Telling their own stories: Māori entrepreneurship in the mainstream screen industry

Ella Y. Henry, Leo-Paul Dana and Patrick J. Murphy

Te Ara Poutama (Māori Development), Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand; Department of Entrepreneurship and Strategy, Montpellier Business School, Montpellier, France; Department of Management and Entrepreneurship, DePaul University, Chicago, IL, USA

ABSTRACT

We examined how factors from Indigenous entrepreneurship research (social capital, cultural capital, self-efficacy) help explain the high level of Māori entrepreneurial performance in the mainstream screen industry. Results, based on ten case studies and a one-year series of structured interviews, extend prior research by showing that these Indigenous entrepreneurs benefit jointly from two forms of capital: cultural and social. We found high levels of both forms to increase the desire for emancipation of cultural and community identity – not just individual identity – through entrepreneurship. Self-efficacy and storytelling helped ameliorate discontinuities across Indigenous and mainstream contexts. Our research sheds new light on how Indigenous ventures can pursue mainstream entrepreneurship while maintaining cultural identity. It also makes several distinct contributions to the Indigenous entrepreneurship literature. First, it provides an integrative theoretic review. Second, it illustrates a culturally appropriate methodology for researching Māori entrepreneurs with implications for other Indigenous communities. Third, it proposes cultural capital and social capital as a two-part framework for explaining Indigenous entrepreneurial action. Fourth, it shows how entrepreneurship can be empowering for Indigenous communities. Finally, our paper demonstrates that entrepreneurship is a promising mechanism for preserving and promoting the cultures of Māori and other Indigenous peoples.

Introduction

As a matter of tradition, Indigenous communities maintain certain practices that are unique to their own cultures. These practices can influence the social and economic activities of Indigenous community members and inform the personal identities that often distinguish them from others within the majority cultures that share their homelands. When Indigenous community members undertake entrepreneurship, it is rooted in a context that jointly entails the sociocultural and mainstream entrepreneurship contexts (Dana 2015; Murphy and Coombes 2009). Indigenous entrepreneurship research has thus identified unique barriers to the mainstream performance
of Indigenous ventures. Yet, it has also cast entrepreneurial activity as a way to surmount community disadvantages and as a means for community development (Cahn 2008; De Carolis and Saparito 2006; Peredo and Anderson 2006). In this paper, we focus on this gap.

The world’s population of Indigenous people accounts for approximately 370 million people in 70 countries (United Nations 2016). In many of their communities, historical contexts serve to hinder the mainstream impact of endogenous entrepreneurial-based development (Light and Dana 2013). Indigenous communities often look externally as a means to revitalize their societies while concurrently attempting to preserve and promote their traditional cultures. Entrepreneurship, a means of revitalization, has been shown to enhance self-determination, foster economic independence, and safeguard traditions in Indigenous communities (Bajada and Trayler 2014; Fryer et al. 2012). Yet, the specific linkages of these positive contributions across Indigenous and mainstream cultural settings are only poorly understood.

Our study examines these aspects of Indigenous entrepreneurship based on evidence from entrepreneurial venture cases in the Māori community. Although this Indigenous community is located primarily in New Zealand and includes approximately 600,000 people, or less than 15% of the national population (2013 Census of Population and Dwellings), the Māori have generated a considerable number of entrepreneurial ventures that embody Māori cultural values and promote Māori society via performance in mainstream settings.

As with most Indigenous entrepreneurs, the thinking and behaviors of Māori entrepreneurs derive in part from cultural values and personal identity. In general, personal identity is important to all entrepreneurs. It bolsters the conviction required to undertake an entrepreneurial venture despite the risks, uncertainties, and the prospect of failure (Cahn 2008). Whereas mainstream entrepreneurship research tends to conceptualize identity via cognitive and individual-based factors, the ontological status of personal identity is somewhat different for entrepreneurs in Indigenous communities. Minority culture is a salient part of one’s identity. For Indigenous entrepreneurs, the practices and activities of their communities are also definitional to personal identity. Therefore, the distinct behavioral norms deriving from one’s culture are known to serve reliably as unique drivers of Indigenous entrepreneurial action.

Based on this premise, Indigenous entrepreneurship research has also shown that social and cultural capital are important conceptual foundations for understanding entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities (Anderson, Park, and Jack 2007; Cahn 2008; McKeever, Anderson, and Jack 2014). Social capital assists Indigenous entrepreneurs via the resources it brings and the strategic relationships it generates within and without one’s community (Light and Dana 2013). Community-based entrepreneurs often utilize these relationships as enablers of economic activities (Frederking 2006). On the other hand, the role of cultural capital and its interaction with social capital are thought to be important but are somewhat less understood. Thus, when an Indigenous venture and its operations embody the values of its community, it is unclear how culture relates to – or how it can enhance – venture performance (Dana 2015).

We examined this question by researching a number of Indigenous entrepreneurial ventures engaged in mainstream entrepreneurship. We focus on the Māori community but, like most Indigenous entrepreneurship research, we intend to enhance understanding of Indigenous entrepreneurial performance in general. Our study also focuses on Māori screen industry entrepreneurs. The screen industry offers an appropriate setting for examining high
mainstream entrepreneurial performance by Indigenous entrepreneurs. Storytelling is a foundation of culture for Indigenous communities in general and for Māori in particular. Of course, it is also a core component of film production (Holtbrügge 2013; Simonds and Christopher 2013; Wuttunee, Loustel, and Overall 2007).

The first section of our paper undertakes a literature review of Indigenous entrepreneurship research, with a focus on the Māori. The second section presents an overview of Māori society and history that is important to a proper understanding of Māori entrepreneurs and their cultural context. The third section details the methodology and results of our study. Finally, the concluding section discusses our findings and contributions to Indigenous entrepreneurship research.

**Background and literature review**

Entrepreneurs often pursue strategic objectives that go beyond economic value creation to include the generation of social and natural forms of value (Bacq and Janssen 2011). This kind of entrepreneurial activity often goes beyond market forces to involve societal and community impact as indices of performance (Peredo and Chrisman 2006). Entrepreneurship research on triple-bottom line performance and alternative denominations of value shows that socially-purposeful entrepreneurs are often motivated by a need for emancipation (Anderson 2007). In particular, for Indigenous entrepreneurs, the potential for transcending the limits of current boundaries is a motivator of action. The desire for emancipation also entails a strong community orientation based on specific economic and social needs (Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen 2009). The specificity of those needs arises from the particular economic and social challenges facing a given Indigenous community, and it often goes beyond individual-level considerations to apply to the community level.

Along these lines, some of the challenges of Indigenous entrepreneurship are different from the ones often noted in mainstream entrepreneurship. Whereas the dominant theoretic themes of mainstream research focus on opportunity recognition, characteristics of entrepreneurial individuals, and the nature of the environments, Indigenous entrepreneurship research often takes an emancipatory-based perspective. The approach is different because it focuses on how entrepreneurs and communities can surmount unique social and environmental constraints that apply to them (Cant 2007). One method by which this research has examined Indigenous entrepreneurship entails a focus on lived experiences (Cope 2005). This empirical approach utilizes as data the evaluations a community ascribes to the actions of members. It captures some of the deeper aspects of meaning behind human performance. When it comes to Indigenous entrepreneurs, whose actions and perceptions tend to reside outside what is normally studied in the mainstream research, lived experiences are useful for explaining performance outcomes. As such, the approach is an appropriate one for Indigenous entrepreneurship studies.

Another unique aspect of Indigenous entrepreneurship involves the importance of communities and their effects on Indigenous entrepreneurial performance (Hindle and Lansdowne 2007). The conceptual foundation of this theoretic focus holds that Indigenous people construct self-identity and perceive the environment based on high-context concepts rooted in their communities (Cahn 2008; Hindle and Moroz 2010). Entrepreneurs in those communities thus define circumstances based on the cultural and symbolic structures with which they are highly familiar (Gupta and Fernandez 2009). In this way, one’s personal identity
functions with one's community as a guide for entrepreneurial action. When the community provides an interpretive framework for sense-making, Indigenous entrepreneurial behavior takes on a unique context that is not social and institutional but also spatial (Welter 2011). This importance of a community's physical space and boundaries are omnipresent for Indigenous populations. They bear upon the networks, households, family structures, tribal lands, and geographic areas as well as norms, policies, and regulations of work and life.

The boundary between an Indigenous community and mainstream society also influences Indigenous entrepreneurship behaviors. Indigenous entrepreneurship research explains this influence in terms of a commitment to one's community and culture that exceeds one's own self-interest (Welter 2011). The construct of community thus contextualizes and defines the area of Indigenous entrepreneurship based not only on spatial and temporal limits, but also in terms of demographic and geographic limits. In what follows, we review and extend these aspects of Indigenous entrepreneurship with respect to some the mainstream approaches to entrepreneurship research.

**Cognitive, cultural, and social approaches**

A large proportion of entrepreneurship research focuses on cognitive, cultural, and social variables in order to explain how entrepreneurs make decisions and take action. Each of these variable categories can help and has helped raise understanding of entrepreneurship, including entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities. Cognitive-based entrepreneurship research, for instance, complements and extends approaches that are purely economic by going beyond when entrepreneurship occurs, to also explain how and why it occurs (Mitchell et al. 2002). In Indigenous entrepreneurship settings, questions of how and why take on a more layered meaning because culture is a salient factor. Cognitive-based entrepreneurship theory offers insight into these instances because it describes the knowledge structures underlying entrepreneurial assessments, judgments, and decisions. These studies show that Indigenous entrepreneurs are more likely to act if their affordances are based on relatively stronger social support compared to mainstream entrepreneurs (Kirby 2006).

Self-efficacy is an important aspect of the cognitive approach. It aligns with Indigenous entrepreneurship studies because of its relation with personal identity. Self-efficacy is the degree to which an individual entrepreneur believes in her or his ability to succeed at a specific task (Wadeson 2006). One way in which Indigenous entrepreneurs differ from mainstream ones in this regard involves the relation between Indigenous cultural identity and self-efficacy (Henry 2013). Research has shown that the relation between self-efficacy and cultural capital is important to Indigenous entrepreneurship (Light and Dana 2013). To be sure, the link between personal identity and culture is an important one for Indigenous entrepreneurs. We hold that this link can help explain Indigenous entrepreneurship if studies focus on self-efficacy and cultural capital.

The construct of cultural capital has three forms (Bourdieu 1986). Its first form is the **embodied** state, which includes individual dispositions of one's mind and body. Its second form, the **objectified** state, refers to cultural artifacts and products of society and includes a culture's native languages. Finally, its third form, the **institutionalized** state, relates to higher-order symbolic factors or matters of policy, such as institutions, educational qualifications, and particular titles related to nobility. Cultural capital has guided theoretic approaches to social entrepreneurship research (Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010; Davidsson and Honig 2003;
Terjesen and Elam (2009). Due to the importance of culture in Indigenous entrepreneurship settings, the construct can also shed light on research in this area because of its relevance to personal identity.

Social capital is another construct that has been used in mainstream entrepreneurship studies. This construct refers to the stock of diverse resources deriving from one's network, acquaintances, institutionalized relationships, and group memberships (Bourdieu 1986). It is similar to cultural capital as it relates to an individual entrepreneur's environmental context. Similar to cultural capital, social capital also has three dimensions (De Carolis and Saparito 2006). Its structural dimension refers to the network and patterns of connections. The relational dimension accounts for personal acquaintances and social ties. Finally, the cognitive dimension of social capital describes shared systems of meanings, language, and common thinking processes. Social capital helps explain the role of networks in entrepreneurial settings and how they generate various types of resources and entrepreneurial opportunities (Anderson, Park, and Jack 2007). There are calls for research into how social capital extends the cognitive-based approach described above (McKeever, Anderson, and Jack 2014). When it comes to Indigenous entrepreneurship, the construct of social capital goes beyond person-situation interactionism to more better apply to cultures and communities (Estrin, Mickiewicz, and Stephan 2013; Murphy 2011).

Indigenous entrepreneurship often occurs in highly collective social and cultural settings (Foley 2012). In such contexts, social capital explains valuable relationships with others and can be as important as one's own individual actions (Nkongolo-Bakenda 2007). Cultural capital, on the other hand, explains how native languages and shared systems of meaning that are definitional to Indigenous communities influence entrepreneurial activities and outcomes. As social capital and cultural capital include all these elements, they hold promise for an integrated approach to Indigenous entrepreneurship research (Cahn 2008).

**An integrated theoretic approach**

Prior Indigenous entrepreneurship research has called for an integrated theoretic approach to explain the importance of non-economic factors and social institutions (Cahn 2008; Light and Dana 2013). Such an approach intends to shed light on the trust and reciprocity in Indigenous entrepreneurship (De Carolis and Saparito 2006). In addition to social capital and cultural capital, the influence of the cognitive-based approach helps explain the role of self-efficacy. We posit that the two factors operate jointly. In other words, social capital’s influence diminishes when an Indigenous entrepreneurial venture lacks cultural capital (Light and Dana 2013). In turn, cultural capital’s influence on performance is moderated by the self-efficacy of the Indigenous entrepreneur. In the next section, we delineate this integrated theoretic approach before undertaking a review of the society and history of the Māori entrepreneurs who participated in our study.

**Summary and propositions**

For Indigenous entrepreneurs, network connections are more than merely business assets. They also have historical and anthropological aspects because culture is salient. As such, the networking activities that Indigenous entrepreneurs undertake will vary based on one’s cultural context (Foley and O’Connor 2013; Fulkerson and Thompson 2008). In these ways,
networking matters to entrepreneurial performance (Li, de Zubielqui, and O’Connor 2015). Peredo and Chrisman (2006) articulate this principle in a general approach to community-based entrepreneurship in which cultural resources take precedence over economic ones. Indeed, Indigenous communities are known to leverage culture to facilitate their entrepreneurial networking practices (Klyver and Foley 2012). In applying these principles to a distinct Māori context, we posit that self-efficacy bolsters cultural capital and generates social capital in turn.

If Indigenous entrepreneurial activities occur in unique contexts, then the performance outcomes of Indigenous entrepreneurial action are likely to also be unique (Cahn 2008). One example of unique performance outcomes is the tendency for successful Indigenous ventures to function as available resources (not as competitors) for other entrepreneurial ventures in the same Indigenous community. In these cases, cultural capital is associated with legitimacy perceptions (Furneaux and Brown 2008). Mainstream entrepreneurship research shows that perceived legitimacy is associated with greater investments of resources (Pollack, Rutherford, and Nagy 2012). However, in Indigenous settings, we posit that same this association functions somewhat differently.

In Indigenous entrepreneurship settings, resource investments are not seen as limited to merely one business venture. Instead, they are seen as benefitting the larger Indigenous community. In other words, we hold that individual entrepreneurial outcomes have the character of shared outcomes in Indigenous contexts. Social capital and cultural capital not only help explain Indigenous entrepreneurial venture performance, but these factors also shed light on the impact of that performance. Research on the difference between performance and impact in Indigenous and social entrepreneurial settings describes a level of collectiveness within the community that can frustrate the boundaries of mainstream entrepreneurship theory (Kayseas, Anderson, and Moroz 2014).

The foregoing review illustrates that Indigenous entrepreneurship’s cognitive, cultural, and social aspects serve to distinguish the area from mainstream entrepreneurship research (Dana and Anderson 2007). We thus propose an integrated theoretic approach that jointly acknowledges social capital and cultural capital. Table 1, adapted from Light and Dana (2013), depicts an integration of the constructs.

The conceptual integration in Table 1 illustrates the importance of social and cultural capital, but it also offers a categorization of other cases in which these two constructs covary. This approach guided the study of Māori entrepreneurs reported in this paper. We expected the concordance of high cultural capital and high social capital to be associated with better mainstream performance by the Indigenous entrepreneurial ventures in our study.

The next section reviews Māori society and history with a focus on the ramifications for commercial development and entrepreneurship. This interesting material is also rather essential, as it illustrates values that have been maintained via Māori storytelling and that continue to influence the perspectives and behaviors of Māori entrepreneurs.

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<th>Cultural capital</th>
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Table 1. Level of Indigenous entrepreneurship activity based on cultural and social capital levels.
**Māori society and history**

A better historical understanding of Māori culture makes possible deeper insights into how Māori entrepreneurs view the prospect of mainstream success. For this purpose, in what follows, we survey and review authoritative Māori historical accounts. This material is familiar and important to virtually all Māori, including the entrepreneurs in our study, but it is generally not well known in mainstream society.

The Māori are part of the Polynesian diaspora that has populated and traversed the islands of the Pacific Ocean for over three thousand years. Māori society has a long history of being tribal and kinship-based, with a longstanding political economy based on gifting, the importance of tradition, and social exchange (Mauss 1954). The strongest Māori beliefs entail family, tribe, spirituality, and community stewardship. However, Māori culture also values risk-taking, personal challenge, and individual struggle very highly. The overall system of Māori beliefs often references cosmological elements to emphasize connectivity between all living things. Māori culture celebrates ancestral linkages to a pantheon of divinity (*atua*) that serves as a higher power analogous to God (Henare 2001).

Historically, interactions between Māori and the outside world began about 400 years ago. The earliest recorded interaction occurred in 1642, when Dutch seafarer Abel Tasman first reached the land now known as New Zealand while under the employ of the Dutch East India Company. Originally, Abel thought he had found part of the Australian continent that he called *Staten Land*. Eventually, ‘Nieuw Zeeland’ received its name as the local geography was better understood. Interactions between the Māori and foreign visitors increased over the following centuries with more frequent seafaring and whaling ventures in the South Pacific.

The relationship between Māori and other Western European nations began to deepen in the later 18th century and wield a strong influence on Māori society. In 1769, the English first encountered the Māori during James Cook’s initial voyage (1768–1771) to New Zealand. The first French interaction with the Māori, two months after Cook’s, occurred on an enterprise led by Jean-François-Marie de Surville. These interactions introduced previously unknown tools and commercial goods to Māori society. The practical utility of these items generated incentives for Māori to maintain productive relations with the foreign visitors. In fact, by the 1790s, the Māori had begun to produce food solely for the commercial maintenance of these international relations.

The first settlement of Europeans (*Pākehā*) in Māori society was in New Zealand’s Bay of Islands, as it was named by Cook. Relations flourished between Māori and Pākehā for the first 50 years. In 1814, British missionaries arrived in order to facilitate the introduction of European civilization to Māori for purposes of industrial development (Lineham 2012). Two decades later, Māori had their own seagoing ships for exporting Indigenously manufactured and commercial goods, such as Kauri tree spars, treenails, treated flax products, and rope. This international trade activity expanded across the South Pacific, and the New South Wales Penal Colony was the largest Māori supply chain partner (Petrie 2006).

International commercial activity turned out to be well-aligned with the Māori cultural values of hospitality, gifting, and social exchange. As such, this activity was guided and enhanced by strategic aspects that reflected ancient Māori customs. That same is true with today’s Indigenous Māori entrepreneurs, as our empirical study will show in the next major section. For the Indigenous Māori industrialists of the 1800s, however, the effects included
surging industry growth. For example, in 1830, no less than 28 Maori ships made 56 commercial transits between Sydney and New Zealand (Petrie 2006).

When it comes to the business activities of Māori, one of the most salient cultural values involves the importance of self-determination and the assertion of independence (tino rangatiratanga). It is a distinct component of the achievement of egalitarianism in Māori society and is often reflected in Māori business practices at individual and societal levels. Historically, as Māori commercial activity generated greater independence for Māori society in the 1800s, it generated a spirit of culture-based celebration. These outcomes began to generate strategic challenges and historic events that still influence the Māori worldview. For instance, Māori ships did not put out to sea under their own colors of registration, like other national trading enterprises. Non-registered ships had incurred additional duties and impoundments, as it did in 1834 with the Sir George Murray.

A Māori consortium of leaders requested recognition of a Māori flag via a meeting with New Zealand’s British resident James Busby. A year later, the Māori had their flag and had drafted a Declaration of Independence with Busby’s assistance. Māori accounts hold that the Māori Declaration emerged in coordination with the British in response to growing French interests in the Pacific (Moon and Fenton 2002). But another important factor was based on tino rangatiratanga. The Māori had learned about federalism as a political form that could unify a nation while allowing for tino rangatiratanga with respect to individual tribes. A federalist system, to be sure, would run afoul of British imperialism. Moreover, in light of the relatively recent American Declaration of Independence, the English societal sensitivity to Māori interest in this political system was acute. Nonetheless, a Māori Declaration was drafted, translated to English, and counter-signed by the Confederation of United Tribes and Busby. It was sent to King William IV and recognized by the British Parliament in 1836 (Keane 2014). What happened next was a pivotal juncture in the development of Māori society and history.

Four years after the Māori Declaration was ratified, internal frictions related to the European settlement in the Bay of Islands resulted in a British visit to the area. William Hobson, British Royal Navy Commander in Australia, arrived in late 1836. When he returned to England to submit a report in 1838, it was determined that England would establish a treaty with the Māori nation. For the Māori, this would guarantee New Zealand’s protection and trade relationships as a British colony. Hobson returned to New Zealand two years later and, after days of consultation with Busby and Māori tribes, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed on February 6, 1840. Today, this document is known as the founding charter of New Zealand (Clydesdale 2007; Orange 1989).

Ratification of the Treaty involved dispatching multiple copies for signatories across the country. Enter here the emergence of a problem with ramifications that still exist today. The original version of the document in the Māori language ceded governorship (kawanatanga) to English Queen Victoria. The version of the document translated into the English language, however, ceded ‘sovereignty’ instead. The mistranslation led to tense relations between Māori tribes and English governors (Adams 1977; Kawharu 1989; Orange 1989; Scott 1975). The poor relations devolved into the potential for war as Māori leaders began to realize that their alliance with Britain was not the mutually beneficial one they had expected. From their perspective, the Treaty established greater British control over trade, legislation, jurisdiction and the social institutions of their homeland. Indeed, by the 1840s these complications had
generated a series of skirmishes that, within a decade, resulted in the Land Wars (Belich 1986).

A full historic treatment of the Land Wars is outside the scope of this paper, but let it suffice that the Māori were determined but outmatched opponents of the British, whose military power wore down the Māori resistance. Henceforth, from the later 1800s until the middle-twentieth century, the Māori incurred all the consequences of a conquered society. Pākehā economic dominance defined this period. New national policies hindered the collective ownership of resources and expropriated Māori lands (Orange 1989). The period saw the loss of communally-owned lands, reduced population from diseases and poverty, and diminution of language and culture (Walker 1990). Māori historians and scholars see the historic events as devastating for the Māori and recognize their ramifications in today's Māori society (Henry 2012).

By the mid-twentieth century, Māori society began to see an urban migration (King 2003). This movement drove cultural assimilation as it introduced large numbers of Māori to western institutions and technologies in the post-war economy. Many Māori became formally educated, and the average socioeconomic status of the Māori community began to increase. It is accurate to note, however, that the community remained underserved. Besides economics, this urban migration also had a sociocultural effect. Increased education rates generated a sense of Māori empowerment and greater awareness of past grievances. As a result, the Māori community began to call for reparations and rekindled its culturally-based desire for self-determination in line with the Māori value of tino rangatiratanga (Awatere 1984).

In 1975, these movements culminated in another pivotal event for Māori history and society. Known as the Māori Land March, this event brought together many diverse groups for the purpose of reasserting Māori identity and formally recognizing the national importance of Māori society, language, and Indigenous culture. This Land March originated in the far north of New Zealand, and entailed a 1000-km March to the nation's capital in Wellington. The Land March was intended to garner attention and to promote awareness of the community and its culture. Land March participants collected over 60,000 signatures from New Zealand residents in support of the cause, and the gathering of marchers grew to include 5,000 people as it moved along its course. The Land March is viewed historically as a success, for it helped compel the New Zealand government to formally examine past grievances. The Waitangi Tribunal was established in order to undertake the examination, especially focusing on breaches of the original 1840 Treaty. Since the mid-1970s, the New Zealand government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in redress (Bourassa and Strong 2002; Clydesdale 2007).

Māori renaissance

Since the late 1900s, Māori society has developed considerably, but a proportion of its population still languishes. This social problem is part of Māori self-identity (Bécares, Cormack, and Harris 2013). The issue has stimulated New Zealand society to prevent the decline of traditional Māori culture and language in a variety of formal ways (Colquhoun and Dockery 2012). Some of these ways entail how Māori society is portrayed in major sporting events such as rugby, in popular culture, and in the film industry. Modern historians cite these societal practices designed to promote Māori culture in terms of a ‘Māori Renaissance’ (Webster 1998). This concept includes a recognizable entrepreneurial spirit, which has been
examined by entrepreneurship research showing that Māori culture possesses inordinately strong entrepreneurial aspects. For instance, one research stream holds that Māori society, if it were a separate nation, would rank seventh in the world in terms of entrepreneurial intensity (Devlin 2007).

Most Māori community members define the spirit and orientation of the Māori Renaissance (described above) in terms of kaupapa Māori. This term refers to a sense of identity and it influences not only Māori entrepreneurship activity, but the nature of the research methods in studies of Māori entrepreneurs (Barnes 2013; Bishop 2005; Henry 2007; Henry and Pene 2001; Smith 1997). Any instance of Indigenous entrepreneurship carries its own unique features. Indeed, Māori entrepreneurship has characteristics reflecting distinct elements of Māori society and history. For example, Māori communities entail kin groups (whanau), sub-tribes (hapū), and tribes (iwi) with distinct boundaries and norms. Stratifications and subcultures are known to generate significantly different patterns of entrepreneurship within the context of a single dominant culture (García-Cabrera 2008). Historically, this structure guided a great deal of diverse community action during the colonial period chronicled above. Today, the same structure guides Māori entrepreneurship. For instance, it redefines venture risk and the structures of capital investments that vary across Māori communities (Frederick and Henry 2004). The structure and operations of Māori entrepreneurial ventures can also vary dramatically based on kin groups, individuals, families, sub-tribes, or tribal groupings. This cultural and social structure also shapes local definitions of venture performance and success. Kaupapa Māori is an orientation rooted in the society and history of the community, as reviewed above. It can be expressed in terms of an activity being ‘by’ and ‘for’ the Māori, and it is an important aspect of Māori entrepreneurship (Henry and Pene 2001).

Storytelling is an essential activity for most Indigenous cultures (Anderson 2007). The sharing of narrative information based on historical events and customs is an important way to celebrate and preserve a community’s traditional values. For the Māori, the practice is especially prevalent, and the bulk of this information transfer occurs between elders and the younger members of families and communities (Tapsell and Woods 2007). The act of storytelling is practically definitive to the Māori culture. In fact, storytelling is such a natural part of Māori communities that it can be regarded as a comparative advantage in industries and pursuits where performance depends upon storytelling.

The screen industry is one context in which Māori cultural and industrial practices overlap with one another. The Māori have been actively involved in the screen industry for over 50 years. This intensity and longevity are due in part to the amenability of screen industry work to the cultural practice of storytelling. From an Indigenous entrepreneurial perspective, Māori firms have achieved a peculiar degree of mainstream success while preserving and promoting authentic elements of their culture. Before presenting our empirical study, we conclude our survey of Māori society and history with a brief review of Māori presence in this industry. This review effectively illustrates the population from which we drew our empirical sample.

**Māori screen production**

Research on Indigenous entrepreneurs shows that cultural capital is associated positively with higher levels of inimitable strategic and competitive resources (Overall, Tapsell, and
Māori entrepreneurship can be better understood from a cultural capital perspective in terms of the societal and historical influences reviewed above, which have influenced Māori entrepreneurial and commercial activity for a half-century. During this period, Māori screen production has been a leading contributor to the mainstream economic health of New Zealand, and some Māori film projects have achieved major international success. These strategies, structures, and operational elements of the Indigenous ventures undertaking these projects reflect Māori culture, which serves as a form of cultural capital. As such, these ventures differ somewhat from their mainstream counterparts (de Bruin 2005).

In the early years of New Zealand filmmaking and broadcasting, Māori people, society, and culture were regarded as objects of European curiosity. The advent of the industry sector occurred in the 1940s, when Ramai Te Miha Hayward used film to share Māori stories with mainstream society (Gauthier 2008). Twenty years later, New Zealand’s television industry emerged and also included objectified depictions. The filmmaking, broadcasting, and television sectors evolved in parallel over a period of decades. In the 1980s, due in part to the Waitangi Tribunal, Māori language and culture received national government support and incentives, which contributed to the development of these screen industry sectors (Henry and Wikaire 2013). In 2004, the Māori Television Service (MTS) was launched to promote Māori language and culture through broadcasting activity. The service generates over 1000 h of Māori-centric programming each year.

These developments have generated opportunities for Māori entrepreneurs in the screen industry. According to Census data, approximately a thousand Māori work in screen production (10% of the industry) whereas Māori account for about 15% of New Zealand’s population (2013 Census of Population and Dwellings). Unlike many industries and other nations, men and women account for virtually equal gender proportions in the Māori screen industry (Lauzen 2014; Todd 2012).

The screen industry is a major contributor to Māori societal development. Famous Māori stories have been featured in several critically and financially successful films, including Once were warriors (1994), Whale rider (2002), and Boy (2010). The entrepreneurial ventures that produced these films benefit from cultural and social capital. They provide employment for other Māori in all areas of the business. The stories in the films reflect the same tino rangatiratanga concept that stimulated Māori commercial activity in the 1800s and the Māori Renaissance in the 1900s (Barclay 2003). The need for emancipation is also a common theme, and is a distinct part of the Māori entrepreneurial orientation. In the following sections, we illustrate how our empirical study operationalized the foregoing theoretic and historic elements.

Method

Sample and procedure

We constructed our study sample over the course of several empirical phases. The overall data collection procedure began with an exploratory orientation of the population and ended with theory-driven interviews of a sample. These empirical activities were part of the first author’s dissertation research, which constituted the first comprehensive empirical investigation of the Māori screen industry.
First, an exploratory survey was distributed to 183 identifiable Māori members working at all levels of the screen industry. The completed surveys and the data were anonymous. This survey generated 53 (29%) usable responses. The respondents provided tribal information, gender information and other demographics, along with open-ended perceptions of the mainstream film industry in light of Māori identities, cultural values, and cultural knowledge (mātauranga). This exploratory step was important because this study was the first of its kind, and some of the demographic characteristics were unknown. This phase guided our approach to identifying and engaging the study participants.

In the second step, we utilized a national directory of screen companies to create a list of 50 Māori-owned production companies. We limited this sample to include only screen productions in the Māori language or with explicit and clear Māori stories and themes. Next, we filtered this list of 50 cases to retain companies that had (a) formal legal status, (b) an operating history of greater than five years, and (c) the generation of at least $1 million in revenues. This phase yielded a sample of 20 cases.

The third empirical phase yielded the participants for our study. The first author contacted the founders of the 20 companies directly to request their participation in the research project. Information collected in the initial exploratory survey guided and informed these conversations. Ten of the founders were currently engaged in projects and unable to participate, not willing to participate, or not in the country at the time of contact. The ten remaining company founders expected to be available over the next year and agreed to participate in a one-year series of interviews. Each participant had already produced a Māori-centric body of work rooted in Indigenous storytelling with a strategic focus on Māori cultural revitalization and mainstream entertainment.

**Case study interviews**

Interviews with the ten Māori entrepreneurs occurred over a series of individual meetings over the next calendar year. The interview procedures were carefully executed in light of the societal and historical considerations examined above. It is worth noting here that studies of Indigenous entrepreneurship have utilized similar approaches with other Indigenous samples (Barnes 2013; Peredo et al. 2004; Porsanger 2004; Smith 1999). The procedures are more holistic and less analytical in order to capture culturally-laden data with greater fidelity (Dana and Dana 2005). More broadly, the same approach has been utilized for four decades in anthropology research that examines cultural knowledge embedded in mainstream contexts when studying Indigenous samples (e.g. Cram 1993; Smith 1997). Such methods preserve the character of culturally-based data that are otherwise subsumed by the empirical aspects of mainstream empirical settings (Bishop 2005; Henry and Pene 2001; Pihama, Cram, and Walker 2002).

The first author of this study is Māori and is well-known in the Māori film and television industries. Her direct engagement with study participants was instrumental to approximating the kaupapa Māori approach described above. In this way, our study models the methodology of other Indigenous research in that it involved a Māori scholar researching a Māori community while coordinating with non-Māori scholars (Moewaka Barnes 2000). We
navigated risks of this approach concerning subjectivity (Chavez 2008) as we collected and analyzed the data with complementary roles. For instance, whereas the first author’s familiarity enabled unmatched access to data, the second and third authors provided external perspectives to minimize bias and promote interpretation of findings in light of the larger areas of Indigenous and mainstream entrepreneurship research.

The interviews were all conducted in person and video recorded. Similar to other entrepreneurship studies using these procedures, the research intended for participants to describe and analyze their experiences as directly as possible (Cope 2005; Starks and Trinidad 2007). Interviews occurred in company offices, homes, and in a traditional Māori meeting house (marae). The interviews began with formal introductions and a welcome (mihimih), prayers and communion (karakia), and sharing of a meal known as (kai). These actions are important during meetings and discussions in the Māori community and they reflect the culturally-based procedures described above.

Finally, after the completion of the empirical stages of the research, we sent a post hoc survey to participants in order to assess the degree to which the study procedures promoted fuller data collection. We undertook this ‘manipulation check’ in order to better understand the effect of the kaupapa Māori methodology of our study. We examine the results of all procedures in what follows, after the next section describes the interview structure and items.

**Analysis structures**

A qualitative approach to data collection via interviews was appropriate in this study because our research question is concerned with explaining why these indigenous entrepreneurs pursued mainstream entrepreneurship and examining how they preserved their cultural identities as they achieved high levels of performance (Pratt 2009). Our purpose is not amenable to a standard research approach emphasizing quantity, or focusing on reporting what actions entrepreneurs took, because it focuses on qualitative aspects and cultural foundations of the Māori community. However, to generate results that extend previous work, we structured the interview procedure with appropriate dimensions and standardization in accordance with mainstream entrepreneurship research methods (McKeever, Anderson, and Jack 2014).

We structured the interviews based on six items. This structure helped ensure that the interviews would generate data that enable an examination of concepts from our review of the literature. The first author used these items as a discussion framework in a similar way for all participants.

1. tribal, demographic, and personal background
2. experience in the industry
3. professional and personal influences
4. main impetus to launch a business venture
5. constraints and challenges faced
6. primary resources supporting the business

Video recording facilitated fuller collection and interpretation of the qualitative data. It enabled detection of vocal non-verbal tone, facial expression, and interactions between the interviewer and the interviewees. These videos are being used for the production of an educational documentary, entitled *Te Wairua Auaha*, which is intended to empower and
advance Māori entrepreneurship. The production of this documentary reflects the essential Māori cultural value of positive community impact (Henry and Wikaire 2013). This community-oriented intention was relevant to our study, as it was a means to motivate interviewees to participate earnestly during the extended one-year period.

**Results**

The initial survey provided general information about the Māori screen industry sector guided our subsequent empirical stages. It targeted approximately 20% of the Māori reported in the census data. The exploratory findings of the survey gave insights into the current state of Māori entrepreneurship, which proved useful when structuring interview questions. These also provided use information for general discussion with the Māori entrepreneurs about business ventures.

One of the most compelling findings of the initial survey was that the Māori screen industry sector was perceived as a veritable popular phenomenon by respondents. This perception served as a point of cultural pride and excitement for many participants. The survey also suggested that Māori community members see their culture and identity as directly relevant to their professional jobs in the screen industry. These findings helped stimulate discussions during the interview meetings, particularly for the sixth interview item concerning resources and support.

**Participant interviews**

Table 2 presents descriptive information for interview case participants, showing the gender, education level, age, name of their Māori community and depth of connection with Māori culture. Participants heralded from different areas of the country, but all of their companies were headquartered in the city of Auckland.

Based on the interview template, the first author guided participants to highlight elements of their own backgrounds that inform their actions as entrepreneurs. The interview results are based on interpretive evaluations of participant thinking and actions based on the concepts and approaches from our review of the Indigenous entrepreneurship literature. In general, many similarities emerged across cases. The principal theme was a commitment Māori culture, identity, and language, and a desire to reflect it in their business operations.

**Table 2. Descriptive data for study participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Tribe*</th>
<th>Culture**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>Tūhoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Ngāpuhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>Ngāti Awa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>Taranaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>Waikato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Aupouri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Taranaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Ngāti Kahu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>Ngāti Porou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>Ngāti Raukawa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Learned = raised in urban environment, committed to learning language and culture. *Primary tribal affiliation; most Māori have multiple tribal affiliations. **Traditional = raised in traditional, tribal, native-language environment.
Other themes pertained to personal intentions for becoming entrepreneurs, mentors and advisors, and the need for emancipation. Generally, these elements reflect concepts from prior research as noted in our literature review.

A particularly striking finding was the importance of key individuals who shaped and informed participant life choices as Indigenous entrepreneurs. In fact, this effect was perfectly reliable for our sample. Each participant regarded other individuals as sine qua non to their entrepreneurial success. The specific contributions of these key individuals included career track guidance, social support, and personal encouragement to undertake bold entrepreneurial endeavors. These mentors included named family-members and parents, specific teachers and educators, and partners and colleagues. The pivotal role of these external sources appeared to be the dominant contributor to participant self-efficacy, which reflects the findings of research on entrepreneurial action across cultural settings (Liñán, Urbano, and Guerrero 2011).

As reviewed above, self-efficacy among Indigenous entrepreneurs often derives from an embracing of one's culture. We found that all participants had a personal passion for Māori culture, to be sure, and it was often expressed via culturally-based terminology and storytelling. When discussing the confidence required to take entrepreneurial risks, participants described embracing their Māori identity and utilizing a cultural linkage to storytelling as underpinnings of their self-efficacy as a filmmaker. Such results extend mainstream conceptualizations of self-efficacy into the context of Indigenous entrepreneurship. As we begin to undertake more specific examinations of participants in the next section, Table 3 presents individual participant background data in more detail.

**Individual-level findings**

The concepts of cultural pride, mentors, need for emancipation, and self-efficacy were all expressed by participants in the explanations of their behaviors. A couple of the participants described their need for emancipation as rooted in family-based factors. Rhonda, for example, described the direct influence of her parents on her entrepreneurial orientation: ‘One of the things that my parents always insisted on was that when we left school, we were not allowed to work in the [factory].’ This finding reflects the need to transcend the limits of current circumstances but conveyed to the future entrepreneur by her family.

Another participant, Claudette, revealed a generational effect in the context of the mid-twentieth century urban migration reviewed above. ‘We were babies of that generation. We came to the city for better jobs, for a better lifestyle. So, we had to succeed.’ In this case, the individual-level need for emancipation of the entrepreneur is rooted in the community-level rationale for urban migration intended to transcend societal limitations. Such societal and historical events are important factors to Indigenous entrepreneurship, because they influence how an Indigenous community defines itself, and how the members of that community perceive themselves.

Like all of the participants, Brad described the importance of key individuals to his performance as an entrepreneur. The influence of such mentors is vital for conveying deeper cultural meanings in ways that relate to one’s entrepreneurial aspirations. In Brad’s case, this influence began at the earliest stages of his life. ‘The whole thing of storytelling and genealogy was actually instilled in me as a baby.’ Brad’s interview illustrated that he had a natural, almost unconscious tendency to define his life and work in the context of storytelling and
Table 3. Brief biographies and professional details for case study participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Rhonda, female, 60s, from a large, urban, working-class, mixed (Māori-Pākeha) parentage family, left school young, travelled internationally, before working in business, rising to management roles. She is not a native speaker of Māori</td>
<td>Went into partnership at 40 in a recording studio, then bought out the company and began producing award-winning television documentaries, and programs in Māori language, then diversified into new technologies, including ADR software, app-development, and book publishing. She has owned her company for over 15 years, and now focuses primarily on her online publishing venture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Claudette, female, 40s, from a Māori family that moved to the city for better opportunities for their children, went to university and on to become the first Māori woman sports reporter, before becoming a political journalist. Claudette is a speaker of Māori</td>
<td>Began a company when she realized she could not tell stories the way she wanted whilst working for mainstream broadcasters. She has gone on to produce a wide range of social and political documentaries for over ten years. Claudette ceased trading and went into politics, after completion of this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Brad, male 50s, born in a rural community and raised by his grand-father, the first Māori doctor in the region, a scholar who infused him with ancient stories. He trained as a journalist, going on to work in mainstream television, but continued to write books and screenplays. Brad is a speaker and translator of Māori</td>
<td>Brad is a partner in a number of companies, which have produced television drama and documentaries. He is a respected writer in Māori and English, having authored a number of books, as well as working on a variety of screenplays, often as the Māori consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Te Kauhoe, male, 40s, born in a rural community, he became a Māori-language learner at university, and went on to become a language expert and teacher. He was offered a role in a Māori-language TV show and he and his family moved to Auckland in his late 30s</td>
<td>Te Kauhoe worked as a presenter and journalist for mainstream TV for many years, before beginning his own company with his wife, producing Māori-language programming for MTS. Te Kauhoe died unexpectedly in 2011, and his wife continues to run their company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Nicole, female, 40s, was born in a rural community, into a mixed (Māori-Pākeha) parentage family. She was sent to boarding school as teenager, and chose to remain in the city. Her father owned his own business and her mother was a teacher</td>
<td>Nicole began work in a company making TV commercials, and started her own company, making primarily mainstream television. She did not speak Māori but sent her son to Kōhanga Reo (Māori immersion education). At his behest she made a program for Māori youth in Te Reo, and has been producing that program and many TV productions and drama for more than ten years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Robert, male, 60s, born and raised in a rural community, where he did not learn English until going to school. Robert has been a life-long advocate of traditional Māori culture and language. He is a respected linguist and advocate for his tribe</td>
<td>Robert was amongst the first Māori trained in TV production by the state broadcaster in the 1970s. He went on to become a journalist and presenter in the first dedicated Māori TV show (Koha), but left to start his own company in the 1980s, and has since produced an extensive catalogue of TV documentaries and children's programs, primarily in Te Reo. He has since left production to become an academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Tearepa, male, 30s, born in an urban community, into a mixed (Māori-Pākeha) parentage family. His father maintained strong ties to home and tribe, so when Tearepa went to university, he also began learning Te Reo</td>
<td>Tearepa was working for a Māori production company, when an opportunity arose to direct a piece. From there he went on to setup his own company producing children's programming in Te Reo and making documentaries. He has gone on to write and direct Māori short films, and a critically acclaimed feature film, which were produced by the company he owns in partnership with two others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Pio, male, 50, was born in a rural community, but brought to the city as a child, where he was educated and went on to work in a variety of different places, before securing a job as a DJ on the first Māori radio station in Auckland</td>
<td>Pio is most prominent for his roles as an actor, comedian and TV presenter. However, he and his wife have owned a TV production company for many years, which produces a range of family entertainment, travelogue and documentaries for mainstream and Māori TV. He is also a partner in other TV companies, focusing on programming specifically for Māori TV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kay, female, 40s, was adopted as an infant by a Pākehā family in a rural community. Her family emphasized values around faith and social justice. She found her Māori birth as an adult, and does not speak Te Reo, but is passionately committed to producing programs for her children, who have attended Kura, immersion education centers.

Whetu, female, 40s, was born in a rural community, into a mixed (Māori-Samoan) parentage family. Hers was the first Samoan-Māori family in the region. She left home and came to the city to become an actress, and has appeared in a number of TV and film dramas.

Kay trained as a journalist, and went to work in mainstream TV, then transferred to Māori programming. She started her own company so that she could make programs that she wanted to, particularly in Te Reo, and coinciding with the start of Māori TV. Many of her productions are education-focused but she has also produced and directed a wide range of documentaries about Māori people and issues.

Whetu has owned a number of production companies, some with different partners. Her first company produced a series of short film dramas, focusing on Māori and Pacific women in the 1990s. She went on to produce TV for a tribal television network. In recent years she has worked with the guild for Māori in screen production.
larger systems of meaning. As an Indigenous entrepreneur, these elements provided him with a sense of clarity and direction in circumstances of uncertainty. Participant Kay recounted similar influences on her entrepreneurial worldview. Without being aware of it, she reflected very clearly the tendency in Māori stories for individuals to always seek to contribute to their community in purposeful ways, in line with the *kaupapa Māori* notion reviewed above. ‘Wanting to do something that contributed to the world was just something that I grew up believing that you did.’ For Kay and the other participants, it was virtually impossible to parse their self-concept from the Māori community. The need for emancipation in Indigenous entrepreneurs appears to be somewhat different than the ‘need for independence’ often cited in mainstream entrepreneurship research. For these Māori entrepreneurs in our study, entrepreneurial independence is also defined in terms of community independence.

The influence of the Māori community on entrepreneurial performance also had certain limits. Whereas it clearly informed participant self-identity, the demands of an entrepreneurial career also extended outside the Māori community, and it fell to the entrepreneur to deal with those challenges directly. The participant named Pio referred to this boundary. ‘There was no real help from mum and dad with regard to academic achievement, other than that they created a really wonderful home life and a base.’ His interview conveyed a sense of individual identity that was completely defined by Māori community and culture even as he was deeply engaged in same industry as other mainstream entrepreneurs.

Each of the participants in our study believed they had found community-based ways to become mainstream entrepreneurs, achieve mainstream success, and simultaneously serve the Māori community. Interestingly, spatial features and geographic locations also served as mainstays of their entrepreneurial orientation. The physical artifacts of culture, birthplaces in villages and on tribal lands, and signs and symbols had special significance. Each participant described these elements as empowering to them in different ways. Participant Nicole described some of the memories of these elements and also how they influence her work.

We go home every Christmas, and as a *whānau* (extended family) we camp together on our *whenua* (tribal land). One of the reasons is to ensure that our kids know the value of their *whānau*, *hapū* (sub-tribe) and *iwi* (tribe).

The essential family structure in Māori society (defined above) and the physical characteristics of space and location that are unique to most Māori communities informed her work as an entrepreneur.

The experiences of being in a physical place with cultural features and personally sensing one’s physical environment influenced the Māori entrepreneurs in our study. They all appeared to appreciate the linkages between these elements and the imagery, sounds, and visual elements of filmmaking. The amenability of Māori cultural background to the practical elements of the work in the screen industry reinforced participant cultural orientation and aided performance. We found that other effects occurred when these salient culturally-based elements of participant self-identity met with mainstream environmental settings. At that juncture, participants developed a broader sense of the Māori community boundaries cited above. Moreover, they sometimes incurred a powerful need for emancipation rooted in their culture. For example, Claudette reported the effect of these experiences on her life.

I went to university and found a whole new world, and fully embraced it to the point of protesting, joining movements and sit-ins. It was just amazing that there were things outside of nursing and teaching that Māori girls could do.
The notion of transcending cultural boundaries and traditions while still keeping one’s culture created paradoxes for participants that evolved into entrepreneurial opportunities.

Sometimes the skills gleaned from reconciling differences across community boundaries blended with one’s self-identity and personal development. For participant Brad, studying a non-traditional mainstream topic led to an unexpected affordance to develop himself as an entrepreneur. ‘I hated journalism because I had to get over my shyness, but I look back now and go, man, actually that was the best thing I could have done.’ Entrepreneurs often find that their periods of struggle yield unexpected rewards in retrospect. However, for most of the Indigenous entrepreneurs in our study, this kind of growth and development could take place in two categorically different ways. On one hand, these Māori entrepreneurs came to grips with the mainstream environment. On the other hand, they incurred the challenge of reconciling that environment with the society and history of their Māori culture. Along these lines, participant Tearepa pursued advanced study of the Māori language for the purpose of developing his sense of identity. His own individual-level need for emancipation also had a clear community purpose. ‘I just wanted to get closer to my nana (grandmother), and reconnect to who I am as a Waikato and Ngati Pāoa’ (his particular tribe). These personal developments in the area of his culture and community informed and influenced his entrepreneurial career in the mainstream screen industry in powerful ways.

The self-concept and entrepreneurial orientation of our participants often derived from storytelling. It is clear that the study participants had a passion for Māori culture and regarded storytelling as a way to express this passion. As personal passion evolved into entrepreneurial passion, storytelling served as a driver of their business pursuits. Thus, storytelling remained important in the community settings and mainstream professional settings of all participants. For Tearepa and several others, storytelling was one of his earliest experiences. ‘I fell in love with stories with my brother on a big double bed that we used to share when I was a little kid and dad was there and he used to roll over and tell us something.’ Participant Whetu also described the influence of storytelling on his sense of identity. ‘When we were kids, she (mother) would pile us all into the bed, and she would tell us these tales of her growing up.’ Participants reported these early experiences in terms of strategic assets that enabled their performance as filmmakers.

The effects of key individuals, physical places, and the integration of all these elements via storytelling enhanced the self-efficacy of the participants. As entrepreneurs, their desires for emancipation from environmental, social and cultural constraints derived were rooted in these aspects of their Māori community. As such, their entrepreneurial actions had social purposes for their own communities (i.e. whānau, hapū, iwi) as well as for the broader population of Māori because their work reflected Māori culture and identity. Listening and participating in Māori storytelling was part of life for the entrepreneurs in our study. Entrepreneurial ventures in the screen industry, where storytelling is part of the core business, seem to be a natural progression.

Whereas a natural progression toward an entrepreneurial career is not regarded as a wholly conscious effort, the creation of viable and robust organizations was indeed the result of conscious and purposeful endeavors. Some participants, such as Kay, even viewed the creation of a company as a necessary evil associated with her desire to safeguard her culture. ‘I never actually went into it thinking, I want to create a business. If I want to control the projects, then I have to have a company.’ Other aspects of the mainstream industry clashed with the community orientation of these Indigenous entrepreneurs. For Pio, it entailed
exploitation. ‘You were at the total mercy of the production houses that grabbed you, as a perceived talent, and you were milked like a cash cow.’ We also noted a tradeoff between mainstream and Indigenous entrepreneurial purpose that participants navigated carefully. Study participant Robert was intentional in parsing the creative and business elements of his work as a means to stay connected to the Māori culture. ‘It is best that we make the program and sell it to them, rather than them dictating to us what sort of programs they want.’ For all participants, these determinations implicated a need for independence for self and community, as reviewed above. That is, each Māori entrepreneur strove for success as an individual in the explicit terms of also preserving culture and serving their community. Participant Whetu described entrepreneurial experiences entirely in terms of self-determination (tino rangatiratanga) with statements such as ‘We have to really strive for our own economic independence.’ As expected, emancipation was a strong and recurring theme in our findings.

The cases in our sample all represented for-profit companies. Each company performs in a competitive environment that is open to all kinds of entrants, with operations and a structure that are subject to the same national laws that apply to all companies. Yet, a community purpose was embedded in the operations of each one. Despite some of the challenges noted above related to the mainstream industry, participants regarded the Māori stories (in the Māori language or in the English language) and explicit cultural content as strategic assets. Indeed, our results suggest that the strong cultural content functioned as a unique and inimitable resource. Whereas this resource is applicable to the market context in an economic sense, it is also applicable to the Māori community in a social sense. In the former context, this cultural orientation generates revenues. In the latter context, it generates Māori cultural advancement, pathways for other Māori entrepreneurs, and awareness of Māori stories. Compatibility between financial and social value is a vital aspect of social entrepreneurship research. Our study sheds some light on the structure of this compatibility in an Indigenous entrepreneurship context. We discuss some more implications for the area of Indigenous entrepreneurship along these lines in the concluding section, after reporting the results of an assessment of our methodology.

In presenting this research at international research conferences and developing its findings for scholarly publication, we realized that it was necessary to examine the specific importance of the kaupapa Māori culturally-based methodological approach. Thus, we collected evidence for examining participant reactions in a post hoc manipulation check. Our original belief was that the approach enabled the procuring of better interview data as cultural familiarity would create a setting that encouraged the sharing of true-score data. In other words, we believed that the efficiencies of a neutral or standardized interview environment reflecting mainstream aspects of entrepreneurship would come at the expense of deeper inquiries into the Indigenous culture and its linkages with entrepreneurship. If so, then the result would be a collection of less useful interview data (i.e. noise).

We deployed an email survey to all participants several months after the data collection was complete. We received six detailed responses (60%) in a two-week period commenting specifically on participant reactions to the study methodology. Some of the comments were that the ‘methodology was honoring,’ and ‘I entrusted my thoughts and answers to you knowing they would be treated with respect.’ One participant stated that the methodology ‘made it immeasurably far easier to share my experiences.’ The responses give clear support for the usefulness of the method. One extended response, which illustrates the general
theme of all the responses, will be interest to researchers of Indigenous entrepreneurship because its implications address the importance of culturally-based research methodologies in general. We reproduced that response verbatim in the Appendix 1.

**Discussion**

Our study represents the first large-scale research of Māori entrepreneurs in the screen industry. The foregoing sections introduced our research question, reviewed prior Indigenous entrepreneurship research and theory, explained the method of our study, and presented its results. In this section, we discuss our findings in general and draw out key implications for the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship. We also discuss some of the specific contributions of this research stream to future studies of Māori entrepreneurs.

The earlier exploratory stages of our empirical procedure suggested certain descriptive characteristics of the Māori entrepreneurial community not reported in previous studies. The first of these characteristics is education level. We found evidence that Māori entrepreneurs are significantly more educated than others in the Māori community who do not pursue an entrepreneurial career. Table 2, for instance, shows that 50% of the participants in our interviews were college-educated. The census data and the exploratory survey also show that members of the Māori community who choose entrepreneurial career paths have greater levels of education. Like other entrepreneurship studies, the finding implicates the importance of formal education. However, it also presents new questions about the socialization aspects of education, which are a unique issue in many Indigenous communities as they relate to student success and dropout rates. According to our interviews, it seems that the experience of higher education provides Indigenous entrepreneurs with exposure to mainstream socialization experiences, beyond formal learning outcomes, that were instrumental to their entrepreneurial careers. Future research on the underpinnings of Indigenous entrepreneurship will do well to examine the complete relation between the full experience of formal education and future entrepreneurial activity.

Another finding of this study concerns the overlap between Māori society and history and Māori entrepreneurship activity. Most of the interview participants in our study described elements of activism and protest as they discussed their entrepreneurial ventures. The disruptive effects of entrepreneurship on economic systems have been researched for almost a century in economics research. In Indigenous entrepreneurship settings, however, the effects of entrepreneurial disruption seem to have a different character. We found that the Māori screen industry was built on entrepreneurial activity that is rooted squarely in a history of Māori activism over the course of many decades. Participants viewed their companies, through a cultural and historical lens, as distinct from mainstream screen industry companies that shared their industry. It was important to review Māori society and history in an earlier section of this paper, because this finding derives from that historical context. Seeing the history of the Māori community as part of the worldview of its Indigenous entrepreneurs is vital to an understanding of Māori entrepreneurship. Some interview participants discussed their dealings with business and production aspects of the screen industry in ways hearkening back to the dynamics of historical events such as the Treaty of Waitangi. Entrepreneurial action often entails less powerful new entrants competing with more powerful, established market actors. The tensions and dynamics created by a new business model in an established industry are well-known in entrepreneurship research. We posit that Indigenous
entrepreneurs see these tensions and dynamics through cultural lenses, in addition to economic ones. Future studies of Indigenous entrepreneurs will do well to consider explicitly a community's history and culture, and to incorporate those elements into their research.

Our literature review noted the importance of emancipation in Indigenous entrepreneurship contexts. Successful entrepreneurial activity can bring freedom and new affordances to an Indigenous community that enable it to preserve and promote its culture. This outcome is vital to Indigenous entrepreneurs, and it has been cited in prior research, but our study extends what is known about its antecedents. The kinds of social and economic changes that can benefit an Indigenous community are most often the result of entrepreneurship that is informed by cultural and social capital. The Indigenous entrepreneurship research literature already shows that the cognitive aspects of how one perceives her or his situation, and the degree to which they believe they can succeed, are vital elements of performance. Our study extends this understanding by shedding light on how social capital and cultural capital complement a purely cognitive approach. Our findings show that the social capital that an Indigenous entrepreneur receives, from mentors or personal contacts, is important to how they think about their own entrepreneurial career. However, the effect is somewhat different from mainstream entrepreneurship settings in that cultural capital is an inextricable part of this importance. One's cultural capital is defined by one's knowledge of the values that define one's community and is reflected by the degree to which one performs in accordance with those values. Communities, to be sure, are social constructs that entail the sharing of knowledge between members. In an Indigenous community or a minority culture such as the Māori, the sharing of knowledge involves the sharing of culture in salient ways. The two constructs differ, but the process of enhancing them is largely the same. Our study sheds light on the current understanding of how Indigenous entrepreneurs build cultural capital as they build social capital. Our findings suggest that Indigenous ventures with more cultural capital achieve better community (but not mainstream) performance and impact, whereas those with relatively greater social capital achieve better mainstream (but not community) performance.

Prior research shows that culture is important to the self-efficacy of Indigenous entrepreneurs outside their communities. All of the participants in our study attested to the effect of self-efficacy on their performance. We found that, for these Indigenous entrepreneurs, storytelling played a unique role in this effect. Storytelling is a component of how these Māori entrepreneurs perceived themselves. The narrative form put their cultural values into a setting that promoted the application of those values to various situations involving uncertainty. We reviewed above the importance of storytelling to Indigenous communities, but our findings clarify the role of storytelling as a mechanism for Indigenous entrepreneurs to put their values into action. The fact that the entrepreneurs had entered an industry in which this important cultural activity holds practical relevance was also instrumental to performance. This study was limited to the screen industry, but the mechanism of fit between an Indigenous culture and the nature of the work in a particular industry sector is worth considering in future Indigenous entrepreneurship research. We posit the success of Māori ventures in screen production, though a small but growing sector, can be attributed to these considerations of storytelling, culture, and the nature of performance in the screen industry. Just as Māori gifting culture enhanced commercial performance in the early 1800s, we found that the Māori storytelling culture serves to enhance screen production performance.
The compatibility between a culture and the dominant logic of business in an industry sector can be a strategic enabler for Indigenous enterprises. The Māori entrepreneurs we studied all kept strong connections with their communities, families, and tribes. The boundaries of these influences were defined in part by physical and geographical limits, as reported above, but also by demographic boundaries of their community in the professional screen industry. We found overlapping boundaries between the industry and the community that were not always hostile to each other. Aside from some reported instances of the business activities of production clashing with a desire to safeguard culture, the structural arrangement between community and industry appear to be a unique aspect of Indigenous entrepreneurship. The importance of family and tribe are definitional to Māori culture and makeup one's self-identity and entrepreneurial orientation. As one's Indigenous community engages a broader external environment, intra-community social and cultural capital appear to be instrumental to preserving the community and the values that define it. The maintenance of Indigenous boundaries also extended into the structure of the companies founded by the participants in our study. Future studies of Indigenous entrepreneurship can develop theory by defining the traditional anthropological and sociological structures of an Indigenous community, extending them into the structure of Indigenous entrepreneurial ventures, and describing their interaction with norms and traditions of the mainstream industries that those ventures enter.

The history of entrepreneurial activity in Māori society is stems from a period when Māori controlled the social and economic infrastructure of the nation of New Zealand. The primacy of this historic period, when considered in the context of colonization, has qualified the nature of Māori entrepreneurial orientation similarly to the effects seen in other Indigenous communities. In the Māori context, the effect on entrepreneurial orientation has been one of intensification. The Māori Renaissance, reviewed above, rekindled the entrepreneurial spirit and saw the advent of a community desire for emancipation. The participants in our study all spoke in terms of the desire for emancipation. Indeed, similar to the findings of prior research, our participants described entrepreneurial activity as a pathway to emancipation driven by social and cultural capital from their communities. Prior entrepreneurship research holds emancipation to be part of the Indigenous entrepreneurial impulse, but our study of Māori entrepreneurs extends this effect to the level of the actual historic events and situations. The implication here is that the perceptions of community members extend beyond individuals to the level of the entire community and its history, and thus become part of the culture itself.

We found self-efficacy and the need for emancipation to be vitally important to the performance of the Māori entrepreneurs in our study. The integration of these factors into a unified approach, with social capital and cultural capital as a conceptual foundation, extends earlier Indigenous entrepreneurship research. As reviewed earlier, prior studies have called for such examinations to focus more on cultural capital and social capital across a broad range of minority communities. This paper responds to the call by showing that these two variables jointly enable Māori entrepreneurs to better navigate the overlap between their traditional culture and the mainstream industrial environment. This finding has implications for the fields of social entrepreneurship and community-based enterprise in Indigenous contexts.

A final contribution of this research is methodological and promises to contribute to the growing body of Indigenous entrepreneurship research. The attempt to undertake a research
A method that utilized a culturally-aligned approach yielded an uncommonly high level of information quality. The generalizability of our findings appears to be on par with other anthropologically-based studies of Indigenous entrepreneurs and the specificity of our qualitative data offer clear direction for examinations in future research. Such research can focus on other Māori industry sectors, or on other Indigenous communities with a methodology similar to the one undertaken by our research team. Studies of Indigenous communities along such methodological lines will surely continue to illustrate further how entrepreneurship can become a means to transcend limits, preserve and promote cultures, and enhance identity. The implications of such contributions will serve to stimulate the future emergence of successful entrepreneurial organizations that are meaningful to Indigenous communities.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**References**


Appendix 1.

Exemplary participant response to the importance of the culturally-based kaupapa Māori research methodology.

As a Māori television production company, we have always been very private about our business affairs as we have often been under undue scrutiny by funders, the government, agencies, and auditors from the Internal Revenue Department. We have continually been cautious and prudent about our ideas, programme formats, concepts, and financial information. When we were approached by you in this study, which included other Māori companies, we were also intrigued to find out the essential creative and cultural imperatives that drove our businesses at the time.

The research methodology, which is Kaupapa Māori driven, completely convinced us to be involved. Not only was it culturally appropriate, but it helped to reinforce the values we aspire to in our company. For instance, validating and valuing our language, ensuring that whatever we produced strengthened our values, and most of all, creating programmes for Māori about Māori by Māori – seizing whatever on-air opportunities to tell Māori stories ourselves and not to be reported on by ‘others.’ In short, where we were a little reluctant to share in the first instance, the Kaupapa Māori method of research definitely encouraged us to share our experiences and our production/business journeys because ultimately we believed the research [name redacted] was producing was about Māori and written by Māori and we in the end share the benefits from the results.