



# Grandparenting Among Māoris of New Zealand: Reflecting on Meanings

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Accepted: 7 February 2023 / Published online: 16 February 2023

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## Abstract

Regardless of nation and culture, grandparents have been instrumental in the survival of families and communities as well as the preservation of cultures. This study explored the meaning and roles of grandparenting among Maori grandparents in New Zealand as a possible platform for advancing the conversation on the significance of grandparents in the lives of people across cultures. Participants interviewed included 17 Māori grandparents to great, great grandparents in Aotearoa New Zealand, living in intergenerational homes. A phenomenology approach was used to analyze the data. Five themes were extracted that elucidated the meaning of the roles of grandparenting from the perspective of Māori grandparents: Elders' responsibilities from a cultural perspective; support, resources, and assets; socio-political and economic challenges; current state of Elders' and role in family, and benefits and rewards. Implications and recommendations are discussed towards a more systemic and culturally responsive support of grandparents.

**Keywords** Grandparenting · Māori · Culturally responsive services · Pacific Islanders elderly

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Grandparents across nations and cultures have been instrumental in the survival of families and communities as well as the preservation of cultures. To say that grandparents are important in the 21st century is an understatement of their integral role in aiding children and grandchildren in effectively navigating changes resulting from significant local, national, and global events. This article offers a discussion of the meaning of grandparenting among Māori grandparents in New Zealand as a possible platform for advancing the conversation on the significance of grandparents in the lives of people across cultures.

## Perspectives on Grandparenting

Early in the study of grandparenting, multidimensional conceptualizations abounded. Several authors concluded that the experience of grandparents were so vast and diverse as to render generalizability nearly impossible (Clavan, 1978; Hagestad, 1985). As if to counter this ambiguity, the literature concerning grandparenting shifted its focus to custodial grandparents. Given the size of the population, this area of study is well deserved. In 2011 the US Census Bureau reported that 7.8 million children lived with a grandparent. Among these, almost 25% of 1.9 million children resided with a grandparent, alone.

The salient areas of study within this shift of focus have been custodial grandparents vis-a-vis epidemics (e.g., HIV and drug epidemic of the 1980 and 1990) or other factors that impact the safety of children (e.g., child abuse) (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2000; Minkler, Roe, & Robertson-Beckley, 1994; Whitley, Kelley, & Sipe, 2001). Others have examined grandparents as resources during stressful times, such as divorce or illness in family life courses (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007; Silverstein & Ruiz, 2006). In both circumstances, the grandparents negotiate the challenges of raising children and the trajectories of their aging processes. However, while decreasing ambiguity, the exploration of grandparenting in the literature may have also reduced the experience of grandparenting to a limited set of role options.

An emerging body of literature has returned to studying the phenomena of grandparenting as a central element of cultural expression across diverse populations (Ofahengaue Vakalahi et al., 2007). For example, it is common in Caribbean communities throughout the diaspora that grandparents offer critical cultural and social capital. During the migration processes, children often remain in the homeland with grandparent as their parents travel abroad seeking economic stability. As trends in migration from the Caribbean change and the migrants' economic conditions and citizen statuses stabilize, grandparents often travel to the host county to provide care for grandchildren (Olwig, 1999; Plaza, 2000). It is also well understood that grandparents preserve and perpetuate the customs and traditions of a culture (Ofahengaue Vakalahi et al., 2008). Further study has demonstrated the importance of such a sharing of culture within intergenerational contexts (Mjelde-Mossey, 2007; Wiscott, & Kopera-Frye, 2000).

Nonetheless, modern grandparenting faces significant challenges. For example, Ofahengaue Vakalahi et al. (2007) cautions that cultural duality, language, and acculturation barriers may negatively impact grandparenting practices. Similarly, Lou

and Chi (2012) discussed changing contextual factors such as increased population mobility and life expectancy that challenge and adds complexity to intergenerational relationships. Additionally, Torsch (2007) asserts that while continuity of traditions contributes to stable frames of reference, transformation in societies may alter traditional ways of grandparenting. In the face of these challenges, grandparenting continues. Though mobility may increase the physical distance between generations, longevity may expand opportunities for maintaining long-term relationships between grandchild and grandparent. Maintaining continuity of grandparenting within a traditional context may only be possible for those with the resources to do so. On the other hand, the cultural identities associated with grandparenting may prove to be resilient as it engages tradition and innovation in the process of continuing and disrupting multiple cultural meaning systems.

As previously mentioned, relevant to intergenerational living with Pacific people is the passing on of cultural knowledge, ways, and doing from Elders to the younger generation (Ofahengaue Vakalahi et al., 2008). While information on Māori grandparenting is limited in the literature, what is available can shed light on the perceptions and roles of Elders in the Māori culture. Studies that are available on this traditional practice have shown its importance in the lives and well-being of Māori grandparents. In addition, their role as the holder and teachers of cultural knowledge contributes to the preservation of Māori culture (Families Commission, 2012; Ofahengaue Vakalahi & Taiapa, 2013). As the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, Māoris are impacted by historical and current economic and political forces (McCormack, 2012), the roles of Elders within their families and communities have adapted to meet the immediate needs of their families for survival, which consequently disengages them from their cultural practices and language. For example, the consequence of urbanization in Aotearoa New Zealand has impelled Māori families to move away from their ancestral *marae* (meeting grounds and integral place for Māori culture), thus limiting cultural learning opportunities for their children and grandchildren. In a similar vein, the younger Māori generation is faced with navigating cultural duality and negotiating their identity and place amidst socio-cultural and political influences and thus are consequently moved further from their cultural identity. The literature that posits that family and ethnic identity is linked to positive well-being outcomes (Bourke et al., 2018) make this a concern. Therefore, the role of family in connecting the younger generation to their cultural identity becomes all the more relevant. Thus, the process of grandparenting fosters an intergenerational reciprocity that positively impacts a people, the perpetuation of a culture, and the continued progression of its future generation.

## Methods

### Research Design

The qualitative research methods of phenomenology focus on accurately describing the lived experiences of individuals in relation to the phenomenon in study. The focus on understanding the perspectives of individuals in the context in which their

experiences occurred is of importance in understanding the phenomenon (Jones, 2001; Groenewald, 2004; Maypole & Davies, 2001). In this study, data gathering was a reciprocal process conducted via in-depth interviews and focus groups and data explication/data analysis entailed exploring the phenomenon as a whole, in context, and “transforming the data through interpretation” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 49; Hycner, 1999). For this analysis, the discussion will focus on the meaning of the role of grandparenting among Māori grandparents living in intergenerational homes with their grandchildren in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

In terms of sampling procedures, a nonprobability network sampling method (Naderifar & Ghajjaie, 2017) was used to recruit study participants, given the known fact that Māori and Pacific communities have large social networks. Community network was used to recruit a community consultant who was a grandparent with links to a community *kapa haka* group (performing arts group) in which Māori grandparents were involved with their grandchildren. The community consultant recruited all of the participants who met the participant criteria through the *kapa haka* group. The use of grandparents to recruit other grandparents is a culturally appropriate method in the Māori and Pacific communities. Interviews and completion of the questionnaire were scheduled during times convenient to the participants and in places comfortable to participants. The research team was hired from the local communities in order to maintain trust and connection with participants (Curry & Jackson, 2003).

Study participants included 17 Māori grandparents in Aotearoa, New Zealand, male and female, living in intergenerational homes. Status of participants ranged from grandparents to great, great grandparents. Participants were orientated and asked to complete consent forms as a requirement for participating in the study.

## Data Gathering

The setting for the study was Aotearoa, New Zealand. Data were collected from grandparents through in-depth individual interviews. In emphasizing the significance of the naturalistic environment, interviews were conducted at participants’ homes or other preferred locations. The individual interviews were a one-time, two hours in length activity using a semi-structured interview guide approach. Interviews were done by two of the research team members: the 4th author is of Māori ancestry and is fluent in the Māori language, and the 5th author who was of Tongan ancestry and the Principal Investigator of the research project. Cultural protocols were honored and observed, in particular on the status of Elders and grandparents as heads of their *whanau* (families, see Appendix A for translations). Thus the participants’ arbitrated the direction and the depth of the interviews. Interviews were tape-recorded and interviewers also took detailed notes. Throughout the study, guidance and feedback from Māori and Pacific faculty at Massey University and the Māori and Pacific communities were solicited and honored.

## Data Explication

Following data collection, information was transcribed verbatim. In keeping with the tenants of phenomenological methodology (Hycner, 1999), the explication pro-

cess began with, first, bracketing and phenomenological reduction in which all of the researchers/ authors were fully and deliberately immersed in the phenomenon as experienced by each participant, consistently bracketing his/her personal worldviews (Crabtree & Miller, 2022). This was an important step as the research team consisted of three Polynesian descendants (Samoan, Māori, and Tongan), a European American, and African American faculty and researchers. The European American author also has experience working in Pacific Islander indigenous communities. The 3rd author's scholarship includes research on social issues of the gerontology population. Bracketing occurred throughout the entire explication process. Second, the researchers delineated the units of meaning which focused on considering the literal content of the data for each participant, the number of times it occurred and how it occurred, extracting and isolating statements that illuminated the phenomenon; and scrutinizing these statements until redundancy (Moustakas, 1994). Third, using the list of non-redundant units of meaning for each participant, the researchers clustered or grouped these units to form themes or units of significance within a holistic context (Creswell, 2009; Sadala & Adorno, 2002). Fourth, a summary was generated that incorporated all of the themes into a holistic context for each participant. Lastly, general and unique themes for all participants were generated into a composite summary (Hycner, 1999).

## Findings

### Participants

Study participants included 17 grandparents, four males and, 13 females, age 50 and older. To allow for triangulation and ensure that multiple perspectives were represented, seven grandchildren were interviewed in a focus group, and two grandchildren were interviewed individually. Only the interviews with grandparents were examined for this article. This allowed for a closer look exclusively at the lived experiences of the grandparents as central to fostering intergenerational living and relationships. This exclusive focus on grandparents may shed some light as to ways of preparing the next generation of grandparents.

## Results

**Themes** Five overarching themes were extracted from the data that elucidated the meaning of the role of grandparenting from the perspective of Māori grandparents: (1) Elders' responsibilities from a cultural perspective; (2) Support, resources, and assets, (3) Sociopolitical and economic challenges, (4) Current state of Elders' and role in family, and (5) Benefits and rewards. Each theme included additional levels of subthemes. These five themes were interrelated, as seen in Fig. 1, and are presented below in detail.

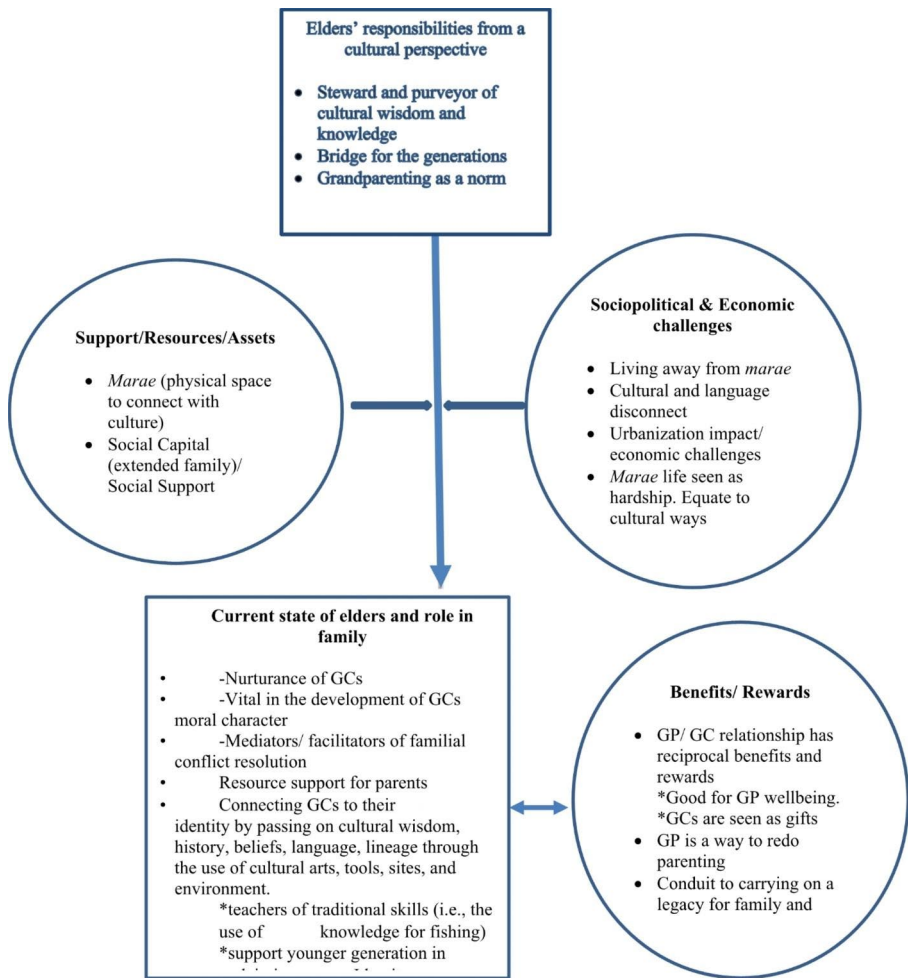


Fig. 1 Themes and subthemes on the meaning of grandparenting

**Elders' Responsibilities from a Cultural Perspective** Nine participants discussed Elders' responsibilities from a cultural perspective. These included *steward of cultural ways of knowing and doing*, *acting as a bridge for the generations*, and *grandparenting as a norm and tradition for tupuna (Elders)*.

Participants spoke of the essential role of *tupuna* as *stewards of cultural wisdom and knowledge*. Māori Elders were seen as the holders of *whakapapa* (ancestral lineage), who are knowledgeable about cultural practices, protocols, and history. As articulated by Sofia, ".it means the continuation of our *whakapapa*.... You know this is my family, this is me...and the enjoyment that one gets knowing who we are." Emily also speaks of her experience with her grandparents as a source of cultural practices, beliefs of health and well-being and their connection to the ecology. She explained that her grandmother:

... understood about the different plants and the barks of the trees and everything... And so if anything was going wrong with our illness or with our wellness she would go down and she would *whakapapa* and talk to the river and then would bring back water, *wai*, and then she would say some *karakia* (chant) and sprinkle it over us.

Participants shared that traditionally Māori Elders have *acted as a bridge for the generations*. Providing guidance for cultural development of grandchildren, and providing leadership in families, Elders performed bridging tasks between past, present, and future generations. As Noreen described it, “To me its about working with the parents, who are our kids, to growing the little darlings, knowing that there’s other little darlings to come along. For us, apart from his (*mokopuna*) *tipuranga* (growth/ growing up) and *oranga* (health/well-being) was his *taha* Māori (Māori perspective).” Additionally, the coalescence of generations was also evident as the different generations came together to support future generations. For example, Tina described working with her grand-daughter’s parents to support her education:

We go to school and she knows about homework ... she’s an absolute delight. And then she can be an absolute pain like a teenager, but I think because she knows she can always go home or, if she oversteps the line, she will go home. And that’s what her mother said to her: if you don’t do this or you don’t do that, we’re bringing you home. So there’s always a sense of being on pretty good behaviour.

The idea of *grandparenting as a norm and tradition* was communicated by participants primarily through descriptions of their own upbringings. Thus, roles that they took on as grandparents had already been modeled by their own grandparents. Tammy described the responsibility of being a grandparent as she has experienced it, both as a child and grandparent herself:

At first it was a duty, but now, to me it is something more than that. It is a traditional thing. I think it should be carried on. The love (and my father always said that) for a grandchild is more than your own children ... I think the reason why they are very special is that they are your future, and so what you teach, what you imbed in them –is what was taught to you by your parent’s, your *tupuna* and they carry it on – it’s an ongoing thing.

**Support, Resources, and Assets** An aspect that impacts Elders’ cultural responsibilities and their role as grandparents are *support, resources, and assets* they are able to access or are available to them. This theme articulates the types of support, resources, and assets that were important to support the role of Elder’s to their community and within their *whanau*. Six participants discussed available support, resources, and assets for Elders in their roles of taking care of grandchildren and connecting the generations through culture. This included *extended family social capital* as well as the *marae as a physical space to connect with culture*.

Several participants discussed extended family relationships, which provide support to children beyond what parents and grandparents can provide. Shirley, for example, described this environment in detail that she experienced in her village growing up:

I had heaps of Nannies who were alive when I was little. Our village where my grandparents both lived is Muriwai, a 20 minute drive south of Gisborne, and just up the road is Manutuke ... my great grandmother lived in the *whare* (house) just behind my grandparents, and some of her sisters lived just down the road. I have lots of memories being with them, and just being looked after them all the time. There were lots of gardens so we never had to go back to Nan's for a kai, everybody else fed us; or there was just food everywhere on the trees and in the gardens, so we didn't have to go back to a house even. There was always someone watching over us. It didn't matter which part of the village we were at, they were all *whanau* – so that's the model I'm used to. If I think about my dad's side, same thing. It didn't matter which *marae* I was at.

While the *marae* is a central place in a child's experience growing up, it was also described by participants as both a *physical place and symbolism for maintaining Māori traditional ways*. Fay described how this stands in particular contrast to how things are done in a more Western environment:

My tikanga on the *marae* was what we could do and what we can't do and what should happen and where you start from and you start from around the back, washing up, dishes, cooking, helping out around the back, tidying up. It took me a while to come into the *wharenuī* (meeting house) ... here it's totally different you know a *Pākehā* environment. You know, to get the proper teaching you have to go back on your own *marae*. But you know here you have a limit, there's no limit back home. The kids can only go to the *kura* and then come back and the playground. But when you are on the *marae* you have everything there but you know.

**Sociopolitical, Economic, and Culture Duality Challenges** While support, resources, and assets help to support the maintenance of the Elder's role and responsibilities within their respective communities and *whanau*, factors such as ***sociopolitical, economic, and cultural duality*** are challenges that also simultaneously impact the Elder's role and responsibilities. Participants also discussed these challenges experienced by grandparents in maintaining and passing on traditional culture. These included *cultural disconnect, living away from marae and marae as a symbol of physical and economic challenges*.

Several of the grandparents discussed the *cultural disconnect* that had happened in their own families, particularly the loss of language in their generation. This proves to be a challenge when it comes to passing on Māori identity to their grandchildren. Emily described how this took place in her own family:



They were fluent speakers, my Parents, my Father anyway, and my Grandparents were fluent speakers but we never got much Māori because it wasn't the thing—and Granddad use to say to a certain degree, English was our bread and butter language therefore we had to be able to speak English. And he used to say you'll pick up the Māori later. Of course you never do really, it was always too hard.

Similarly, grandparents shared the cultural disconnect that continues with their grandchildren as the younger generation are distant from their cultural heritage. While this is a challenge, grandparents find creative ways to expose their *mokopuna* (grandchildren) to the lore of their ancestors. Naomi explains:

When he (*mokopuna*) was younger he didn't want anything you know he didn't want to... But the Interesting thing is that those cousins that are here and have the *reo* haven't wanted to come to the traditional places that I have wanted to take them, not at all. And, of course so, they all get a story from me. We go for a walk along the *awa*, we get a story, they get a story. We talk about certain trees and certain points along the *awa* that we were taught as children. I hand them that story. We talk about our *maunga*. I talk to them about that. There's a lot of places. We have got about 145, 145 *wāhi tapu* sites here, sacred sites here in the city that I can take them through.

In addition to linguistic distance, *living away from the marae* was described as a challenge by Fay, who noted, "It will be really great once we can get back on to the marae. Like you know, people are starting to go back onto the *marae* it might be a big advantage. But I think we still have got to come back to the environment that we are living in now. Finally, Emily also mentioned that some may remember the *marae* as a *symbol of physical and economic challenges* they experienced as youth:

My Grandmother was very strong, extremely strong, so when she spoke to us in Māori and we didn't understand or obey she would smack us ... my brothers were brought up with my Grandparents, they were farmers in a way. They milked cows and they did all sorts and then there was an expectation that my brothers would be out there helping. I remember them saying that they would be up at 4 o'clock in the morning looking for these damn cows that they had to bring in to milk ... they had to rely on rain water and so I don't think that bathing and showering was a norm, you just had a wash (laughs). And in a way when I think about it how they were, regretted having to be brought up by my Grandparents because of the, I don't know whether they classified it as ill-treated or whether they were a bit hard on them.

**Current state of Elders and role in family** The interplay between the themes mentioned earlier coalesce to give a picture of the current state of Māori Elders and their role in the family. This theme was discussed by eight of the respondents and included: *connecting grandchildren to Māori identity, nurturance of grandchildren,*

*resource support for parents, being facilitators of conflict resolution in familial relationships, and helping grandchildren develop their moral character.*

The role that was most often discussed by participants in reflecting on their experiences and the meaning of grandparenting was that of *connecting grandchildren to Māori identity*. This included connecting grandchildren to Māori language, protocols, tools, practices and culturally relevant places as well as promoting the benefits of having a connection to their Māori culture. For example, Lisa described the multitude of different ways in which she involves her grandchildren in culture:

So my role as Nanny is always looking for those opportunities for the *mokopuna* to express themselves, to develop. And those are areas such as in our culture, ensuring that they have access to their *marae*, and that's all of them (*marae*), not just Parewahawaha, the one we go out to in Bulls, although that is significant; access to their *hāhi* (church) whatever that might be, because on the other side of their *whanau* they are Nga Morehu - (Ratana – Māori prophet movement) so making sure that they have access to that; making sure that they have access to our language, *te reo Māori*; *wairuatanga* (spirituality) and understanding everything that we have been taught; and the biggest part is ensuring that they, all of their relationships not only from our side but also from the fathers side of the family. A big role aye, but it's very different from that with your own child. You're looking a lot broader so that they really do understand who they are right from the outset.

Another primary subtheme that participants focused on in describing their role as grandparents was that of *nurturance of grandchildren*. This subtheme went beyond merely caretaking and providing support to parents, and included the development of particular kinds of support to their grandchildren, such as focusing on teaching rather than discipline and providing a safe and stable place for grandchildren, both physically and emotionally. Naomi described the unique relationship of trust that she has with her granddaughter:

I mean her father comes in and I know he just pops in and he wants to know well how was the weekend and he wants to know how is it going and has she told you why she didn't get into Te Piringa for example? And he wants to know all those things and she has spoken to me about it, about wanting to get into, just say for example she wants to get into a team and she didn't. She won't tell them but in some way she will tell me. What her feelings are why, what's happening in the bigger scheme of things it's not just what's happening in the movement its all thus influences around I think. And I just sit and listen to her and I say well have you ever thought about doing it like this and she will say "I no I never thought about that".

Grandparents also serve as *resource support for parents*. This includes providing childcare, financial and emotional support, and acting as mediators of parent and child relationships. Evelyn described supporting her children in this way: "I guess

the number one thing is babysitting ... I'm there for anything they need to know, coz obviously I've been through bringin up children and anything I could pass on to them...as far as babies go...and what stage of their life this happens or is meant to happen."

According to participants, grandparents also serve as *faciliators of conflict resolution in familial relationships*. Noreen described how the grandparents supported a couple when there was a potential conflict among the parents due to disputed parentage of a grandchild:

The other thing too is that there were issues in their own relationship before he was born. They were just kids. There was lots of *korero* (talk) about whether the child was Pita's or not. The good thing though was that we were open about it. They weren't so much but we were. The other grandparents and parents were. We were all quite open about it. Whatever the case was that baby was going to be born, no matter what ... so that was a bit of a hurdle. But it strengthens you as a *whanau*.

The final grandparent role discussed by participants was that of *helping grandchildren develop their moral character*. As Naomi explained:

I believe that [grandparenting] is the most important. You are the most important person to that moko. And I say that because through my experience, my children, my *mokopuna* will look over my parents' head and go, "Is that right Nanny? And it's looking for that yes, it's looking for clarification. All of those things so that they know that yes, that is right. So if dad says something then my moko will go, "Is that right Nan?" or she will ring me and ask me.

**Rewards and Benefits** Finally, a related theme that emerged from the narratives of all the participants concerned the benefits and rewards of grandparenting. This theme appears to influence and be influenced by the *current state of elders and role in family*. This included: *reciprocal benefits for grandchildren and grandparents, provide opportunity to redo parenting, and conduit to carrying on a legacy for family and a people*. All participants spoke fondly of their *mokopuna*. They were described as "gifts," "best thing that ever happened," and "treasures." Participants also described the benefits of grandparenting as, "good for my well-being," "fun," "exciting," and "nothing compares to it."

A primary subtheme of the rewards and benefits, as described by the participants, was that grandparenting provided an *opportunity to redo parenting*. For some, this meant the chance to do things differently, to learn from past parenting experiences, changing what didn't work, and keeping what worked. As Lisa stated,

I guess the main thing is that you've got another shot at providing a view of being for the *mokopuna* that you couldn't do for your child. So to me, it's like you got another shot at working alongside the *mokopuna*..

Tammy added on how her grandparenting has changed her ways of parenting:

...it makes you more responsible, do things for him (grandchild). With our own children, I didn't have the time or patience. It slows you down and makes you think before you speak. It makes you careful of what you say.

Participants also saw grandparenting as their contribution to the younger generation of by *carrying on the legacy for family and a people*. As Tammy articulated:

I think the reason why they are very special is that they are your future, and so what you teach, what you imbed in them –is what was taught to you by your parent's, your *tupuna* and they carry it on.

Sofia also spoke proudly of her grandchildren and what they know of their legacy: “I think it gives me a lot of pleasure, as I said last night, my grandchildren standing and being able to say who they are and where they come from and who their families are.”

As shown in the narratives, reciprocal relationship between the current state of Māori Elders' role in the family influences benefits and rewards received and visa versa. The reciprocity not only impacts Elders' but also multiple generations (children, grandchildren, etc.) within the family to support social, cultural, wellbeing needs.

## Discussion

This study sought to explore the roles and the meaning of such role of contemporary Māori grandparents in the lives of their families and communities. As mentioned earlier, a total of five interrelated themes were extracted from the narratives of grandparents of Māori ancestry on the meaning of grandparenting from their cultural perspective. The first theme showed their *cultural perspective of the role and responsibilities of Elders' and grandparents*. Findings on this theme resonated with previous research using the Ho'okele model (Vakalahi et al., 2013) which perceived the role of grandparents as similar to Elders who were the repository of cultural knowledge, customs, and experience, and the bridge for the past, present, and future generations (Families Commission, 2012; Laumatia-Paki, 2021)). Interestingly similar to other Pacific Islander cultures (Ofahengaue Vakalahi et al., 2007), grandparenting from the Māori participants' perspective was that it was a normal practice. This wasn't only in name but importantly in practice. It was the expectation from the grandparents perspective that they are to be actively involved in the grandchildren's lives through childcare that involves not only the passing on of cultural wisdom but also to perform parenting duties, however, for the latter, to a lesser extent. While grandparents view the care of their *mokupuna* as a given responsibility, conflicts do arise with parents of the grandchildren when this process is not effectively negotiated (Breheny, Stephens, & Splisbury, 2013).

How expectations of grandparenting from a Māori perspective influences *the current state of Elders and role in the family*, are heavily influenced by *support*,

*resources, and assets* available to the grandparents, and the *sociopolitical and economic challenges* they are confronted with for survival and sustenance. Whereas resources and support such as connection with cultural space such as the *marae*; social support through extended family, friends, and community; and financial stability helps to sustain traditional roles of grandparents for their grandchildren, socio-political and economic concerns can create challenges.

A report by Ofahengau Vakalahi et al. (2007) mentioned that often times Māori grandparents provide financial support for their families and consider their needs above their own. Reiterated by the findings of this study, grandparents serve as financial, social, cultural, and emotional support to their *whanau*. Additionally, they are integral to a social support system that is integral to the maintenance of cultural practices and knowledge (*tikanga* Māori). They are the link of the *whanau* to the *whakapapa* and the *marae*, thus fostering social capital and network. Such a support system is essential in times of need (i.e., death, care of a nonblood minor) as reciprocity of the collective is the norm that provides the necessary resources to its familial and community members (Vakalahi & Taiapa, 2013).

As urbanization, modernization, and political concerns continue to persist (Wilson et al., 2021), so do challenges of grandparenting and expectations of Elders' within the Māori culture (Dawes et al., 2022). While the role of grandparenting will not cease in the foreseeable future, its significance and influence as *tupuna* in the lives of the younger generation may wane given the challenges and barriers they face (Sepulveda et al., 2016). Some of the grandparents spoke of how they were discouraged from speaking the Māori language by their parents because they grew up during a period when they were taught that western education and language led to a successful future. Some of the reminiscence of these thoughts persisted on to their children and grandchildren. Consequently, adverse social and health outcomes are at disproportionate rates for Māoris due to the lingering impact of historical trauma through the generations from colonization (Came et al., 2021; Wirihana & Smith, 2014). Mainstream systems (education, political, health, justice) and their standard approach have not been effective in addressing much of the social and health ills of the Māoris (i.e., Bishop et al., 2009; Came et al., 2021; Sutherland, 2020; Worrall, 2006) and have acknowledged the need to search for answers within the Māori communities (Moewaka et al., 2021; Simpson et al., 2022). With the re-empowerment movement of reclaiming the Māori identity as essential to the well-being and future of its people, the current and younger generations are discovering the significance of understanding their cultural roots and identity (Ramke & Paul-Burke, 2015). Thus, the role of grandparenting becomes all the more relevant to shepherd this process for their grandchildren.

The current state of grandparenting has morphed over the generations as a result of environmental changes at various levels (macro, mezzo, micro), however much of it remains as they continue to be the conduit to Māori culture and heritage for their *mokopuna* and *whanau* (Hokowhitu et al., 2020). To a lesser extent is exposure to cultural sites and place as they move further away from primary cultural places such as the *marae*. As shown in our findings, what is different from their own experience of being parented by grandparents is the reality of the cultural duality of their *moko-*

*puna* - faced with a different environment from how they grew up, negotiating their roles as *tupuna* becomes a challenge.

Yet and still our findings indicate that grandparenting comes with great benefits on intra- and interpersonal levels. The inherent joy that was expressed for having *mokopuna* was in itself an internal reward and thus, motivation for grandparents. While focusing on one's happiness is important to one's health and well-being, collectivist cultures are more inclined to focus on the welfare of others, value building and maintaining relationships, and sustaining good standings in the community (Kim & Chu, 2011). As suggested by the attribution theory of motivation, when the perceived reward (intra-/ interpersonal) is strong, the motivation is likewise (Weiner, 2000). This perspective can shed light on why benefits and rewards from grandparenting are vital for its success and sustainability.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of grandparenting, as perceived by grandparents themselves, is essential to the welfare of families and the continuation of cultural wisdom and ways of doing. Thus, support for grandparents is essential not only for the reasons mentioned but also for the welfare and well-being of grandparents. Studies have shown that indigenous people who were more connected to their cultures were more likely to have life satisfaction (Barusch & Steen, 1996) and better health outcomes (Bourke et al., 2018) than those who aren't. Important to consider are the types of support for grandparents to be included. They are leaders of their *whanau* and communities and thus are essential to include in the discourse of services that impact them and their families. Additionally, as holders of cultural wisdom, customs, and practices, they are key in preserving the ways of the past and linkages to the future.

Given the reality of cultural duality for Māoris, supporting grandparents to continue to engage in preserving and linking the generations to cultural wisdom and practices is important. As more grandparents are taking responsibility for the care of their *mokupuna* in place of their parents (Families Commission, 2012), social, cultural, health, and financial support become necessary to navigate as such systems may appear to be antithetical to their cultural approach to healing and restoration (McPherson et al., 2015; Reweti et al., 2022).

## Appendix A

Reference for Māori words & places: Translations and meanings.

- Awa: water stream.
- Hāhi: church.
- Kapa Haka: performing arts group.
- Karakia: chant.
- Korero: talk, discussion.
- Kura: School.

- Marae: A space that consist of an assemblage of carved buildings on reserved land that belongs to certain tribe and family (lineage).
- Maunga: Mountain.
- Mokopuna: grandchild.
- Oranga: Health/ Wellbeing.
- Pākehā: a New Zealander of European descent.
- Parewahawaha: a marae located in Bulls, New Zealand.
- Reo/ Te reo Māori: voice or language/ Māori language.
- Taha Māori: Māori perspective.
- Te Piringa: Law School in Aoteaora New Zealand.
- Tipuranga: growth/growing up.
- Tupuna: Elders.
- Wai: water.
- Wairuatanga: spirituality.
- Wahi tapu: scared places/ sites.
- Whakapapa: ancestral lineage.
- Whanau: family, families.
- Whare: house.
- Wharenui: meeting house.

**Acknowledgements** This research was funded by the Fulbright New Zealand and U.S. Department of State, George Mason University, and supported by Massey University. The authors would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Māori grandparents in Palmerston North, Aotearoa, for entrusting us with their stories and sharing of their wisdom. Also, to Rachael Selby, Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata, Litea Meo-Sewabu, and researchers Rongomai Taiapa-Aporo and Terewai Rikihana who provided cultural consultation, guidance, and support throughout the entire project. This study would have been impossible without you. We are truly indebted.

**Authorship Statement** All authors have contributed to all aspects of this manuscript and grant permission for the final version to be published.

**Funding** This study was funded by the Fulbright New Zealand and U.S. Department of State, and George Mason University.

**Data Availability** The data that support the findings of this study are available from the Principal Investigator (last author) of the study. Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were collected under agreement with the Māori and Pacific faculty at Massey University and the Māori and Pacific communities. Data are available from the Principal Investigator with the permission of the Māori and Pacific faculty at Massey University and the study participants.

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