuated self, and will speak of culturality<sup>5</sup> and individuality respectively. My conception of the cultural, communal, individual, and human person is treated as synonymous with the agent.

### **3.1.2 Theory**

As for applied social theory, mine is derived from a libertarian socialist perspective. This influences my account, but not unduly as the evidence bears the weight of my interpretation. To help judge my interpretative activity, the reader should take into account the following

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<sup>5</sup> "Culturality" I have appropriated from 'interculturality,' an English translation of the Spanish word 'interculturalidad' made (and rejected) by Lois Meyer (2007). I use culturality as a noun for a model of the cultural person that may be internalized by actual persons of the relevant cultural community, so that it becomes a personal property

interconnected and interdependent values as explained by Suissa (2010) which influence my social theory: freedom, solidarity, reciprocal awareness, equality, and fraternity. For short secular explanations of libertarian socialism as social theory and project, see Chomsky (2014), and Goodway (2012); for a Christian perspective see Christoyannopolous (2011). The libertarian socialist emphasis on self-determination by individuals and groups, the decentralization of power, comported well with my attempt to shift the locus of power in the research design towards the participants and away from myself as the researcher.

Although I am a radical sceptic of authority, I agree with De George (1985) when he argues that parents ought to exercise performative and imperative authority over their child. Ideally, parents make wise decisions for the child that the child would make if she were capable, and the love of the authority-figure for the child is vital. Such authority can be legitimately delegated to, or conferred on, teachers by parents.

At a more specific level of theory, located within the sociology of education, this project began with my interest in testing and refining a social reproductionist model of schooling (Anyon, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Jones, 1991; Penetito, 2010; Willis, 1981). At the level of the school, I expected to explore a dynamic incorporating reproduction of the dominant liberal order, due to the extant material and ideological power of liberalism in society, and resistance to injustices generated by it. My project began in the wrong place, and I don't mean the 1970s of Bowles and Gintis. For reasons of cultural respect and veracity, I had to re-configure my inquiry to take into account two key factors:

- (i) the Māori and Pasifika aspirations of Kia Aroha College, the school that became my case study months after I spun my original research plan; and
- (ii) the advantage of collecting and interpreting the data in a more inductive and open-minded fashion.

The two factors are intimately related. As a Pākehā researcher it would be culturally inappropriate to collect data with the single-minded purpose of testing my preconceived theory, rather than being open to the student narratives and the aspirations of the school.

### **3.1.3 Qualitative research design and case study methodology**

As the focus of my inquiry was the students' conceptualizations and enactment of cultural leadership, it required qualitative data collection as part of an emergent design, rather than a quantitative approach. Working with a focus group, I sought to elicit rich, thick description on

student perspectives on their leadership, as it existed and as it ought to be. By thick description, I extrapolate from Geertz (1973) and define it as the collection of in-depth, detailed, multi-perspectival, interpretive, and inherently problematic data. The importance of gathering these youth narratives on student leadership relates to my attempt to address four key gaps in the literature. First, a general lack of research on youth conceptualizations of secondary school based leadership. Second, a specific lack of research on Māori and Pasifika perspectives on student leadership. Third, insufficient attention paid to the complex concept of authority in relation to that leadership. Fourth, a lack of research into the influence of school context on student leadership.

The qualitative research design, with its emphasis on *kanohi ki te kanohi* encounters through the focus groups, also cohered with my culturally responsive research design. The evolving, circular or spiral nature of an emergent design allows early and continuous inductive analysis; this in turn permits the refinement of the inquiry focus (Mutch, 2013). Therefore, the emergent design of my qualitative research had the potential to be responsive to the Māori and Pasifika participants and the research context.

By a process of induction, I have used the qualitative data to develop two key areas. First, I use the data to generate a conceptualization of the structure of student leadership in terms of its properties and associated components. Second, I produce a morphogenetic/static influenced analysis of the causal processes at work within the school community with the focus on the structure and practice of student leadership. These two key areas for analysis are linked to other social contexts and addressed in Chapter 5.

A case study methodology was selected because Kia Aroha College represented an integrated system for study, and offered the chance of an instrumental study (Stake, 1995). Although the school's learning community constituted the case, Archer's methodology entailed making connections beyond the school's boundaries. As a case study it was chosen as a possible exemplar of culturally responsive education. The research was designed so that the transferability of Kia Aroha's school practices to other schools could be explored (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Obtaining thick description was integral to supplying data for this purpose, and would allow others to draw their own conclusions about transferability. As a case, Kia Aroha College offered two possible prospects. First, it offered the prospect of learning and publishing positive lessons about Māori and Pasifika cultural leadership, when so much research has

concentrated on negative outcomes. Second, it held the promise of the applicability of those lessons for the benefit of Māori and Pasifika students in other schools.

### **3.2 The ethics of researching in a Māori and Pasifika cultural context**

As a Pākehā researcher my research design is *not* “Kaupapa Māori research,” or even “Māori-centred research,” but rather “research involving Māori” (Pūtaiora Working Group, 2010, p. 46). Nor is my research Talanoa research (Fa’aoi, Parkhill, Fletcher, 2006). To the best of my ability as a lone Pākehā researcher, I have striven to plan and carry out a culturally responsive inquiry. I recognize that it cannot be as culturally responsive as Kaupapa Māori or Talanoa research. If there are any borrowings from the Kaupapa Māori or Pasifika methodologies of research, they were conducted by the whānau of interest. As a Pākehā, I cannot appropriate these methodologies, but I have been guided by their some of their insights in my attempt to conduct culturally responsive research. The whānau of interest was a multicultural group of educators from Kia Aroha College, consisting of two Māori, one Pasifika, one South African Indian, and one Pākehā educator, the latter being the long-serving Principal whose cultural competence far exceeds my own. In this section I address my positioning as a cultural outsider: a Pākehā researcher in a Māori and Pasifika context.

#### **Power relations and cultural competence**

When planning to research in a Māori and Pasifika context, a primary concern of mine was to address the issue of power relations. As a male, middle class Pākehā I belong to a relatively privileged social group in the dominant society which is the product of colonization and settler capitalism. Many Māori and Pasifika are highly conscious of their subordinate position regarding their ethno-linguistic rights in relation to Pākehā society, as a colonized indigenous people and ethnic minorities respectively, and actively challenge this situation (May, 2012). It is well-documented how Pākehā research methodologies have typically been culturally insensitive, invasive, misrepresentative, and of little benefit for Māori (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; L. T. Smith, 2012) and Pasifika (Vaiioleti, 2006).

My planning was guided by the five issues of power and control in research that Bishop and Glynn (1999) identify as vital concerns to Māori: initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation, and accountability. I intended to negotiate a culturally responsive research design that addressed disparities of power by shifting the locus of power away from myself and towards the participants. Fundamentally, I planned to respect tino rangatiratanga (self-determination), as it pertained to indigenous rights connected to the Treaty of Waitangi (a key

legal document between Māori and the Crown), and in a broader sense of respecting personal, cultural, and communal self-determination. After I approached Kia Aroha College with my initial, social reproductive research focus, I was somewhat vexed at how my agenda could be squared with sharing power over initiation of the research with the participants. The emergent design of the research created the space to revise the research focus with guidance from the whānau of interest. The research was designed to benefit the Māori and Pasifika participants through a focus group method to elicit thick description which emphasized the authentic voice of the students. To reiterate, the instrumental case study design also offered the strong possibility of a positive educational narratives about Māori and Pasifika students and culturally-based education, with the possibility of the transferability of practices to other schools with Māori and Pasifika students. In terms of my representation of the experiences of the Māori and Pasifika participants, participant-checking at different stages was crucial for accuracy and credibility. The legitimacy, or authority, of my findings would turn on the issue of credibility with the participants. To ensure my accountability to the school, I stated I was willing to acknowledge that the whānau of interest had the right of veto over anything in my research they deemed potentially damaging to their mana.

The issue of my relative lack of cultural competence was always a vexatious one for me—I suspect it was far less worrying for the Māori and Pasifika participants who were, in effect, teaching me. Since 2004 I have worked as a history teacher in a school where the students are preponderantly Māori and Pasifika, and from 2005 I was involved in the Te Kotahitanga programme. The school has a marae, a Māori unit, and a continuing commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy. As such, I have some knowledge of things Māori and Pasifika. Nevertheless, I remain a Pākehā relatively inexperienced in things Māori and Pasifika. I considered it feasible to explore successfully cultural leadership at Kia Aroha, provided the whānau of interest guided me, and I built relational trust with teachers and students by observing the principle of “he kanohi kitea” (being the seen face), and the other six researcher guidelines provided by Cram (2001), which would show respect to my hosts. As Kia Aroha is a bilingual school operating within the strictures of National Curriculum and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), I anticipated that my relative lack of cultural competence could be overcome. Such knowledge as the culturally expert participants were willing to share with me, mainly through the English language, and my openness to learning, would be sufficient, provided the relationships of a culturally responsive research project could be negotiated. Although I could not hope to match Alex Barnes’ (2013) knowledge of te ao Māori

(the world of Māori) as a Pākehā researcher and ally in Māori contexts, I shared his aspiration to be of service, and to benefit Māori.

An integral part of the research design was the notion of reciprocity, a core value for Māori (Cram, 2001) and Pasifika (Chu, Rimoni and Sanga, 2011). Ultimately, the production of the thesis would be my way of thanking the school for all their assistance. The results would be returned to the participants and school community through a spoken presentation, a culturally appropriate format, given to the Board of Trustees and the staff, as well as a written report as a koha (gift). However, I was prepared to “give back” during the research process, and subsequently helped with student learning and wrote a summary of my inquiry for an impending Education Review Office visit. My relationship with the school will be sustained after the research process is complete.

Although my planning process was informed by the literature, consultation and building a sound relationship with the school was of paramount importance. The process of building trust began when I first met Principal Ann Milne at the end of the academic year in 2013 to discuss the possibility of my conducting research at Kia Aroha College. Two other important initial consultations were first speaking with the whole staff about my intentions followed by the same process with the Board of Trustees. Ann had made it clear that staff and the Board of Trustees would want answers to these questions: What do you propose to do? Why are you doing it? Who is the research for? How does it benefit us? Why us—and why you? How will students participate and how are they to be protected?

When speaking to my audiences, I outlined the research focus, at this time it was about citizenship in a culturally responsive school context. I made clear my motives were framed by a conception of social justice that respected theirs, and my intention was to be a Pākehā ally who could do a good enough job of accurately and respectfully representing the school’s experience to an interested audience, including other Pākehā educators. To this end I stressed my willingness to work with a whānau of interest who would assist me, hold me accountable to my pledge to respect tino rangatiratanga (self-determination), and exercise a right of veto to protect the mana of the school to ensure the school benefited from the study. I assured my audiences that if invited to be a researcher I would not appropriate knowledge in an exploitative fashion, or set myself up as an evaluator who made recommendations for the school. I publically acknowledged that I did not possess (and as a Pakeha could never truly claim) expert knowledge in things Māori and Pasifika, and I would rely on the whānau of interest and the

student participants to be my guides. I had approached Kia Aroha College as an exemplar school. In 2012 I had attended the Social Justice Education Symposium hosted by the school and been impressed with the student leaders from Kia Aroha College. I cited my practical support for culturally responsive and critical pedagogy and cultural rights for Māori as tangata whenua and Pasifika, mainly as a teacher engaged with Te Kotahitanga in an urban school with a strong Māori and Pasifika student and teacher presence. I had a Ministry of Education Study Award on the pledge that my research would benefit Māori and Pasifika students. If the study was approved, student participants would give voluntary and informed consent, could choose anonymity, and had the right to view and veto any of their comments on the transcripts. A focus group approach would acknowledge the centrality of *kanohi ki te kanohi*. I later adopted the guided walks strategy as one that recognized Cram's (2001) guideline of "aroa ki te tangata," showing respect for the people by allowing them to define their own space and to meet on their own terms.

Subsequently, the Board of Trustees sanctioned my research, pending the approval of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC). Approval was given on 27 May 2014 for three years for the research (reference number 011223). Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms were prepared for the Principal/Board of Trustees, the teachers, and the students, all of whom were invited to participate voluntarily. Subsequently, new consent forms were produced for the students and teachers to allow the choice to waive anonymity, or choose how they wanted to be named. The Board of Trustees wanted to waive anonymity early on in proceedings, but the ethics application was already in the system with the standard anonymity clause. After my research was approved by UAHPEC, the school produced a letter of waiver. Prior to conducting the research, there was an orientation period consisting of a series of in-depth visits to the classes on campus at the start of term two across the months of May and June.

Kia Aroha College is in fact one campus for two schools: Te Whānau o Tupuranga for the Māori students, and Fanau Pasifika which is composed of the three Areas, Fonuamalu (Tongan), Lumana'i (Samoan), and Kimiora (Cook Islands Māori, which is currently in abeyance). At times, I refer to Tupuranga as an Area, which borrows from student usage. The six focus group students are, I shall argue, sufficiently representative of the senior students of Te Whānau o Tupuranga, and Fonuamalu. Lumana'i has not featured in this case study. It is important to note that when I refer to Kia Aroha College in my findings and discussion, I principally denote Tupuranga and Fonuamalu.

### **3.3 Conducting the research**

#### **Overview**

Beginning in July, three rounds of interviews were conducted with a focus group of six senior students. The first was a guided walk; the second was an interview in a quiet space; the third was a participant checking session that had an interview element. This amounted to six interviews, a total of four and three quarter hours of rich, (mostly) transcribed material. Third, concurrent with the interviews, and assisting with triangulation, I observed the students in their learning spaces on four separate days, a total of around seven and a half hours. Using these methods and strategies, relatively thick, rich description was obtained for the subsequent thematic analysis. An interview with the educators in the whānau of interest who worked with the student participants, and knew them well, provided another source of triangulation.

Negotiation and consultation with the whānau of interest were ongoing, and included the provision of draft chapters and summaries of the writing process. Outside the official meetings, the dialogue continued face-to-face and via email. Conversations with the whānau of interest shifted the focus of the research from citizenship to cultural leadership, and displaced my interest with social reproductive schooling in favour of the concerns of the Māori and Pasifika participants and the school.

#### **3.3.1 Interviews**

Interviews were an important method to obtain the required data for the inquiry focus, and to observe the Māori cultural principle of *kanohi ki te kanohi* which also worked well for the Tongan participants. As the interviewer asking the questions, I shaped the course of the interviews and the data obtained, but the questions were frequently open, and the interviews treated as inter-views after Kvale (1996). Knowledge was co-constructed, with students conversing with each other as well as myself, and arriving at some new conclusions as a result of the mutual dialogue. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, my methods resembled those features required to elicit authentic student voice, as identified by Dempster et al. (2010).

I employed the mobile research method of guided walks (Ross, Renold, Holland & Hillman, 2009) to create an enabling research context to produce rich understandings of the students' everyday lives at school, focusing on student leadership. By moving through familiar, safe, socio-cultural spaces, I aimed to elicit mundane and intimate thoughts on student leadership. I audio-recorded and later transcribed the guided walks, a process followed in all but one subsequent student interview. Students were given the opportunity to request to see all



transcripts. Later, I gave every student a copy of their quotes from a draft of Chapter Four to check their accuracy, and to decide whether they wanted them on the public record, and if so, whether they wanted them attributed or unattributed.

I asked students to make a short photo-diary that captured, or recreated, aspects of student leadership that they considered important, to provide artefacts for a photo-elicitation session. Every student had a phone to take pictures, and said they could email me the results. My approach was cued by Allen's (2011) use of photo-diaries and photo-elicitation to explore student perspectives in depth. I treat the students' views as the accounts of realist agents making sense of how leadership really works at the school. The definition of student leadership was kept relatively open, because I wanted their conceptualizations. The photo-elicitation sessions took place in a quiet room and were loosely structured by my interview guide.

The third round of interviews was a participant checking one. Based on the transcript analysis of the previous two interview rounds, I presented students with a sheet that summarized the codes categorized into three themes in language they could understand. They were given time to discuss each theme and code and record their thoughts in writing, using the prompts I provided and adding their own comments. I left the room (and took my audio-recorder with me) in case my power, or their regard for my feelings, interfered with their dialogue. I accepted that their local expertise was needed to verify my claims about how student leadership actually worked, as well as capture new data. Conversations with me followed as soon as they had finished this checking, for the purpose of mutual clarification, and yielded important new data which I report in Chapter 4.

Serendipitously, the three rounds of interviews ended up with the Tongan students interviewed separately from the Māori students. The greater familiarity, and I infer higher inter-group trust, may have allowed the students more freedom to speak and elaborate their ideas without needing to compare. I had hopes for a joint-interview at the end, where an interchange of views may have raised new points, or clarified old ones, but it did not eventuate.

For the formal interview with the teachers in the whānau of interest I prepared five rather challenging questions derived from the findings. These questions were circulated via email a week before the meeting. I emailed the findings (Chapter Four) and my early thoughts on Chapter 5 nearly four weeks prior to the meeting. At the outset, I put on the table the idea that there might be disagreements over: factual accuracy, interpretive accuracy, and how to best

protect the school's mana. These would need to be resolved to our mutual satisfaction. I took notes at the meeting, as I had done in previous ones with the whānau of interest.

### **3.3.2 Observations**

The observations served as a means of triangulation, as I looked for evidence of student leadership in classroom contexts. I used an observation schedule observed as unobtrusively as possible. At times this segued into participant observation, participating while analysing (Merriam, 1998). According to the Principal, the students were used to visitors and my presence wouldn't alter the usual classroom dynamic. Given the open plan classroom and inquiry based learning, I conclude that my presence did not significantly change the behaviour of the students. This held true across the observations, and seemed to obtain during my orientation period.

### **3.3.3 Public documents**

A selection of school-authored documents were used to assist with my thematic analysis. Pedagogical classroom sources were viewed, and notes taken. The school's website was an important source of information on the school's history, philosophy, and organization, as were two of Ann Milne's (2010; 2013) works. I also viewed student artefacts in class time, and studied one at home. In the public domain, Auckland Council online documents were useful for the social geography of the local area.

### **3.3.4 Data analysis**

Inspired by some aspects of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I employed an emergent design for my thematic analysis. As a consequence of my making extensive memos on the interview transcripts, relatively open coding of the data led to categorization of the codes into three themes. Participant checking of the codes and themes by the students preceded thematic integration whereby I created the core category that captured the meaning of student leadership in the context of the case study school. The core category and the findings associated with the themes were also checked with the teacher focus group. I was quite aware of interpreting at the data collection stage.

In the more theoretical phase of analysis (Chapter Five) I adapted aspects of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach. This allowed me to shift from a phase of thick description, and largely descriptive categorization, to a deeper phase of conceptualization. In the latter phase, I had two priorities. First, to analyse student leadership in terms of its structural properties. Second, to analyse the causal processes at work within the school's social context, where the

communal and cultural structures were mediated by student agents who enacted the structural properties of student leadership.

### **3.4 Trustworthiness and credibility**

In this subsection I explain how I conducted the research to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of my findings and analysis.

#### **3.4.1 Trustworthiness**

##### **Reflexivity**

To enhance the veracity of my inquiry, I have remained aware of, and tried to offset, my researcher bias. I have already attended to my awareness of my Pākehā position, and my relative lack of cultural knowledge was at the forefront of my thinking. Open questions of interviewees were part of a research design to encourage my open-mindedness. I have used relatively open coding as part of a consistent effort to be led more by the data and less by my bias when reaching conclusions. Although my research focused on student leadership as the school-sanctioned version, negative leadership examples were sought within and outside this version. Difficult questions were posed to participants to explore areas problematized in the literature by authors I disagreed with. I have sought discrepant evidence, data that might disconfirm a favourable interpretation. I have to acknowledge that my epistemological, ontological and theoretical beliefs, as well as more personal beliefs and various biographical details, perforce influence the research process. I contend that they have not unduly influenced my interpretation. A critic may claim that I present an idealistic picture of student leadership. It is a generally positive one, in part because I chose to focus on the positive conceptions and enactment of student leadership. In part, I chose to do this to tell a Māori and Pasifika educational success story well.

##### **Veracity**

In terms of working with the whānau of interest and negotiating a shift of some power and control to them, I have to anticipate and address the criticism that the trustworthiness and academic credibility of the research is thereby compromised. Without the guarantees I gave, there would have been no research at Kia Aroha; it conforms to the ethical principles of self-determination and due regard for the risks to the research participants (notwithstanding anonymity, which would be very difficult in this case), and the innovative example of the school was frankly alluring. This is no real answer to questions of trustworthiness, but it helps

explain why I took a calculated risk. First, I had reason to stake the research on the belief that Kia Aroha College would provide a positive example of an urban school committed to a culturally-based education. As explained in Chapter One, I believe there is a *prima facie* case for the effectiveness of culturally responsive education. More importantly, I was confident that positives would emerge from the school because the educators' grapevine and online Educational Review Office reports implied as much. Second, I trusted that a school committed to Freirean ideals would be open to sincere dialogue as part of a search for the truth. If consensus on some aspect of the truth was unachievable, I believed we could negotiate a solution of how to report it in a way that was honest, reflected any interpretive disagreements openly and fairly, and protected the school's reputation. Third, meeting with Ann gave me assurance that I could proceed with respectful rigour, however precarious the balance between the two, as she and other educators at the school have pursued their own university-accredited research programmes using data from their school community. Fourth, other researchers have worked in somewhat similar situations and produced trustworthy research (see Mutch and Wong, 2008), and in Chapter Five I shall argue I have also managed this.

The self-selected six focus group students were sufficiently representative of the senior students of Te Whānau o Tupuranga, and Fonuamalu. In the first place, the students had different academic profiles and career aspirations which, impressionistically, I would say were generally representative of their fellow senior students at the school. Their views of student leadership were likely to be representative of the senior rather than the junior students, although they did reminisce about their junior years. The benefit of participant hindsight is a double-edged sword for a researcher: The memories are important, but it is difficult for participants to recapture their original, pristine thoughts. Of the four Māori students, one was a young woman, as was one of the two Tongan students. This at least ensured a female perspective was aired, alongside the male ones, for each of the ethnic groups. I accept that the differences in gendered experience for young women as leaders does require greater female student participation than offered here. The small sample of six students, even for a small school, was necessary to elicit the rich data; however, triangulation was employed to give credence to my claim they were sufficiently representative of their peers.

The focus group students were local experts capable of accurate representation of student leadership as a personal understanding and a cultural phenomenon in the school. The focus group's position to represent the truth is based on their years of experience at the school. Importantly, the student research participants have all experienced mainstream schooling in

New Zealand, allowing them to draw comparisons with Kia Aroha College. They possess a level of intellectual and social maturity allowing them to understand and assume leadership responsibilities that younger students do not yet have, and so cannot yet speak of. The focus group's maturity also meant they had the ability to dialogue with me and one another on quite abstract matters. The research methods facilitated them to tell the researcher what they held to be true, and not what they thought I wanted to hear. Obviously, students, like the educators, were protective of the school, and their ideas are influenced by their socio-political commitments and world-views; therefore my own observations are an important source of triangulation.

The accuracy of the students' generalised representations were verified via triangulation. I was able to triangulate each student as a separate source of data, and compare what they had to say with their photographic evidence, my own observations (in class, around the school, and on the guided walks), and the observations of the whānau of interest, reported in conversations with me (formal and informal) and in public, written documents. For example, I observed students showing leadership by helping other students, this was confirmed (and elaborated upon) during interviews with student diarists, two of whom produced photographs capturing such moments. The guided walks and photo-diary activities were crucial in eliciting the student narratives. The semi-structured interviews worked better the looser and more informal they were. Generally, the students were keen to share their knowledge and converse with me. The veracity of my research is also buttressed by their active, and reflective participation, and provision of evidence via the photo diary, my observations of student leadership on the guided walks, and participant checking of my themes and codes.

The teacher focus group was also the whānau of interest whose local and cultural knowledge provided an important source of triangulation. They also knew the focus group students well. As well as offering guidance on likely avenues of exploration, the whānau of interest were an important sounding board, allowing me to test the credibility and veracity of my personal interpretations against their local knowledge. Consensus of a sort was aimed for: allowing my interpretation might be somewhat idiosyncratic in terms of the conceptual language and theoretical constructs employed in my representation of student leadership, but ensuring it had the ring of authenticity for the participants. This participant checking overlapped with a sustained participatory mode required by the whānau of interest. Again, triangulation with other sources of data was employed to confirm the veracity of the teacher focus group.

### **3.4.2 Credibility**

In order to be culturally responsive research, it was critical that the Māori and Pasifika participants saw the emergent and final findings as authentic. Participant checking was crucial to ensure that I represented their thoughts, actions, experience, values, and knowledge accurately. The students and the teachers were forthcoming when correcting my misunderstandings. I also clarified ambiguities or gaps in my understanding as they occurred to me during interviews. I explained the analytically complex Chapter Five *kanohi ki te kanohi* to the whānau of interest, and it was endorsed as representing something true and important about the school, albeit from my singular viewpoint. A similar presentation tailored for the student participants would have enhanced the credibility further, but schools are busy places, and senior students have many pressing commitments. They did, however, give significant feedback on the data that became Chapter Four, the basis of the subsequent analysis. The whānau of interest agreed with my suggestion that naming student leadership as whānau leadership was apt.

Regular conferences with my supervisor enhanced the credibility of my data collection and analysis. My work was discussed at the various stages of development and I produced raw data and memos, and so forth, as part of the discussion. The extant literature also provided a source of credibility, as the international literature provided points of similarity that will be duly be discussed.

# Chapter 4: The findings

## Introduction

I begin this chapter by providing background information on Kia Aroha College's locality and its special character as a school, and a vignette to capture that special character (Section 4.1). I then examine the three themes that emerged from my analysis of the data, and the associated seven properties of whānau leadership:

- (i) Diffused leadership
- (ii) Self-leadership
- (iii) Role-modelling
- (iv) Respectful leadership.
- (v) Managing social difference
- (vi) Service leadership
- (vii) Conscientized leadership.

In section 4.2, I address “Theme One: Whānau grows leadership.” I examine student leadership in terms of four properties of student leadership: diffused leadership; self-leadership; role-modelling; and respectful leadership. I explore the first theme in more depth than the subsequent two themes because the data was richest for “Whānau grows leadership.” The second and third themes are, however, significant enough to merit the appellation. In “Theme Two: Managing Social Difference,” Section 4.3, I address student leadership as the property of managing social difference in relation to two aspects. First, I explore how students manage cultural differences at the school, focusing on ethnic culture. Second, I examine how students manage the difference between age-groups, concentrating on youth-adult relationships. In 4.4, I address “Theme Three: The reciprocities of self and other”, where I address service leadership and conscientized leadership. As with Theme One, each subsequent theme is prefaced by a vignette. I conclude the chapter by summarizing the key findings for each theme and introducing the core category: “Whānau leadership: The reciprocities of right relationship.”

When I refer in this chapter to “the Māori students,” or “the Tongan students,” or the students from Te Whānau o Tupuranga, or Fonuamalu, I am typically referring to the focus group students, although I shall make wider claims. As outlined in the methodology section, the focus group students consist of four senior Māori students (male students, Cee, Wade, and Tamati Bellamy, and one female student, Hazel) from Tupuranga, and two senior Tongan students

from Fonuamalu (one female, C.M; one male, J.E.). Tamati chose to use his real name, the others chose pseudonyms. With the exception of Wade, the students are in Year 13. When I speak of culture, I usually mean culture as ethnicity.

## **4.1 Background**

In this section I will outline the background to Kia Aroha College, and clarify the three emergent themes, the properties of student leadership, and the core category. Specifically, my findings interpret student leadership as it is understood and enacted by the students in the context of the opportunities provided by the school – as per my research questions. I also begin to explain the properties and components of student leadership in terms of the whānau-based socio-cultural context of the school. A vignette then provides vicarious context and leads into “Theme One: Whānau grows leadership” in section 4.2.

### **4.1.1 Ōtara and a special character school**

Kia Aroha College is located in the suburb Ōtara, in the city of Manukau, which is itself part of the regional “super city” of Auckland Council. Geographically, Ōtara is in the south of Auckland; socially, it is South Auckland, a sobriquet that usually denotes a high proportion of Māori and Pasifika people relative to other parts of the city, and low levels of income. Using 2013 census data, Auckland Council’s (2014, p. 1) Local Board Profile describes this area as “home to diverse and vibrant communities, with strong community networks.” According to the same source, 15.6% of Ōtara-Papatoetoe residents identify as Māori (10.7% city-wide) and 45.7% identify as belonging to a Pacific peoples’ ethnic group (14.6% city-wide). Of the Pasifika ethnic groups, Samoans outnumber Cook Islands Māori, Tongans, Niueans, and Fijians combined. Just over 30% of the residents identify with an Asian ethnic group. City wide, 59.3% of Auckland’s residents identify as European, compared to 20.7% in Ōtara-Papatoetoe. Nearly half of adults in Ōtara-Papatoetoe have a personal income of less than \$20,000. Home ownership is low (46.2%) and declining. Multi-family households are more likely than elsewhere. 28.7% of adults have no formal qualification, compared to 16.8% for Auckland as a whole. The population of the Ōtara-Papatoetoe Local Board area is rather less than 76, 000 and constitutes around 5% of the Auckland region. Kia Aroha College draws its students locally, and sometimes from further afield in Auckland city.

Kia Aroha College is a co-educational, designated special character public school. The 285 students in this small school are enrolled from Year 7 to Year 13. Departing Year 13 students are encouraged to attend as Year 14 and complete their secondary education. As part of a



whānau -based education, the school community is treated as one family. “Kia aroha” means “through love, or caring.” Within this one whānau, the College campus has several learning Areas, each chiefly serving students from a different culture. Te Whānau o Tupuranga (Māori for “the family of future generations”); Lumana’i (Samoan for “future”); Fonuamalu (Tongan for “a safe shelter”); and Kimiora (Cook Islands Māori for “seeking life, or well-being”) which is currently not running. The first three Areas feature bilingual teaching.

Historically, each of these Areas developed within Clover Park Middle School. Te Whānau o Tupuranga was formerly the Māori bilingual unit of Clover Park Middle School and in 2006, under Section 156 of the Education Act 1989, opened as a designated special character school, enrolling students from Years 7 – 13. This was only achieved after a struggle by the school and local community with the Ministry of Education. According to the school website (Kia Aroha College, 2012a), the special character of Te Whānau o Tupuranga is based on seven key points. For the purposes of this study I cite the first five:

- (i) the philosophy of whanaungatanga (a sense of family connectedness) derived from tikanga Māori;
- (ii) a marae-based education focusing on: whakawhanaungatanga (building family connectedness), manaakitanga (hospitality, kindness, care), tikanga (custom), kaimahi mo te iwi (being a worker for the Māori people), kotahitanga (unity);
- (iii) a bilingual education programme (Māori and English), but as the school is not a Kura Kaupapa Māori there is no immersion in te reo Māori (the Māori language);
- (iv) the philosophy of whanaungatanga entails whānau groupings (Years 7-9; Years 10/11; Years 12/13); and
- (v) there is an integrated, holistic curriculum, where the principle of ako<sup>6</sup> informs curriculum delivery which is “reciprocal, non-hierarchical learning and teaching” and explores “Māori concepts, tikanga, language and historical contemporary Māori issues.”

In 2011, Te Whānau o Tupuranga and Clover Park Middle School merged to create Kia Aroha College. In the process, Clover Park Middle School became Fanau Pasifika (family Pasifika), with bilingualism as part of their special character.

For the educators at Kia Aroha, social justice is a major theme for the curriculum, and underpins their own pedagogical practice. The educators’ draw on G. H. Smith’s (1997) Kaupapa Māori

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<sup>6</sup> Ako means to learn and to teach, implying students and teachers both learn and teach.

model of transformative praxis, which is based on Freire's triad of conscientization, resistance, and praxis. Conscientization is about developing a critical consciousness; resistance embraces oppositional actions and collective politics; and praxis is transformative action capable of reflective and reflexive change. The educators at Kia Aroha College employ this model of transformative praxis in their own professional practice, and to guide students' learning which is often inquiry-based. Kia Aroha College shares G. H. Smith's focus on addressing the twin crises of Māori underachievement in the Pākehā education system (defined as schools systemically failing Māori) and the erosion of Māori culture. The broader goal is tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) for Māori as the indigenous people of Aotearoa / New Zealand. Correspondingly, Kia Aroha College aims to provide a culturally responsive indigenous education as the medium to realize the potential of their Māori students. Pasifika pedagogies are used with their Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Islands Māori students. The sustenance of Pasifika cultures and identities is also an assertion of cultural rights, but as peoples who are non-indigenous to New Zealand. Māori and Pasifika language, culture, values, beliefs, and knowledge are identified as valid learning in themselves and not simply a means to raising student achievement. Principal Ann Milne (2010) speaks of "the white spaces" of mainstream education marginalizing Māori and Pasifika as functions of racism and hegemony in the wider, white society. The school's pedagogy of whānau seeks to resist this, reproduce Māori and Pasifika culture, and produce "Warrior Scholars" (a concept I will explore later).

### **A vignette: "Whānau, that's what it is."**

The school day for Te Whānau o Tupuranga begins with karakia and pānui in the hui space<sup>7</sup>, where the students and educators assemble. However, today I arrive for "block two" after interval, and will stay for the third and final block of time, after lunch. The two-storey building of Te Whānau o Tupuranga has a grey concrete base surmounted by dark brown weatherboards that form an apex, like a wharenui<sup>8</sup>. A visitor approaching the red, double doors of the main entrance of Tupuranga is about to step through a gateway in a double sense. First, the visitor crosses a physical threshold, marked by a Māori carved lintel affixed to external wall above the doors, stepping from the exterior atrium, with its tukutuku patterned paving stones, studded

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<sup>7</sup> Karakia are prayers; panui is news; hui means meeting.

<sup>8</sup> The wharenui is the large building for meetings on a marae. The marae refers to the open area in front of the wharenui, and can incorporate all the buildings surrounding the marae.

with boulders, to the interior space. Second, the visitor exchanges the informal social space of the atrium, flanked by raised garden beds with concrete sides imprinted with a poutama design, that also serve as seats, for the more formal social space dedicated to learning things Māori (inter alia) and organised by the principles of whānau.

Inside, I walk across what present and past members of the school community name “the landing,” the upper layer of the split-level interior at the entrance. To my left are offices, and the glass balustrade flanked stairs, with frosted koru motif, that lead up to the learning spaces of Whakairo and beyond that Kowhaiwhai<sup>9</sup>. Overhead is an exposed timber beam, it is an original feature of this re-designed space, and as the tāhuhu (ridgepole and backbone) of Tupuranga it has been retained in accordance with the wishes of whānau connected to the school.

I walk down the four landing steps, rather than the ramp or wide walkway that leads to the central hui space, and head for the Purapura Whetu pod. The lighting is subdued, and the learning pods have recessed fluorescent ceiling lights behind semi-opaque plastic. Natural light is provided by large windows that reach almost from the ceiling to the floor. In sunnier moments, the still vibrant winter Pacific sunlight saturates the verdure in the landscaped and well-maintained grounds, dazzling the eye with brilliant hues. The partitions of the Purapura Whetu display framed pictures of the Kingitanga monarchs. Also adorning the walls are a copy of the Treaty of Waitangi and George Angus’ 1840s portrait of Ngai Tai rangatira, Tara Te Irirangi, resplendent in his cloak. More prosaically, NZQA learner log-in instructions are dotted around, and a board sports student subject selections, key tikanga ā-iwi / Social Science concepts, and the customary white plastic clock for classrooms nationwide.

I am observing a Year 12/13 English class, and I count 13 students, with girls outnumbering boys. The teacher Principal Ann Milne—Nanny Ann to the students—is taking the class who are working at National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level Three. The Principal identifies as Pākehā, and has Māori tamariki (children) and mokopuna (grandchildren). It is nearing the end of term, and students are at different stages of completing their assignments. This involves activities such as making movies, storyboarding, recording research notes, and writing speeches. The students are IT savvy and keep learner blogs. It

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<sup>9</sup> Whānau groupings of students in Year 10-11, and Year 7-9, respectively.

doesn't prevent a couple of students forgetting passwords they have re-set, a scenario I find familiar as a teacher. It's largely independent work that the students are engaged in. The topics the students have chosen are drawn from Witi Ihimaera short stories. It transpires that Tamati is examining Māori-Pākehā race relations, racism, and the perceptions of the characters George and Api from the "Clenched fist." He explains that, from his point of view, Api is "aware" and George is "a sell-out."

The teacher's laptop and projector are set up; teachers' gear often has to be mobile here. Nanny Ann reintroduces me. She issues instructions, advice, and reminders to the class, who sit around tables arranged in horseshoe fashion, so that each student faces all others, as well as the teacher. Behind her is a moveable whiteboard used as a projector screen. The students relax attentively on rather stylish black and silver chairs. Presently, they disperse to the computers on the periphery of this pod and the adjacent one, Takitoru. In this open-plan learning space, there are four pods arranged in two adjacent pairs. Each adjacent pod is separated by a fixed, partially retracted partition so that these pods still feel connected. In place of a fourth wall or partition, each adjacent pair is separated by, and joined to, the pair opposite by a large hui space. In lesson time these four pods are for the senior students; upstairs the younger students of Whakairo and Kowhaiwhai learn in the same open-plan design.

I have a plan to observe any leadership moments, hoping to use various categories of my observation schedule to record student and teacher-directed examples of leadership in the classroom. Will I be able to identify instances of tuākana-tēina relationships? These are modelled on older-younger sibling, or cousin helping relationships, where students more expert in an aspect of the learning at hand help those less competent. I do record instances of students helping others: helping a fellow student log on, finding a folder on the computer, and giving technical support to the teacher. Leadership is likely to be highly incidental, given the class are doing their own projects. I also aim to get a feel for the whānau relationships as context to student leadership. I jot down 'calm and purposeful atmosphere' and note that the relationships between students are 'cordial and good humoured.' It sounds like ERO-speak.

It soon becomes more interesting to record ambient details: a smile; a joke shared; a high five at chest level—those handshakes that my own students fox me with; two young women share hand-lotion, and one slaps the other's backside good-naturedly; fragments of pop songs in American English, and songs in Te Reo; was that a flirt? I have no category for the last one. Most of the talk is in English. Whānau nouns like mātua and whaea are used reflexively. The

teacher does not sit at the official teacher's desk, but with the students. The teacher-student discourse focuses on academic feed-forward and feedback. The teacher language focuses on encouragement to achieve ("You can do it"), improvement, and criteria for the higher grades of Merit and Excellence. Warrior Scholar praise is given for persistence. Ann names racism, conscientization, marginalization and resistance. "Your speech is about resistance—go straight into injustice in the education system." These concepts are employed by students in their academic writing. Ann reiterates the importance of evidence to support arguments.

It strikes me as interesting that Cee hunts through the teacher's desk drawer, looking for something, glue it turns out. When he cannot find it, he asks the teacher if she has some. No permission is asked before he rummages. Later, and in similar fashion, another student opens the desk drawer, examines the contents, closes it, sifts a pile of papers, and returns them carefully and in order. Students distribute clear-files from the storage cupboard to one another. The students move freely, some in stocking or bare feet, to use the photocopier on the landing area; or cross the hui space to an unoccupied pod; or lie in the hui space with a book. The teacher acts a reference point, a kind of hub for student movement. Conversations between teacher and students border on social equality, although students are respectful, and tacitly acknowledge her greater knowledge. Cee respectfully banters with Ann contrasting her powerful position as Principal with the inability to instantly provide some glue – aren't you the big administrator, he asks? Tamati approaches Nanny Ann with his work. He asks clarifying questions, and an extended, at times jocular, dialogue takes place over how to improve the assignment. Tamati confesses he thinks he has lost his movie and storyboard. "That's the story of your life—always losing things", comes the reply. Tamati's reactions show he understands the deadpan humour, the caring, and the accuracy of the remark. He gets on with re-doing the movie. When the teacher circulates to monitor and assist, there is no discernible difference in behaviour when students are out of supervisory sight. Ann is firm and respectful: cajoling students when required, admonishing one student without a pen and another for wearing headphones for non-academic reasons. Later in the third block, Ann asks rhetorically about the headphones: "Where's the whānau in that? When you are in your bubble. When you are grooving away to your music, you can't hear me." She knows the students personally and their career aspirations. This knowledge is used to encourage perseverance with the internal assessment. There is a plenary before lunch where some of the students state what they have left to do, and a student initiates a karakia.

The pūtātara (conch shell trumpet) announces the start of lunch, and I remain in class to speak with Ann. The students are not ushered outside, the external doors remain open. Pausing on their way outside, some boys exchange passes of their rugby ball at close range. The younger students, including the juniors, converge in the hui space, the landing and the pods, forming small groups, and mixing in with the seniors. Girls expertly twirl poi, and a boy strums a guitar surrounded by friends. Lunch is eaten inside. In her typically no-nonsense style, a grandmotherly growl might capture it, Ann calls over a female student with the wrong shoes. The student offers an explanation, and gives up a non-uniform scarf without demur, and volunteers her bracelets too.

## **4.2 Theme One: Whānau grows leadership**

In this section, I describe the nature of whānau as a form of school community based on Māori and Pasifika cultures. In this study, the Māori word for family is employed when it is the Tongan concept of family that the two Tongan students address. The description of whānau and leadership given here, and elsewhere in this study, is based largely on student narratives. Although I do not doubt the students' honesty, and recognize they have knowledge pertinent to the study, their narratives are triangulated and otherwise checked to verify the claims made by students. In turn, I argue that whānau relationships grow student leadership, and leaders, of a special kind. This leadership is whānau leadership and the students are whānau leaders. I examine the following properties of leadership: diffused leadership; self-leadership; role-modelling; and respectful leadership.

### **4.2.1 Whānau, culture and student leaders**

The students' narratives make it plain that it is whānau that defines the school community and culture. In effect, the softly-spoken Cee speaks for the Māori focus group students from Tupuranga when he states: "Whānau. That's what it is." For the reserved and reflective, Hazel, "the main thing about Tupuranga is to have a bond. If we're all going to have a bond then it's going to be great. You're going to have a great year. But if you don't have that bond then your year's going to be long. It's going to take for ages." For the Tongan young man J.E., "It's like whānau." His compatriot C.M. agrees when she defines older students helping younger ones with their learning as taking it to the point where "we're all brothers and sisters" and refines her understanding of school-based whānau as "like between friends and family"—a refinement that comes after a pause for thought in the conversation and the interjection of "I don't know" before pinning it down succinctly. The phrase "I don't know" and similar ones are recurrent in the students' narratives—and my own. That the students employ such phrases and pause for

thought sometimes speaks to the limits of their knowledge at the time, limits that were often surpassed through dialogue that co-created new knowledge. It also supports my contention that the student responses are not token answers, but authentic responses, even when they were generated by interview contexts which the interviewer controlled to an appreciable degree.

All students raise the idea that they are figurative siblings in the school whānau. Cee states the basic premise: “We’re like brothers and sisters.” Sibling-like relationships exist between peers, and between older and younger students. In terms of the latter, Hazel says the ASB Polyfest cultural competition allows the school’s kapa haka group<sup>10</sup> to bring the youngest students, which is a boon because “we’re not a full whānau without our ‘babies.’” For C.M., a sibling-style relationship is at the heart of the learning experience in the mixed-age Fonuamalu Area, where senior students assist younger ones.

In the whānau-based school community, students treat teachers like they are kin. Students address the teachers as matua (uncle, but also father) and whaea (aunty, but also mother). The Principal is Nanny Ann. Referring to the teachers, Wade says without qualification “they are our aunties and uncles” and “they’re just there for you 24/7.” Teachers can, for example, be relied on to give a ride if you are stranded and call them, or provide help if you having trouble at home. In the following story, confirmed by the Principal, the irrepressible Tamati has “slept-in” and so missed his ride across the city to school.

Tamati: Oh we’re always, constantly, trying to impress Nanny Ann. Like this morning, so I missed my ride to school, so I called up Nanny Ann this morning at home and said, “Sorry I can’t make it into school today I’ve missed my ride.” She said, “Right, I’ll be there in 8 minutes to pick you up.” She only lives just up the road. So yeah, I got a ride to school with the Principal this morning [Tamati and Hazel laugh].

Cee: Lucky you!

Me: And that impressed her? [said with humor]

Tamati: Mm. Hopefully [Tamati, Cee and I laugh]. I could have stayed home, y’know.

Hazel supplies further evidence of the whānau bond between students and teachers: “We can even text our teachers and tell them that we’re going to be late” (her trek to school is arduous). She explains how “the grown-ups actually get where we’re coming from” and the school’s social worker “pretty much knows what is happening with all of us – what we’ve been through – and they [the adults] try and help us stay on track.” These students feel the pull of these bonds

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<sup>10</sup> Māori cultural, performing group.

and for Hazel it was powerful enough to bring her back from Australia, and her return was experienced as a homecoming. Tamati abandoned his move to a school with a Māori unit that was much closer to home, but not to his heart. When Hazel intended to leave education altogether, “Nanny Ann said ‘no’ – if I go anywhere, she’ll come and get me. And I’m like, oh, OK I can’t leave.” For the Tongan students, the whānau bond with teachers seems very strongly connected to academic achievement. Although C.M.’s school report does not identify individual teachers, she knows which teacher wrote which comment based on her knowledge of their linguistic “tells.”

The whānau bond is palpable to me as an observer, and the students speak of whānau with warmth and sincerity. The whānau metaphor extends to me as an adult. I am addressed respectfully by the students as matua. The figurative sibling and parental relationships do help influence the nature of student leadership, as I shall show.

In school life, the relationship between whānau community and culture is an indissoluble pairing. Kia Aroha marae’s wharenuī (the large building on the marae complex) is selected by the Tupuranga students as a very significant site for building community and showing leadership. Hazel says “we all met up as a whānau in here, we do our kapa haka, we have nohos, pōwhiris, and ... we bring manuhiri in.”<sup>11</sup> The students have their own leadership roles in this process, including preparing the marae and the younger ones for the public occasion. Students arriving at the school for the first time attend the pōwhiri as a rite of passage. It’s also a place for marae-style learning, away from the regular classroom. Kapa haka is identified as a marae-based activity of especial significance to the students.

Kapa haka as a group and activity is a touch-stone for the Tupuranga students and connects to different places inside and outside the school. For Wade, kapa haka is about “[a] sense of belonging; cultural identity. It’s just the bond. The whānau.” Kapa haka is acknowledged as a means to building whānau as a community connected to, but separate from, Tupuranga. The year 13 students reminisce fondly about 2009 and kapa haka as a formative, communal, and personal experience. Cee states that kapa haka is “pretty much how the bonds are made, ay?” Hazel agrees.

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<sup>11</sup> Noho: staying at school after hours; powhiri: welcoming manuhiri (guests) into the marae.



Cee continues:

Through kapa haka especially – not so much of the school ‘cause you’re – I don’t know – the wairua, the ihi, the wehi’s<sup>12</sup> not there when we’re all together, but with our kapa haka rōpū for National’s, you can just feel it. We’re all not afraid to sing in front of each other. There’s those certain few who we can be ourselves in front of.

This in no way disparages the school-wide sense of whānau, which matters greatly for these students, but it does make clear the importance they attach to kapa haka. Hazel doubts she would have even talked to the two boys without the bond created by kapa haka. Cee and Tamati concur that kapa haka brought them together, and unlikely friendships were made. Tamati says that kapa haka was also “a huge stepping stone in my life and I used to like doing anything Māori – but I was never very good at it, and kapa haka made me the person I am today. Kapa haka and Tupuranga”. These students also convey a sense of personal and communal loss when kapa haka is in abeyance. Hazel comments that after the national kapa haka competition in 2009, “We went back to our own little groups, but when it came back to kapa haka we were all together.” Almost simultaneously with Hazel, Cee says, “We were all together,” and adds “and we always started talking to each other – have a big, massive yarn.” Kia Aroha College can be conceived as a community of overlapping communities. In addition to the signposted communities of Tupuranga, Fonuamalu and Lumana’i, kapa haka can be identified as a community of interest – a voluntary association capable of creating especially strong social bonds.

I explore the idea of a series of overlapping communities at Kia Aroha College with the Tongan students. When I ask C.M. whether she has multiple membership she replies, using the collective, first person plural pronoun so typical of the students:

Yeah, definitely. So what are we? A student of Kia Aroha College; we’re a student of Fonuamalu; we’re a student of the Studio; we’re a student of, like, our friends; we’re the student of our English class. I don’t know how to explain what else—our cultural class, our cultural groups.

Relational trust is a key feature of whānau and influences the nature of student leadership. The classroom experience is a relatively unbounded one, as the opening vignette illustrates. A school with what Bernstein (2000) calls “weak classification” (“open” classification would be more apposite here) requires high levels of relational trust, and a strong social network amongst

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<sup>12</sup> Spirit, psychic force, something awesome, respectively.

the educators. The same preconditions apply to the school's aspiration to be a place of cultural safety. This level of trust has an important influence on student leadership. The guided walk the students take me on is an example of student leadership in the context of high trust. Although the students are sincere and open with me, they are consciously performing an ambassadorial role. The school has been, and remains, rather embattled by external forces, including the competition with other schools for students, and school reputation matters to the adults and to the students. On the guided walk, students have no trouble borrowing keys from teachers to take me into locked rooms. When the Fonuamalu students unlock the hall, C.M. greets a passing administrator politely, and there is no query from the adult—polite or otherwise—about their purpose, or whose keys they have. When talking me through her photographs in the photo-elicitation session, C.M. remarks that Fonuamalu is the safe haven, and “everyone leaves their stuff around—like no-one would take it. Everyone just shares.” This includes her bag and laptop. J.E. confirms that Fonuamalu is “a very trust-oriented place.” Māori students frequently imply trusting relationships, for instance when they speak of the kapa haka group where performance is uninhibited, and having the cell numbers of five teachers.

The students recognize powerful and positive communal and cultural continuities between home and school and these contribute to school-based whānau, which in turn creates leadership opportunities. The cultural continuities certainly include cultural performance on-stage, which is experienced as significant to self and community, yet they go far beyond this and influence every aspect of school life. For the Tupuranga students what happens in the wharekai (the place where food is prepared and served) intensifies community bonds and connects the school with home. In addition to being an important place to show hospitality to manuhiri, the wharekai is employed for other purposes, like staying for kapa haka, and is used by teachers, students, and their families. Cee explains that “our parents come in and they help working in the kitchen. Kind of a whānau thing – you bring your whānau in to help out, prepare our kai.” The students themselves show leadership by working in the kitchen and directing the younger ones. The Tongan students tell me the fale is “an extra facility for the islanders” and although it is not actually a marae, it is perceived as having an equal respect. It is a place where parents can come in, help with the preparation of cultural costumes, a place to meet, and a place to prepare food for night-markets at the school.

For the Tongan students there are appreciable differences between home-culture and school culture. C.M. says at first she did not know what she had gotten herself into when her mother

enrolled her at Kia Aroha College. At her previous school, a Catholic one, Tongan students were in a small minority, and she says “I swear, I thought I was the most Tongan person I knew.” However, coming to Kia Aroha College was an eye-opener:

I was like, okay. I don’t know what that is, I don’t know what you’re saying, but I want to learn. So this has developed my cultural side. It’s pretty good to know, like now you know. It was shocking what I didn’t know about myself.

One student discloses that it is easier to talk to teachers than parents. Both agree that the experience of student leadership has helped when it comes to negotiating with parental authority. The negotiation between child and parent is reported by one student as requiring expending reserves of persistence with the point being made. In contrast to home, at school students negotiate with others from a place of greater mutual understanding. The students note that the school community is more diverse as well as more understanding. One student remarks that the difference between home and school becomes more apparent after students have been at the school for a while. The students report home life as strict in a caring way, and Kia Aroha is less strict, but not permissive. One student remarks that “we can lead more here, like we can help others more than we can at home.” Nevertheless, home and school are seen to be mutually supportive.

#### **4.2.2 Theme 1—Property One—Diffused leadership: “We can all be leaders.”**

Māori and Tongan students in the focus group agree that student leadership at Kia Aroha is not about restricted office holding. There is no Head Boy or Head Girl, for example. In response to my observation that such positions are commonplace in other urban schools, J.E.’s rejoinder is: “Why should we have those – why should we make them the only leaders? We can all be leaders.” The Tongan senior students lead, as do the matapule (student representatives in Fonuamalu) when they are away from the Area. The property of diffused leadership logically entails that leadership is quite a spontaneous and everyday affair.

#### **Diffused leadership**

Student leadership is diffused across community networks in the school as an emergent part of the social design by the educators. J.E. observes that “leadership is everywhere” at the school, “to the corners and tips of the fields.” In other words, student leadership is diffused across every socio-spatial area of school. It’s to be found in every classroom, the library, the sports field, and courts. Instead of concentrating on elections, or co-option by teachers, for limited,

prestigious offices, the emphasis is on diffusing leadership as widely as possible. In Fonuamalu there are titled positions that can be filled, but this does not contradict the diffuse nature of leadership. The students explain that the title of *matapule* is an age-graded one held by some senior students. A teacher elaborates further. The students choose ten nominees for the role of *matapule* (spokesperson); however, this may include juniors as well as Year 12 and 13. Using the *hui* space as a place for public talk, the students vote to choose four *matapule*: two girls and two boys. The students determine who can represent them in the *hui* space, and teachers sometimes have to be forbearing when those elected speak as part of their role. The *matapule* arrangement exists in the background, with a more evenly distributed leadership coming more to the fore as leadership develops in this direction. The students explain that the position of monitors is diffused across juniors and seniors, and individual role holders change over time. Simultaneously, everyone is in a position to show leadership by virtue of being a student of Fonuamalu, for example anyone can speak when students and teachers assemble in the *hui* space at the beginning of the school day, or help others.

A key concept employed by the Tupuranga students is that of *manutaki* and it illustrates nicely the diffused, shifting, and informal nature of student leadership.

Tamati: This concept of *manutaki*, which is basically a flock of geese, you know they fly like this [Tamati demonstrates with his hands a v-formation] and they ... a triangle.

Cee: In a spear head.

Tamati: And the guy at the top takes the most force and whenever he gets tired he'll fall back, and someone else will come and take their place. And they keep on repeating that and repeating that – that's what we're expected to do, to be like a flock of geese. Where we're all leaders, not just ...

Cee: Not just one person.

Significantly, the geese have a common destination and the birds who fly behind are followers, but not passive ones. Tamati observes that “even if you are at the back of the pack, it's still as vital to the thing. Like if that one person from the back drops out, the whole formation is going to get mucked up, so it's just as important as the next.” Hazel describes the birds at the back as ‘back up.’ I subsequently link this to Wade's remark about “having his friends' back”, and to the Māori idea of leading from the back. Cee emphasizes that “the cool thing is, when like a bird gets sick, two of the geese will fly down with goose and look after it, ‘til it's ready to go.” When I ask him if the cool thing is the act of leadership as caring, he replies, “Whānau. That's what it is.” Leadership is explicitly acknowledged by students as being like *whānau*.

Leadership is diffused and so circulates according to needs as they arise. Hazel encapsulates it this way: “when one senior backs up, the next has to step in, so we all pretty much take turns at being leaders.” The Tongan students recall watching an audio-visual clip of the geese in relation to the metaphor of manutaki, and although they do not name the metaphor, they describe student leadership as having the same basic character. C.M. declares that leadership is “not just for certain people. It’s like everyone can be leaders.” This is clarified when C.M. thoughtfully compares leadership between her previous mainstream high school and Kia Aroha:

We had house colours and classes. It was like one leader. That’s what I thought it was. And I was the leader for our group and that’s how I thought it was supposed to be. Like, I lead you, you just follow me—blah-blah-blah. I was used to telling everyone what to do. Then when I came here, everyone was like ... I don’t know how to explain it. Everyone was leading and I was like – so what do I do? You are all leaders and I don’t want to interfere. So I left it for the first week and watched everyone else—what they were doing and then you get the hang of it. But it took me a while to kind of fit in. Oh, not really fit in, because to fit in at this school you kind of have to stand out.

When C.M. recalls she was a quiet student for the first week, J.E. jokes: “Yeah, a week – then a leader the next week!” This implies an important point: even with diffused opportunities for each and all to lead, some may choose to lead more than others.

In terms of the enactment of diffused leadership, the students do provide evidence for this during the interviews. On the guided walk with Tupuranga, there is negotiation over where to go next and turn-taking when deciding where to go. Students speak in turn, but they seem to choose to speak according to their interest or knowledge, or prompt a more knowledgeable student to speak. They do not take equal turns speaking during each segment of the conversation, but overall it is almost equal. A word count reveals that Cee spoke 31% of the words; Hazel 34%; and Tamati 36%. The students hardly ever interrupt one another; once the loquacious Tamati does this and then acknowledges Hazel still has the floor. Frequently, the Tupuranga and Fonuamalu students finish off one another’s sentences—not in a competitive way, but to support what the other is saying, or to help them when the words won’t come easily.

The resemblance of the school-based whānau to the literal family social organization fosters whānau leadership, in all its properties. As it would be in a typical family, the leadership given by the young people at Kia Aroha is largely informal, in that it does not depend on holding officially designated offices restricted to a few individuals at any one time. Age-status does play a role at school as in the family. Cee states that “at this school everyone is a head boy/

head girl,” and qualifies this with “we’re not the same rank,” which is a reference to the age-status of the seniors. As Hazel observes, “We’re pretty much the head people,” meaning the senior students have a collective leadership role that is different to the younger students, a point I shall revisit.

## **Spontaneity**

Leadership practices emerge somewhat spontaneously from the whānau context, in part because of the diffused nature of leadership. The Tongan students say that each year a leader will step forward, and then the next will step up, and so forth. When I ask whether everyone is in fact a leader, C.M. replies “Everyone is a leader, but they don’t know it themselves.” She adds that “if I see potential in the juniors, I tell them, I tell their teachers: ‘sir she can do this, she can do this.’” The idea of personal potentiality and development as part of the distribution of leadership is important. The Māori students appear to link leadership with contextual contingency of two kinds: individuality and the situation. When I ask whether public speaking is a sign of leadership, it seems that when leadership activities are assumed by students they are often contingent on their personality and preferences. In relation to public speaking as a sign of leadership, Cee says, “It just depends on who you are—and whether you are confident or not, or shy.” Tamati concurs, saying “that talking thing really depends on your personality, like I love talking, I love being the centre of attention.” When the behaviour of friends gets in the way of learning, the students report showing leadership by managing particular friends in particular ways that are proved to work, like non-verbal cues in place of verbal reprimands. The spontaneity partly derives from the particularities of persons and the situation.

## **The everyday**

The different properties of student leadership are diffused so that they are embedded in everyday life. Leadership is described by C.M. as “normal” and the “norm.” J.E. observes that “it’s just part of everyday life now.” Significantly, when I attempt to explore the importance of public speaking as a leadership skill with the Tupuranga students, Cee employs an example from the everyday: “when we are all together in karakia we address pānuis or notices when we have something to say. So I guess that’s a certain amount of mana that we have—we get to address things.” Of equivalent importance to the Tongan students is their hui space where each day begins with prayers, the recitation of the school creed (in Tongan), and then notices. During notices, it is possible for students to address things. For example, C.M. states that the matapule “can give notices of anything of concern to them about the area. So that’s like uniform, just an update on what’s happening, bubble gum, chewing. And then if the juniors want to say

something, they say stuff and that's when the teachers start talking." There is also a mix of junior and senior monitors appointed by the teachers to check uniform and gear every morning before admitting students to class. The fact that student leadership is embedded in the everyday and everywhere may help account for why it is sometimes difficult for the students to apprehend it when speaking about it.

### **4.2.3 Theme 1—Property Two—Self-leadership**

Self-leadership is a significant property of leadership, and one that largely eludes the literature. The students' conceptualization of self-leadership sits outside even Northouse's (2010) very broad definition of leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p.12). This understanding of self-determination as self-leadership comes through strongly in the photo-elicitation session with the Tongan students, although at first I don't grasp it. C.M. shows me a photograph of students electing to work in class at lunchtime, and says she took the picture "because I think this is leadership for them to stay in their own time, carrying on with their work." The photographed students are seated together and I think it is about peer learning, or role modelling, and the connection between leadership and academic learning. These things are relevant, but it's not the point C.M. is making. A second photograph shows a student working outside and alone, but it is only on the third photograph, showing a student reading an onscreen report from the web, that I apprehend her meaning when C.M. says: "this is leadership - independent working." After the penny drops for me, the students elaborate:

J.E: It's not where the teacher just tells you to work and you work. It's like – you find it everywhere too.

C.M: Yeah, like you have to be able to lead yourself, kind of, before you can lead anyone else.

Me: Self-leadership or self-determination?

J.E: Yeah, self-determination.

C.M: Self-determination, that's on our creed too.

The students explain that the school's creed is central. C.M. explains that the creed is "everything we need to know each morning, so every morning everyone has to say it. Like before prayers. Like when everyone comes to sit down we start the creed, it's kau'matui (that's just 'our creed' in Tongan) and it talks about three main points." The three main points, they say, are (i) walking to the future with self-determination, (ii) transformation, and (iii)

resistance. This provides another example of how the whānau context of the cultural community plays a role in creating the students' whānau leadership.

In addition to the creed, it is important to note that learning arrangements for the Year 13 Tongan students give self-leadership an especial significance. As C.M. observes, leading involves “being more responsible because we don’t really have a teacher to be watching us all the time.”

The same concept of leadership-over-self emerges from speaking with the students from Tupuranga. In the context of the kapa haka group attending the Nationals, Wade and Cee recall the following:

Wade: We were in Whakatane, and everyone was at the skate park. Instead of riding scooters and stuff they were like sliding down and mucking around. And that was just a time to have fun but as soon as the kaupapa was back on everyone was like “yep, sweet,” everyone was back on-line. And I think that’s leadership for all of us because we knew when to have fun—

Cee: And when to stop.

Wade: and when to be serious. Like that was an act of leadership for all of us—without knowing too. Without thinking about it.

#### **4.2.4 Theme 1—Property Three—Role-model leadership: “We actually grow into being leaders.”**

Whānau grows student leadership, and student leaders themselves grow into leaders, and rely on the example of more competent students and teachers. Development as personal growth is often referenced by the students. Tamati explains the rocks that are a feature of the atrium signify seeds and Cee remarks “and that’s like our long life journey – of us growing up. That’s what it represents.” I ask if they were leaders when they arrived at Kia Aroha College or whether they became leaders. Hazel replies, “We actually grow into being leaders.” Cee explains this is “because you don’t know how to be a leader straight away” and sees a situation of “older students passing on our knowledge” to younger ones. Hazel agrees that younger students learn leadership when “you watch the older ones.” J.E. makes a similar point about learning by observing other student leaders as way of learning how to become one. Tupuranga has its age-grades: Year 7 are Tēina; Year 8 are Tuākana; Years 9 and 10 are Pākeke; and the seniors (Years 11-14) are Mātāmua. The Tupuranga students explain the relationship between age and leadership, as well as the core purpose of that leadership:

Tamati: You start from Form One which is Tēina ...



Cee: You start off taking orders.

Tamati: So you start as a Tēina in Form One and everyone tells you what to do, you're the baby of the school. When you go up to Tuākana then your job is to look after the Form Ones. You still get told what to do and there's nothing you can do about that, and then you get the Pākeke and that's when you start the third through fifth form – and that's when they [the adults] expect you to show leadership. You are expected to take a step up from being a child to being a teenager.

Cee: Start looking after the younger ones – that's when it starts.

Tamati: After Pākeke you have Mātāmua – and that's us.

Cee: Senior role.

Hazel: That's us now—so that's when we can tell people what to do! [laughter]

Cee: You start leading the way pretty much and get up for kapa haka and we get up front where the teachers go and we teach too – we just teach what we were taught when we were young.

The experience of growing into leadership is recalled by the Māori students as one of bringing the rhetoric of leadership into alignment with reality. Hazel reminisces that, “Back then we all thought we were leaders, telling everyone to shut up, get in line. We all liked to take charge then, ay?” In Year 7 and 8 she recalls “I was still a bossy little girl, but I used to think that I was cool – so I could tell someone what to do.” Cee adds that “I guess we've become less of a hypocrite because we know what that is now. We wouldn't say ‘shut-up, shut-up, shut-up’ and then say ‘what's up, bro.’” Hazel agrees, “I used to tell people ‘ah be quiet-ah’ ‘stop talking’ – everyone goes quiet ‘oh how's your day today?’ - and I will start talking.” Cee muses: “We're more reasonable now too, I guess, with the way we discipline each other, so instead of doing a big yell and telling them – we just tap them on the back and -” Hazel completes the train of thought: “‘C'mon bro, stop talking – they're trying to talk to us.’” The students define leadership, in this instance, as ‘disciplining’ peers in formal learning contexts.

The difference between juniors and seniors in terms of leadership responsibilities is not a completely stark one. The student librarians are juniors, and as leaders they can influence senior student behaviour. According to C.M: “being a Year 13 sitting there doing my work, they will still come up to me and tell me like ‘Oh, you can't be doing this; can't be doing that.’” C.M. relates a similar situation in relation to the monitors of Fonuamalu where there are “junior and senior leaders, boys and girls, and they make sure everyone stands there quiet while they do a stationery check, a uniform check, and then they can come in” for the start of the school day. C.M. observes that the distribution of student leadership stretches to include junior students.

For the Māori students, kapa haka is a significant place to demonstrate positive role-model leadership:

Wade: Kapa haka is pretty-much leadership, or role-modelling, 'cause you're giving them something to—

Cee: Look up to, yeah.

Wade: look up at. Instead of being on the street, being stereotypes of how Māori are looked at these days. And yeah, just you standing on that stage, making something of yourself shows them that you're role modelling for them with leadership, without even knowing that you are. Just because you enjoy doing it.

The Tongan students also raise the idea that role-modelling is often unintended by the person exhibiting this property of leadership. From her photo diary, C.M. produces a picture of a senior student sitting outside with a younger one at interval as possibly showing his good influence by leading. I ask if he is being a role-model. She agrees. However, C.M. points out that the young man in the photograph “probably doesn't think he is being a role-model; he probably thinks he's being a friend.” I ask if the young man would recognize he was role-modelling after the act. If we were to speak to him about the photo, C.M. surmises, he probably wouldn't even use the word role-modelling: “It's only if you step back and look at this picture and explain it to him like we see it, then he'd think he's role-modelling.” C.M. says that it happens a lot that students role-model without being aware of it. C.M. captured a photograph of a student cleaning a small piece of graffiti from the classroom wall and explains “he was showing initiative, so that's good leadership—he took it upon himself to clean it off and not just leaving it there for someone else to come clean off.” C.M. says this is role-modelling too. J.E. adds that juniors will take notice and emulate this in future.

The students provide examples of role-modelling for the benefit of the peers as well as younger students. J.E. observes that even senior students who arrive at Kia Aroha College ought to observe how leadership works at the school before assuming any leadership. C.M. reports that she did this after moving to Kia Aroha. Cee and Wade see kapa haka as a chance for role-modelling for peers. Cee notes that he prefers to:

lead by example. I just sit back and do what I'm told. And that's a form of leadership, you're showing them what to do. So that could be just as easy as being quiet in line in kapa haka – you show them that you're ready.

If sitting back and doing as you are told sounds too passive to be leadership, it should be borne in mind that any leading by example will have to conform to some publicly visible criteria. In the context of a group performance, order and control of extraneous noise is essential for

collective success. Cee and Wade cite the case of a fellow student in kapa haka whose performance was a benchmark for the standards of all the performers, and a source of inspiration. The idea of role-modelling is implicit in the school's awards given on Celebration Day and this is recognized by the Tongan students who also see role-modelling as natural, as opposed to feeling forced or unnatural, and is widespread.

Role-modelling is a highly significant form of leadership to these students and this might be because it is relatively unproblematic in terms of the exercise of power in relation to other students. Hazel cites an example of what they might do when witnessing a junior student dropping litter on the ground: "We wouldn't go tell them to go pick up that rubbish because I'm angry at you. We won't be doing that. We'll pick it up ourselves and then that's to show them: 'don't put rubbish on the ground—pick it up.'" Cee and Tamati both prefer leading by example. Tamati distinguishes leading by example from authoritative leadership:

I never really was one that was good at taking orders - being told what to do. And that's just how I am. And like, I prefer to lead rather than – not to tell someone what to do, but rather to show them. I've never really been a [person who says] "well you go and do that," more of a, "I'll go off and do something and you know eventually someone will start paying attention," they'll click on. Just yeah, that's the type, style of leading I prefer to do rather than leading authoritatively.

It may be significant that the power relations implicit in role-modelling for younger ones and peers are similar to giving advice. The recipient of advice is free from negative sanctions if they choose to ignore the advisor. By contrast, an instruction comes with the expectation that the recipient will do as the instructor says. If the recipient fails to comply, then negative sanctions usually follow to enforce compliance, and the instructor loses face if this fails. I explore this in greater depth below as we turn to respectful leadership.

When I discuss student-led conflict resolution, J.E. describes the process as "not fixed" but "natural," and he and C.M. see it as part of a living, school tradition. J.E. says that they learn it from the older, "fore-persons" and C.M. thinks "It's just like been kind of passed down, the people before us have been doing it, we don't know where they got it from. Some brainy person probably started it." Note C.M. identifies older youth as passing it on. Students emphasize their home-culture, the school (in effect the school community with its own culture), and the role of themselves and other individual students in enacting and maintaining the traditions of student leadership. The whānau context established by the adults is not an exhaustive explanation of what can be termed whānau leadership as student agency also plays a role. If the processes of the traditions are not fixed, they may also be open to incremental change, and students may

influence this. J.E. underlines that role-modelling students are also encouraged by the school to be unique.

#### **4.2.5 Theme 1—Property Four—Respectful leadership**

Here I examine explicit leadership that emerges from the whānau context at Kia Aroha College, and as a coda sketch linkages to the literature. I define explicit leadership as acts where leaders attempt to deliberately, perhaps overtly, exert their influence over other agents to affect their behaviour, and achieve quite specific goals. The agents they aspire to lead are likely aware that this is happening. By comparison, role-modelling is far more implicit leadership, it does not necessarily require leaders consciously giving directions or advice, or even being aware that they are acting as a role model for others. I name explicit leadership at Kia Aroha as respectful leadership. First, I explore the nature of respect and purpose. Second, I examine leadership employed by the seniors with juniors, and within their peer group. Third, I investigate the issue of student authority.

#### **Respect and purpose**

Although student leaders grow into their roles by following the example of others, they have to earn explicit leadership and use it respectfully. Wade notes that *mātāmua* must be wearing the correct uniform, if they are to run a detention for younger students with incorrect uniform. It is important, Wade says, not to be a hypocrite and earn respect, otherwise, “you’re pretty much laughing in their face because you’re older.” Earning respect rules out certain leadership attitudes and practices. In general, the Tupuranga students agree that student leaders should not be unacceptably “bossy,” “blabbing” their mouths and demanding things, or “up themselves.”

C.M. and J.E. worked together on the qualities of a good student leader. C.M. says they rate “humility and understanding” as the most important attribute of leadership which is:

Not being high-headed about being a leader, or like saying “oh you do this, you do this.” It’s about understanding where they’re coming from, their situation, and that’s really strong in our leaders now because we know our students and we know their families. Yeah, it’s just about knowing that you’re human, we’re all the same.

C.M. reports the second most important quality student leaders possess is one of values:

Like respect, being respectful. Getting respect. Leading by example. Influencing change. I wrote maybe opinionated because it’s always good to have an opinion and voicing is always good as well. Having the ability to question issues that arise in this school or community, and being able to think outside the box.

Good leadership is identified by the Tongan students as meeting two key purposes. First, student leaders act as an influence for “stability and kind of order the flow of every day at the school” when they “step up when no one will; it’s taking charge.” The second purpose is to “help our younger students, Years 7 to 9, adapt to our school system, in hopes that one day they can help lead the school in any way possible: on the field, gym, whānau system etc.” which in turn “sustains relationships” between all students. J.E. links this to becoming Warrior Scholars. The second purpose also relates to the notion of empowerment of each and all to be leaders which C.M. expands on:

I know for a fact we don't have one leader, or a group of leaders—it’s a shared power/responsibility because everyone has the right, no matter what age or size, to take the lead and step up. I believe that everyone was born a leader, it just takes a certain time and place to be able to let that leadership out.

Students’ recognize negative leadership as unethical actions. When I ask for examples of negative leadership, the issue of bullying is raised by the Fonuamalu students. J.E. notes that it is a widespread problem, not one confined to Kia Aroha College. Both he and C.M. believe the problem exists in their Area, but it is under control, and female students play a key role in mediation. C.M. says the senior boys “have to respect the girls; it’s always been like that.” J.E. adds, “It’s the culture thing.” Tupuranga students Cee and Wade reckon that bullying was a bigger problem in the past, but as seniors they have helped improve the school climate. Interestingly, Cee identifies bullies as “ones with big egos – think they’re ‘all that.’” The big ego may manifest itself in the different guise of the inappropriately bossy leader. In terms of the origins of bullies as negative leaders, Wade speaks of “wannabe tough guys” from “bad backgrounds.” The solution he says works best is building relationships with those younger children. The students’ concept of negative leadership reinforces the idea that good, explicit leadership is respectful leadership.

## **Seniors and juniors**

Given that students view themselves as siblings and the teachers as aunties and uncles, the use of respectful leadership may be seen as working in a familial mode. In this mode, whānau grows respectful leadership by older siblings being accorded some limited authority by their parents to direct and control younger ones. The Kia Aroha students from Tupuranga agree that age-grade authority exists and includes instructing younger people what to do. Recall that Cee and Tamati describe Tēina in Year 7 as the stage where they start by taking orders from older students. Tamati qualifies this when he notes that the organization of younger students by older

ones is premised on the idea that all students still take responsibility for themselves. In the context of directing younger students, Hazel says she can play “the grumpy senior” and “when I can see someone playing up, I don’t let them get away with it. I tell them, there and then: stop playing up.”

In addition to reprimanding, there is an educative role for seniors that involves direction. Cee explains: “You start leading the way, pretty much, and get up for kapa haka, and we get up front where the teachers go and we teach too – we just teach what we were taught when we were young.” Mundane matters like the seniors organizing the clean-up in the wharekai offer leadership possibilities which also have moral content. Cee explains: “We look to direct our younger ones to do the dishes – make sure they’re not slacking.” Hazel clarifies: “No running off.” Cee elaborates: “No running off or going to the toilet. So we’re teaching them a good lesson, I suppose, to stay in and do the mahi when it’s needed. They don’t want to end up being a lazy guy, and not know how to do dishes.” Furthermore:

Hazel: We do all the stacks and piles of dishes. But we don’t go in there and moan about it. We go in there and have fun about it. Like we’re having fun

Cee: Dance and music.

Hazel: - and yeah, we’re all pretty much laughing about it. So when we’re doing that the teachers are just relaxing. So that’s pretty much us taking the job over while they have a relax ’cause they pretty much done everything for us the whole day. And the least we could do is do dishes.

There is some frustration voiced with “naughty little kids” that teachers, albeit from their position of adult authority, would recognize. In a kapa haka practice scenario, Hazel implies increasing frustration with those female junior students who won’t stop talking: “seniors will tell them to shush, be quiet, scream and yell at them.” When this fails to work, she says the seniors “tell them to leave and then come back with a better attitude.” I observed on one occasion, and heard it reported to a teacher on another, instances of younger students refusing to comply with senior student directions to go to where they ought to be, simply by ignoring them and staying put. The Fonuamalu students report being less daunted by younger students, and I confirmed this by observation.

Fonuamalu students also direct younger students, although it is learning activities that are emphasized. In a social control situation, J.E. states that they can help control their area and monitor the library to keep it ‘balanced.’ The whānau context, C.M. says, means that “if one person is acting bad, we’re not ashamed to tell them they’re doing something bad.” The bad

behaviour includes typical off-task behaviour. However, it appears that for J.E. and C.M. keeping control is not so bounded by age grades and, as I shall discuss presently, they are reluctant to view their direction of students in any age grade as a matter of exercising their authority. Rather, they speak of giving guidance and options, and showing the right way. This may help to explain their focus on curricular learning activities. In this context giving guidance and options is akin to giving advice: it can be taken or not, and does not necessarily imply the need for sanctions if recipients fail to heed the recommendations of the advisor.

Respectful leadership as guidance is illustrated in the photo elicitation session, where C.M. presents a photograph of a younger student who has chosen to cross the classroom to ask a senior student a curricular question. The seated older student shares an attentive gaze with the younger student who stands next to her. They are joined across the distance of several years of school experience by an open work book that they each hold a corner of. The senior student has open body language, smiles warmly and seems to give sage advice with the help of a declarative pen. The younger child appears pensive and grateful, her head slightly bowed. As J.E. points out, the recipient of the help is also exercising leadership as self-determination by showing initiative. C.M. says that this is normal behaviour: “We don’t mind helping them; they don’t mind asking us.” Culturally speaking, C.M. observes that for Pasifika students asking help from adults can be difficult because the expectation from adults is “oh, we should be able to do it by ourselves. Like even now I don’t really like to ask for help. I’ve grown to independence.” This may help to explain the example of “secret leadership” that C.M. identifies in a photograph where a Fonuamalu teacher is giving extra instruction to a group of students at their table, while a second teacher circulates to help. In this way, the students do not have to ask for help, and yet receive it without feeling singled out publicly. Like the Māori students, the Tongan students identify leadership in various contexts as helping others, in the familial mode. C.M. also reflects:

I don’t think it’s like leadership to us, more of like the older sisters, or older brothers, kind of thing. That’s for me what it is, like how I treat my little sisters, and that’s how I treat everyone else. Not that they’re equal—oh yeah, they are pretty equal. Ay? They’re like just another extended family.

It may be the case that the typical, adult connotations of leadership are what is wrong, and not the denotation of leadership. The Tongan students do say that leadership as commonly understood might restrict a full understanding of what happens here.

## Peers

In the whānau context, older students are reluctant to direct peers for reasons intrinsic to peer relationships. Tamati observes that being brothers and sisters can present challenges: “It’s hard with our whānau concept because we’re all brothers—it’s really hard to tell off your mates.” The other Māori students agree. Wade explains this difficulty with peers is due to “when we’re together it’s like a party. The kids our age are just all about, y’know, we just have laughs and mock each other and stuff.” It is difficult to tell friends what to do because “we don’t want to hurt each other’s feelings!” However, when it is more like persuasion than ordering, it can be managed, according to Wade:

When it’s time to put our big boy pants on—then yeah [clicks fingers] —so if we see one of our Year level’s mucking around: “Hey, stop mucking around, this is your time to y’know stand-up, do what’s right”—they’re like “alright, sweet.”

A common account given by the students is one where a teacher is addressing a group, you want to listen to a teacher, but your friend insists on talking to you. It’s a real quandary for them. After the boys talk about how hard it is to tell mates to be quiet and listen, Hazel agrees and observes:

Sometimes I don’t like doing it to my friends either because it’s like ‘did you just seriously tell me that?’ They’re like – give you that look. And it’s like, ‘Oh well, I told you’ and I don’t know how I’ve said it to them. I might have hurt their feelings, but at the same time I don’t really mind.

Whether in familial, or neighbourhood settings, telling your friends and peers what to do can contravene the underlying, egalitarian, and informal nature of those youth relationships. When youth authority is used, the Tupuranga students underscore that it must be employed in a reasonable fashion; they also set high standards of expected behaviour, and can be quite exacting. Cee sums it up when he states that authority must be used “in a respectful and rightful way.”

## Authority

As I have shown, students treat exercising authority over others as rather problematic, and I explore it in more depth here. Cee and Wade report they are granted authority by the teachers and they exercise it as part of everyday life, although Tamati argues that “authority isn’t a big factor for students,” and identifies authority as having power over others. During a photo-elicitation session, Cee shows me a picture of a female student “settling the kids down before they come for karakia. Every day usually a senior goes out to sort the little kids out, and make sure they come in quiet and, yeah, suss them out.” This “just happens” and helps the teachers.



On the guided walk, I inferred correctly that the Tupuranga students drew a line between adult authority and their powers as students. However, I also drew the wrong conclusion that students lacked formal authority, which this exchange corrected:

Me: So I instruct and you comply: you do as you're told, or there's like a sanction, which is we keep you in after school, or whatever the case may be. How do you guys do it, because you don't have that grown-up authority do you? How do you get the little kids to listen?

Cee: No, yeah we have that authority too. It's not just the teachers. Like so, say we say 'you better shush or I'm going to make you all stay in blah-blah-blah'. The teacher's going to look at us and go 'yep. All good.' That's just taking leadership—in their eyes. As long as they still get a home time!

The exercise of this delegated authority takes place during high-stakes events too. Cee cites the example drawn from the kapa haka group travelling to Gisborne for the Nationals where one of the seniors was “acting as an adult for his room, because we stayed in a motel. So he was in charge of like four to five people, and as a senior I guess that was his job. A trust thing given by the tutors and the adults.” The sports day provides another significant point of reference for the Tupuranga students. Cee observes that “we headed that, we were all leaders of the whole group. And that included us and the Fanau Pasifika side.” Further, “we organised the whole event, set a theme, we all had colours for our team.”

The Tongan students are more reluctant to name their direction of other students as the use of authority. During a participant checking session, J.E. crosses out my claim that student leadership is about ‘authority of some sort’ on my sheet of themes and codes, and inserts ‘being an example.’ C.M. says student leadership as influencing others is offering them choices: “You can do it this way – we’re giving you options. We’re not telling them what they have to do. We’re kind of guiding them.” For J.E. it’s “showing them the right way” and there is only a little difference between dealing with peers and younger students. C.M. says that it is basically the same process no matter the age-groups involved. Both students are emphatic that student leadership is not about ‘do as I say.’ In their view, you may tell somebody off, but it’s not the same as actually telling them what to do. Even ‘organizing’ others doesn’t feel a good fit, with J.E. suggesting it means “to keep everyone in their place.”

I introduce the distinction between “power-over” and “power-with” (Starhawk, 1987). The students reject the idea of power-over in favour of power-with. C.M. says leadership is “empowering people.” Teachers are “up there,” and rightly so, but student leaders should not be a “head-up” or arrogant person elevated above others. Student authority vested in a

hierarchy, then, appears suspect. However, the organization of sports day did entail directing other students, for example taking students to where they had to go, but without being bossy or the boss – or even trying to be the boss. J.E. says students should lead without a “harsh style.” I pose a scenario where a reprimand ought to be justly given. Whether it involves a group of peers or a younger student admonishing an older one, the upshot is the same. Any one person can reprimand any other person. That in some cases power relations can render this highly unlikely in practice does not detract from the ideal. That some people will issue instructions and others comply appears to be less of an issue than how it is done.

In some cases of respectful leadership, the use of directive authority by students is present, but is quite consciously limited. C.M. says that “We as Year 13 students could have, but choose not to, the power to tell people to ‘do as I say.’” She presents a scenario of conflict resolution where one student has been accused of bullying by another child. C.M. relates the process: “We normally just take them into the class office for both of them to tell their sides of the story—because it’s always different.” To provide a feeling of safety for the person who reports they are being bullied, “we bring them and their friend” and the seniors “try and firstly make them sort it out by themselves. And then we’ll come in and have a little comment.” Once the facts are established, C.M. says that she personally would try and make the offender “understand what he or she is doing” to the person bullied in terms of their feelings, and “I’ll just keep going until I can see they can feel it, kind of thing, and then they apologise maybe.” Simply telling someone what to think or feel won’t work – they have to work it out by themselves. C.M. notes that all actions have consequences, so presumably someone who fails to figure out their transgressions will still face consequences from someone.

In other cases of explicit leadership, the use of direction by students is present, but may seem so natural that it might not be seen as leadership. Consider what Cee and Wade identify as leadership just before they take the kapa haka stage in front of a large audience where Māori Television cameras are rolling:

Wade: Making sure everyone’s quiet, telling everyone to just get in the mood, put your head in the game.

Cee: Giving the big pep talks, ay. Pep talks.

Wade: Yeah, saying this is our chance: we’ve got one shot at this. The 3 months before this build-up, all that hard work, all that hour of running around, and working on choreography, for only 25 minutes on stage. That should have your head in the game, ’cause you gave up all that time for 25 minutes. That you’re showing everyone where you’re from, who you are. How you deal with things and stuff, yeah.

This is leadership in the context of the high-stakes tasks that Roach et al. (1999) argue form powerful contexts for youth leadership.

There appears to be some ambivalence by the Tupuranga students over whether student leaders who are “bossy” are a boon or burden, but this can be resolved because there are different kinds of bossy leaders. The Tupuranga students Wade and Cee identify what they consider inappropriate bossiness as egocentric and demanding (see above). This supports research by Dempster et al. (2010). However, the “bossy type” is not necessarily a bad leader, as Cee implies:

Cee: There’s a few people that stand out. I don’t know, they’re just like born to be a leader. They take charge – they’re not afraid to do that, and that shows when they get up and do that. Me, myself, I don’t really like to get up and take charge. I’m not the bossy type.

The respectful property of leadership that these students articulate accords with the research of Roach et al. (1999), as well as that of those researching in secondary school contexts, such as Lizzio, Andrews, and Skinner (2011). This strand of literature suggests that youth prefer relatively non-hierarchical, informal, and shared leadership for the benefit of the group. Significantly, Roach et al. (1999) explain the youth model of leadership with reference to the family, and are sceptical that the model they observe in youth organizations can be applied in US public schools. It would seem that this youth model of leadership is working at Kia Aroha College precisely because the educators have modelled the school on whānau.

### **A brief vignette: “Nearly grown-ups.”**

Convening the hui at the end of block three, the adults of Te Whānau o Tupuranga bring to a close the school day and address issues. Today Judith Riki, who has direct responsibility for the students in Tukutuku and Whakairo, has an important message to convey about uniform, and adult expectations of behaviour and leadership.

The students have passed on Whaea Judith’s reasons for the hui, so the students know they face a bit of a growl. The Year 10 to 13 students are seated in single file rows, facing Te Rākau, the memorial grove, beyond the large windows behind the teachers who are seated on chairs or standing. Hazel stands and gives a pānui about the Tupuranga night market which involves the kapa haka group. Then Judith, who exudes a quiet authority, addresses the students in firm and measured tones to convey her disappointment over the dress and behaviour of students when manuhiri were at school the day before. She notes students who were exceptions. She

draws the students' attention to the lack of respect shown to staff – the students haven't the authority for such conduct.

Meanwhile, the younger students of Kōwhaiwhai are at the doors eager to join the rest of the whānau. A senior student takes the initiative, and springs up from a sitting position to tell the Kōwhaiwhai students to wait. Cee turns to me and mimes taking a photograph to capture a student leadership moment. I try hard to restrain my mirth as it might be misconstrued.

When Judith has made plain her thoughts and expectations about uniform infringements, Principal Ann Milne adds a point about the girls' ribbons: they must be the correct size. Girls are not to look like Christmas presents – less is more, girls! The freedom of the high-trust, open classroom, and ako, combined with the emphasis on whanaungatanga and student leadership, demands responsibility and maturity from the older students. Earlier, Ann had addressed her Year 13 students as “nearly grown-ups.” As rangatahi, the senior students' status is clearly differentiated from the higher status of the adults, one they can attain only in adulthood. If they forget this difference, they can expect to be reminded of it.

### **4.3 Theme Two: Managing social difference**

In this section, I examine how students' manage social difference as a form of leadership. First, I examine how students manage social difference in terms of the different cultural groups in school who are also organized into different Areas, forming quite distinct communities of learning. Second, I consider the social difference of age, focusing on student-adult differences.

#### **4.3.1 Theme 2—Property Five—Managing social difference: Different cultures**

Students manage the cultural differences within the school, and frame this property of leadership in positive terms. To recapitulate, Kia Aroha College comprises three different cultural Areas:

- (i) Te Whānau o Tupuranga (Year 7 – 13 Māori students)
- (ii) Lumana'i (Year 7 – 13 Samoan students)
- (iii) Fonuamalu (Year 7 – 13 Tongan students, and other cultures).

Collectively, Lumana'i and Fonuamalu are Fanau Pasifika. Māori have the status of tangata whenua (people of the land) and the school marae is one key product of this. Like Māori, Pasifika students at Kia Aroha have their own ethno-linguistic rights upheld as a human right

that migrants and their descendants retain, but it is not an indigenous right. The Tongan students in particular emphasize activities and processes that unify the different cultural groups.

## **Mixing and “botsing”**

The male Tupuranga students identify the playing field as a social area where they typically socialize separately from Fanau Pasifika, but one where they can sometimes mix. Tamati explains that “this is Tupuranga’s field. This is where we play rugby. This is where Fanau comes to play rugby, but they use the goal posts. We just like the whole area. From the drain there, from the drain over there – our try line.” One way of managing difference between the cultural groups is to play separately, and Cee reports that this is the general situation. Tamati cites the examples of social mixing on the courts at playtime, and observes that “whānau has expanded” over the time Tupuranga has been established as a school. Cee corroborates this, noting that in the past there were some frictions between some Māori and some Pasifika students, but the situation has definitely changed. Tamati agrees. The picture of a generally positive rapport between the different Areas tallies with the observations of the Tongan students, and my own.

When Cee says that students usually stay in their group, I ask him and Tamati why that is. The verb of “botsing” lies at the heart of their joint answer. A person can be a “bots” and “botsing it” is something people do. I and the boys have to work hard to draw out the meaning. If you are a bots, then you are “being a random guy.” Cee offers the example of a circle of girls being approached by a boy who wants to join in. He would be a bots and botsing it. In similar fashion, if you are playing rugby with mates in the neighbourhood and a stranger asks to join in, he is viewed as “sketchy” because you do not know him. In this example, the random guy, or bots, gets the ball thrown to him. I inquire whether a bots is an outsider; you could say that, replies Cee. The bots as a “wrong guy” has no social connection, at least to begin with, so caution is shown. However, mates can bots it with mates, risking the epithet of a “botsing it guy.” “Don’t bots it!” is an injunction for mates who are botsing it. Tamati illustrates this with an example of when he was botsing it. He was adamant that he knew the correct spelling of freedom, and would not heed his mates who knew otherwise. Had Tamati accepted he was unsure, he would not have been such a bots.

The Tupuranga students report formally organized activities that demonstrate the overlap between the communities within the wider school community. Cee observes that “Our sports day we had, like last term, that was pretty cool and we headed that, we were all leaders of the

whole group. And that included us and the Fanau Pasifika side. So we got to mingle with them and get to know a few of them.” The other significant instance of interaction with Fanau Pasifika that emerges from the Māori student narratives is the first day of school and pōwhiri for the new students.

For the Tongan students, the positive reciprocities between the different cultural communities are highly significant to them, and they attest to the significance of the school hall in bringing people together, students from the different areas and cultures. When J.E. and C.M. take me to the school hall on the guided walk we are the only people there. As an auditorium lacking on-stage actors and large audience, it nevertheless doesn’t feel like an empty space, perhaps because the students treat it as a social space full of personal meaning. The students speak with enthusiasm, even reverence; add to this the echoing of our voices and the partial lighting, and it’s like we are in church between services. This might explain why I ask them about whether gatherings such as Celebration Day have a spiritual quality. J.E. replies that Celebration Day is definitely a spiritual thing and he develops the idea: “Pacific Islanders were brought up with their spiritual side. So, like whatever we do, we give our thanks to God. Whether it’s the performances we have to do, to like honour and recognize where they came from.”

We segue into a dialogue on managing cultural differences within Fonuamalu. C.M. acknowledges the “different religions from our area—like lots of them” and explains that:

It’s about sharing each other’s religion. Like, I’m Catholic and they’re like Mormon, Methodist – we have a good mix in there. It’s pretty interesting to learn some of their songs, and they learn some of our songs. But we—like, I don’t know how to explain it— it’s like we have the same God and everything, but like we still feel connected in that way.

I ask whether the underlying unity is Christian, or whether it’s deeper. J.E. says it’s deeper, and upon reflection C.M. agrees. J.E. says “we built this spiritual culture in our area, the whole school actually.” In answer to whether it would be the same God or spirituality if there was a Hindu or Muslim in class, C.M. replies it would not be the same, but respect would still apply. J.E. agrees, they wouldn’t take advantage of this social difference by mocking them. C.M. adds that respect for different religious beliefs is respect for the personal beliefs of others, and although we might have contrary opinions, it’s a personal matter. J.E. broaches the idea that being culturally spiritual is distinct from being spiritual in a religious sense.

In a photo-elicitation session, J.E. expands on the theme of inter-cultural connections linked to the hall. From his personal perspective, “the hall is pretty much everything; it’s the cultural

centre of the school. It's like where culture meets culture." For J.E., "when we're in this room we are like all together as one: like one school. We're not different cultures, we're all one. And we learn to work together." J.E. attributes a school-wide identity that maps over the cultural identities as linked to the different cultural communities of school. In terms of working together at Kia Aroha College, J.E. identifies learning another culture as a challenge and specifically, "just trying to do what they do, it's difficult." However, it still works. A piece of art-work in the hall was created by C.M., with patterns flowing from a flower, I ask what inspired her to make it. She says:

There were not just Tongan patterns in it, there were some Māori patterns and some Samoan patterns. I was acknowledging the fact that we are more than just one culture living here.

I ask a clarification question about where "here" in "living here: refers to. C.M. replies "Oh, not 'living' – that 'goes here,'" meaning what goes on at school. I wonder whether her initial use of cultures or students "living" here demonstrates the intimacy of this whānau-based school. Young people do not usually refer to living at school, but in the English language it is normal to speak of living at home.

J.E. elucidates his reasons for taking a photo of a sign-posted area in the school. It's not one I would have predicted and the explanation reinforces the idea of inter-cultural and community connections. J.E. says the photo captures

the centre point of the school. It pretty much connects Lumana'i to Tupuranga to Whānau Office and from there on you can find Fonuamalu at the back. It's like the navigation point.

It is not the heart of the school, he explains, but analogous to the spine. It's also "a connection, like a bridge. A bridge to the other side." In relation to building bridges, the Fonuamalu students recall "a whole day of leadership talking," where all Year 13 students from Fonuamalu, Tupuranga and Lumana'i collaborated.

### **4.3.2 Different ages**

#### **Leadership without leading**

The Māori and Tongan students affirm that the greater power and authority of the adults is generally legitimate, and they manage the power differentials respectfully, but not supinely. The students agree that they do not, and ought not, lead teachers. They do, however, acknowledge that they sometimes deliberately attempt to influence the adults. When they do

this by bringing their powers into play, I contend they are enacting leadership, and they do attempt to manage teachers in a non-authoritative sense.

Cee says that adults should have their power, but “it doesn’t mean they’re always right. That’s when sticking up for yourself comes into play.” Some might call it talking back, he adds playfully. Early on, J.E. observes that the students are not leaders in the way that teachers are, and he is also adamant that “you’ve got to challenge” the school and “to question it.” The students seem to be affirming that the adults have the authority to decide such issues, but as students they are prepared to express their opinions, and request change.

Students have various ways of influencing teachers to try and achieve their ends. In terms of students getting teachers to accept a student’s choice of study topics, Wade explains: “If they don’t allow us, then we try and soften them up. Like, ‘oh, whaea can I please do this, please?’ Ahh, alright then.’ ‘Yes!’” Cee says: “Choosing our sport for P.E. is the same thing. ‘Can we play some touch today?’” and Wade adds the teacher’s reply: “‘Yep - straight after you do some work!’” In addition to this negotiation, students attribute success in influencing teachers to school-based whānau: “It’s just that bond we have – they have that soft spot for us.” The same strategy can be employed at the end of interval:

Wade: When the bell rings, and they’re like, “Go to class,” you’re like, “c’mon whaea – just one more game!”

Cee: Last try wins! [laughter]

Wade: And they’re like: “Last try, last try.” “Oh please whaea – one more!” [laughter]. And they’re like, “Nah.; [Wade snaps his fingers] because they know when to stop – they know when not to give in. They’re like, “I’ve given them once – twice? No. Get to class.”

J.E. and C.M. value highly students expressing their opinions. “The students in this school have a strong – like our opinions matter,” C.M. says, “I reckon everyone is opinionated – but in a good way.” Significantly, they view students’ ability to express their opinions as an everyday occurrence, and they are willing to relay opinions of students who ask them to. It’s also part of taking through concerns and improving things. They say their opinions are treated seriously, and when taking a matter to the Deputy Principal they know they will get an answer and things will be done.

Although the students say they do not lead teachers, and it would be improper to try, they agree that they can influence them and reciprocal respect is evident. I construe this as leadership by management without authority. An example cited earlier was C.M. telling teachers about



students with the potential to lead who deserve a chance. Teachers may act on this advice at their discretion. The Tongan students do not rate enacting leadership with adults as more difficult than working with students, but it is different. As C.M. explains, they can compare themselves to the students, but this is impossible to do with teachers. It is not deemed ethically right for students to lead teachers; J.E. says “that’s a big ‘no.’” However, the students deem it acceptable to influence teachers by offering ideas. C.M. asks whether teachers asking them for help counts as leadership, and J.E. thinks it does.

### **Influencing governance without governing**

Just as students show leadership by influencing teachers by managing them without actually leading, they influence governance decisions without actually governing. C.M. recollects a uniform change initiated by the students: “We’d never had jackets before and a student, X, he com – oh, he didn’t complain, but he like proposed that we need something.” C.M. says it began with the student discussing the issue with his friends before “he wrote up a proposal and took it to Ann Milne and he had to persuade her, in a way.” J.E. observes that it took two years for the change to come into effect.

C.M. appreciates the uniform change and asks if I’ve seen the old one. I haven’t – a lucky escape according to C.M. who was no fan of the chequered maroon and navy design. As for having to wear a uniform, C.M. says “I don’t mind really. I just think uniform is – like the purpose of the uniform, is to represent our school.” J.E. agrees it’s a school thing. C.M. assents to the idea that wearing the uniform is easier because she respects the school’s educational approach.

I have chosen the word management partly to differentiate it from leadership as (direct) governance. The students tell me there isn’t a student representative on the Board of Trustees. Would they want one? J.E. says that would be alright. I observe that they would need a representative, and C.M. adds “from each Area,” whereas I was thinking how having a representative would mean a fixed position for a single student. In relation to the idea of student input into the governance of the school, C.M. says that’s “not really how the school is run. It’s more about knowing that your concerns, like what you’re saying, something’s happening with it.” Student voice is seen as working towards improving things and C.M. separates this from students “saying how the school is run, ‘cause we don’t run the school.” Running the school is what adults do. Both say influencing or shaping things at school is not as strong as ‘having a say,’ which they construe as running things by being in charge. Tamati agrees when he says

leadership is not about having a say in the way the school is run; instead “leadership is being trusted and respected” by others. Nevertheless, students can influence governance decisions to a limited extent, as the uniform examples demonstrate.

### **A final vignette: “We’re still students, but we’re leaders.”**

Shortly before the school day begins, I sit in a child-free Kia Aroha College library: a whare-shaped building whose roof connects the Tupuranga school building opposite, providing a covered space between the two. It’s a useful shelter for wet winter days like this one. At the gable end of the library a large section consists of glass, from floor to ceiling, and features the widespread frosted motif of a Māori waka. There is no susurration of ocean waves, but the soft background hum of the air conditioning is restful as I wait for J.E. and C.M., the Tongan students from Fonuamalu, to arrive. Each section of book shelves has signage with the same waka motif, and information in five languages: English, Māori, Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands Māori. For example: ‘Non-fiction: kōrero pono; tala moni; talanoa mo’oni; puka tuatua tika.’ The walls have a combination of commercial posters on a variety of topics, from climate change to football (soccer), and student artwork strikingly executed using Māori and Pasifika cultural patterns and imagery. I speculate on which Pasifika cultures are represented there. Laminated Rugby World Cup flags are prettily arranged across part of the ceiling. There are two clusters of three tables with a computer on each, configured to allow face-to-face interactions as well as screen time, and a number of long tables to invite talk. There are seats with the same stylish design as the ones in Tupuranga and more comfortable ones: black and red upholstered chairs, and U-shaped settles arranged by the shelves. These seats can be moved, pushed together for conversations, or pulled apart for some quiet time reading alone.

Presently, the senior student J.E. arrives. Did I know this would be an unsupervised, self-directed class? Some of the class are out today, he continues, so there will only be three students. No worries, I say. J.E. asks how they can help. Just do your studies as normal, I reply. Whilst waiting for C.M., J.E. initiates some serious talk, reiterating the concept of Tongan values. He is glad of the instruction in Tongan language he has received here and he speaks it at home. It comes in useful, for instance, when he is child-minding younger relatives. He asks who I will vote for in the forthcoming General Election, and we discuss the different parties and their policies. J.E. acknowledges that the National Party have provided stable government, and has some praise for Minister Paula Bennett, as people should not sit on the benefit when they should be getting a job. He cites the damage that alcohol and other drugs do in the

community. We discuss solutions, pros and cons. C.M. arrives; we greet, and we brief one another about what we're doing. The students are working on their speeches for English: J.E. on the Treaty of Waitangi, and C.M. has a poetry slam about her culture and the politics of assimilation in New Zealand. There is a strong social justice dimension to both topics.

Presently, J.E. asks C.M. whether she wants to practise her speech. They use the chairs in the centre of the room. From standing position, C.M. starts her speech in English. J.E. remains seated, his white school shirt collar sits over the red lapels of his open school jacket. He strokes his fingers along his lower lip in thought, his eyes cast down. Concentrating on her words, he very occasionally looks at C.M.. Her black hair is tied back, a big knot in her school tie and subtle ear piercings provide a personal touch to her school uniform: a russet V-necked jumper and long blue skirt. There are pauses as they discuss grammatical correctness. "The media say, or says?" C.M. queries. The poetry slam re-starts. "'Why is culture irrelevant in mainstream schools? / Where it can be used as a warrior scholar's tool / It's labelled as an extra-curricular activity / And is met with resistance and deep animosity.' Curricula or curriculum?" At one point, J.E. finishes a line. C.M. observes matter-of-factly that he has listened to it too many times. C.M. asks J.E. which words to emphasize. "What matters," he replies. "It all matters," C.M. says. Even if I were not restricting myself to observing, I'm pretty sure I cannot give wise advice on slam poetry reading.

Holding her cue cards, C.M. pensively paces back and forth, moving lightly on black canvas lace up shoes, and continues. She rehearses the emotion. J.E. gives feedback and feed-forward at different stages. He asks whether he can try it. C.M. hands the poem over and J.E. stands and delivers it expressively. C.M. watches attentively, at one point whispering the lines in tandem, trying to attune to J.E.'s verbal expressiveness.

In a follow-up observation in the library, there are more students in attendance, including several from Lumana'i. The camera and tripod is set up. The students organize the gear, the rehearsals for the speeches, and the recording which takes one to film and one to speak. The teacher Cindy facilitates. The situation is fluid, with students taking turns to help one another. J.E. commends a student's speech, for example. Advice is given too. Help is not always viewed as helpful, a familiar experience for educators. J.E. politely and prosaically challenges a younger, senior student: "Why are you late?" The reply is measured and respectful. The social distance is not great; a younger, female senior student is just a little cheeky with J.E. Before one recording is made, a camera operator is required. The teacher recommends J.E., but the

student about to be filmed prefers another student. No problem. At one point C.M. takes a lead, straightening a fellow student's collar. Prior to recording, she twice presses her index finger to her lips demonstratively, effectively quieting those students practising their speeches aloud at the back of the library.

#### **4.4 Theme Three: The reciprocity between self and other**

In this section, I first examine how student leadership coheres with the success of the culturally-defined, and individuated person, with a mutually reinforcing relationship between their academic and cultural learning. Second, I consider how personal goals and the goals of the group have a mutual interdependency: Success for the cultural person as leader creates success for others; the success of others creates success for the cultural person as leader. These two aspects are defined by causal, reciprocal relationships. Third, I examine the property of service leadership, often helping other students with their learning. Fourth, I investigate the property conscientized leadership which is strongly linked to social justice. Although all the leadership properties have a relation to the ethics of altruism, or strong reciprocity to use the term of Bowles and Gintis (2011), service leadership and conscientized leadership have a particularly close association.

##### **4.4.1 Theme 3—Property Six—Service leadership, and success for self**

Cultural and academic success are connected to personal success by the students, and it is linked to leadership. C.M. understands that “being strong cultural leaders” requires being “good in your academics” and “showing good sportsmanship,” for example. With reference to kapa haka, Wade says their teachers reiterate “You have to perform in school work, at school, outside of school, not doing silly things. They say the performance is never over” and “you’re performing as a Warrior Scholar; the special character that’s designed here.” Thus the success of the cultural person encompasses and exceeds the cultural and academic success, whatever the criteria to measure the different aspects of success. Kia Aroha College records student achievement according to the mainstream practices, logging NCEA credits and grades for example, and calls this part of the “school-lens.” The school has also developed a means to measure the strength of cultural identity and peer relationships and plot them on a graph. The cultural identity and peer relationships indicators are used to assess the “self-lens.” C.M. refers to this self-lens as it appears on her report:

There's like this little part on it that's called the red lens – it's a graph of how our relationships have been changing. So there's four corners and there's strong relationships, poor relationships, secure identity, poor identity and it's like all split up, and like my graph is going up – it can go down – and its saying that our relationships are getting stronger and our culture is secure. Our cultural identity is secure.

As in other schools, there are other areas of learning success for students which are less amenable to quantification for the scrutiny of agencies like the Ministry of Education, but in qualitative terms are known to the teachers. Tamati underscores that belonging to the kapa haka group and Tupuranga was the making of him and “if it wasn't for this school, I would probably still be that little, naughty kid that first started – just older and scary.” Cee emphasizes that kapa haka is about personal growth, and building confidence, as well as improving their collective performance. For Wade, visiting new places is viewed as part of the kapa haka education; the Nationals in Gisborne also entailed going up to other places like Waihirere, Manutuke and Kaiti. Student leadership grows out of this context; to be a successful cultural leader ideally requires success in the academic and cultural spheres.

Tamati underlines that leadership is connected to his personal academic success, but you don't have to be a big success in class to be a successful leader, and vice versa. Cee adds that if you fail in class (an assessment for example) it doesn't mean you are no longer a leader. Tamati observes that you don't need to be achieving at some NCEA level to be able to do something; there is no paper qualification needed for leadership.

## **Personal and group goals**

Part of self-leadership is making decisions about what endeavours to pursue and for your own reasons. When I ask Wade where his teachers want him to be in the end, he replies “Wherever our mind is set to go.” He elaborates on why:

'Cause all of us have different ways – like one of my bros he wants to be a Navy Seal. So they're trying to send him on the way, so into maths and physics, and stuff like that. So he's set. Where like I want to be a businessman, yeah – they're sending me off doing accounting stuff and McDonalds courses, so I know how businesses run and stuff. Yeah, and they just —wherever—you just tell them where you want to go and they'll send you in that direction.

In connection with kapa haka, Wade likes doing it because “I'm doing something with my life, other than being away doing silly stuff,” and it keeps him out of trouble. Further, if you are angry, or frustrated and don't know what to do with your life,” then you can “take it out on the haka” when you “hit the stage and stomp your feet [laughter], slap your chest, pūkana, pūkana at people in the crowd.”

Cee adds that people do kapa haka for their own personal reasons. He states that his te reo Māori (language) is not too strong and this is one of his reasons for participating in kapa haka. For Wade, kapa haka is also “pretty cool ‘cause everyone’s always busy” and practices are—now snapping his fingers in time—“always, always, always—like every week, every week.”

Personal success is linked by the students to group success. I ask Wade and Cee what’s more important: being part of the group or competing? Wade reckons being in the group. Cee agrees, and adds “what you get out of it too.” Both are proud of how the kapa haka group has improved its performance, but modest about the group’s performance in absolute terms. I identify a complementarity between the personal and the social: being in the group brings personal benefits, and being a contributing individual is needed for group success. The personal is social, and the social is personal. This is further illustrated when Wade claims that kapa haka is responsible for “more of that whānau bond” where “everyone” is feeling closer. Ideally, the whānau bond is reciprocally shared by all individuals, and it fosters the reciprocity between personal and group success.

Wade provides an apt illustration of reciprocity between the person and the group, the personal and the social. Wade explains that kapa haka at the Nationals provides a chance “not just to represent the school, but represent who you are, and where you come from.” Their haka, ‘Ngati Ōtara,’ challenged the stereotyping of Ōtara by outsiders as a place “just filled with women beaters and people on the dole who smoke drugs all the time.” Wade harks from “down Gisborne,” but lives local to the school. Going “hard at haka” was because Ōtara and South Auckland is “where all the boys are from and I’m going to have the boys’ back and what they love – because this is their home – even though this is not my home, it’s their home, and because they’re my brothers.” Cee adds that “We respect that.” For Cee doing the haka up in Gisborne, is about showing his identity from Ōtara.

According to C.M., one key motivating factor is “our work,” and J.E. says that the future and curiosity provide additional motivation. Both students agree that not knowing what is going to happen next and wanting to find out pushes them forward. C.M. says her family, her mother especially, provide external motivation. Success for J.E. is personal and future-oriented. Both students help one another towards their personal goals. These students drive for academic success is strong, but not simply self-regarding. Their service ethic is strong.

## **Service leadership**

Reciprocation is evident in the normal, helping atmosphere of learning activities where students can demonstrate “service leadership” (see Greenleaf, 2001; and Katene, 2012 for a Maori view). The library is a place of knowledge which C.M. and J.E. treat as their second classroom, and a place for personal study with mutual help given as needed and when possible. In the preceding vignette we saw how these students show leadership by helping one another with their learning.

Reciprocities between leadership and academic learning emerge from a conversation I have with Cee and Tamati, but only after they start to view leadership as helping peers in class. Tamati remarks that he tends to think of leadership as a matter of power, as in having power over others, or authoritative leadership. He would not usually be over someone’s shoulder in class offering help, but if people need help and ask him for it, he will give it. I say that this can be seen as leading; in this case leading someone to the right way of doing something. Both boys agree that people take turns in helping one another, and recipients draw on the expertise of others.

The reciprocation inherent in service leadership in the whānau community is not about helping others on the condition that there will be an equivalent return from those helped, and in the near future. Reciprocation has a more generous definition than this. Bowles and Gintis (2011) define strong reciprocity as altruistic cooperation, which costs the benefactor and benefits others, including non-kin. Strong reciprocators act altruistically, and they expect others to behave likewise when in a position to do so. Bowles and Gintis (2011) explain strong reciprocity happens because “people gain pleasure from or feel morally obligated to cooperate with like-minded people” (p. 3).

J.E. won the school’s Whakawhanaungatanga award for the peer tutoring help that he independently and voluntarily gave to another student across a full academic year. Such leadership is seen by students as prosocial, and appears not to be principally self-regarding, or a case of enlightened self-interest. The Fonuamalu students are focused on self-leadership for their personal success, and they are committed to helping others with their learning. These students see service to the school community as of prime importance. Service leadership emerges for the Tupuranga students too. Although they did not construe helping their peers in class as leadership, we have seen how they act as whānau leaders for the younger ones.

Giving back to the school is seen as a reciprocal arrangement too. Wade remarks that the teachers will be sad to see the students leave, but “we will never leave, we always come back.” This can include helping out with the kapa haka group, “’cause the school makes us want to come back – the people in it make us want to come back.” As such, cultural leadership is seen as giving back: “The school’s given to you, so what are you going to give back to the school?” Cee agrees, adding that former students always come back, helping in the kitchen, or as kapa haka tutors.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 3—Property Seven—Conscientized leadership**

As noted in section 4.1, the educators at Kia Aroha position social justice as a major theme for the curriculum, learning, and teaching. The Kaupapa Māori model of Freirean transformative praxis stresses that students can play a role in their own emancipation via the process of conscientization, resistance, and praxis. In this sub-section, I examine the property of conscientized leadership as embedded in the everyday lives of the students. As part of the students’ social practice, conscientized leadership does not only, or mainly, refer to social activism as campaigning for change. I merely point out that social justice at the school features strong reciprocity as a form of altruism, as there is insufficient space to explore this.

##### **Mass media misrepresentations**

I ask the Fonuamalu students to name one social justice issue that stands out the most for them. J.E. raises the issue of media comparisons of their school with other schools. J.E. remarks: “We’re doing good, but ...” C.M. supports with “Stereotypes.” I ask whether it’s about the list of schools with schools ranked from top to bottom. That proves to be the issue. They explain that the “top deciles” have better numbers in terms of NCEA scores; the lower deciles have lower numbers. Both students understand that a school’s decile is based on the neighbourhood the school is in. C.M. explains: “It’s rated from the poorest area to the richest area. Like, obviously our school would probably be a decile one school.” J.E. describes poverty for the community in terms of “low income housing, poor insulated homes, Pacific Islanders, yeah, Māoris.” Pākehā are hardly represented, J.E. adds.

The very act of labelling schools in terms of decile ratings is keenly felt as stigmatizing. J.E. says that “It’s more of a put- down, y’know, on our students. ‘Oh, you’re decile one – you’re not going to do good.’” These students concur that rating the school is also rating students personally. J.E. says that on the basis of decile rating, people outside the school think “‘You’re just going to the factory. We need factory workers.’” In fact, J.E. argues “although we are in a



decile one community, we can do great. But labelling us as decile one means ‘ah, no. Don’t take your child there. They’ll be a factory worker.’” C.M. adds: “They expect little from schools from decile one areas.” I ask who ‘they’ are. “I think it’s just the media. Just the media keeps pushing it out that decile one schools are low level.”

Another shared criticism of the media is the systematic misrepresentation of Ōtara. “They only say the negative,” observes C.M.; and “few positives,” J.E. appends. He elaborates on the way the media represents Ōtara as a place of dereliction, with areas around houses burnt down, and litter by the lake, and police chases. These stories are presented as major news. I ask why this is. J.E. thinks it may be giving a message to upwardly mobile people to move residence. C.M. thinks the reporters’ stereotypes are “stuck.”

When I ask the Māori students about social justice issues that matter most to them, they too name the mass media representation of Ōtara. Wade speaks with passion about the negative stereotypes people have of Ōtara: “people away from Ōtara think that this place is just filled with women beaters, and people on the dole who smoke drugs all the time.” The good things about Ōtara are not understood, and Cee and Wade attribute this to the media. “It gets pretty annoying when you see no good things – good things that places like Ōtara do,” Wade laments, and the media “publicise the shootings and stuff.” Cee muses that “they just want to keep that image of Ōtara like that.”

The haka ‘Ngati Ōtara’ performed at the Nationals tackled the injustice of these negative stereotypes. With quiet fortitude, Cee underscores that “we want to show them that we’re not all those stereotypes, we’re something else. We’re something different.” When Cee speaks of “them,” it is the context of the media and the public. Wade explains with gusto that the haka “talks about Tara Te Irirangi—how Ōtara got its name.” Te Tara was a “great chief who was like a people’s person. Someone who—even the Pākehā—wanted to converse with because he was so knowledgeable.” An important part of kapa haka is “getting our message out there,” Cee elucidates. When Te Kaea (Māori Television’s news show) asked them what one item in their bracket they wanted to air the most, the haka was chosen, Wade says with verve, because it was “the guts of our bracket—where we flung our message across to the audience, telling them who we were, where we come from, and that Ōtara isn’t all that it’s made out to be in the papers and stuff. Even though I’m not from Ōtara, I was keen for that haka.” Cee explains that the theme for the haka was the senior students’ choice: “all the seniors—a few people—got to sit with the tutors and discuss what we would like in our items, and we put down what we

wanted to portray in our item, so we can relate to it. They put it into words and we perform them.” Wade provides the teachers’ rationale for this: “They wanted us to be able to connect with the items for us to be able to really perform them. So I think that’s why they feel the haka was the guts of our bracket—because they could sense our anger and our feeling and emotion towards that item.”

I ask why Cee and Wade think the media focus on the negative news for Ōtara. The answers include: the media have to talk about something; it provides ‘good’ stories; it pays their bills; and perhaps they have their own reasons for hating Ōtara. Wade is aware that it’s not just Ōtara that is systematically represented in a negative light. Manurewa, Māngere, and Ōtāhuhu are cited as other examples where the media “say all the bad things that happen there, but none of the good things. Like how we feed the kids. Pretty sure they didn’t plaster that on their papers.” Cee agrees, noting that Māori Television covered the event in question, and Three News did not. I ask them to tell me about the ‘feed the kids’ thing.

The two young men explain that they had prepared breakfast and lunch for local children, making sandwiches at Sir Ed (Sir Edmund Hilary Collegiate, a school in Ōtara). Wade relates they had been introduced to “mātua John—John Minto<sup>13</sup>—he offered us the opportunity to take part, to participate in the Mana Party campaign, and most of us—most of them—said ‘no.’” However, some seniors were keen to get involved and “stayed here for a night, just planned out what we’re going to do, went over there” and made the lunches. The students explain that it is connected to Hone Harawira’s attempt to get free food for decile one and two schools. The event at Sir Ed is publicity for this campaign, and supported by some celebrities, some of whom gave performances. Cee also adds that the Mana Party want the children “to have energy for the day, to get through the day, do the work, stay focused.” Wade elaborates “because we all know some families across South Auckland are not fortunate to be able to eat and provide for stuff like that.” I ask why that might be, and Cee agrees with Wade who states that some parents “make silly decisions with the money.” Wade thinks the government is unconcerned, and Cee states they have made it harder for people.

I inquire into whether the Fonuamalu students have been involved in any social activism, as I believe it’s in their creed. C.M. recalls that their creed speaks of being an advocate for change; J.E. confirms this and mentions “the ‘feed the kids’ thing.” Neither student participated, but

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<sup>13</sup> John Minto the social justice campaigner, perhaps best known for his role in the direct action, anti-apartheid protests directed against the Springbok (Rugby Union) tour of New Zealand in 1981, was formerly a staff member at Kia Aroha College

C.M. relays it was a Mana Party initiative, linked to the feed the kids bill, which Kia Aroha participated in by making breakfast for some Ōtara children last year. J.E. notes that the bill didn't survive. Both students understand the breakfast event was about raising awareness in connection with Hone Harawira's private member's bill. They recollect that they had written letters to their MP in class about something, but it was a while ago. It is important to add that the school sees action for social justice as part of the everyday, and not mainly as social activism narrowly defined as protest. When students express their political opinions, whether via a haka in a public performance or in their academic writing, this constitutes an engagement with social justice. I take up this point in Chapter Five.

To summarize, the young person as a leader is expected to be community-minded, and is treated as a unique personality whose cultural identity is integral to their selfhood. Ideally the communal, personal, and cultural aspects of the student function reciprocally; each develops the other.

## **4.5 Key findings and the core category**

Below, I firstly enumerate the key findings. Secondly I sketch how the core category of "Whānau leadership: The reciprocities of right relationship" helps to explain the nature of student leadership at Kia Aroha College. The core category and the associated heuristic device will be elaborated in Chapter 5.

### **Theme one: Whānau grows leadership**

- (i) Whānau leadership is created in the context of the school-based whānau community and culture which draws in ethnic culture from neighbouring communities and creates its own distinctive culture.
- (ii) Student leadership has a diffused property. As with all the leadership properties it bears a cultural stamp.
- (iii) The property of self-leadership is significant to students, which (mostly) sits outside the literature.
- (iv) The property of student role-modelling is significant to students, and positive role-modelling is seen by students as relatively unproblematic, and even unconscious.
- (v) The property of respectful leadership as explicit leadership is described as relatively non-hierarchical, informal, flexible, and shared leadership. Students view it as potentially and actually problematic, especially in relation to student authority.

(vi) There is broad correspondence between student leadership at Kia Aroha College and the international literature that argues for youth conceptions of leadership as different to adults. Cultural particularities matter too.

### **Theme two: Managing social difference**

- (i) Students manage the different cultural Areas of the school and frame this positively.
- (ii) Students manage adults as leadership without leading; and influence governance without governing.

### **Theme three: The reciprocity between self and other.**

- (i) Student leadership coheres with the success of the culturally-defined, individuated person and a reciprocal, positively reinforcing relationship exists between academic and cultural learning.
- (ii) Personal goals and the goals of others have a mutual interdependency, and exhibit causal reciprocity: Success for the cultural person as leader creates success for others; the success of others creates success for the cultural person as leader.
- (iii) The property of service leadership is significant.
- (iv) Conscientized leadership is about understanding and enacting social justice in a broadly defined way.
- (v) All seven properties of student leadership are closely associated with strong reciprocity.

The seven properties of student leadership are:

- (i) Diffused leadership
- (ii) Self-leadership
- (iii) Role-modelling
- (iv) Respectful leadership.
- (v) Managing social difference
- (vi) Service leadership
- (vii) Conscientized leadership.

The core category of “Whānau leadership: The reciprocities of right relationship” is a good fit with the above key findings in two ways. First, the key findings accentuate the importance of relationships between the individual child, whānau-based school community, and ethnic culture, and this is a matter of social justice. Social justice derives from right relationship. Second, the idea of reciprocity features in each theme in two forms: (i) ethical reciprocity, and (ii) causal reciprocity. In the next chapter, I unpack the core category of “Whānau leadership:

the reciprocities of right relationship” when I use Archer’s (1995) morphogenetic/static methodology to analyse student leadership at Kia Aroha College.

# Chapter 5: Discussion

## Introduction

In this chapter I analyse whānau leadership by drawing on Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/static methodology, and the concept of reciprocity in its ethical and causal forms. I employ two figures that help explain the core category of "Whānau leadership: The reciprocities of right relationship." These figures represent my realist, analytical dualist claims; they are not merely heuristic devices. "Figure 1.1. The Structural, Contextual, and Personal Properties of Identity" addresses the social processes that can influence the students' identity. "Figure 1.2. The Structural, Contextual, and Personal Properties of Whānau Leadership" assists the discussion of these two key aims:

- (i) I generate a conceptual generalization of the structure of student leadership at Kia Aroha College in terms of its properties (5.1.3).
- (ii) I produce a morphogenetic/static account (Archer, 1995) of the causal processes at work within the school social web that produce students' whānau leadership. Combining the structural and agential processes of the school and related social webs, I shall explain how and why student leadership is enacted as whānau leadership (5.1.4).

In turn, this analysis has implications for mainstream public schools with Māori and Pasifika students, where educators might be interested in the properties of whānau leadership as part of a culturally responsive and critical pedagogy, and how these properties can be produced and sustained. I refer to the literature throughout the discussion.

In section 5.2, I address the implications of the research. Firstly, with the whānau of interest I explore the implications of whānau leadership for the students of Kia Aroha College. Secondly, I examine the implications of exporting Kia Aroha College's whānau student leadership to mainstream schools with Māori and Pasifika students. Thirdly, I discuss the implications for researchers who want to investigate student leadership that is cultural and critical. Finally, in Section 5.3, I summarize matters.

## 5.1 Interpreting the findings

In this subsection, I recapitulate the research questions and introduce Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/static methodology. I then discuss the properties of whānau leadership. This is followed by my in-depth application of morphogenetic/static methodology where I explain how and why whānau leadership is enacted by students.

### **5.1.1 Revisiting the research questions**

My three research questions were placed under a general question: (1) In what ways do students conceptualize their cultural leadership? The component research questions were:

- (1.1) How do students describe their conceptual frameworks of cultural leadership?
- (1.2) How do students enact their conceptual frameworks of cultural leadership?
- (1.3) How do teachers provide opportunities for students to participate in school-based cultural leadership activities?

In this single case study context, my three research questions were aligned with a focus on the ways students conceptualized their cultural leadership, where the cultural focuses on ethnicity. At a general level, the purpose of my research was to address four significant gaps in the literature:

- (i) a lack of research on youth conceptualizations of student leadership at secondary school;
- (ii) a lack of research on Māori and Pasifika perspectives on student leadership;
- (iii) insufficient attention given to the conceptual complexities of authority in relation to student leadership; and
- (iv) a lack of research into the influence of school context on student leadership.

Moreover, at the level of the case study school, my purpose was to examine how Māori and Pasifika students conceptualized and enacted cultural leadership in the context of a school committed to a culturally responsive and critical pedagogy, linked to aspirations that are counterhegemonic in cultural terms.

In Chapter Four, I claimed there was a close correspondence between student conceptualizations of cultural leadership and how a plurality of students enact it. Given this degree of correspondence, the first two research questions are addressed in 5.1.3 when I explore the key components of the properties of student/whānau leadership. I focus on respectful leadership because it addresses student authority, an under-examined concept in the literature. The literature also influences my selection of the other properties I concentrate on. The notion of ethical reciprocity is examined here.

Note that I treat student leadership as a structural, ideational phenomenon which is part of the wider structure of the school-based whānau. When students activate the various properties of student leadership they exhibit personal leadership properties, and may also incorporate them as personal properties. This will be explained in more depth in 5.1.3.

My third research question addresses the final gap in the literature: the influence of the school

context on student leadership. In 5.1.4, I will examine the interplay between the structure of student leadership and student agency in the social context, using Archer's morphogenetic/static methodology. In effect, this will address all of my research questions because the structural and social context of the school helps explain how and why students conceptualize and enact whānau leadership.

### **5.1.2 Archer's morphogenetic/static methodology**

I now provide a highly compressed account of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/static methodology. I will select those features most germane to this study, and some concepts will be introduced later in the text.

For Archer, morphogenesis means structural elaboration, where profound transformation is registered at the systemic level, for example the education system. Essentially, structural change lags behind the actions of agents because structure provides the prior basis for action, and it takes time to be transformed, or elaborated. In this case study, however, I am interested in a local, single case where the school is treated as a localized system, which is connected to structures that comprise a far larger system. Mine is also a chiefly morphostatic analysis of whānau leadership as a cultural structural feature that is a logically necessary constituent part of the whānau communal structure. As morphostatis denotes the reproduction of the relevant social structures, I ask how and why students at Kia Aroha College reproduce the structure of whānau leadership.

Morphogenetic/static methodology is premised on analytical dualism that separates structures and agents. Therefore, it is opposed to methodological holism, methodological individualism, and Giddens (1984) duality of structure. Morphogenetic/static methodology argues that social structures pre-exist individuals, are relatively durable, yet transformable by human action, possess emergent properties, and have antecedent causal powers of their own.

Emergent properties are those with causal power. They can be either active, or inactive, depending on the situation. When active they produce effects. There are specific mechanisms at work, and agents are mediators of social structures. I cite an example drawing on the ideas of Scott (1998). Assume that in a state education system its ministry of education is a distinct structure vis-à-vis the schools it controls. This ministry has the emergent property of simplification, as do all state structures with supervisory functions. Driven by the quest for legibility, this ministry of education decides to introduce state-mandated, high-stakes



assessments to provide simplified data for its education agenda. This in turn has negative, unintended consequences, such as the teachers are pressured by principals into ‘drill and kill,’ and the curriculum is impoverished. To identify the specific mechanisms at work, one would search between the emergent property and its effects, and the mandated high-stakes tests would feature as part of the explanation.

Individuals have their own distinct emergent properties and powers of agency, separately and conjointly. Agents are the active mediators of social structures, and influenced by these structures that constrain or enable, depending on the agent’s role and general social position, which in turn explains vested interests. In my study, the students occupy a different social position to the adults, and their different vested interests are largely compatible.

It is vital to distinguish between what Archer calls the social environment or Social Context, on the one hand, and social structures on the other. Agents act in the inter-agential “Social Context,” and they may be either unaware of (to some degree) or misrecognize the social structures that constrain and enable them. Archer also distinguishes between “Social Structures”, and the ideational “Cultural System”, which she treats as propositional knowledge (see also Archer, 1996).

### **5.1.3. The properties and components of whānau leadership**

I now discuss the properties of whānau leadership in relation to the literature on student leadership. These seven properties were identified in Chapter Four. My selection and relative weighting of the properties is influenced by the key similarities and differences with the literature. Respectful leadership I accord the heaviest weighting because of the importance of authority in relation to student conceptualizations of their leadership.

#### **Property two: self-leadership**

Self-leadership as defined by the students sits outside even Northouse’s (2010) very broad definition of leadership, and also the literature on student leadership. The Fonuamalu students make it clear that self-leadership is part of whānau leadership, not an adjunct, and it features in their Tongan language version of the school creed, which is recited in the hui space every morning. It is also evident in the context of the classroom and beyond: being a Tongan learner when reading a book or webpage in the Area, in the grounds, or in the library. This self-leadership is also seen by the students as a prerequisite to leading others. I would say that it is present too when taking the initiative and acting as responsible agents in conjunction with others. For example, some learning is independent of the teacher, but students work

interdependently, allowing leadership of others to emerge. Tupuranga students also report self-leadership as acting responsibly and independently of adults, and it has collective and individual applications. Communal and cultural resources are activated in conjunction with self-leadership when participating in the kapa haka Nationals. Knowing when the kauapapa is back on, and acting accordingly, is an important feature, whether on the road with the kapa haka group, or in the playground. The student accounts in Lizzio, Andrews, and Skinner (2011) identify self-management as leadership, but it is self-control for the purpose of leading others. The Kia Aroha students' definition of self-leadership includes self-control for their personal benefit, which need have no leadership effects on others.

I did not predict that the students would name exercising their personal autonomy and initiative as self-leadership, despite being open to the possibility that even the very broad definition of leadership I began with might not work in this context. It makes perfect sense that the students emphasize the need for taking personal responsibility for their actions, as taking responsibility for your behaviour is a trope in school and family settings. In the Kia Aroha College context, this autonomy is named by the adults as a form of self-leadership, and it is understood and enacted as such by the students who use the resources of community and culture to do so.

### **Property three: role-model leadership**

Role-model leadership at Kia Aroha College taps into cultural ideas about the role of siblings that are drawn into the school's social context. These ideas help explain the communal structure of Tupuranga, where the mātāmua are expected to have grown into their leadership role, and act as role-models for younger students. The Fonuamalu students also speak of older students role-modelling, and younger ones learning from them. This is facilitated in the Fonuamalu learning space by having mixed age-groups. Interestingly, Roach et al. (1999) show younger children learning from older, more experienced youth in socio-cultural contexts quite different to those of Kia Aroha College. As Roach et al. (1999) suggest, younger children learning from older ones may derive from the kinds of informal learning that typically take place in families and neighbourhood organizations. There may well be a broad and strong cross-cultural preference by youth for learning how to lead by watching and imitating older, more experienced children, and young people. This does not obviate the need for culturally specific forms of leadership as role-modelling.

Role-modelling as a property of leadership includes a component of unconscious leadership which challenges conceptions of leadership in the adult world, and supports the calls for investigation into youth perspectives on student leadership. Being a role-model can be made explicit, but it is often tacit. In the latter case the role-model may exert an influence over others without being aware that their actions are construed as worthy of emulation. The idea of unconscious leadership is somewhat counter-intuitive, but like leaders without authority, it is conceivable.

### **Property four: Respectful leadership**

Students found activating the property of respectful leadership, where they deliberately attempt to influence others, as rather problematic. Here my discussion concentrates on the components of respectful leadership property in relation to the issue of authority.

I first categorise its components:

- (i) authoritative, hierarchical leadership with vertical, top-down authority (power-over others);
- (ii) authoritative, non-hierarchical leadership with horizontal authority over equals (power-over, but egalitarian, and possibly softer); and
- (iii) non-authoritative, non-hierarchical leadership as power-with others, without either vertical, or horizontal authority. This includes leadership by sincere, honest, and reasoned verbal persuasion. It also embraces giving solicited and unsolicited advice, guidance, and instruction which can be refused without sanction. Students helping fellow learners is one example of this.

I take Starhawk's (1987) three types of power as a starting point. First, she represents power as "power-from-within," and empowerment is treated as a synonym. It is a person's ability, a creative power—and one I think germane to student self-leadership. Second, Starhawk identifies power-over with hierarchy and authority, where people use their title or position to command others to obey. Power-over people is about people in authority taking decisions that affect others, and then enforcing them. As coercive power it is backed by the threat and use of sanctions by those in authority, the most extreme is the use of physical force. The control of resources we need to survive, or more subtle resources like information, approval, or love, also constitute power-over other people. Third, power-with is described as

the power of a strong individual in a group of equals, the power not to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and see it happen. The source of

power-with is the willingness of others to listen to our ideas. We could call that willingness respect, not for a role, but for each unique person. (1987 p. 10)

This typology focuses on the agential, and so structural power and its emergent, causal properties are not considered.

Because Starhawk treats hierarchy, authority, and coercive power as necessarily intertwined, she treats sanctions like disciplinary gossip in a group of equals as power-with. It is more accurate, I contend, to separate hierarchical authority from non-hierarchical authority; both these species of social power entail power-over others. This corresponds with Ritter's (1980) argument that positional authority is not restricted to the hierarchical authority of office-holders. I have employed the distinction between hierarchical authority and non-hierarchical authority in this study to better examine student conceptualizations of respectful leadership.

**Table A: Different components of respectful leadership**

| Component                                            | Relation to authority | Relation to power | Relation to equality |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| (i) Authoritative, hierarchical leadership           | Vertical              | Power-over        | Unequal power        |
| (ii) Authoritative, non-hierarchical leadership      | Horizontal            | Power-over        | Equal power          |
| (iii) Non-authoritative, non-hierarchical leadership | Absent                | Power-with        | Equal power          |

Table A above shows that I have split power-over into hierarchical and non-hierarchical modes. In the former mode, senior students can direct younger students to do something, like stay behind after class for an infraction, or go to class. In the latter, any student may direct another student to do something, although this may hold true only for peers in a given age group. This is an exercise of horizontal power-over. A rebuke by a peer to a peer would also fit this category. So too would the power of a majority in a community of (near) equals. If there were a vote taken, for example to select the matapule, then majority-rule prevails, and the minority would have to accept the outcome.

## **The property of respectful leadership as authoritative, hierarchical leadership**

When activating the structural property of respectful leadership in their social practice, it would seem that student leaders are, at least, circumspect about hierarchical authority. The Māori students are more likely to name authority and use it, albeit respectfully. A senior student must not be hypocritical, or exploit the power that comes with age to belittle others. The Tongan students refuse the appellation of authority, and are wary of the exercise of power-over.

In terms of age-grade, authoritative, hierarchical leadership, the Māori students appear to recognise it exists and ought to be exercised—within limits. For example, instructing younger children in their duties in the wharekai is seen as good and proper. The younger ones need direction by the older students for their own benefit and to reciprocate the hard work of the adults. Although authority is delegated by adults to senior students to direct and discipline younger students, the exercise of it must not be abused, the students argue. Nevertheless, using delegated authority is still rather problematic for senior students as “naughty little kids” can defy their directions, and leadership as positive role-modelling offers another, perhaps more attractive possibility of leadership. Role-modelling may be preferred because it runs less of a risk of in compliant behaviour by the younger ones, with an attendant loss of face for the seniors. Preferring role-modelling may be a matter of personality, or it may be influenced by the fact that older teenagers can have an ambivalent attitude to adult authority. They are still subject to adult authority in various socio-cultural contexts, and the experience of it might make them equivocate when they have the chance to use it themselves.

The opportunities for authoritative, hierarchical leadership provided by the school community and culture are perhaps strongest in Tupuranga. Here, communal structuring of roles via the age-grade system of leadership assists Mātāmua to activate this component of respectful leadership. The responsibilities of the role means adults grant Mātāmua access to material resources to organize other students, on the marae for example. The senior students’ uniforms and the Ngā Rīpene o Ngā Mātāmua o Te Whānau o Tupuranga are structurally role-dependent material resources that convey social status and power. The Rīpene are ribbons, hand-embroidered with striking, colourful tāniko designs (symmetrical patterns), and mounted on a black background to distinguish them from the junior ribbons. They are a mark of merit as well as rank. The Kairangi rīpene is awarded to Mātāmua who have attained NCEA Level Three, and the Kapa Haka rīpene acknowledges those who have tutored Kapa Haka for Year 7 and 8, Ahurea, ASB, and Whānau Kapa Haka (Milne, 2013). At the same time, these age-grade slots

and material accoutrements are backed by the corresponding symbolic resources drawn from the cultural structure of the school. The rīpene as material artefacts dependent on the communal structure have some power in the social context largely because it resonates with students' culturality. Looking beyond the school, it is likely that less formalized tuākana-tēina relationships exist in the students' families and wider communities, and these social relational and ideational constructs are utilized by the school. However, the hierarchical authority of older siblings over younger ones, justified by the former being more competent, is inherently problematic; even authoritative parents can struggle with their children. As we have seen, the Māori students in particular reported "naughty little kids" as difficult to deal with.

The Fonuamalu students were chary of student authority in general, and hierarchical student authority is viewed as especially problematic. These students talk about avoiding being the boss, or even attempting to be the boss, and say students are not "up there" like the teachers. They emphasize that authority is not an accurate description of what they do because it implies keeping people in their place. Even exercising hierarchical authority over much younger students seems to be rejected. In place of authority, they argue they give guidance, offer choices, and try to persuade students to recognize when they have transgressed and that they ought to work out the solution to the problem they are a part of. Even a reprimand does not constitute telling somebody what to do.

The Tongan students did seem to exercise hierarchical authority at times, for instance directing students on sports-day. However, it may be that such exercises of authority are closer to positional authority of a horizontal nature, rather than vertical, and this is not construed by students as a kind of authority because students have equal respect, regardless of age.

### **The property of respectful leadership as non-hierarchical leadership and horizontal authority**

It is important to note that the manner and motivations of authoritative leadership, whether vertical or horizontal, are important to the students. Authoritative leadership that doesn't have the right tone of respect is seen as egotistical and rejected by the Māori students. It is possible, necessary even, the Māori students argue, to have good, bossy leaders, but they must be doing it correctly, and for the right reasons. The Tongan students agree, to a point. You can sometimes direct people to do something in an equitable manner, provided you are not "harsh", for example. C.M. says leadership is about empowering others. This opens up the possibility of some form of respectful authority, provided the leader intends to empower another.

Horizontal authority for the Māori students seems to operate when rebuking peers. In the context of the classroom, it often means dealing with friends who want to enjoy sociable conversation when they ought to be listening to and learning from the teacher. Rebuking peers is experienced as a real quandary by the students because it can cause some emotional harm to the friend who is rebuked, and may jeopardise friendship. It may also be ineffective unless the rebuke is tailored for the recipient. Wade at one point says that rebuking friends and telling them to be quiet is more like persuasion than ordering people to do something; so vertical and horizontal authority may overlap. The students report that strong whānau ties make publicly admonishing friends in class difficult, and this may be compounded by the presence of adult authority.

The Tongan students seem to diffuse leadership rights beyond the peer group. Junior student librarians are accorded the right to rebuke older students, for example, and in a hypothetical example every student has the right to admonish another if the situation warrants it. A line is drawn between telling someone off and then pointing out what they are doing wrong, and actually telling someone what to do. They are reluctant to name rebuking as authority, perhaps because the exercise of horizontal authority has egalitarian implications, and is not associated by them with power-over, but it is linked with their preference for power-with.

### **The property of respectful leadership as non-hierarchical leadership without authority**

Non-hierarchical, non-authoritative leadership is an important component of respectful student leadership. Wade and Cee cite a case of leadership emerging from kapa haka with students supporting one another with pep talk prior to taking the stage. Such moments are spontaneous, arising during specific contexts, and are a nice illustration of power-with others as horizontal leadership without authority. Like role-modelling, they may not always be seen as examples of leadership, either by the person initiating these acts or the recipients.

One of the most important set of relationships for non-hierarchical leadership is centred on peers teaching, and learning from, one another. This is especially important to the Fonuamalu students and fits their stated preference of power-with and empowering other students. It has added importance for the cultural reason that Pasifika students can find it easier to ask a student rather than a teacher for help with their learning. Seniors offering learning advice to younger students or peers who are less competent in a given task, is not about authority. Students are free to ask for advice or instruction, and equally free to ignore it. The same applies when students offer unsolicited help. This is a form of student leadership where students can lead

others to greater knowledge by influencing what they do, and without authority. Initially, Cee and Tamati did not see this as a form of leadership.

There are status differences between younger and older students linked to the level of knowledge or competency, although not reducible to these, and the students are cognizant of power differences between different age groups. The Fonuamalu students tend to see this stratification as principally one of older, more competent siblings helping less competent, younger ones. This is also an important social relationship for the Tupuranga students, who appear to have a more stratified view of the age-related roles of students. In either Area, social stratification does not prevent strong reciprocity working on a long term basis, as younger students later assume the role of teaching students younger than themselves. In peer based situations, strong reciprocity also works in the short-term as students share knowledge, as I observed in the school library and in class.

### **5.1.4 The structural, contextual, and personal properties of whānau leadership**

#### **The agent**

In this sub-section, I outline my conception of the agent at Kia Aroha College and use Figure 1.1 below. Note that my conception of the agent is “stratified,” but as I explained in Chapter Three, I have followed Morris (1994), rather than Archer (1995). Recall that the school takes the position that cultural and academic learning are equally valid and mutually reinforcing. I treat cultural identity as core knowledge in the metaphorical storehouse of the school’s cultural structure. This knowledge is in the curriculum where it is learned in the social context, and thus becomes part of the young person’s self-knowledge and personal identity. This process of learning is linked strongly to the school’s designation of the “self-learning lens” (see Milne, 2013). This agential transformation of cultural knowledge into self-knowledge, is mutually interdependent with the learning knowledge associated with the “school learning lens.” This is socio-political knowledge, delivered by an integrated curriculum, and knowledge of whanaungatanga relationships. The “global lens,” is the third interrelated domain, and is associated with knowledge of the international sphere and ICT. Via the global lens, youth seek to build their personal capacity and knowledge, and the technological resources of Studio 247 (a school and local community facility linked to the High Tech Youth Network) and the world-wide web provide the facilities for this.



Figure 1.1 shows the student leader in the centre: a single, whole, integrated personality, yet stratified in a tripartite manner for the purposes of analysis. In the social web, there are structural properties of personhood derived from the ideational mix of the cultural structure. These structural properties are: the cultural person (culturality); the communal person (communality); and the individual person (individuality). Bear in mind that these properties are structural and ideational; they do not refer to actual agents. In the structural domain, these properties are part of a cultural construct: a cultural conceptualization of the generic person. Provided an actual student is cognizant of these ideational structural properties, they can mediate them by practising them in the social context where agential action and interaction occurs. Simultaneously, they can choose to internalize these properties so they become personal properties.

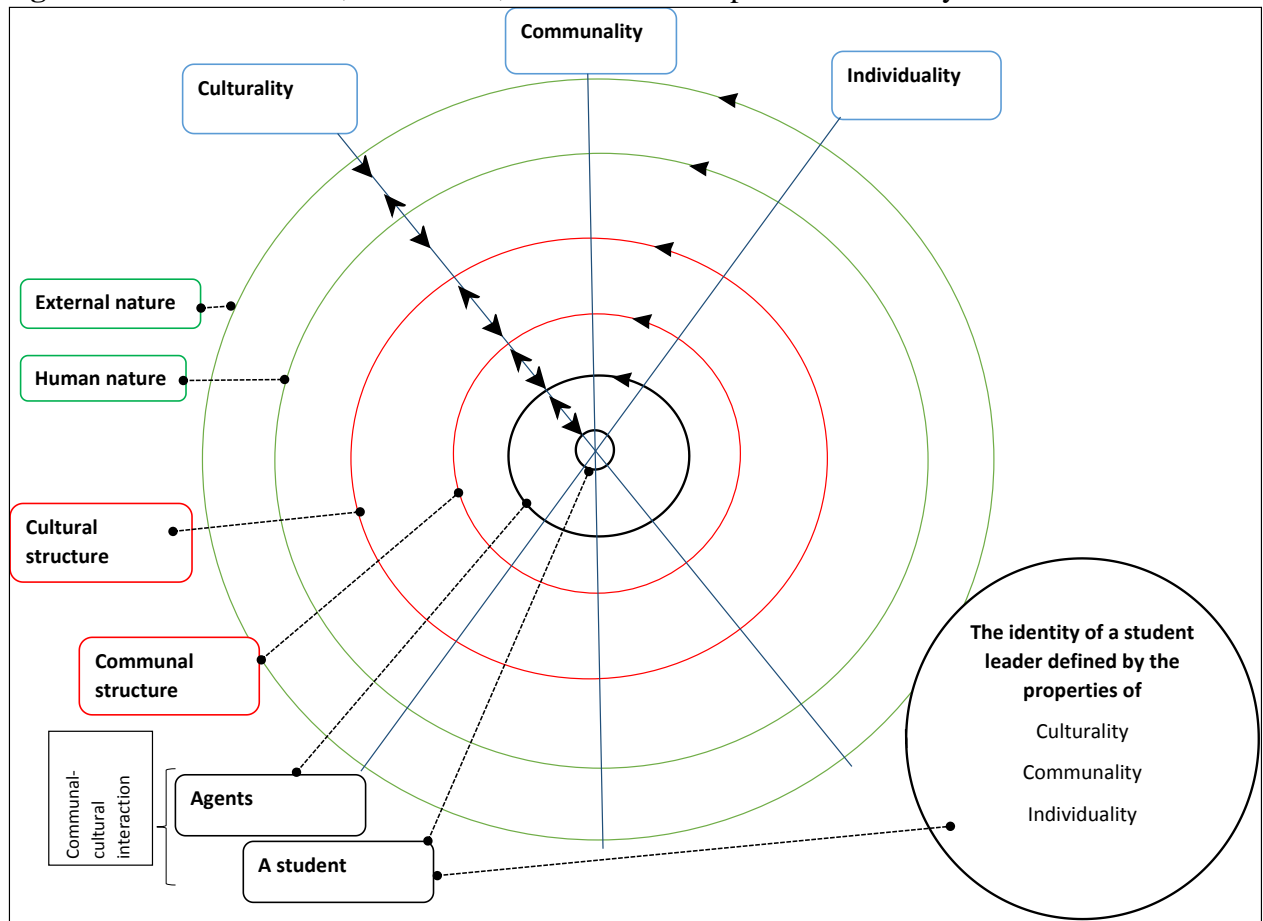
The pattern of causal influences work in the same overall pattern as Figure 1.2, including reciprocal causation. This pattern will be examined in detail with the more important Figure 1.2. In brief, agents in the culturally responsive social context of the school activate the cultural structural properties of the generic personality of their ethnic group. Simultaneously, students utilize other symbolic resources provided by the cultural structure, and material resources linked to roles in the communal structure. Note that human nature is biological, innate, fixed, and determinative; this is a source of freedom, including free will.

## **Agency and structure: morphostasis as empowerment**

### ***The core category and the social web***

The core category “Whānau leadership: The reciprocities of right relationship” is the product of my analysis of the three themes, and seven properties of student/whānau leadership at Kia Aroha College. Figure 1.2 unpacks whānau leadership in terms of its properties (see below), and locates it in a social web where the various parts and agents interact in reciprocal ways. These causal reciprocities are integral to whānau leadership and the school-based whānau community. The interplay between structural parts and agents helps to constitute right relationship. Right relationship is my appellation for the communal-cultural relationships the school aspires to, and the phrase is theological in origin, and has been employed by Henare Arekatera Tate (2010), and in a secular context by Consedine and Consedine (2012).

**Figure 1.1.** The Structural, Contextual, and Personal Properties of Identity



*Figure 1.1.* Web diagram showing reciprocal causation between (i) the three radial properties of cultural structure (culturality, communality, and individuality) and (ii) the agential student leader, which influences the student leader's overall identity. This is shown here by the arrows along the radial property of culturality. Each leadership property is derived from the cultural structure. The student's identity is comprised of the personal properties of culturality, communality, and individuality. There are intersections between the three radial properties and the circular domains of (a) human and external nature, (b) communal and cultural structure (where the latter incorporates properties other than the three shown here), and (c) the communal-cultural context where other agents interact with the student leader. With the exception of human nature which is unidirectional, reciprocal causation works between each domain and the student when influencing student leader identity, provided the student activates the cultural properties (and other properties not illustrated). The counter-clock wise arrows depict the potential causal powers of the domains to influence student leader identity.

## **The structure of the social web introduced**

### ***Student leadership is a social structure and a practice***

First, Figure 1.2 illustrates my conceptualization of the structure of student leadership at Kia Aroha College in terms of its properties. I make three claims about student leadership as a stratified, tripartite social phenomenon: (i) it is a cultural structure; (ii) it is a social practice; (iii) structural properties become part of the personal properties of students as agents, if they choose to internalize them as part of their normative beliefs. A student who chooses to internalize the properties of whānau leadership would be (i) a power-sharing leader; (ii) self-determining; (iii) a role-model; (iv) a respectful leader; (v) nurturing and caring; (vi) a manager of social difference; and (vii) critically compassionate. I shall restrict my analysis to the first two claims, and simply represent the third in Figure 1.2.

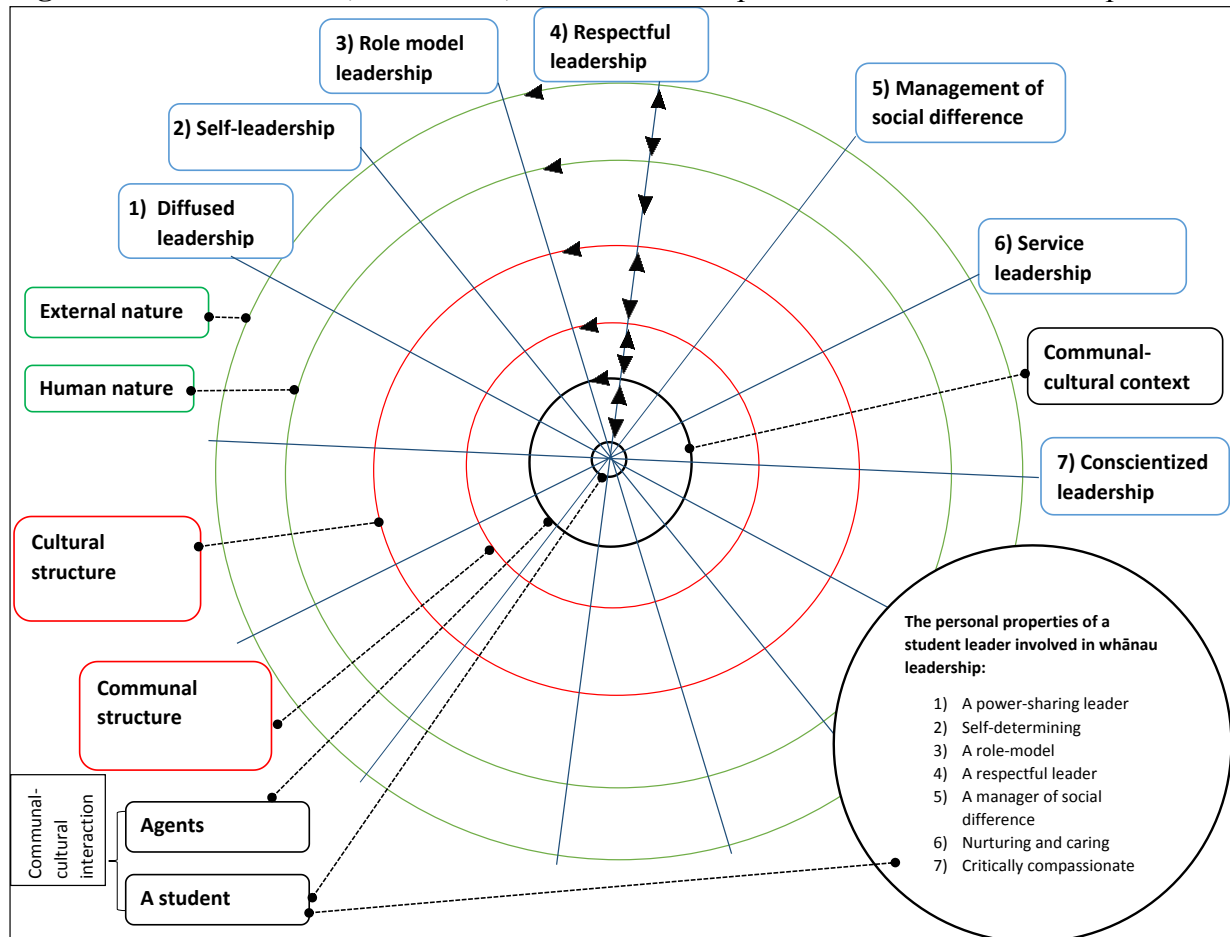
### ***Social structure and social context are conceptually differentiated***

Second, figure 1.2 summarizes my morphogenetic/static account (Archer, 1995) of the causal processes at work within the school's social web which serve to reproduce the structure of student leadership. Now that I shift into a higher-order analysis, when I refer to the school community it denotes the *social context*, and this is separated from the *social structure*. The social structure comprises two distinct parts: communal and cultural structures. The communal structure refers to roles, resources, and power imbalances. The cultural structure denotes ideas stored as the memory of the living, in writing, in image, and in three dimensional artefacts. I emphasize that agents are conceived as inhabiting the social context where they interact with one another. These interactions I refer to as communal-cultural interaction (social interaction and socio-cultural interaction are synonyms), and include social practices. I refer to the social context as the communal-context, the socio-cultural context, the social environment, or simply the social. In Figure 1.2, a student is represented as the innermost, personal domain, and the surrounding domain is the social context where communal-cultural interaction takes place between agents.

Student leadership is conceived as an ideational structure, and so is derived from the cultural structure. I claim that the whānau leadership structure is internal to, and of necessity a constituent part of the overall whānau communal-cultural local system. Student leadership is represented in Figure 1.2 as radial properties that intersect the structural, social, and personal domains. The radial lines of causal influence run in both directions: showing the empowering influence of the structure of whānau leadership on students, and the reciprocal (not necessarily

symmetrical) influence of students on this structure when they activate it. Additionally, the arrows represent the limiting influence of whānau leadership structure on student leadership

**Figure 1.2.** The Structural, Contextual, and Personal Properties of Whānau Leadership.



*Figure 1.2.* Web diagram showing reciprocal causation between (i) the seven radial properties of whānau leadership and (ii) the agential student, which shapes their identity as a whānau leader. This is shown here by the arrows along the radial property of respectful leadership. Each leadership property is derived from the cultural structure. The student leader's identity is comprised of the seven personal properties of whānau leadership. There are intersections between the seven radial properties and the circular domains of (a) human and external nature, (b) communal and cultural structure (where the latter incorporates properties other than the seven shown here), and (c) the communal-cultural context where other agents interact with the student leader. With the exception of human nature which is unidirectional, reciprocal causation works between each domain and the student when influencing whānau leadership identity, provided the student activates the cultural properties of whānau leadership (and other properties not depicted). The counter-clock wise arrows show the potential causal powers of the domains to fashion whānau leadership identity.

practices, and the corresponding student influence on the structure. In this case, students reproduce the structure. For the sake of clarity, I show only one set of arrows on the radial line of respectful leadership.

### ***Agents are mediators of social structure***

From their position in the social context, agents work as mediators who interact with the structures, mediating their influence. Via agents, the communal and cultural structures interact with one another. Social structures are identified by their effects, either enabling or restricting agents. Social interaction by agents is observable activity, and agents have personal reasons and motives for acting. Recall that social structures pre-exist individuals, are relatively enduring, yet relatively transformable, and have independent powers. This is why these abstract entities are treated as real. The counter-clock wise arrows of Figure 1.2 show the potential causal powers of the domains to influence whānau leadership practices and identity.

External to the social web in Figure 1.2 is a natural web, which I bracket in my analysis. It is sufficient to emphasize that the agent in my account has an innate human nature, in addition to being a person socially and culturally embedded in a social context dependent on the wider natural world. Human nature is a matter of human capacity, not performance, therefore it sits outside the social web, and the causal lines of influence run in one direction along the properties of whānau leadership. Human nature determines our biological, human properties. What agents choose to do with those properties as social powers is decided in the social context in conjunction with social structures.

In my analysis, the school's social web is linked to other social webs, such as the students' families and the Ministry of Education. For reasons of brevity and clarity, I do not represent this in Figure 1.2. Combining the structural and inter-agential processes of the school and related social webs, I shall explain how student leadership is enacted as whānau leadership.

### **Illustrating how students are empowered by and activate the properties of whānau leadership**

I explore why students have the capacity to activate the structure of whānau leadership, and how they activate this structure, and other related ones. This concerns the reciprocal causation of agency and structure. I focus on empowerment now, and consider the limitations of whānau leadership in 5.2.

## **Activating ideational student leadership via the whānau communal and cultural structures**

Whānau leadership as a cultural structure is activated by students who utilize other structural features. As noted above, whānau leadership is an ideational structure derived from the cultural structure, and it is a social practice when enacted by students in the social context. The ideational, structural properties of whānau leadership can be activated by students in terms of belief and action in the social context. This activation of the structure of student leadership simultaneously activates the roles and resources located in the broader communal structure of whānau, and other ideational complexes located in the cultural structure.

As a communal structure, whānau at the school consists of a number of well-defined roles with associated resources. We can speak of these roles as ‘slots’ for youth and adults, for siblings and aunties/uncles, and one nanny; to this we can add matapule and monitors in Fonuamalu, Mātāmua, Tēina, Tuākana, and Pākeke in Tupuranga, and so forth. Each role is associated with different levels of social power, which influence the ability of agents to access material resources, and the ideational resources located in the cultural structure. Whether we define roles in the narrow sense of well-defined positions, like jobs or offices, or more general positions, like child and adult, the distribution of these resources remains unequal across the school—and necessarily so. The students are in a general position of knowing much less, on balance, than the adults. This is partly due to differences in age, and partly due to the greater cultural knowledge and the professional expertise that the adults have. In addition to a higher level of competency, the adults have corresponding responsibilities that justify this basic inequality of social power. The students’ roles, no matter how senior, give them access to fewer and less powerful resources. Their positions are also defined by having different vested interests to the teachers, as well as joint interests. It is in the vested interests of both parties that students learn, for example, but students will not always prioritize their learning above other concerns. These concerns are manifold and range from need for economic survival, helping family, coping with severe emotional stress, and the need to socialize with peers.

Concurrently, and necessarily, the student activation of the structure of leadership activates additional culturally specific knowledge, beliefs, and values derived from the structure of culture, and used in the social context. Contra Archer’s (1995) Cultural System as solely propositional knowledge, the cultural structure I present is more inclusive. I include knowledge as language, metaphor, narrative, and art (as in skills), in their intellectual and affective (or spiritual) states, plus beliefs and values. These cultural ideas are structured in various ways,

cohering into a Māori cosmology, or the art of kapa haka, for example. In the socio-cultural context, this structural storehouse of knowledge (oral, written, or otherwise recorded) becomes a living culture, and the property of interacting individuals.

The daily convening of the hui in the Fonuamalu social context, draws on the structural resource of the hui space, and provides students with a place to raise school-based issues that concern them. The adult intention for the election of matapule is to provide students with representatives to articulate the concerns of the students to the adults, and it may function to empower students who lack confidence to speak in public. The structural role of matapule is inspired by Tongan society, and is Fonuamalu's version of the village spokesperson. The ideas of the matapule, the village, status difference, and the less powerful speaking across that difference to articulate their group interest, are each taken from the cultural structure beyond the school. In the school's cultural structure they are re-assembled, given new meaning, and stored. These ideas are brought to life in the social context in their novel and more democratic ways, which are indicative of the changing culture and community of the Tongan diaspora in New Zealand (Sanga & Sanga, 2011). In the Fonuamalu learning-space, the poem "You, the choice of my parents" by Konai Helu Thaman adorns a wall, and it may symbolize a modern, Tongan challenge to certain values that underpin old customs, and a transvaluation of them.

For the Tupuranga students, assembly for karakia and panui in their hui space provides a similar social context for leadership, as structured by whānau. The communal structure of the hui space, and its structural ideational features, provide the material and symbolic resources for students to show their leadership when sharing news, or organizing the younger ones to line up and settle. The students cite kapa haka as an especially important socio-cultural context for activating the leadership structure, and it emerges in their practices and on-stage. The students are passionate for the assemblage of ideas that constitutes kapa haka, and performance helps to create the whānau bond, and whānau leadership. In communal structural terms, the roles of teachers and tutors, as figurative aunts and uncles, and the roles of the students as figurative siblings, whether as peers, or organized along tuakana-teina lines, are vital for activating leadership in this social context. The cultural knowledge of the initiated is passed on through social interaction in practices and competitive performance. The material resources of the school—the marae complex, the kākahu, finance for the travel and accommodation, and so forth—are made available through the communal structure of the school and permit leadership to take place.

The cultural symbolism present in the school's social context is derived from the cultural structure, and students draw on the latter when activating the structure of whānau leadership. As we saw in Chapter Four, the fabric of the buildings and the grounds are replete with cultural imagery, symbolism, and significance. From the carvings of the wharehau to the engravings on the windows, from the posters, student art work, and framed pictures on the classroom walls, to the honours' board in the hall, the college is richly laden with cultural symbolism. The students' uniform also sports the Kia Aroha logo, with its combined Māori and Pasifika motifs on the jerseys and vests. According to the school's website (2012b), the tohu or logo has two hooks, symbolizing ocean-borne discovery of new lands by the ancestors of Māori and Pasifika peoples, sustenance from the sea, and the fishing of knowledge. The upper hook has Māori symbols and the companion hook has Pasifika ones. These multifarious cultural symbols expressed in material form are important to making whānau as school community. As evidenced by the student narratives, these symbols create a strong sense of place and belonging for the students; a place of culture, and familial community. The meanings of these symbols are lodged in the cultural structure, local and further afield.

The material expression of these ideas is dependent on the communal structure of whānau: The necessary resources are distributed in accordance with roles, in the narrow and broad senses. In the broader sense, it is mainly the adults, educators as figurative family in consultation with literal whānau, who have used their structural power to design the school and the uniform logos in the fashion they have for the benefit of the youngsters in their care. The culturally-inscribed school artefacts create a common identity, and that is a whānau identity. The physical plant of the school is a place of cultural safety, and a metaphoric home, rather than a factory. These features are important sources of the student capacity to actualize whānau leadership; they are found in the socio-cultural context of the school and socially-structured. Utilizing these sources, students can construct a strong sense of cultural and communal self, solidarity, and security.

Students thus have a strong, structural platform for the social practice of student leadership. Students create their capacity for leadership through social practice, some training, and a lot of observation of role models. This inter-agential activity is supported by the structure of school leadership, the whānau structure, and literal family structures.



## **School culture and external culture**

As noted above, whānau leadership is a set of ideas drawn from the storehouse of the cultural structure of the school, which is stocked by agents connected to social webs external to the school. Culture enters the school with the students and educators, and originates from external, interconnected social webs. The special character of Kia Aroha College means that this culture is well-understood and integral to the curriculum and to the social fabric of the school. However, the school culture exceeds the external sources of ethnic culture by adding its own ideational and lived culture as a learning community, influenced by the specific functions of formal schooling and the ideas of the educators. Other cultures co-exist here too, such as global youth culture and Pākehā culture. The state's network of educational organizations, like the NZQA, are an important source of Pākehā culture that has to be addressed by the school community. For instance, to meet the external, structural requirements of NCEA and serve the purposes of the school's whānau communal and cultural structure, the senior school curriculum integrates the criteria of Achievement Standards with whānau-based learning and a strong social justice content.

Recall that to speak of the school's community in the singular actually denotes a single, federated community, rather than a unitary community. There is an overlapping set of communities, within the school's social web and beyond. Any real, individuated student will belong to both the college Kia Aroha and an Area community, and other communities of interest. Beyond the school, students may belong to one ethnic culture or identify most strongly with one culture. They might identify with more than one culture, or be influenced by other cultures embedded in the school culture, or outside of it. They will also belong to various communities of interest, for example churches, sporting, and cultural associations, which are also repositories of cultural knowledge.

## **Morphostasis: Why students reproduce whānau leadership**

We have already seen how students practise leadership, and thereby reproduce the structure of whānau leadership because it empowers them to do so. This mutual interaction between structure and agency I term reciprocal causation. I now discuss why students choose to acquire and perform whānau leadership. My account addresses the reasons the students as agents have for activating the structural properties of student leadership, given their general position in the school and the wider society. Recall that I do not claim all students engage fully in leadership, or that all do so equally; I claim that a plurality of students, at the least, do so over time, and focus on the senior students (Years 11 to 14).

Students choose to use their capacity for leadership because they see good reason to do so. These reasons may be self-regarding, and at other times they are characterised by strong reciprocity. Although the adults have most of the social power and authority, the students trust them to use it in their best interests. When they believe their interests might be better served by different actions, students may show leadership and challenge the adults—as they did over the school uniform, for example.

Self-interest is an important motivation for acquiring and enacting leadership capacity. The senior students I spoke with had a sense of aspiration and career direction, and saw school as a means to personal advancement; leadership played a role in this. One student wanted to be a business leader to earn the money he would like to have. School also provides more immediate and manifold opportunities. The individual, self-regarding reasons for getting involved in student leadership will be as diverse as the students. One student was involved in kapa haka, and incidentally leadership, to improve his te reo Māori. The students also enjoy one another's company and that of their teachers, and feel the whānau bond.

The valency of the whānau bond depends on strong reciprocity, and so does whānau leadership. A community of pure egoists is, after all, hard to imagine. Strong reciprocity as a form of altruism is an important motivating force for student leadership. Students spoke of giving back to the school and the community as a moral obligation, and were involved in many leadership actions involving strong reciprocity. Students manifestly enjoy helping others, and they want to do so because the school is responsive to their cultural, academic, and personal needs. The vested interests of the students are not synonymous with self-regarding interests. For a group to have a collective vested interest is compatible with altruism, and to be expected.

It is true that the educators' strong counter-narrative aims to motivate students to act as cultural leaders, but why students respond to this narrative is the crux of the matter. It has been explained why the narrative of the struggle between Kia Aroha College and the Ministry of Education to become a special character school, for instance, is important for creating the school's whānau bonds. The counter-narrative is one that joins the school's social web with those families in the surrounding communities. The social overlap between school and parents/whānau (school-home partnerships) is one of solidary ties (doubtless of varying strength) made through successful collective resistance and action centred on the school's struggles with the Ministry. I suggest this is a potentially significant source of motivation for students to be leaders. First, service leadership for the good of the school, or wider community, may make more sense if the

interconnections between school and home are seen as constituting a genuine common good. Tupuranga and Fanau Pasifika can be seen by students as schools of the community, for them, and by them, because of the community's struggles to establish them and assert the ethno-linguistic rights of the students. Second, the successful example of local community activism—that of their families and communities—provides a potential model and inspiration for student leaders. Recall what J.E. said about how Kia Aroha achieved its culturally-based education, while many mainstream schools have lagged behind: “We’ve had to struggle for it, that’s why.”

### **Morphostatis and elaboration of a different kind**

Students use their agency to actively contribute to the traditions of student leadership that are passed down to them by older students who are role-models. Students are aware of this, and aware that they have their own ideas, preferences, and strengths as leaders. If they do innovate, it would be within the structural constraints set by the adults. Although there is no structural elaboration by students, they are still acting as agents empowered by the relevant social structures, and getting satisfaction activating those structures. Crucially, it can be inferred that students view the reproduction, or morphostasis, of whānau leadership as empowering. As student leaders they have the chance to develop their agential powers as caring and nurturing, critically compassionate leaders and so forth. Any such personal elaborations are significant to the students, and they have their own emergent properties too, which can be brought into the interplay between agents and structures as part of whānau leadership.

Archer (1995) differentiates between “Primary Agents” and “Corporate Agents.” Primary Agents are defined as unorganized, inarticulate, and possessing causal efficacy only as an aggregate. Should structural conditions be favourable, then they might develop into Corporate Agents with the emergent powers of an articulate organization. The students at Kia Aroha College do not fit into this scheme. Within strict limits, they can help effect non-structural school-wide changes on issues that matter to them, school uniform for example. They do not do this as an aggregated mass, but through spontaneous, articulate, collective delegations that approach the adults directly and in their offices. In general, as the occasion arises, the senior students feel free to respectfully speak their minds, articulate their opinions, and make proposals to the adults on many issues. They anticipate being listened to by the adults, but do not expect to get their own way by right. The right to speak and be heard is, of course, especially important to young people. The kapa haka group somewhat resembles a Corporate Agent, and students have used that organization to express their opinions, but the leadership of the adults predominates.

As I have aimed for an accurate realist account of student leadership, Figures 1.1 and 1.2 are ideal-type models that abstract from reality. They can also be viewed as normative models in two ways, which I illustrate with reference to Figure 1.2. First, as part of its normativity, the school-based whānau community and culture does in fact offer all students the potential to participate, and activate the social structure of student leadership. Second, the models provide food for thought for educators interested in a culturally responsive and transformative education. A critic may query whether I do in fact represent what can be legitimately called student leadership, and whether I would even term it leadership in a mainstream school which pursues more traditional leadership aims. First, this was what students authentically described and named as leadership, which I subsequently examined. Whatever students in another establishment might have said about how they conceived and enacted leadership would have received the same acknowledgment, provided they also gave authentic responses. Second, leadership—like authority—is a complex social and philosophical concept. Within the different philosophical meanings of leadership there are a multiplicity of social possibilities.

## **5.2 Final reflections**

In section 5.2, I address the significance of the research. Firstly, I explore the meaning and significance of whānau leadership at Kia Aroha College via a summation of an intercultural dialogue with the whānau of interest. Secondly, I speculate about the implications of exporting Kia Aroha College's whānau student leadership, as an integral part of an education grounded in both culturally responsive and critical pedagogy, to other schools with Māori and Pasifika students.

### **5.2.1 A final intercultural dialogue**

On the basis of my findings, I created several follow-up areas of questioning. These areas were ones I thought educators (Pākehā and others), who might support a culturally responsive and critical pedagogy, would want explored. When I broached the questions ahead of the conversation with the whānau of interest, I underlined that they were intended as non-judgmental, exploratory questions for the aforementioned audience. I also believed the whānau of interest should speak to their challenges and approaches as a matter of right, as well as giving some hope, advice, and food for thought for interested educators.

### **Social justice and social activism as conscientized leadership**

The focus group students did cite examples of participation in collaborative, conscientized leadership activities with a social justice theme. I asked the whānau of interest how widespread

such critically compassionate, social activism was, and why this was so. Significantly, activism was defined by these educators as a normalized, everyday activity, and not necessarily protest actions. A student is an activist when they are on the kapa haka stage, or taking part in manu korero (speech contests)—often with an overt political message. They are also activists in their academic learning. Students articulate their own ideas in their written English studies, for example, when exploring the history of colonization and its ramifications for social justice today, including their own lives. In the context of academic learning, addressing the root causes of current structural inequities (like disproportionate levels of poverty for Māori and Pasifika families) is viewed as necessary to counteract the reinforcement of negative stereotypes and the passivity of victimhood. By learning this and speaking to it, students are being activists. According to the whānau, getting to school, under difficult social conditions, and getting a critical education is about being a young revolutionary, a Warrior Scholar. I conclude that if social activism is construed as actions, by an individual or a group, to effect named social goals with a social justice dimension, then this is what happens as part of the everyday. The diffused leadership property is at work.

In other school contexts, social activism as conscientized leadership could be defined in very narrow terms. It could be viewed as a formal project within a cycle of praxis with relatively immediate social justice goals explicitly identified, attainable, and measurable. Prior to this, an inquiry phase would establish the causes and consequences of the injustice, and alternative social actions would be considered. At Kia Aroha College, such leadership does exist, alongside the broader definition given above. A current NCEA Level Three Social Studies internal assessment at Kia Aroha incorporates these elements. One student set up a Facebook page and had the option of writing a letter to the mayor. However, Ann intimated that tasks like these, driven primarily by assessment criteria, can lack a level of authenticity. By comparison, the social studies findings five students from Tupuranga presented at the 2012 American Education Research Association (AERA) conference in Vancouver, in a symposium named “Reclaiming education: Youth counter-narratives in the neo-liberal reform era,” was authentic. Their joint research on “Te Ara Tino Rangatiratanga—Our Pathway to Self-Determination” focused on the impact that organizing their school as a whānau had on their cultural identity, the experience of their literal whānau, and their own experience as learners at Kia Aroha College. The students added comparisons to First Nations youth in Canada for their speech in Vancouver. This example of leadership was authentic because it was collaborative, grew out of local and personal concerns, and connected to national and global frameworks. It

also had a purpose that included, but exceeded, gaining credits: getting a heartfelt and political message across that added to knowledge for empowerment.

Social activism as leadership can also be identified in more simple terms as campaigns. The “Feed the kids” initiative was one such, and according to Judith some students felt that by itself it was not adequate to address the problem, and needed an ongoing approach. Sustaining such an approach is likely to sit outside the curriculum, as indeed the voluntary initiative did, simply because the focus of any school must be the curriculum, however defined. Student success at school work is a key aim, with the requirements of NZQA and other accredited institutions as an important focus for senior students, linked to their career pathways and the wider economy. Thus, broader social structures and agential purposes influence the nature of whānau leadership.

Students are activists for social justice when representing the school, which champions social justice as the right to a culturally responsive and critical education for Māori and Pasifika youth. In May this year, a volunteer group of senior students delivered a speech and a powerful haka to primary school Principals who were on the school’s marae to learn about whānau-based pedagogy. The importance of the students’ ambassadorial and hospitality roles is underscored by the fact they have a separate uniform for such occasions. This does not preclude critical, yet respectful, questioning of guests. Famously, Year 11 student Ofoi asked the visiting Prime Minister John Key some self-prepared and searching questions she had about whose cultural norms were in the government’s literacy and numeracy targets. The teachers had not anticipated Ofoi’s questions; nor had the Prime Minister.

## **Governance**

As with any social structure, whānau leadership places limitations on student agency, and these are not necessarily disempowering. The educators gave three key reasons why students have no formal role in governance via a Board of Trustees representative. First, there is a cultural explanation: Students as youth ought not to be involved in the adult world of governance. This is strongly felt by the Pasifika staff. Second, it is a matter of safety. The business of the Board of Trustees is not a very safe space for students, whose presence might in turn make it unsafe for adult board members or staff. The Board of Trustees meeting is viewed as the wrong place for a direct, permanent student voice because a student representative is likely to feel out of their depth and disempowered. Empowerment happens in other ways. Students can, and do, ask teachers to take their opinions to the Board. The Principal’s recent report contained, for

example, a report by student C.M. Students also feel safe to make representations to the teachers that have a bearing on governance. For instance, a delegation of female students argued for a change in uniform, making “ballerina flats” an alternative to the “clunky” uniform shoes. The Board subsequently approved a trial period. Third, a lack of student interest was cited.

The idea of having two students as joint Board of Trustees representatives was floated by the educators as a possible way to empower them, but there was no student response. I speculate that this lack of expressed interest is partly because students do not see a pressing need for institutionalizing their leadership, which can be made to count as things stand. In addition, students consider the formalization and restriction of student leadership roles as somewhat suspect. Although the two Tongan students were not opposed on principle to representation on the Board of Trustees, it was not a burning issue; the school was deemed as “open” and adults as highly approachable and responsive to students. In general, it is also likely that the vested interests of youth are quite dissimilar to adults when it comes to governance. On matters like uniform, which students must wear throughout the school day, it is unsurprising that students have strong feelings about it. Other matters will not affect their interests in direct ways, or be of far less interest than their other activities, like socializing in their free time, or working for their families in some capacity.

## **Politics and education**

Freire (1993, 1998, 2004) repeatedly argues that politics as ideology and power relations are unavoidable in any school’s pedagogy. Penetito (2010) observes that any education will always involve socialization into selected knowledge, values, and a first language use. Sleeter (2012) states that educators typically shy away from what they consider politics, even if they are willing to countenance culturally responsive pedagogy. These insights—especially the last—prompted me to ask the whānau of interest how they viewed the role of politics in education, and how they as educators negotiated it with their students.

Fundamentally, teaching for Māori and Pasifika is seen by the whānau of interest as a political act in two key ways. First, the educators view mainstream education as a political act by the state as a long-standing ploy of colonization, and as an injustice experienced from infancy by Māori and Pasifika. To ask if politics can be, in practice, separated from education is to pose the wrong question, they say. Second, there are political acts by those who challenge “the white spaces” of mainstream schools. In terms of Kia Aroha College, the kaupapa is one of

conscientization: raising student consciousness to challenge the cultural hegemony of Pākehā schooling, by providing whānau-based education as a place of cultural safety. Cultural knowledge, and counter-stories from Māori and Pasifika perspectives, are political because they challenge the power arrangements of the status quo. This is linked to preparing students for success at school and beyond as young people who sustain their Māori and Pasifika identities. Knowledge and self-esteem are needed to counter and navigate the structural inequities of society. Ann asked rhetorically: “How on earth do our kids play the game unless they know it?”

It is important to note that the political kaupapa of Kia Aroha College is openly stated, and whānau enrolling students there, and the students, are made aware of this fact. Cindy noted that many of the parents were themselves very political. This statement by Ann would, I think, be affirmed by many such parents: “You can’t live as Māori unless you’re political.” At Kia Aroha College there is a consistent and highly visible counter-story to the dominant one; to the extent that mainstream schools have a dominant narrative it is unlikely to be as coherent, or recognized by most educators as political. In terms of critical thinking within Kia Aroha’s kaupapa, I observed, and have recounted, cases of students reaching their own conclusions, and holding their own opinions. Over and above the political conspectus of cultural self-determination, there are bound to be differences of opinion, just as there are in the adult world. For Kia Aroha, the ‘critical’ in critical pedagogy includes looking after cultural knowledge, having the keys to access it, and living it. The seeds of cultural and political knowledge are planted at the school by the adults, but the students are not the equivalent of bonsai trees. Ultimately, what the students choose to do and think is their decision to make, as the idea of self-leadership implies, and as the students understand.

### **The place of race, gender and social class**

Culture is the most important dimension at Kia Aroha. This follows a strong Māori preference for using the language of culture over that of race. Nevertheless, race and racism are important issues in the school’s curriculum. Gender seems to follow culture. In terms of social norms, gender differences are informed by different cultural views. The school has a lot of mana wāhine—the whānau of interest is all female. Poverty is seen by the educators as a named issue that is salient in the students’ consciousness as well as their own. In our conversation, I raised the role social class plays in poverty, and the intersection between race and class. Ann observed that class is not used by the adults very much, although “the rigged game of education” is named: where Māori and Pasifika youth are disproportionately selected via schooling to be



distributed into poorly paid jobs. The student leadership narratives showed this understanding, on a very personal level, and one they linked to doing better than occupying poorly paid jobs.

### **5.2.2 Implications of whānau leadership for other schools**

Whānau leadership has implications for Māori, Pasifika, Pākehā, and students of every other ethnicity. If educators are committed to culturally responsive pedagogy, then student leadership ought to be compatible with a student's culturality, individuality, and communality, as should all aspects of school life. The traditional, formal, office-holding version of student leadership, combined with certain aspects of Pākehā culture, may (or may not) suit middle-class Pākehā students, and is coherent with a competitive, meritocratic, and elitist view of leadership as best restricted to a talented few who exercise vertical, hierarchical authority. However, it may be that the properties of diffused and respectful student leadership would better suit, or benefit, students whatever their class, gender, and race. The interrelationship between the culture and politics of the educators and parents is of crucial importance to delineate what kind of leadership and education they believe most benefits their children.

At Kia Aroha College, the ideational structure of whānau leadership is a constituent part of the whānau-based, cultural and communal local system, which largely defines the social context. It may reasonably be wondered how a mainstream school, where Māori and Pasifika students may or may not represent a majority, could effect this form of community to support a fully viable form of whānau leadership.

In the first place, even a better approximation to whānau leadership than currently exists in many schools might count as progress. It might be possible to begin with whānau leadership as a culturally responsive practice in extra-curricular settings, or some classrooms, or a programme. In the second place, an expanded and much closer approximation to the general ideal is possible within mainstream settings. In the US there are some interesting examples of schools-within-schools as part of the small school movement (Meier, 1995). In New Zealand, Māori "units" and institutional marae are fairly commonplace in mainstream schools. It is not difficult to conceive of whānau-based small schools in the imagination; actually conceiving them is another matter. As J.E. observed, Kia Aroha College's achievements were the result of a protracted struggle with the Ministry of Education, where people from the community worked with the educators on a common project they were strongly committed to. Alliances between educators, whānau, the local community, and more mature students are likely to be necessary to establish small schools in mainstream settings. In state schools this means the

Principal and other power-holders, including sufficient classroom teachers, have to be willing to struggle for whānau-based socio-cultural contexts. Realizing a culturally-based education and leadership is also dependent on every educator developing their cultural competence. The possibility of more character-designated schools, as an alternative to Charter Schools, also remains.

## **5.3 Conclusions**

In this section I draw together the major conclusions of my study, and discuss the implications for researchers who want to investigate student leadership, especially of a culturally responsive and critical kind.

### **Student conceptions and enactment of leadership**

My study lends some support to the argument that student conceptions of leadership are substantially different to those typically held by adults. My research suggests that a plurality of Māori and Pasifika students at Kia Aroha College share an affinity for the informal, shared leadership that underprivileged youth in the US (Roach et al., 1999), and youth from diverse social backgrounds elsewhere possess. Whānau leadership is viewed by the students as a highly collaborative process, with leadership shared across the senior students, and to an extent the juniors, rather than a matter of positional power for a few. As per the relevant literature, the students at Kia Aroha spoke of the different abilities and preferences of the senior leaders. Significantly, when the students identified the qualities of leadership they were ethical values, rather than the leadership traits described in the adult literature. The diffused property of student leadership at Kia Aroha College aligned with the flexibility and fluidity that Roach et al. (1999) discussed, with students moving from role to role. Additionally, the notion of older, and/or more experienced students demonstrating leadership, and younger and/or less experienced ones learning from them, was also present at the school. As I have shown, the relational aspects of whānau leadership were strongly influenced by the idea that older siblings help younger ones, and other familial tropes. The emphasis given by the students to group benefits and strong reciprocity can be likened to the commitment of successful youth groups to sustaining excellence for the benefit of the group that Roach et al. (1999) identified. To the wisdom in spontaneity that Roach et al. identified, I add the wisdom of culturality and communality.

There are two findings about student conceptions of their leadership which may provide some direction for researchers in other contexts. First, the idea of self-leadership is important to the

students, and sits outside the literature. Self-leadership is not simply a synonym for autonomy. The idea of leading oneself, in particular, and following one's better moral and rational inclinations for the common good, as well as the personal, are not meanings integral to the liberal ideal of the autonomous person "who reflects upon and freely chooses from amongst a plurality of conceptions of the good" (Suissa, 2010, p. 20). Second, the idea that leadership can be unconscious is counter-intuitive, but recognizable in role-modelling, for example. Some aspects of the structure of leadership seemed to elude students, partly due to definitional uncertainties of leadership, and partly due to its diffused property. An expanded definition of youth leadership might incorporate these insights, and others yet to be produced.

I have shed some light on how students' view their own authority, and how to theorize and investigate student authority by drawing on political philosophy. The students themselves problematized their authority, which should prompt further research. It ought to be of particular interest to those with humanist, Marxist convictions, as well as those on the broad libertarian left. Any pedagogical project proclaiming alternatives to the status quo has to address certain fundamental issues related to their projected social ideal, which in turn ought to influence pedagogy. These issues cannot be reduced to general principles, and need to be explored in context. The answers as they apply to adults and youth, here and now, as a prefiguration of a potential futurity, are crucial. Relatedly, what youth think, and what they may come to think, about authority, leadership, and society is a vital area for research, and for pedagogy.

As well as providing some support to the international literature on the possible, cross-cultural preferences of secondary school students for leadership, my small study has added some much needed Māori and Pasifika student perspectives on their leadership. Crucially, Kia Aroha College has made a virtue of home-culture, which has allowed student leadership to develop along the lines identified in the pertinent literature and summarized above. The particularities and deeply felt personal significance of culture-as-ethnicity, and whānau leadership, sit alongside possible and actual universalities. Any cross-cultural student preferences for leadership do not down-grade the importance of particular cultures. The reader should not focus on the "cross" and ignore the "cultural." More research on student leadership in relation to home and school culture is warranted. Even if it is proven as generally true that students prefer leadership models derived from familial and neighbourhood experience, there can be no assumption that those preferences are aligned with youth sharing power with one another.

## **The influence of school context on student leadership**

In simple terms, the whānau context of Kia Aroha College has grown whānau leadership, and my research represents a small contribution to the study of how school context affects student leadership. At a higher level of analysis, my application of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/static methodology helped to theorize the seven properties of leadership as an ideational structure drawn from the cultural structure, and linked to the communal structure of the school as part of a local system. In turn, students are influenced by, and activate, the structure of leadership and the powers of the whānau communal structure. This reciprocal causation is realized by inter-agential activity within the social context of the school. The school's social web of interconnected structures and communal-cultural context is linked to wider, overlapping social webs, and home-culture is integrated (and modified) into the school culture. The morphostatic activity of the students reproduced the structure of whānau leadership, partly because whānau leadership is experienced as an empowering set of social practices. The bonds of whānau, culture, wider community, and strong reciprocity contribute to students' morphostatic leadership activities. I propose that using an analytical dualist approach can stimulate rigorous research and theorization.

In connection to the effects of school context, as social structure and socio-cultural context, I must qualify the support my research gives to the literature that argues students prefer non-positional leadership. As McNae's (2011) study suggests, school context can influence students to embrace a style of leadership that is restrictive rather than shared, and about hierarchical power rather than empowerment. In other words, student leadership may develop in more authoritarian, or more libertarian directions, depending on the context as heavily defined by the more powerful adults. A school with adult notions of student leadership as positional and restricted to a few, and culturally homogenizing, could influence students to adapt to what is on offer, and (perhaps) internalize the associated norms. The question of what kind of school, and what kind of student leader, ought to be created is linked to what kind of society schools ought to be designed for. It is also about how educators and family ought to prepare students to negotiate the status quo. How school contexts influence student conceptualizations and enactment of leadership requires more research.

## **Lessons**

There are general lessons about whānau leadership that can be drawn from this single case study that might benefit similar student populations in mainstream settings. The most important lesson I draw is the desirability and feasibility of cultural leadership that coheres with the

aspirations of students and their families to succeed as members of their culture and communities. The individuality, culturality, and communality of students, as leaders and in all their school roles, ought to have the chance to flourish at school as a matter of right. A whānau-based education can potentially benefit each and all.

Thinking somewhat tangentially, there are implications for Pākehā student leadership and the social context of their schooling. Pākehā culture is diverse. There are European communal and cultural traditions and beliefs, related to the labour movement, or other cultures of social transformation, secular and religious, which point in different directions to those of, say, neo-liberalism with its belief in *homo economicus* (Curl, 2012; Ealham, 2010; Ellerman, 1992; Restakis, 2010; Vieta, 2012; Whyte & Whyte, 1991; Wilbert and White, 2011). So it may be that values of egalitarian, voluntary and free cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity, combined with traditions of labour union and industrial democracy, could underpin a reconceptualized form of critical leadership for Pākehā students. Māori, Pasifika, and individuals from any ethnic group, could freely contribute to such a critical leadership, and transform it to meet their own cultural aspirations. Whether there is the political will and resources to achieve such a critical pedagogy is another matter.

Returning to the whānau context for student leadership, it will probably be difficult to achieve given its overt political stance, and opposing political forces. Most schools are covertly political, and often unaware of the emergent properties of interrelated social structures that operate in complex ways at the local, national, and global level. Schools are covertly political when they adapt students to the prevailing set of social power relationships, without offering genuine, improved educational alternatives for those individuals, or empowering all students to question the fundamental, structural inequalities of society. To believe that *te reo* Māori and Pasifika languages are unsuited to the modern world; that bilingualism is a hindrance not a help, that Māori and Pasifika should assimilate to the dominant Pakeha culture to better succeed in that society, is to have a set of empirical and political claims. These beliefs, and the resultant educational policies, are enmeshed in wider social webs of power relations (see May, 2012), i.e. politics as ideology and practice, whether educators, students, and parents recognize this or not. When schools choose to be monolingual, for example, it is a political choice with political effects, even when choices are made with the best intentions, or when the alternative of bilingualism simply did not occur to the decision-makers. Once we factor in politics as power relations, the task of achieving a culturally responsive and emancipatory education to support

the appropriate cultural leadership reveals the scope of the challenge, but it also clarifies the nature of the difficulties in the path that lies ahead of those who decide to brave it.

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