



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

## Research Commons at the University of Waikato

### Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

# **Maori Children: Conceptions of Death and Tangihanga**

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Social Sciences in Psychology

at

The University of Waikato

by

Juanita Emily Jacob

The University of Waikato

Te Whare Wananga o Waikato

2011

## **ABSTRACT**

Research pertaining to Maori children's experiences and perceptions of death and tangihanga is sparse. Much of what is available, relating to children and their experiences with death, particularly death of a loved one, is generalised and stems from Western paradigms of knowledge. In contrast, this study aimed to investigate Maori children's experience relating to death and tangi through the eyes of Maori parents.

Five areas were explored with Maori parents: (1) childhood experiences of Maori parents relating to death and tangi, (2) parental conceptualisation pertaining to ideas of an afterlife (3) how and when Maori parents talk with children about topics relating to death, tangi and an afterlife (4) how Maori children understand and conceptualise these events, and (5) how these practices will continue on in the future.

Findings of this study suggest that Maori children: (a) received abundant support from kinship networks to help them cope with their grief, (b) they were included and involved in all aspects relating to death and tangi, (c) they were encouraged to express emotions openly and without restraint, (d) they understood and comprehended death through personal experience and exposure to tangi, (e) the business of grieving came secondary to the fact that tangi was more like a holiday with family, (f) Maori parents informed and talked to their children about death and tangi, and (g) they often use both Christian ideologies and cultural beliefs to explained death and afterlife to their children.

From this study we learn that death was not hidden from children, that parents talked with their children in very open and age relevant ways, and considered their children's participation in tangi as an important way to grieve and ensure continuity with kinship networks and support. This study suggests that the challenge now is to ensure that these practices continue to persist between parents and their children, and continue on through generations.

## **PREFACE**

Hikurangi is a mountain in the Far North that stands between two valleys, namely Pipiwai where my father is from, and Awarua where my mother is from. My siblings and I were raised in Awarua, a rural and predominantly Maori community 20 minutes south of Kaikohe. My parents are of Maori descent with Te Reo Maori being their first language. Their upbringing was rooted within traditional Maori customs and rituals. Some of these traditions carried through with them into adulthood and parenthood. Consequently, this knowledge was passed on to me and my siblings.

Both of my parents came from very large Maori families. My father had 17 full siblings and my mother had 11 full siblings. My father told me that this was due to the fact that there was no television back then, and I quite believed him. You may wonder why this is relevant to death, tangihanga and Maori children. As you can imagine, having a large extended family afforded me many firsthand experiences of understanding Maori culture and practice pertaining to death and tangi.

I have very fond childhood memories of attending tangihanga of loved ones, either at Tau Henare marae in Pipiwai or Te Huruhi marae in Awarua. I was a young child when both my nanas died, as well as when several of my father's and mother's siblings died. On many occasions we would be woken up in the late hours of the night or early hours of the morning by either the noise of the telephone ringing or the sound of a vehicle coming up the driveway. When this happened, we would intuitively know that the call or visit was from an uncle, aunty or other relative announcing news that a death had occurred in the family.

On other occasions our schooling was interrupted, with our father shuffling us out of the classroom to tell us of news that a family member had died. Admittedly, I can recall that my siblings and I were quietly joyful to leave the mundane curriculum of schooling to go to, what seemed to me at the time, a big sleepover at the marae catching up with family. From school, we were quickly taken home to pack clothes and bedding ready to leave and join other family members gathering at the marae to mourn. For me, arriving at the marae signified the beginning of tangi proceedings.

In light of my own childhood experiences of death and attending tangi of loved ones, paired with my interest in childhood grief; it was appropriately fitting to choose an area of research that would be most meaningful to me. Although there is a growth of literature pertaining to grief in childhood and helping children understand and/or cope with death and so on, there is very little, if any literature that specifically touches on how Maori children do so. Therefore, based on my own personal experience and interest, along with having the support and supervision of very seasoned academic staff in the area of child rearing practices and Maori issues in Psychology, I was able to formulate a study that highlights a significantly important event in the life of Maori and their children.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I would like to thank all the participants in this study, who willingly shared their childhood experiences with me pertaining to the death or tangihanga of a close family member or loved one. I am also thankful for their contributions in giving insight into how they, as Maori parents, have talked about and explained topics like death and tangi with their children. I felt very privileged indeed to have listened to the many heart-felt and touching accounts given. Your korero has been greatly valued.

Secondly, I would like to thank my primary supervisor Linda Waimarie Nikora and Jane Ritchie my secondary supervisor, for imparting their knowledge, skills and expertise with me. Their ongoing support, guidance and encouragement were truly appreciated. It was indeed an honour and a privilege to work with you both. Know that you are both a brick in my wall of life.

I am also ever so grateful for my wonderful husband Neihana, who has been encouraging and supportive during the long hours and late nights of working on this piece of writing. You have constantly lightened my workload with a smile for which I am thankful. Know that without you I would not have maintained my motivation to complete this thesis.

I would also be ungrateful if I did not acknowledge the various scholarships awarded to me from The Ministry of Health, MPRU and Tainui Maori Trust Board. Thank you for the financial support which has helped with the various costs to produce this thesis.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Edie Neho and my late father, Te Roka Robert Tairua; who have both taught me the value of education and hard work.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract .....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	v
Dedication .....	vi
Table of Contents .....	vii
List of Tables.....	x
Glossary of Maori Terms .....	xi
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Understanding and Conceptualising Death .....</b>	<b>2</b>
A Developmental Perspective .....	2
Gaining Understanding through Personal Experience and Culture.....	3
<b>Talking to Children about Death .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Talk and Expressions of Emotion .....	6
Consequences of Withholding Information and Exclusion.....	7
Traditional Approaches Revived by the West.....	8
<b>Maori Perspectives surrounding Death and Tangihanga.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Kinship Ties .....	11
Roles & Responsibilities .....	11
The Karanga .....	12
The Bereaved Whanau .....	13
Tapu Restrictions.....	13
Whaikorero, Waiata and other Formalities .....	14
Wairua & Afterlife .....	14
Maori Children & Death.....	16

<b>Conclusion</b> .....	18
<b>Aim of the Present Study</b> .....	18
<b>Chapter 2: Method</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Qualitative Methodology.....	20
Research Method.....	21
Research Ethics .....	22
Selection Process.....	22
Recruitment of Participants.....	23
Demographic Questionnaire.....	23
Participant Information.....	23
The Interview Process .....	27
<b>The Interview Schedule</b> .....	28
Past Childhood Experiences .....	28
Conceptualising Death, Dying and/or Afterlife .....	28
Talking to Children about Death, Dying and an Afterlife .....	28
Examples of Talking to Children .....	29
Tangihanga and Tupapaku .....	29
Doing Things Differently .....	29
Into the future .....	29
<b>Transformation of Raw Data &amp; Thematic Analysis</b> .....	29
<b>Chapter 3: Findings and Discussion</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Childhood Experiences Relating to Death and Tangi</b> .....	31
The Loss of a Loved One .....	31
Tangi likened to a Holiday .....	33
Rekindling Family Ties .....	34

Children’s Experiences with Tupapaku .....	36
Roles, Responsibilities and Activities of Children at Tangi .....	37
Tangi Attendance .....	41
Parental Conversations about Death.....	42
<b>Ideas of Death Dying and an Afterlife .....</b>	<b>43</b>
Christianity, Culture or Both .....	43
Reuniting with Family beyond the Grave .....	46
Never Far Away .....	47
Personal Experiences with Wairua.....	48
<b>Talking with Maori Children .....</b>	<b>50</b>
Being Open and Honest.....	50
Children’s Reactions when News of Death is Announced.....	51
Conversations Generated in Various Situations and Setting.....	53
Giving Details.....	55
Emotions Expressed & the Grieving Child .....	56
<b>How Maori Children Understand and Conceptualise Death .....</b>	<b>59</b>
Exposure to Tupapaku.....	61
Experiences with Wairua.....	62
Looking Ahead to the Future.....	63
Transmission of Knowledge.....	64
<b>Chapter 4: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>66</b>
Implications .....	66
Limitations.....	68
Areas for Further Research.....	69
<b>References .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>77</b>

## **LIST OF TABLES**

<b>Table 1</b> Participant details .....	24
--	----

## **GLOSSARY OF MAORI TERMS**

Hapu	sub-tribe
Hongi	pressing of noses to greet
Hui	a meeting or gathering
Iwi	tribe
Karanga	welcoming call
Kaumatua	revered elder men
Kawa	protocols
Kehua	spirits/ghosts
Mahau	veranda of the meeting house
Manuhiri	visitors
Maori	indigenous people of New Zealand
Marae	sacred courtyard/complex
Pakeha	New Zealanders of European descent
Reinga	spirit world/departing place of spirits
Ruru	to shake hands
Tangata-whenua	hosts/ local people
Tangihanga (tangi)	Maori funeral rituals for the dead
Tapu	sacred/prohibited/restricted
Tupapaku	corpse/ the deceased
Tupuna	ancestors
Waiata	song/s
Wairua	spirit/soul of a person
Whaikorero	speech making/oratory
Whanau	family (immediate and extended)
Whanau pani	chief mourners/bereaved family
Wharemate	a special dedicated shelter/building on the marae.
Wharenui	meeting house

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The objective of this chapter is to examine literature that canvasses ways in which parents and adults conceptualise and talk about death with children. I examine what the literature says about how children gain their knowledge, understanding and comprehension of death and how parents and adults talk about it with them. I look at literature pertaining to cultural practices and death rituals; and examine previous work related to ways in which Maori parents talk with their children about death and its rituals. This review of literature will provide relevant background information which forms the basis for this study.

Most children will experience grief and bereavement in their lifetime when someone close to them dies. Some will experience the death of a parent while others will experience the death of a sibling or grandparent (Cohen & Mannarino, 2010). When a parent or sibling dies children often grieve the loss of that relationship (Dyregrov, 1991; Heaney, 2004). They have lost the love and security that was given by their parent; they have lost a friend, a playmate, a rival sibling and family member (Gill-White, 2006; Parker, 2003).

The death of a grandparent or other significant adult (e.g. an aunty or uncle) can also be life altering for children. For many it is usually the first time they will grieve over the death of someone close to them (Wells, 1988). “In New Zealand society grandparents are revered for their caring attitude towards their grandchildren, especially in extended families” (World Trade Press, 2010, p. 10). This is particularly so for Maori children and their grandparents with whom significant attachments are encouraged and culturally defined (McRae & Nikora, 2006). In Maori society, the role of grandparents is to “nurture, care, protect and pass on cultural knowledge, like Maori identity pertaining to the whanau, hapu, and iwi, to their grandchildren” (Families Commission, 2010, p.94). Ritchie and Ritchie (1979) note that in Polynesian societies, the role of parenting and childcare is not limited just to the parents alone, but often involves family members like, older siblings, uncles, aunties and other kin who are readily available when needed. These kinship networks provide Maori children with “affection and food so that they are being nurtured in the fullest sense” (Families

Commission, 2010, p.94). It is not surprising, that the death of a grandparent or other significant adult can be particularly hard for children to deal with as a result of developing strong familial ties and/or emotional bonds with them (Parker, 2003).

Children can find the death of a loved one difficult, overwhelming, and at times traumatising (Rosner, Cruse & Hagl, 2010). Nevertheless, it is well documented that explaining and helping children understand the concept of death can significantly reduce any fear, anxiety and other emotional or behavioural responses associated with mourning the death of a loved one (Turner, 2006).

## **UNDERSTANDING AND CONCEPTUALISING DEATH**

How children understand and conceptualise death varies from culture to culture (Rosenblatt, 1997). Theorists, who have based their research around Western paradigms of knowledge, have suggested that children cannot acquire a mature understanding of death until they have a basic understanding of certain components (Feifel, 1977; Kane, 1979; Lansdown & Benjamin, 1984; Nagy, 1948; Speece & Brent, 1992). The most commonly researched components are *universality*, *irreversibility*, *non-functionality* and *causality* (Cuddy-Casey & Orvaschel, 1997). *Universality* refers to the fact that eventually every living thing is destined to die and it cannot be avoided. *Irreversibility* states that death cannot be reversed. That is, once a person dies they cannot be made alive again (Granot, 2005; Speece & Brent, 1992). *Non-functionality*, also referred to as cessation, implies that the deceased person is no longer living and life is non-existent (Granot, 2005). The concept of *causality* involves understanding the possible causes and circumstances of how the death occurred. Causality emphasises the importance of clarifying the cause of the death, whether it is internal or external (Granot, 2005; Speece & Brent, 1992).

### ***A Developmental Perspective***

Various studies have argued that children's understanding regarding concepts of death, advance throughout various ages and stages of development (Speece & Brent, 1992; Childers & Wimmer, 1971; Ellis & Stump, 2000; Kane, 1979; Wenestam & Wass, 1987). These, along with several other studies pertaining to

children's acquisition and development of death related concepts, reflect a close correspondence with Piaget's (1960) theory about stages of cognition (Koocher, 1973; Lansdown & Benjamin, 1984; Nagy, 1948). Piaget's (1960) theory in relation to stages of cognitive development suggests that children's thoughts and reasoning are assumed to develop gradually over time and as a function of age. Lansdown and Benjamin's (1984) investigation involved 105 children aged between 5 and 9 years. Each child was questioned about their own concept of death following the reading of a story about an old lady who died. The results were analysed in terms of the components of the concept and it was shown that almost all had fully developed notions by the age of 8 or 9 years. Approximately 60% of the 5-year-olds had a complete or almost complete concept of death. Similarly, Nagy observed and summarised children's development of concepts of death in three stages. Children under the age of 5 were believed to be in the first stage. At this stage, denial of death was found to be prominent. The second stage related to children between the age group 5-9 years. At this stage children had the tendency to personify death (e.g. the bogey man). The third and final stage occurred after the age of 9 years, where children begin to realise that death is final and universal (1948).

Kane (1979) explored the nature and development of children's concepts of death and the impact of experiences relating to those concepts. His study involved children 3-12 years of age. Findings showed that children's concepts of death developed as a function of age. Children's thoughts about death were also found to develop in stages; comparable to Piaget's (1960) theory pertaining to stages of cognitive development. Though these studies showed parallels with Piaget's theory of cognition, findings also show that children can understand and comprehend death at a young age if they are exposed to it.

### ***Gaining Understanding through Personal Experiences and Culture***

Children can become aware of loss and death at an early age. In everyday life children are exposed to numerous accounts associated with dying and death (Vianello & Lucamante, 2001). Death is taught as part of the schooling curriculum, for example, history, social studies and biology. It is also portrayed culturally in art, music and literature (Heaney, 2004). Children see animals that

are dead on the road or brought in by the family pet; they hear about death in fairy tales and/or act it out when playing their imaginary games (Heaney, 2004). Vianello and Martin's (1985) study found that children's understanding of death is more evolved than people suspect; even young children as young as 3 years of age showed awareness of death through seeing animals or insects dying or dead. Their study also showed that very young children's thoughts do not just focus on the death of animals but also on the death of human adults and children (Vianello & Martin, 1985). Their investigation also found that, at an early age, children were able to differentiate between death and ordinary sleep or illness and could recognise some of the causes, like accidents, shootings and stabbings, as well as the effects of death, like the absence of movement.

Death and associated themes are present in the media and television where children observe wars, killings and natural catastrophes (Vianello & Lucamante, 2001). Young and Papadatou (1997) noted that in Western societies, like Europe and America, children are much more removed from the true reality of death than those from more tradition societies. They are also more likely to be exposed to death through graphic images portrayed in the media than experience death firsthand. Over the years, the influence of the media has shaped perceptions regarding death. Research undertaken by Fulton and Owen (1988) showed that the media often depicted death violently and very rarely portrayed it as a natural process of human life. In addition, they noted that the media portrayed death mainly in superficial ways, treating death in a casual and impersonal manner. This study is a pertinent reminder that the media can often be an inappropriate source from which children gain their understanding of death.

It is important to note that the literature and studies that are referred to above have been founded on Western paradigms of knowledge. This is defined by Nikora (2007) as:

*Knowledge which has been gathered by 'the West' through 'Western' validated ways; classified according to categorisation systems meaningful to 'the West' and represented to 'the West' and to the 'Other' through 'Western' validated systems; and compared, evaluated and ranked by standards of 'the West' as the criteria against what is 'normal' and*

*'acceptable'. 'Western knowledge' is processed by 'Western logic'.  
(p.127)*

However, Western ways of knowledge have limitations and may not transcend cultural differences. This is not to say that these ideas should be dismissed, but rather we should also consider that a child's personal experiences, beliefs or culture may also contribute to how they understand and comprehend death. Rosenblatt (1997) pointed out that "there are no pan-human categories for understanding death; how people think about death is everywhere culturally embedded" (p.31).

Cultural and religious explanations often address themes of death and/or questions of an afterlife. Both constructs frequently help adults to explain difficult questions asked by children after the loss a loved one. These beliefs provide comfort for children, much like they do for adults (Cuddy-Casey et al, 1995; Granot, 2005). Children absorb the beliefs and culture they are raised in and are readily accepting of the answers that they provide concerning death (Fiorini & Mullen, 2006).

Religion and culture are often intertwined. For Maori traditions and cultural beliefs mingle closely with Christian ideologies (Salmond, 1976). Though many Maori have become converted to Christianity they are still able to retain many traditional aspects pertinent to their culture (Blanche & Parkes, 1997). This idea is consistent with what Ritchie (1992) termed the 'both/and' logic way of thinking in the Maori world. According to Rosenblatt (1997) the blending of cultural traditions with religion is not unusual, in fact, there are many instances where people seek guidance, comfort and understanding from both sources.

Young and Papadatou (1997) suggested that generally, there are cultural differences in how children acquire their knowledge and understanding surrounding death. They note that a large number of children are often exposed to death at an early age as a result of being exposed to war, civil conflict, sickness or natural disasters. During times of war and violence, children of all ages have witnessed their parents be killed, murdered or die (Marten, 2002). A longitudinal study conducted by Dyregrov, Gjestad and Raundalen (2002) explored children's exposure to warfare following the Gulf War. In this study 94 children were interviewed over a period of two years. Their findings showed that all 94 children

were exposed to death, and that 71 children had lost a close family member and 84 children claimed to have lost a close friend. In countries like Africa, where mortality rates are higher than the standard population, children are more likely to be exposed to death; learning about it early on in life. UNICEF (2003) reported that over 11 million children living in sub-Saharan Africa had lost either one or both of their parents to HIV/AIDS.

From the literature covered, we learn that children can understand and conceptualise death and its concepts in a number of ways. They can learn about death developmentally, through the influence of media and religion, educational settings and other contexts. Others learn the true realities of death firsthand through their own culture, through exposure to war and civil conflict, as well as from exposure to natural disasters and sickness.

## **TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH**

### *Talk and Expression of Emotions*

In cultures of European origin, parents and adults have often avoided talking about the death of a loved one with children; in fact, many have found it an extremely difficult task (Granot, 2005). Goldman (2005) stated that “parents and adults have consciously and unconsciously inhibited children from expressing emotions due to their own feelings, discomfort or inability to speak of death” (p.73). Some suppressed their own emotions and feelings in the presence of children thinking that they are sheltering them from the pain, hurt and anxiety associated with the grief of losing a loved one (Granot, 2005; Smith, 1999).

Parent’s reactions of grief, like anger, shock, crying, are often concealed and hidden from children. As a result, children have learnt that powerful emotions should be withheld and not expressed (Smith, 1999). This learnt behaviour of withholding emotions can extend into adulthood, where children may continue to struggle to express and regulate their emotions (Dyregrov & Yule, 2008; Granot, 2005).

Even though communication and expressions of grief are repressed in some cultures it may differ in others. Rosenblatt (1997) noted that in death “how, when and possibly whether emotions of grief are felt, expressed and understood is a

matter of culture” (p. 35). What may be considered appropriate and normal expressions of grief in one culture may be seen as inappropriate in another. For example, in some cultures, like that of Maori, there is no attempt made to mask the grief that is felt when somebody dies. Loud wailing and lamentation for the dead are common cultural practices at death; all emotional responses are openly displayed and tears run freely (Phillips & Huria, 2008; Sinclair, 1990).

### ***Consequences of Withholding Information and Exclusion***

In the past, Pakeha children, have been kept from attending the funeral service of a loved one; neither were they exposed to, or allowed to view the body (Drewery & Bird, 2004). Similarly, other children of European origins, have been sent away from home during the initial mourning period; others have been prohibited to visit their dying family member in hospital, while some receive no information at all about what has happened (Dyregrov & Yule, 2008; Granot, 2005). However, by parents and adults withholding information from their children and excluding or isolating them from being involved in the funeral ceremony and rituals of a loved one, makes the situation worse (Turner, 2004). Tokin (2003) suggests that when questions are left unanswered or there is an absence of information about the death of a loved one, or delays in receiving it, it can lead children to make up their own stories about what happened, allowing fantasies of the imagination and magical thinking to play upon their mind, where gaps of information are left untamed. Dyregrov and Yule (2008) explain that children usually have two versions of events surrounding death. The first version is the truth which is constructed from the information they have received about it; the second version is a construct of the child’s own fantasies and interpretation about what happened. When children begin to believe their own fantasies, rather than accepting the reality that someone close to them has died, their perspective can become distorted as to what is the truth (Granot, 2005; Smith, 1999).

Too often bereaved children have been put to one side and left to cope with their grief alone. As a result, many are deprived of the opportunity to grieve the loss (Heaney, 2004). Adults who have experienced grief in their childhood report that the failure of their parent or other adult to include them in the mourning process contributed to their increased difficulty in coping with grief (Granot, 2005).

Studies have found that unresolved childhood grief, combined with their perceived loss, contributed to the development of adult psychopathology and impairment in interpersonal adult relationships (Edmans & Marcellino-Boisvert, 2002; Mireault & Bond, 1992).

Childhood bereavement has been linked to the development of child psychopathology and/or vulnerability in adulthood to psychopathology (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2005). Bowlby's (1980; 1973; 1969) theories of attachment show that the making and breaking of early emotional bonds of attachment significantly impairs the psychological wellbeing of children. A study by Rutter (1966) found that childhood psychiatric disorders were significantly higher in bereaved children compared to those of the general population. Investigations from various other studies revealed that mental health problems have often stemmed from unresolved or badly handled childhood loss (Cohen, Mannarino & Deblinger, 2006; Dowdney, 2000; Lutzke, Ayers, Sandler & Barr, 1997).

Other research shows that childhood bereavement places children at risk of developing serious mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, and post-traumatic stress symptoms (Haines, Ayers, Sandler & Wolchik, 2008; Kaufman & Kaufman 2005; Rosner, Kruse, & Hagl, 2010; Turner, 2006). Studies have also found that grief and bereavement can have detrimental effects on children that are immediate and long lasting (Black 1996; Dowdney, Wilson, Maughan, Allerton, Schofield & Skuse, 1999; Luecken, 2000).

### ***Traditional Approaches Revived by the West***

Talking about death with children is an approach that is now widely encouraged by health professionals in America and Europe, as a strategy for parents and adults to use to alleviate emotional and psychological distress in bereaved children (Webb, 2010; Rosenblatt, 1997). Scholars and professionals in this field have produced educational literature and resources that validate the so-called "talking approach" which is, adult and parental encouragement to talk with children about grief and death openly and honestly without apprehension (Webb, 2010; Dyregrov & Yule, 2008; Turner, 2006; Granot, 2005; Goldman, 2005; Turner; 2004; Smith, 1999).

From this literature, it has been found that when talking to children, information should be given as soon as is possible after death has occurred; even in cases where someone dies tragically, for example, in car accident or suicide. In addition, information should be given openly and honestly without reserve.

It is interesting to note, that the “talking approach” is not a new concept when assisting bereaved children in their grief. In many traditional societies and cultures it is common practice to talk with children about death and include them in the mourning process. Young and Papadatou (1997) explained that many of these cultures, have long known the value of talking to and including children in mourning practices pertaining to their beloved dead; as well as “giving them the opportunity to see and touch the body as a final farewell” (p. 200).

“There are cultural differences in talk, that is, what is important about life, death and grieving differs markedly from culture to culture” (Rosenblatt, 1997, p.41). For some cultures, death is part of everyday life. Young and Papadatou (1997) commented that death is considered a natural process and part of everyday life in more traditional cultures. They explain:

*“The dying and dead are cared for by their own family and children are not only close observers of this but are often active participants in any activities or rituals of the ‘death surround’. In this ways, they are exposed to learn from the same realities as adults, with no special arrangements made to shield or exclude them as they so often are in the West”.* (p. 199)

In many cultures, children’s involvement and inclusion also allows family members to support them in their grief. In this way family members are open to teach and talk to their children about their cultural practices and beliefs regarding death and bereavement (Young & Papadatou, 1997).

As demonstrated earlier, parents of European origin have often avoided talking to their children about death and excluded them from mourning practices (Granot, 2005). As a result, many children have found themselves vulnerable to delusions and/or various kinds of emotional or psychological distress. Now, with a growing awareness of the challenges faced by bereaved children, many parents and adults, chiefly from European extraction, are beginning to talk about death and including

their children in mourning ceremonies (Drewery & Bird, 2004); something that has been long practices in many traditional societies and cultures.

### **MAORI PERSPECTIVES SURROUNDING DEATH AND TANGIHANGA**

Western ideologies dominate the mainstream world of New Zealand (McRae, 2010); as such, has guided ways in which Pakeha have dealt with mourning the death of a loved one. Drewery and Bird (2004) noted that in times past, Pakeha, much like other cultures of European origin, excluded children from participating in the funeral of a loved one. Pakeha approached death with the attitude that “the dead must be hurried away and hidden from sight” (Dansey, 1992, p.108). However, in contemporary New Zealand, times are changing, with a growing number of Pakeha openly acknowledging the value of Maori approaches and practices surrounding death and bereavement. In turn, Maori approaches to death and its rituals are greatly influencing the way in which Pakeha are now mourning their dead (Drewery & Bird, 2004).

Serious illness, dying and death are among the most sacred and important events in Maori culture. They are events steeped with tapu and kawa. Though each hapu and/or iwi hold different customary practices following the death of a loved one, threads of similarity are found throughout Maoridom (Ngata, 2005). In traditional and contemporary Maori society tangihanga takes precedence over all other meetings, events or gatherings held at the marae or in the community. Gatherings are interrupted or cancelled to accommodate the deceased, ensuring that their body can lie in state at the marae, ready for family members, relatives and friends to congregate together to mourn (Salmond, 1976; Sinclair, 1990). Tangi traditionally takes place at the marae; however, within a more contemporary Maori society, tangi are being held in other settings such as, in the home, funeral parlours and educational institutions (Edge, Nikora, Rua, 2010).

Tangihanga (tangi) is the term used to describe Maori death ceremonies that involve 2-3 days of mourning (Mead, 2003). Other terms that are used to describe this ceremony process are hui mate, nehunga and uhunga (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2003). During tangi the life of the deceased is celebrated, acknowledged and farewelled from the physical world (Drewery & Bird, 2004). “In death, drawn

by the ties of love, respect and sorrow, people gathered to mourn; this is tangihanga” (Dansey, 1992, p. 110).

### ***Kinship Ties***

When death occurs, family members and relatives of the deceased living in various parts of New Zealand and afar are informed of the death and notify others. Once news of the death is received, family members rally together to organise their travel arrangements back to the marae to pay their final respects to their deceased relative (Mead, 2003). Many travel great distances to be part of the ceremony and to mourn the deceased; no other ceremony more effective in mobilising Maori (Mead, 2003; Sinclair, 1990).

According to Ritchie (1992) whanaungatanga is one of the most valued aspects in Maori society. It is the foundation in which relationships with kin, “linked by blood, adoption or fostering”, are established and maintained (Nikora, 2007, p. 68). As explained by Ritchie (1963), kinship networks have traditionally stemmed from lineage; now however, kinship networks are composed of families within a lineage but not limited to wider networks of support. For Maori, maintaining kin relationships is significantly important. One way in which these relationships are maintained is at tangi. This ensures “the continuance of emotional ties, the building of bridges and love between relations who may, with the passage of time, have drifted apart” (Dansey, 1992, p.110).

When illness and death occur, it impacts, not only on the individual, but also on the whanau, hapu and iwi (Ngata, 2005). The bereaved family rely on these social systems for support and sustenance during these times of death (Ngata, 2005). However, as a result of urbanisation, these levels of support are now widely fragmented by nature, with whanau now scattered in various other place away from their homeland. Many now rely wholly on support from their basic nuclear unit. Only at times of tangi and whanau reunions are these systems of support brought back together (Durie, 1998; Mead, 2003).

### ***Roles & Responsibilities***

Sinclair (1990) noted that there is a “marae workforce” that usually consists of family members and relatives living locally in the hapu. Their role is to host

visitors throughout the duration of the tangi proceedings. This so-called “workforce” manages and prepares the marae ready to receive the body of the deceased and their accompanying family members and friends. “The marae is prepared, stores are brought in, kaumatua and/or ministers are notified, food is organised and sleeping arrangements are made” (Sinclair, 1990, p. 227). The response is almost immediate, with family members and relatives ready to give support and contributing their time, where they can, to ensure everything runs smoothly (Mead, 2003; Sinclair, 1990). Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2009) explain that for the bereaved, the knowledge that people are taking care of the marae arrangements and preparing for their arrival gives them much comfort and relief during a time when emotional distress is high. Most often than not, these workers arrive at the marae long before the tupapaku (deceased) and their accompanying whanau arrive (McRae, 2010). In addition, might I also add, from my own personal experiences, they are also usually some of the last people to depart from the marae after the tangi concludes. These workers play a significant role, particularly during the initial phase of preparing the marae for a tangi.

There is usually a division of labour, with everyone allocated various roles and responsibilities according to their age and gender (Sinclair, 1990). The young are also allocated various roles and responsibilities dependent on what tasks need to be done and/or according to their interest; many learn by observation (Ngata, 2005). Te Rangi Hiroa (1950) noted that tangata whenua undertake multiple roles simultaneously. Not only do they organise and prepare meals and lodgings for visitors during tangi but they also entertain them through whaikorero, waiata and dance. Ngata (2005) commented that the particular roles and functions that are carried out “ensure the continuity of kawa and of skilled people to carry out various tasks” (p. 35).

### ***The Karanga***

The formal tangi ceremony begins once the tupapaku has arrived at the marae accompanied with the bereaved family and other kin. The pallbearers carry the tupapaku on to the marae with mourning family members following closely behind (Salmond, 1976; Sinclair, 1990). They are greeted with a karanga, a welcoming call inviting the deceased back home to the marae (Ngata, 2005). A

member of the funeral procession may also respond back with a karanga acknowledging the welcome (Ngata, 2005; Sinclair, 1990). Karanga is performed by the women of the marae. Additionally, karanga is performed at various intervals throughout the duration of tangi to welcome other visitors and kin who arrive at a later time. When the karanga finishes the casket is placed down and the lid removed (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2003; McRae, 2010). The placement of the casket varies from iwi to iwi; some tupapaku are laid in the wharenuī while others are placed on the mahau, or in the wharemate (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2003; McRae, 2010).

### ***The Bereaved Whanau***

Where I am from, the terms “whanau pani” refers to the bereaved family, primary mourners or relations of the deceased. The whanau pani as a collective, consists of female kin of the deceased, including widows or marae kuia (Rua, Rua, Te Awekotuku & Nikora, 2010; Salmond, 1976). When the casket is placed down, “either in the wharenuī, on the mahau or in the wharemate, dependant on the kawa of the hapu/iwi” (McRae, 2010, p.27), the lid is removed and the whanau pani assemble around the body, never leaving them alone (Salmond, 1976). Their primary role is to mourn and remain with the body until burial (Mead, 2003; Salmond, 1976). Rua et al., (2010) note that the role of bereaved whanau has changed over time, with many lacking commitment to their primary roles of mourning and taking care of the tupapaku.

### ***Tapu Restrictions***

The whanau pani are considered under the tapu of death. To ensure that tapu is not violated, the intake of food or drink is prohibited and restrictions are placed on their activities; that is, “what they can or cannot do” (Mead, 2003, p. 138). Eating in the wharenuī was also considered an act that breached tapu. From Rua et al., (2010) we learn that:

*Tangi and the presence of tupapaku among the living, are not ordinary activities and the wharemate is charged with metaphysical activity that requires care and dedication to the task of supporting the wairua of the tupapaku onwards in their spiritual journey away from the living. (p.424)*

From an account given in Rua et al (2010), we gain valuable insight from one of the kuia interviewed. She explains that eating in the wharemate and in close proximity to the tupapaku had consequences. However, over time and through personal observation, people are now eating in the wharemate unaware or being dismissive of traditional kawa.

### ***Whaikorero, Waiata and other Formalities***

Whaikorero is a predominantly patriarchal role undertaken by either the men who are hosting or those who are visiting (Mead, 2003). Whaikorero acknowledges the journey and return of the deceased back to their ancestors and also addresses those who have passed on (Sinclair, 1990). Speeches of welcome are also given to bridge the gap between those visiting the deceased and those playing host (Ngata, 2005). Waiata (singing) concludes each speech. Following the completion of all the speech making, those who are visiting shake hands (ruru) and press noses (hongiri) with the primary mourners and/or tangata whenua, completing the formalities of tangihanga (Ngata, 2005).

Hongiri enables both parties to meet one another and become unified while expressing sympathy over the loss. After the hongiri rituals visitors are able to interact freely with tangata whenua and unite with them when welcoming later arrivals. Both visitors and tangata whenua complete the process by enjoying a meal together making them as one (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1950). From this point on and until the burial, the tangihanga proceedings cycle through these elaborate rituals and customary practices which are central and essential in understanding how Maori respond to death, grief and loss (Mead, 2003; Sinclair, 1990). Though each hapu and/or iwi hold different customary practices following the death of a loved one, threads of similarity are found throughout Maoridom (Ngata, 2005).

### ***Wairua and Afterlife***

Maori believe that after a person dies their wairua departs its mortal remains, continuing on in existence; however, where the wairua continued on to still remains to be clearly defined. Mead (2003) describes a common viewpoint held by Maori as to what happens to the wairua after it leaves the body. He explains:

*“It is common belief that the wairua hovers over the body it left... Throughout the tangihanga ceremony the wairua hovers, lingers and watches over the proceedings, making sure that the rituals are done properly...and if they had not been, the wairua would not leave but would hover for a long time, bringing bad luck in its wake”. (p.147)*

There are also a number of other beliefs that are held by Maori with regards to the wairua and where it goes when it departs the body. Oppenheim (1973) noted that after burial the wairua journeys to a place northbound; a leaping place called “Te Rerenga Wairua or Te Reinga Wairua”. The location of this place is known by many Maori to be the northern most point of the North Island (Mead, 2003). Te Rerenga is the pathway where the spirits leap off to enter the Reinga, and there, return to Hawaiiiki Nui from whence it came (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1950).

Maori believe that the wairua of the death can communicate with the living through dreams and visions, passing on important messages and warnings (Hanson & Hanson, 1983; Mead, 2003). Many also believe that the wairua of a living person can leave the body for short durations of time while dreaming and converse with other wairua passed on. Visions received in dreams were seen as a result of what the wairua saw while visiting in the other wairua in the spirit world (Best, 1924). Best notes an account of two individuals who claimed to have entered the Reinga as spirits, but were forced to return back to the world of the living. Interestingly, both reported their experience saying that “the Reinga was a place of light where they met their relatives” (Oppenheim, 1973, p.97).

Best (1924) explains that the wairua of the dead do not always head directly to Reinga but often lingers round about its home or place of belonging, in the form of kehua, or what those in western societies would term “a ghost”. Mead (2003) also comments that “some wairua do not wish to make this journey, but permanently hover around burial grounds, mountains and culturally significant sights, never far from their kin” (p.148). Many Maori are happy with the knowledge that the wairua of their ancestors are round about them, and many say that they talk with them, see them and/or feel of a presence of those who have long since passed on.

In conclusion, I have described how Maori, in general, approach death and tangihanga and how significantly important these events are in Maori culture. I have described the importance of kinship relationships and the roles that family members and kin take on, as a collective; to ensure that the bereaved family is supported as they grieve the loss. I have also explained aspects of Maori belief systems with regards to death, tangi, wairua and an afterlife.

### ***Maori Children and Death***

Maori life expectancy has been significantly lower than that of non-Maori for a long time (Statistics NZ, 2010). Though the gap between Maori and non-Maori life expectancy has narrowed throughout the years Maori are still dying at a faster rate than non-Maori (Statistics NZ, 2009). Given this, it is probable that Maori children are more likely to be exposed to death more often than non-Maori children in New Zealand; experiencing more situations of death and associated grief.

To date there is only a small body of literature that thoroughly examines research relating to traditional and contemporary Maori customary practices and rituals surrounding death and tangi. Furthermore, little is mentioned about how Maori children experience these events. Earlier studies have attempted to reconstruct ways in which traditional Maori society and culture was prior to European settlement (Best, 1924; Te Rangi Hiroa, 1950; Vayda, 1960). Others studies have been pivotal in forming the foundation of knowledge relating to Maori society and culture in New Zealand (Beaglehole, 1946; Hohepa, 1964; Metge, 1964; Oppenheim, 1973; Ritchie, 1963; Salmond, 1976; Te Rangi Hiroa, 1982). Literature that specifically touches on areas relating to Maori children's experiences of death and tangi or their inclusion from these events is minimal. Research about ways in which parents explain and conceptualise death and tangi with their children is even sparser. From the review of literature pertaining to this area of interest, I was only able to source four references, which I will discuss. Edwards, McCreanor, Ormsby, Tuwhangai & Tipene-Leach (2009) examine the grieving process of Maori men who had lost babies through Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Their study discusses traditional Maori grieving processes and the changes that have evolved in grieving due to colonisation, urbanisation and

the changing world. Noted in this study was the role that children play in helping fathers grieve. Children were deliberately seated by the grieving father as a reminder to him of his lost child (Edward et al., 2009). This cathartic measure helped the grieving father address his underlying grief and open up hidden emotions. Though this study focuses on the grief processes of Maori men, this study makes mention of the part that Maori children play in the grieving process.

Ngata (2005) canvasses Maori perspectives pertaining to death, dying and grief. Though he is not specific when discussing the various roles that tangata whenua perform to support the event of tangi, he did, however, allude to the fact that children have roles allocated to them when preparing for tangi. Mead (2003) briefly discusses children's involvement in tangihanga and their understanding and comprehension of the event. Though this account sheds some light on children's understanding and involvement in death and tangi, information is limited.

Dansey (1992) gives an autoethnographic account of death and tangi as he perceives it. Part of his narrative draws on a childhood experience he had when news of death was announced. He stated:

*"I slept as a boy on the veranda of our home...When someone died, or perhaps when tidings of death arrived, a watcher by the bed would go to the door and raise her voice in a long, heart-crushing wail, that cry, the quintessence of human sorrow. Another door would open and the cry would be repeated...My father would come on to the veranda and look into the night and sigh, "That was poor so-and-so, he was very low yesterday" and then we'd talk a while... (p. 110-111).*

Dansey's childhood memories are amongst the very few narratives that I found that gave insight into children's experiences when news of death was announced. Of significance is the opportunity he had to listen to his father talk about death with him as a child when death was announced. Sinclair (1990) also alludes to children's involvement, specifically when making preparations for tangi. She comments that roles and responsibilities are assigned to all individuals according to their age and gender; the term "all" suggesting "all family members and/or tangata whenua including children" (p.227).

## **CONCLUSION**

A significant amount of literature discusses various ways in which children gain their knowledge, understanding and comprehension about death and its concepts. Some argue that children's understanding and comprehension can be explained from a developmental perspective. However, others say that a child's learning and understanding is embedded in the culture they are brought up in. Though the developmental perspective is not discredited, culture also plays a large part in how children understand and cope with death.

The literature also suggests that there are cultural differences in how parents and adults talk with their children about death and its concepts. In some cultures death is talked about with children, and in death, emotions expressed openly. In other cultures, talk about death is prohibited and emotions hidden. As a result, children have been vulnerable to a host of negative outcomes. Literature examined in the latter half of this review related to Maori cultural perspectives on death, tangihanga and its significance in Maori culture. In the literature relating to traditional and contemporary Maori practices and rituals surrounding death and tangi; there is little of Maori children's experience, understanding or involvement in these events. In addition, there was no literature found that discusses how Maori parents explain and conceptualise death and tangi with their children. Therefore, in light of the lack of literature that exists pertaining to this, I conclude, that further investigation into this area of interest is needed.

## **AIM OF THIS PRESENT STUDY**

This study endeavours to explore childhood experiences of Maori relating to their inclusion and involvement when death and tangi occurs. In addition, it aims to capture ways in which Maori parents talk to, explain and conceptualise death and tangi to their child/children. This investigation will analyse various narratives in the following areas:

- Childhood Experiences Relating to Death and Tangi
- Conceptualising Death, Dying and Afterlife
- Talking with Children

- Looking Ahead to the Future

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **METHOD**

This chapter will outline the nature of qualitative research methodology and its relevance to this study. It will provide an examination into how Maori children experiences and understand death and tangihanga. More specifically, this chapter aims to address reasons as to why qualitative research methods were employed for this study; it outlines the sample selection, recruitment and the interview process and schedule; and discusses the process in which raw data was generated into summary reports to produce the next chapter, findings and discussion.

#### **QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative methodology was seen appropriate for this study; firstly, because it investigates childhood involvement and experiences of Maori relating to death, dying and tangihanga of a loved one; and secondly, it explores ways in which Maori parents conceptualise and discuss these topics with their children. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), qualitative research enables the researcher to explore and understand peoples viewpoints, constructs and how they makes sense of their lives, experiences, and structures of the world they live in. Qualitative research also gives the researcher “the ability to get into the world of someone who does not share one’s own lens” (Gergen, 1999, p. 50). Therefore, a qualitative method of inquiry is suitable for this study.

Data collection using qualitative methods allow in depth recording of individuals’ words and actions to ensure that information is not minimised or ‘lost in translation’ (Willig, 2008, p.16). Qualitative methodology facilitates in depth investigation into various areas of interest relating to childhood concepts and experiences of death, dying and tangi, as well as parents’ perceived childhood experiences. It also provides a way to canvass various ways in which Maori parents explain and conceptualise these topics with their own children.

Qualitative methods of data gathering rely on firsthand experiences of individuals unlike quantitative designs “which rely on pre-coded data collection techniques such as multiple-choice, questionnaires or structured interviews that often minimises information and data collected” (Willig, 2008, p.16). Relying on people

as the primary source of data collection allows individuals to dispute and, if necessary, correct the researcher's assumptions about the area of research being investigated (Willig, 2008).

Qualitative inquiry has enabled this research to explore several areas of interest relating to Maori cultural practices and rituals surrounding death dying and tangihanga; uncovering aspects not yet explored in narratives. Qualitative methods and approaches have been highly favoured among Maori compared to quantitative methods which often detach the participant from their experience, and at times become culturally inappropriate when researching indigenous cultures (Gibbs, 2001; Smith, 1999).

Central to this research are participants who identify as Maori, who are parents themselves, and who have experienced attending tangihanga with their children. Therefore, a qualitative method was seen as the most appropriate approach to use for this study as it allowed Maori parents the opportunity to tell their own childhood stories/experiences about death, dying and tangihanga of a family member or a loved one. Through qualitative means this study is also able capture how parents talk to their children about these things.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In depth interviews are amongst the most common qualitative methods of data collection used by researchers (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). It is one of the best methods to use when gathering data for "individuals' personal histories, perspectives and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored" (Mack et al., 2005, p. 2). Semi-structured interview methods were employed as the main vehicle for data collection in this study. They are a widely used qualitative method of data collection in psychological research (Willig, 2008). Semi-structured interviewing allows data to be analysed in a variety of ways, making it easily compatible with various methods of data analysis. Semi-structured interviews are also relatively easier or less complicated to conduct than other qualitative methods of data collection (Willig, 2008).

Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher is afforded the opportunity and privilege to listen and learn about particular aspects of peoples' lives and/or

experiences. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher flexibility to ask and direct conversations that will lead to the research question being answered (Willig, 2008).

## **RESEARCH ETHICS**

Prior to this research being undertaken, The University of Waikato required that this study was reviewed and approved by the Psychology Research and Ethics Committee. Any research that is undertaken that involves human participants has to comply with the University's "Ethical Conduct in Research Guidelines". In light of these guidelines, an "Ethics Review for Human Research Application Form" was filled in and completed by the researcher. She and both her supervisors then signed the forms before handing it in to the Psychology Office. The application was then passed on to the Ethics and Research Committee to review. Two weeks elapsed before receiving confirmation via email and a letter that my application for research had been approved. I could now begin conducting my research.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study. Purposive sampling is a frequently used sampling strategy which aims to identify participants according to pre-selected criteria guided by the research question (Mack et al., 2005). In this particular study, the researcher specifically sort out participants who identified as being Maori, and who were parents or adults who had discussed death, dying and tangihanga with children while they were between the ages of 3-8 years. There were no restrictions placed on the age or gender of the participants as the sample selected through purposive sampling produced a well rounded demographic population. Participants who were interviewed varied across socio-economic backgrounds, iwi affiliations and geographical locations in New Zealand producing a rich source of information. More information will be presented regarding this in the next section.

"Purposive sample sizes are determined on the basis of theoretical saturation" (Mack et al., 2005, p.5). Saturation is the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions (Mack et al., 2005).

For this study there was no set number of participants required; the point of saturation was achieved after interviewing 17 participants.

### **RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

Participants were recruited by the distribution of an information sheet about the project through student and staff friendship and kinship ties. Potential participants were referred through these various connections or approached by the researcher herself. When contact was made with these potential candidates, an initial overview of the research topic was relayed to them and on agreeing to participate, an interview was scheduled and a mutually agreed date, time and venue was set. Eighteen participants were interviewed for this study; however, only seventeen of the interviewees fit the criterion of being a Maori parent; the other one identified as being a full Cook Islander.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

Prior to the interview getting started, each participant was asked to fill in a structured questionnaire that would collect their demographic information. Participants were given 5-10 minutes to fill this in. The questionnaire requested information pertaining to their age, gender, religious affiliation/s, ethnicity (if they identified with any other ethnic groups other than Maori), iwi and hapu affiliation, occupation and the number of children they had; this information provided valuable background information for the researcher.

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

Below is a table that has been generated from the demographic questionnaire. It outlines the names, age groups and number of children (including their age and gender) of each participant. Their primary region and Iwi they affiliate themselves to, along with basic information given about their occupation are also included in this table.

**Table 1 Participant details**

FIRST NAMES  * indicates that a pseudonym is used	20-30 yrs	31-40 yrs	41-50 yrs	50+ yrs	Total No of Children	Gender & Age of Children		Affiliated Regions/ Primary Iwi	Occupation
1). Heeni				✓	5	No gender/age given		East Coast/ Te Aitanga a Hauiti	Marae nanny
2.) Astral		✓			4	2 x female  2 x male	No age given	Northland/ Ngatiwai & Te Arawa	Student
3). Sulia	✓				2	1 x female  1 x male	No age given	Northland/ Ngapuhi	Call Centre Operator
4). Jodie		✓			1	1 x female	8	Bay of Plenty & Taranaki/ Ngati Manawa & Te Ati Haunui a Paparangi	Teacher
5). Lena			✓		3	3 x males	26,23,20	Ngaruawahia/ Waikato	Alcohol & Other Drug Clinician
6). *Sam		✓			2	1 x female  1 x male	5  8	Bay of Plenty/  Te Arawa/ Ngati Awa	School Principal

7). *Matiu		✓			3	3 x female	5,3,1	Bay of Plenty/ Tuhoe	Research Officer
8). Dianne			✓		5	3 x female  2 x male	20, 12, 6  21, 10	Taranaki & Waikato/  Tanui & Te Ati Haunui a Paparangi	Social Worker
9). Ivy	✓				3	3 x male	7, 5, 2	Northland/  Ngapuhi	Student
10). Whiro		✓			5	2 x female  3 x male	9 & 4 months  14,6, 1	Ngaruawahia/  Waikato	Social worker/ Educator
11). *Frank				✓	2	2 x male	No age given	Bay of Plenty/  Te Arawa	Court Attendant/  Maori Liaison
12). *Rehua		✓			5	4 x female  1 x male	18, 15, 6 & 5 months  7	Bay of Plenty/  Ngati Rangiwewehi	Researcher
13). *Lana		✓			4	1 x female  3 x male	16  24, 9, 8	Bay of Plenty/  Ngaiterangi	Factory Supervisor
14). *Tama			✓		4	1 x female  3 x male	16  24, 9, 8	Bay of Plenty/  Ngaiterangi	Crane Operator

15) *Leroy		✓			3	2 x female  1 x male	9, 4  5	Bay of Plenty/  Ngati Hako	At home solo father
16) Bunny				✓	3	2 x female  1 x male	39, 33  30	Bay of Plenty/  Ngaiterangi	Team Leader/ Remote Control Operator
17) *Rangi			✓		8	8 x male	26,24,19,17,15,12,11,8	East Coast & Northland/Te Aitanga a Mahaki/Ngati Porou & Ngapuhi	Mill-hand

There were seventeen participants in total; 10 females and 7 males. In the age group 20-30 years, there were 2 females. In the age group 31-40 there were 5 females and 3 males. In the age group 41-50, there were 2 females and 2 males and in the age group 50+, there was 1 female and 2 males. There were 8 participants that affiliated with iwi in the geographical region of the Bay of Plenty's, 3 came from iwi within the Waikato region, 3 others were connected to iwi in the Far North region; 2 others were affiliated to iwi on the East Coast and only 1 participant was linked to an iwi within the Hauraki region.

In this study some participants requested to remain anonymous. The researcher allocated pseudonyms to those who requested them. These participants are identified in the above table by a star preceding their alias. Other participants interviewed did not mind being identified in this study and are referred to by their real names.

Please note that the interviews were conducted between the months of June through to September 2010. The above information was accurate during this time period; however, circumstances may have changed at the time of completing this study.

## **THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

Each interview was held at a place and a time mutually agreed to by the participant and researcher. On meeting for the initial interview each participant received an information sheet about the study, which they had an opportunity to read through prior to the interview. The researcher explained the study and answered any questions they had about anything relating to it. The researcher also made the participants aware that they could withdraw from the study at any stage up until the completion of the research. Participants were also informed that they could remain anonymous with pseudonyms attached to their information, or choose to be named. Eight participants indicated that they wanted to use a pseudonym; the other seven did not mind using their real names. Participants were also asked to sign a consent forms prior to their interview.

Participants were invited to bring support people to the interview if they so wished. If the support person, with the agreement of the participant, took an active part in the interview, they were also asked to sign the consent form and the same rights that were extended to the participant were also extended to the support person. This occurred in one interview.

On average, all interviews took between 30-65 minutes to conduct. All interviews were audio recorded. The audio recording of each participant in this study was transcribed by the researcher and then turned into a summary report. The interview was conducted in an open conversational style and focused on the participants' personal experiences relating to the topics of death, dying and tangihanga and talking to children about them. Participants were encouraged to discuss any aspects they wanted to share relating to the areas of interest.

Each interview concluded by asking the participants if they wanted to make any additional comments or statements regarding the topics covered. If there were no further comments they were then thanked for their contribution towards the study. The researcher explained to each participant what was going to happen to their information. That is, that the audio recorded interviews were going to be transcribed and used to generate a summary report from the data. The researcher let each participant know that a copy of their summary report would be sent to them for comment and amendments if necessary. The participants were also

reminded that the researcher would be in contact with them again if any details or aspects of their interview needed clarification.

## **THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

The questions posed in the interview schedule aimed to answer research objectives. These objectives were designed to explore ways in which Maori children have experienced death, dying and/or tangi; and secondly how Maori parents explain and conceptualise these topics/events with their child/children; and children responses to these events. The interview schedule surveyed the following themes:

### ***Past Childhood Experiences***

As a starting point, this section of questions aimed to draw out participants' own childhood experiences of death, dying and/or tangihanga of a family member or a loved one. It was hoped that questions would begin to trigger their own memories of these events and how their children have experienced these events. This section also aimed to encourage dialogue which captured the worldviews, perspectives and concepts taught to them by their parents when they were children relating to death, dying and/or tangihanga.

### ***Conceptualising Death, Dying and/or Afterlife***

Questions in this section were designed to capture the cultural and/or religious beliefs of Maori parents with regards to concepts of dying, death and afterlife. Parents were also asked whether they transmitted concepts and perspectives taught to them by their parents to their own children.

### ***Talking to Children about Death, Dying and an Afterlife***

Questions in this section searched for answers about whether or not Maori parents openly talk with their children and include/involve them when death or tangi occur in the family. This section aims to capture the various conversations parents may have had with their children and whether they were comfortable in talking about death and tangi with them.

### ***Examples of Talking to Children***

This section was interested in finding out which settings or environments dialogue relating to death, dying and tangi was initiated by Maori parents and/or their children. This section of questions was also concerned about finding out children's responses (immediate or later; verbally, behaviourally) to these events and whether they had any concerns relating to the emotional responses.

### ***Tangihanga and Tupapaku***

This section questioned parents' perspectives pertaining to how their child/children perceive/experience death and tangi of a loved one. Questions were also designed to find out how their children experience the tangihanga processes including viewing the tupapaku, their pre-burial, burial and post-burial experiences, if any.

### ***Doing Things Differently***

Questions in this section aimed to capture whether Maori parents were content about how they have talked and conceptualised these topics with their children or whether they would do things differently in the future.

### ***Into the future***

Following on from the previous section, questions in this section examined whether they, as parents, believe that their children will communicate these ideas of death, dying, afterlife and tangi to their children when they become parents themselves.

## **TRANSFORMATION OF RAW DATA & THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Transcripts from the audiotaped interviews were typed and recorded. Summary reports were developed from the transcribed materials produced from the audio recordings. The summary reports reviewed and paraphrased significant conversation covered during the interview between the researcher and the participants using verbatim quotes directly from the participant. Once the summary reports were completed for each participant, the researcher posted them all out for each participant to review and comment on if they wanted to. Each

participant had the opportunity to amend, add to or delete the content written up in their reports if they so wished. Four participants amended, added and/or requested to withdraw specific aspects of information they gave during their initial interview. Thirteen others were content in knowing that their summary reports recorded accurate information.

Once they were satisfied that their summary report reflected a true and fair account of their experiences, they were then requested to sign a summary report deposit form (SRDF) which would allow their final report to be entered into the information that would be used for this study. If participants agreed by signing another space allocated on the SRDF, their summary report would also be stored in the Tangi Research Programme document repository for use by the broader Tangi Research team.

Thematic analysis was the method employed in this study to make sense of the data produced during the interview process. This method of analysis identifies emerging themes and patterns according to the topic of inquiry (Boyatzis, 1998). Themes are usually derived from recurring ideas, conversation, activities or key words (Taylor & Bogdan, 1988). Summary reports were initially organised and categorised into various themes that emerged from the data. This made for easier retrieval of information when examining and identifying commonalties between each interview during the analysis phase. From this point we were able to move into the findings generated from this research undertaken and discuss its significance, if any. This information will be examined in the following section.

## CHAPTER 3:

### FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

In this chapter I outline the findings of the main themes that arose from the interview schedule and attempt to generate discussion relevant to the key findings.

#### **CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES RELATING TO DEATH AND TANGI**

All participants who were interviewed for this study were asked to recall and share their childhood experiences and memories of the death or tangi of a close family member. Each person was able to draw upon more than one childhood memory/experience relating to the death and/or tangi of a grandparent, sibling, aunty, uncle or other close extended family member.

##### *The Loss of a Loved One*

Several individuals recalled attending tangi in which either an aunty, uncle or other extended family member had passed away. For others, poignant memories of the passing away and/or tangi of a beloved grandparent were evoked. I spoke with Bunny from Tauranga, an older participant, who shared some brief but heart-felt words relating to the passing away of his grandmother. He explained:

*When my grandma passed away it was quite a lonely experience...I was brought up by my grandmother and grandfather, so it was only him and I left...She died when I was about 5 or 6, so I was at a young age... It was sad that she had passed on, but in a way I was happy that she had moved on because she was sick. I didn't know what sickness she had, all I was told was that she was sick and that's why she passed away...*

Though Bunny is mature in age, he was still able to recall clearly, how he felt losing his grandmother in childhood.

Whiro, from Ngaruawahia, talked with me about the fragmented memories she retained from attending the tangi of her maternal grandfather as a child. She paused and took some time to think before she relayed her thoughts on the matter. She said:

*My earliest memory of attending a tangi was when my grandfather died, my mother's father, which would have been in the late 70's. I think I would have been about 6. The memory, though very brief, has been chiselled into my brain I suppose...All I remember was my grandfather lying in state in the whare at Turangawaewae marae. All of us little kids were sitting in front of his body in front of the coffin on the whariki, and I remember crying...*

Lena, also from Ngaruawahia, was able to recall the strong emotional response she had when she found out about a close uncle passing away. She stated:

*My favourite uncle died. I remember feeling angry towards my family...They just let me be because it was a way for me to let it all out because they knew I was grieving for my uncle.*

Recalling childhood memories of losing a significant adult, like a grandparent, aunty or uncle, brought back a host of emotions for participants involved in this study. From the experiences shared, we learn that grandparents and/or other close kin, like aunts and uncles, were greatly valued and grieved over by these individuals when they were children. McRae and Nikora (2006) note that, in Maori society, along with parents, the role of grandparents and other kin is to nurture, care and protect children. Therefore, it is of no surprise that many participants felt sad over the loss of their grandparents', aunts and uncles.

Other participants spoke to me about the trauma they felt as a child over the death of a sibling. One could recall the event clearly, as if it happened yesterday. Rangi, from Tokoroa, openly shared with me his most unforgettable childhood memory of the passing away of his younger brother. His words were moving as he remembered and relayed the event. He said:

*My first experience of a tangi close to me was my baby brother; he was 3 when he died of poisoning... I was only 4 and I remember it quite clearly... Both my brothers were poisoned; they both drunk poison. My brother who is still alive, he took it first and spat it out and then my little brother, he swallowed it and he died...It just burnt him out. He lived for about a week*

*or five days and then passed away.....It was all pretty traumatic stuff...My mother grieved for years and years...*

Sadness also resonated from the voice of Ivy, the youngest female participant in the study. She told me about how she felt losing her sister to cancer while they were both still children. She explained:

*My sister died of cancer... she was only 7. Growing up the rest of my life as an only child seemed to be very lonely. I didn't have anyone else to play with anymore, or someone to talk to and grow up with...*

These accounts of childhood bereavement illustrate how the effects can be significant and on-going in the life of surviving siblings, as well as their parents. Gill-White (2006) and Parker (2003) note that many children grieve over the loss of a sibling because they have lost a friend, a playmate, a rival sibling and family member; with many feeling sad and lonely about that lost relationship. However, through positive support, children do overcome the trauma of such experiences. Ivy related:

*The support of everyone in our community was good, support was always around and I was never left alone.*

During times of illness and death Maori support systems, like that of, whanau, hapu and iwi, unify as a source of support for the bereaved whanau (Ngata, 2005). These levels of support are apparent in Ivy's account. As a result of the abundant support available to her, the death of her sister was made somewhat more bearable.

### ***Tangi Likened to a Holiday***

Participants spoke fondly of their childhood experiences attending tangi. They related the experience to going on holiday. It was exciting, different and away from the normal everyday grind of daily life, yet still very much a part of their living experience. It was not an unusual happening. Dianne, a mother of 5 from Whanganui, discussed with great enthusiasm her childhood experiences:

*Tangihanga, death and dying were a natural part of my childhood. It was something that we commonly did or attended...it was not something that*

*was fearful. It was just what we did...When a tangi occurred in the family the car got packed up, everyone hopped in and we were gone... we were off...that was just what we did, kind of like a holiday really because you knew you were going to see your cousins and your aunties”.*

Dianne described and likened her childhood experiences of attending tangi to a holiday, where the car got packed with baggage and bedding and headed off to visit with family. Similarly, Heeni, a nanny from the East Coast, shared similar sentiments, commenting:

*I know that this may sound strange, but we thought that attending tangi was wonderful! When we were children we just loved going to tangi because we saw all our relations...Wherever we went the rest of our relations would be there, so it was a great holiday experience for us. We had no concept of death other than it was a time when you met all the relations.*

For these participants, relocating away from their everyday homes and lives to the marae took them into a different space, where time was spent with cousins and other relatives. It seemed that the business of grieving was secondary to that of being on ‘holiday’, suggesting the absence of anxiety, and more importantly, the presence of anticipation, excitement and fun. This view of tangi as a holiday, is a theme that is absent from the literature on children and tangi.

It is clear, that parallels can be drawn between taking a holiday and tangi. Similarly, in both instance travel arrangements are organised, bags are packed with clothes, the car is loaded up and there is anticipation and excitement in the air about where you are going, who you will be seeing and what you will doing. Therefore, it is understandable as to why Maori children would easily confuse the two.

### ***Rekindling Family Ties***

In conjunction with the notion that attending tangi was much like a holiday, a large number of participants also likened tangi to attending a family reunion, where kinship ties were rekindled and strengthened, particularly ties with cousins.

Rehua, from the Bay of Plenty, shared her fond memories of attending tangi as a child:

*Often tangi were cool from a kid's perspective and even from a teenager's perspective because you didn't go in and sit with all the nannys and the koros and sit around the tupapaku and cry and that kind of stuff. We went to catch up with our cousins and we'd go and hang out with them...It was a lot of fun going to tangi''.*

Jodie, a lady in her early 30's also from the Bay of Plenty, asserted that the central reason why she went to tangi was to spend time with her cousins. For her, attending tangi was one of the rare times she had to reconnect. In her words she explained:

*Attending tangi was great because all the cousins got together. For me the main thing about a funeral was that you get to see your cousins that you haven't seen for a long time...We enjoyed each other's company because we knew that that's the only time we'd ever see each other would be at tangi.*

Ivy also uttered similar words:

*Tangi was a time to catch up with family as a kid...Even to this day it may be the only time that our family does get together, at times of death.*

Dansey (1995) has pointed out, that maintaining relationships with kin is significantly important for Maori, and tangi is one way these relationships can be maintained. However, for many, including Ivy and Jodie, sometimes it becomes the only way. As a consequence of urbanisation, kinship networks have become fragmented. They are now widely scattered in New Zealand and abroad, with many reduced down to the nuclear unit. Only at times of tangi and whanau reunions do you see these networks endeavour to reunite (Mead, 2003).

For many participants, maintaining and strengthening kin ties primarily with their cousins while at tangi was of most importance, while maintaining other kin relationships with aunts, uncles, kuia or koroua came secondary. Thus we see

that the most noteworthy relationship developed for children attending tangi is the relationship that they build with their cousins.

### *Children's Experiences with Tupapaku*

It is almost inevitable that when attending tangi, people will see and be exposed to the tupapaku of the deceased. Only in exceptional circumstances is the coffin closed. All the participants spoke of times when they touched, kissed, viewed or were in close proximity to tupapaku as a child, and were never scared or afraid of being exposed or near it. Rehua openly explained her thoughts on exposure to tupapaku as a child.

*I don't know that it was scary and I suppose when I look back on it I don't remember anyone saying to us "Ok when you go there there's going to be a dead body. We didn't view it as a dead body, that's our whanau, somebody that we knew and loved and spent time with and we cared about...It's an awesome experience to be able to say your final goodbyes... They're not scary!*

Dianne also commented on how comfortable she felt as a child.

*Sitting next to the tupapaku was something that we did naturally and something that we'd do with our kuia and koroua who we were familiar with...We'd be sitting around the tupapaku singing and our kuia would be laughing and telling jokes...*

For both Rehua and Dianne, being scared of the tupapaku as a child never entered their consciousness. The tupapaku were presented and engaged as family members and familiar loved ones who were loved dearly. They were not dead bodies that carried connotations of fear and mysticism. In addition, we do not see any attempts or arrangements made by their parents and other adults to shield or exclude them from death. Maori children are comfortable with being close to and near their dead allowing them to grieve alongside their family collectively.

Jodie from Murupara, spoke explicitly about a childhood memory of being up close with the tupapaku of her grandmother. She explained:

*...It was nothing to be scared of; I was never scared of the body... I think it was because of the relationship I had with the other person... I remember when our nanny passed away; I was very close to her. I remember my cousin's and I were around her body and we were just sitting there with her. While we were sitting with her, a cousin asked if we wanted a chocolate biscuit, and I remembered saying yes. My cousin went to throw me the biscuit but it fell on our nan who was dead, I think on her face or somewhere on her body, and I just picked it up and ate it. I thought that that was alright because it was just Nan, and I just carried on eating it... You're not allowed to eat near the tupapaku or in the mahau or any part of the wharenuī. There were no adults around while the cuzzies and I were eating those biscuits. We were secretly eating them around our Nan without their knowledge, and had there been any adults around we wouldn't have eaten by our Nan. We ate those biscuits by her because she was our Nan, and we felt she wouldn't mind... plus we were hungry.*

In the Maori world there is a strict separation between food and tupapaku irrespective of what iwi a person belongs to and to eat food in close proximity to tupapaku can be seen by many Maori as a breach of this restriction/tapu (Mead, 2003). Though Jodie and her cousins were aware that eating food on the mahau and around their Nan's tupapaku was prohibited, they did not think there was anything wrong with it. After all, they were hungry and if there was anyone that would understand that, it would surely be their Nan and she would not have minded because of that. They did well to hide from their parents and other adults the fact that they had been eating near their Nan's tupapaku and had they not concealed their eating from them; they would have been found out and seriously reprimanded. Cousins do well to support other cousins in keeping their activities, particularly, eating near the surrounds of the tupapaku, hidden.

### ***Roles, Responsibilities and Activities of Children at Tangi***

There were various tasks and activities that children participated in while attending tangi. Ivy's commentary outlined the specific tasks that she was assigned to do as a child. She stated:

*My number one job was doing dishes and table setting...You just go and start helping in the kitchen to see if there's anything you can do to make things easier...We would just help out where we could... We would stay around the marae and play the number one game "Bull Rush" and catch up with cousins; but you always knew that once manuhiri turned up you were back in the kitchen setting up and getting something ready for them to eat and prepare things for the next big meal.*

Tama from Tauranga also talked about the roles he performed. He said:

*We helped out in the kitchen at times and helped take the pig buckets to feed the pigs and all the easy work...I was also a pallbearer for my grandfather and it was an honour to be asked. They make the kids or grandkids carry the body... I don't know if they do that in other places but that's the way I was brought up...*

Lana, Tama's partner, also from Tauranga, commented on the various roles that she and her family members undertook when preparing for and attending tangi. She noted that roles were allocated depending on interest. She stated:

*Everybody had a certain job and ours was pretty much the kitchen and I've got an aunty and her job was the wharenuī and looking after the linen. Everybody had their jobs and if it interested you and you showed interest you went with them.*

Though the roles and responsibilities undertaken by participants as children may seem small, their contribution and involvement is undoubtedly valued.

Various roles and responsibilities of tangi and its functions were learnt through observation. Matiu recalled that he learnt the work that went on behind the scenes at tangi through observing others. He stated:

*You were taught simply by watching everybody and following them or if you were told to go and get wood or stones or the meat and stuff like that you did... that's how we were taught.*

From these accounts we learn that there is an expectation for Maori children to contribute in whatever capacity they can, to lighten the load that bears upon their

bereaved family members, kin and the workforce behind the scenes. Certainly there are some tasks that are allocated according to children's age, gender, interests and/or abilities and learnt through observation (Ngata, 2005; Sinclair, 1990); however, other tasks and responsibilities are allocated for other reasons. As was seen in Tama's account, certain responsibilities allocated, like that of being a pallbearer, contributed to a shared moment and a shared memory. Being a pallbearer is a final responsibility undertaken by able grandchildren to farewell a beloved grandparent.

Between various tasks and responsibilities children are expected to play and engage in various activities with their cousins and other children attending tangi. Indeed, if parents go in search of their children they would know, in most cases, they could be found playing somewhere within the marae grounds with their cousins. If they were not, then older children or youth would be sent off to find them and bring them back on site.

Accounts given by other participants recall times in which restrictions were placed around activities. Leroy from Tokoroa spoke of these restrictions by saying:

*When I was growing up we'd go out the back and help with the food, do the dishes, set the tables and all that, we all did that. After that we were allowed to play but we weren't allowed to play close to the marae... Only for sleeping were you allowed to go in...or you go in there if you were sent there by an adult or if it was your family...*

Bunny also shared similar experiences about areas of restriction. He commented:

*As kids we couldn't go out the back into the kitchen or we'd be in the way. They'd tell you to get out and that it was only for adults. If you go and listen to the adults' whaikorero you can't sit on the paepae either... All us kids were in areas where there were no adults...*

From Leroy's and Bunny's dialogues we find that there were certain areas where children were not allowed to play within the marae compound. These areas were outlined by them as near or close to the mahau, wharenuī or wharemate. Depending on the kawa of the hapu/iwi, children could also be restricted from

entering these spaces and places during tangi (Rua, et al, 2010). Areas and places where children played in or were allowed to go were often areas where there were no adult present or supervising.

Lana was quick to point out that there were often times when she felt put to one side by adults when she attended tangi as a child. She explained:

*If you were a kid it was just about playing around the back. The first few hours you watched part of the tangihanga process and then after that you don't really exist to your parents.*

Interestingly, other participants' responses also reflected childhood memories of diverse and unsupervised activities without parents. Dianne recalled that there were many times she and her cousins would get up to mischief, creating their own fun and activities. She commented:

*We kids would skidalle off the marae atea...We would sneak around, and do things we weren't allowed to do...We set a mattress on fire one time and chucked it down the bank hoping it would get down to the river but it only got half way down...*

Rehua's childhood memories also reflected unsupervised activities with cousins. She said:

*My cousins and I would go and hang out down the river, and go and play in the old house, and go out to taniwha springs, and go for a swim, and go and pick plums and pick the blackberries; those were the things we used to do...*

At tangi parents and adults are often busy or involved in various formalities so that their children and/or grandchildren are at times left to their own device. Some may view this as an irresponsible and careless approach to parenting when children are left unsupervised; however, in many Polynesian societies, children, particularly older children, are trusted to be responsible caretakers of younger children while their parents are absent (Richie & Ritchie, 1979). During tangi it is often like this; where children are trusted to mind other children and are responsible for each other while their parents and other adults participate freely in

the tangihanga proceedings. Together they monitor where they can or cannot go and what they can or cannot do within and beyond the marae compound. They cleverly formulate their own fun and games and mischievously engaged in other kinds of conspired entertainment to occupy their time over the three day period. All this is done with very little, if any, adult or parental supervision; and surprisingly, children do well to be accountable to and for each other.

### ***Tangi Attendance***

Participants explained that they found themselves at the marae when tangi were occurring for a number of reasons. Two participants gave childhood accounts of attending tangi of people that they did not know. Matiu candidly commented:

*Any funerals that were down the marae whether we knew them or not we'd go down to... If you don't go down then you're not going to get a kai because everybody's not at the house, they're down the marae...*

If Matiu's whanau were not at home he knew that they would be down at the marae helping out, and if they were down there helping that he should probably be down there too.

Lana also shared her thoughts of attending tangi of unknown people. She said:

*Mum was the hardcore staunch person you rang as soon as somebody died. She did all the shopping, all the cooking. She was kind of the boss of the kitchen so we were dragged to all these tangihanga and I didn't even know who the people were! Most of the time I just sat in the car...As we grew up she would ring us and say come on you got to come, and it was all about pulling us back to the marae and that's where we'd learn the tikanga of tangi.*

Lana was a young girl, and at the time did not understand the lessons that her mother was trying to teach her. However, as Lana grew up she understood and learnt that her mother was teaching her by example, about what it meant to be a member of a hapu and how one can provide support and uphold the mana of the marae during significant events like tangi.

Both Matiu and Lana's whanau were often part of the work force behind the scenes when there were tangi on at the marae. As a result, their children accompanied them also. Their children may not necessarily be working alongside them, but are often playing or helping out where they can, while awaiting their next meal. For a large number of rural children this is their reality when tangi occur.

### ***Parental Conversations about Death***

Part of my questioning concerned whether participants' parents spoke to them as children about topics such as death, dying, tangi or beliefs about an afterlife. A large majority of respondents conveyed to me that their parents engaged in many conversations about topics relating to death, and that these conversations were a normal part of daily life. Many also said that their parents were direct when giving information about the death of a family member. Sam, from Rotorua, shared how his parents talked with him as a child about death and tangi. He commented:

*Yip, they were pretty up front with it. They just said so and so died because of this reason, or they think it's because of this. They talked about the practicalities of what was happening next. For example, they'd go there, they'd get embalmed... and they'd come back... As a child growing up it was just part of what we did. You wake up one morning and someone's dead; someone took them off somewhere; we went to the Pa and got the Pa ready and they came back in a casket... We always grew up knowing what tangi was and we knew what those expectations were...*

From a young age Sam was aware of death and tangi. He witnessed these events regularly as a result of living close by to the marae. Information pertaining to the death and tangi of whanau members was given to Sam directly.

Ivy's parents talked openly with her after the loss of her sister in childhood and included her in all aspects regarding her sister's death and tangi. She explained:

*My parents didn't exclude me from anything and they made sure that I knew exactly what was happening. They gave me options of how to deal with my sister's death afterwards like not having her around anymore.*

*They also organised counselling at school... support was always around and I was never left alone.*

A conversation I had with Matiu indicated that his parents talked with him about loved ones who had long-since passed away. He explained:

*It was part of everyday conversation. Those who had passed on were still talked about. If you did something and you did it wrong they'd say "Oh your uncle would have done this". They'd remind you how skillful somebody was, or remind you how belligerent somebody was, or how koretake[useless] somebody was. We were reminded of them through our experiences and our action like milking cows, getting eels, catching cockabullies and riding horses as kids, we done a lot of that. There were always reminders of a particular person that had passed on who was good at something...*

It was important for Matiu's parents to tell him about the life and lifetime a loved one long since passed on. For them, it was about Matiu remembering who they were and holding dear to his heart memories, familial traits and talents, ancestral ties and linking family throughout all generations over time.

### **IDEAS OF DEATH, DYING AND AN AFTERLIFE**

When queried about an afterlife and how they learned of it, participants explained that they came to know and believe in either a Christian afterlife, a traditional Maori afterlife, or, interestingly, some combination of both.

#### ***Christianity, Culture or Both***

Several individuals I spoke with told me that their parents taught them religious perspectives when explaining and conceptualising death, dying and/or an afterlife. This was mainly as a result of their parents and grandparents joining various denominations and living their lives in accordance with Christian beliefs.

Ivy recalled that although her parents were both Maori they did not hold traditional Maori views of death and afterlife. She further explained that a large portion of her understanding about ideas and concepts of death and/or an afterlife came from religious perspectives taught to her by her parents. She commented:

*My dad doesn't believe that the spirit goes back up the North Island or things like that...Both my parents believe strongly that there is life after death and they've incorporated it into my life by bringing me up in the church as a kid...*

Ivy referred to the spirit going back up North, a reference to a Maori belief that the wairua or spirits of the deceased continued on, journeying northward to Te Rerenga Wairua, the leaping place of spirits. Though Ivy's dad was Maori, his perspectives of death were Christian based.

Rangi was also forthcoming in sharing his thoughts about what was taught to him. He explained that even though his parents were both Maori their knowledge about Maori perspectives of death, dying and afterlife was very limited. Much like Ivy, he too, was given religious explanation. He commented:

*My parents were both pretty young when bringing up our family...so I don't think their level of knowledge about taha Maori was that great. My mother was the religious person so a lot of it was more like "He's gone to heaven....and they're a star up in the sky" and that sort of thing...nothing in depth as far as the Maori perspective of death.*

From Rangi and Ivy's experiences, we find that religious concepts regarding death, dying and afterlife were taught to them as children. To some extent, religious constructs influenced how they both understood and comprehended these things. Furthermore, although some Maori parents hold strongly to their cultural heritage and at times acknowledged traditional Maori beliefs and practices relating to death, religious constructs were often their preferred way to explain these topics.

Frank, the oldest man that participated in this study, explained to me that as a child in the late 1930's, the influence of Christianity did not change the way in which he understood death and/or afterlife. Many beliefs he held regarding death or afterlife stemmed from traditional Maori perspectives taught to him by his parents and grandparents. He was not able to recall any time in which his parents spoke to him about God; neither had they given him religious explanation relating to perspectives on death. He said:

*I never heard them mention about God, never! Just only that they were going to pass away... Everything was handed down from my parent's beliefs [traditional Maori beliefs] first, then after that, there were other influences coming in like Christianity and all that. By that time one would have gone to school and learnt about God and Christianity...*

Frank's parents held common Maori beliefs pertaining to death and views that supported ideas about an afterlife and the continuation of the wairua or spirit. However, later on in life Frank's belief system came to incorporate religious ideas taught to him in school and at the marae.

A conversation I had with Sam suggested that he was taught by his parents both religious and traditional Maori perspectives about death, dying and/or afterlife.

*They usually said they went to heaven. That was one side of it...Well, from the religious point of view they both said they went to heaven... Mum and Dad are Anglicans and we were brought up in the Anglican church. I'm not too sure why, but I suppose it's because the Anglicans were the first to get a church in our part of the tribe...But from a Maori point of view they knew that the bodies were going back to Papatuanuku. That was part of the Maori tradition of what we believed. For example, the bodies went back to the ground but the spirit returned back to Hawaiiki. Those were the same stories that came through, through the tangihanga process. But through the religious process, and if we were to draw parallels, I suppose you could say that the spirit was heading somewhere upwards. Mum and Dad always believed in some sort of afterlife of some sort. Whether it was either religious or through Maoridom, they'd talk about that...*

We learn from the experiences shared that when participants were young they absorbed the beliefs and culture they were raised in, accepting the answers that they provided regarding death and ideas of an afterlife (Granot, 2005). What was intriguing to note from Frank's and Sam's narratives were the interchanges between, and acceptance of, both religious and traditional Maori explanations relating to ideas of death and an afterlife, taught to them by their parents. We also find in Sam case, that his parents gave him both cultural and religious explanations without giving thought to these differing perspectives.

According to Rosenblatt (1997) it is quite common for many traditional societies to blend culture and religion without it being terribly problematic. In fact, many find comfort and understanding of death and ideas of an afterlife from both perspectives; and from the accounts given, we learn that Maori parents can hold strong to their cultural beliefs as well as incorporate religious perspectives without any qualms (Salmond, 1976). Christian ideas, like “He’s gone to heaven” or “You’ll be with God and angels”, mingle simultaneously with traditional Maori beliefs, like “The bodies going back to Papatuanuku” and “The spirit will return to Hawaiiki” despite their differences.

Within both viewpoints lie similarities. For example, significant to both is (1) a belief in life after death, (2) that the spirit continues to exist when it departs its mortal remains, and (3) that we will be reunited with our ancestors and family members long since passed. Though many Maori have become converted to Christianity they are still able to retain many traditional aspects of their culture (Blanche & Parkes, 1997).

### ***Reuniting with Family beyond the Grave***

All who were interviewed believed in life after death and that the wairua or spirit continued to exist after it departed its mortal body. Many also believed in the notion of being reunited with immediate and extended family after death. This was reflected in the words of Matiu, who openly shared his thoughts about what he perceived life after death to entail. He said:

*This is what I think will happen to me. I’d simply go and see my uncles who have just recently passed away, my koroua and my immediate whanau and there I’ll be connected with the older/elder ones that I don’t know of. This to me is what I think will happen when I pass on...There have been a lot of events I have witnessed that suggest to me that they’re still watching over us. There have been events on our marae that just go against logic, the laws of physics, even on our river things that have occurred that I’ve seen that reinforce stories that I’ve been told about where we’ll be going...*

Matiu's personal account indicates why he believed in the notion of life after death. This idea of being reunited with both immediate and extended family members were held not just by Matiu, but also by others I spoke with.

Ivy was unwavering in her belief in the existence of an afterlife and the idea of being reunited with family members after death. She conveyed her thoughts about an afterlife in the following statement:

*I understand and believe that there is an afterlife and it doesn't just end when we die...I believe the afterlife is going to be amazing! For me it's something to look forward to; it's made me not scared of dying. The thought of being with family in the next life and not being alone is what makes me really want to, not die, but look forward to that time when it happens...*

These comments gave insight into Ivy's thoughts of how "amazing" a place the afterlife is going to be. For Ivy, there is no fear about dying but of a certainty that life will continue long after mortal death. Those who have lost loved ones close to them can often find the thought of being reunited with family comforting.

### ***Never Far Away***

All participants interviewed believed in an afterlife. Many of them were also of the opinion that the spirit/wairua of their deceased loved one was never too far away. This is the commonly held belief of Maori regarding wairua (Mead, 2003). The following accounts echoed similar threads of thought pertaining to this. Three men who I conversed with believed in the presence and continuation of wairua after death. Tama further suggested that the wairua of the deceased may manifest itself in dreams. He stated:

*I do believe people are watching over us. To me they're with you and they don't leave. I think they come back to you in your dreams...*

Maori believe that the wairua of loved ones long since passed can visit and communicate with the living through dreams and visions, passing on important messages and warnings (Hanson & Hanson, 1983; Mead, 2003). Therefore, it was not surprising to find that Tama also held these beliefs.

Frank implied in conversation that the existence of an afterlife is never in any particular place but lingering within you. He explained:

*To me, afterlife is never anywhere; it's always there in you, the wairua of that particular person, your beloved one. Yes they've passed away, but they're still there and it will never go away...The wairua is still there and still around. That was my parents' belief and that sort of belief was handed down to me...*

Rangi also shared his thoughts on the matter in saying:

*I believe in an afterlife, I think it's just a different dimension. Once the spirit departs the body I don't think it goes very far. I think they're around us all the time. I only say that because I've had experiences and still have them, so to me they're not very far away....*

Rangi also relayed to me in great detail, two other separate accounts of seeing and feeling the presence of his mother and brother who had long since passed away. He also explained that he has often felt their presence regularly in his life since their passing.

These participants, along with others (Dianne, Rehua, Sam, Bunny, Lana), held the belief that the wairua of those loved ones departed linger very close to those who are dear to them. Another commonly held belief of Maori was that the wairua of the dead did not always head directly to the spirit leaping place, Te Rerenga wairua, but often lingered round about its home or place of belonging (Best, 1924; Mead, 2003). Certainly, from these experiences many were undoubtedly certain that firstly, there was life after death; and secondly, that wairua can be close by watching over us.

### ***Personal Experiences with Wairua***

I had many conversations with individuals who spoke of personal experiences they had seeing, feeling or hearing those of their relatives who had previously died. These experiences confirmed to them that a loved one's spirit continues to exist long after they pass from this mortal life. Rehua spoke of such an instance this way:

*I've had a lot of experiences hearing things, seeing things, dreaming things and talking to people that have been dead for a long time. In fact this happens on a relatively regular basis...*

Dianne from Whanganui also told me of a time when her father spoke of being visited by the wairua of her two siblings who had earlier died from leukemia. From a young age these stories told by her father gave Dianne a strong indication that life continued after death. She commented:

*I had three brothers. Two brothers died when I was two and they died of leukemia in the same year; they were aged 11 and 13... My father would say things like "They came to see me last night...the boys came to me" ...*

Several individuals I spoke with had had experiences relating to wairua, kehua or spirits. Matiu told me:

*We learnt about kehua, particular objects, hillsides and creeks that we weren't allowed to go into. That would give us an indication that there was life after death and that it was always constantly around us. Even to this day we still don't go into certain areas..... Usually the ones who go in to those places are my mischief cousins or my older brothers who didn't listen.... ...But they'd come back with stories and say "Make sure that you don't go there or you'll find out about kehua and things". My older brothers have got quite vivid memories of things they saw.*

In Maori culture it is believed that some people are gifted to see and talk to the wairua of relatives that have previously passed on (Mead, 2003); and from Rehua's account we find that this was true for her and that she learnt about wairua and kehua from firsthand experience. For Dianne and Matiu their learning of these things came from indirect experiences and accounts. From these accounts we learn that all acknowledged belief in wairua and awareness they were always around, even at time visiting the living. We also see that many interviewed had had personal encounters of feeling, hearing or seeing wairua of their loved ones and relatives passed on.

## TALKING WITH MAORI CHILDREN

A significant part of this study concentrated on finding out how Maori parents and adults talked about, explained and/or conceptualised death, dying and/or tangi with children. This section largely focuses on the various ways they have done so. In addition, this section reviews whether Maori parents include their children in death and tangi proceedings and whether mourning the loss of a loved one is encouraged.

### *Being Open & Honest*

Many participants interviewed agreed that it was important for them to be honest and open when talking to children about the topic of death. Sam told me that he and his wife strive to be as open with their children as possible in this regard. He stated:

*We speak to them about it all the time. I share with them the same things that I was told when I was a kid, as much as I can remember. I wouldn't say that we are blunt and brutal, we just tell it as it is. For example, what's happened and what we think is going to happen next...*

Dianne was another who believed that open communication was of the utmost importance when talking about death. She explained:

*I believe in open communication and being honest with my children and letting them see things for what they really are and not disguising it or making things look pretty or giving them a false sense of reality. Our children learn a lot better when it's all open and I believe that's how I've communicated with them.*

Lena from Ngaruawahia shared her experience about the loss of her baby daughter and how she talked to her sons about her passing. She recalled:

*When my baby girl died I told my sons "Come here and see your baby sister"... They even asked me as they grew up "Aye mum we had a sister" and I'd say "Yes, and she was beautiful"... They use to tell their friends that they had a sister too. So I was very open about the loss, and my boys were told all the time about her. They were open to knowing what*

*happened, they were open to the fact that they had a sister, and they'd say "Yeah if she were here she would be bossy" and that sort of stuff...*

For Sam, Dianne and Lena, talking to their children about death, particularly the death of a family member, is very important. It is about allowing children to ask questions freely if they are unsure and bringing their feelings out in the open so they do not bottle them up or hide them away. More importantly it is about listening to them and letting them know that they are there for their children to support them in times of grief and loss. This also allows for parents to openly teach and talk to their children about their cultural practices and beliefs regarding death and bereavement (Young & Papadatou, 1997).

### ***Children's Reactions When News of Death is Announced***

A number of parents were able to recall various stories in which their children experienced losing someone close to them. Many shared in-depth personal accounts with me which I felt privileged to hear. Sam shared with me a touching account of losing his mother unexpectedly and how his children reacted to the news. He commented:

*Both of them were really shocked at the news because they had just finished talking to their grandmother the night before...We had dad visiting with us at the time so we had to break the news to him too....and they saw his reaction to that news. They were scared for a little while, they felt really saddened; you could see that in their faces and in their own persona and how they talked. They knew something wasn't right, their whole character changed...*

*Over that time when the stress was really high about the news and we were trying to get from Auckland back down to Rotorua they knew that when we asked them quietly if they could just be quiet while we were on the phone or if we needed them to move quickly they knew that there was urgency there, so they responded really quite quickly. I don't know what it was; it wasn't something we taught them like "Sit there be quiet and do this" or two weeks earlier we say "If this ever happens we need to do this", sort of like preparing for civil defence, we never even told them that!*

*I think they took their lead off their mother and I. We tried to be calm as much as we could and they sort of followed that lead. I think they figure out in their own minds that if we do what mum and dad do we should be ok...Once we got down home to Rotorua we took them inside; mum was still lying in her own bed in the house at home... When we found out what happened they wanted to take her straight away but we asked them if she could stay there until we got home because dad wanted to see mum at home first before they took her to wherever. We were going to be about three hours away, so they did what they could to keep her there. When we got there all the families were there, but we got through all of them and the kids came with us and they saw their grandmother lying there and they knew we were upset and they openly showed their emotions just like we did, and we had time with her...*

*As we travelled down we talked a little to them about what was happening and what we were doing. We didn't go into too much detail with them then though because we knew we had dad with us and he was still going through the shock of everything. So there was sort of a fine line between how much we could tell them right then about what was going to happen. We were more concerned about dad, and that's what the kids picked up on...and ever since then and even through the whole tangi period they asked, they came and sat with her, we kept telling them the same stories about what happened and everything...*

From this description, we see that when news was announced of the passing of their beloved wife, mother and grandmother, all were present, including the children. Indeed it was an emotionally distressing time for all; Sam and his wife were prompt in giving their children constant direction and communication, and because they were calm at a significantly stressful time, their children's anxieties and fears about the event were minimised.

When children are not informed about the death of a family member it can impact directly and/or indirectly on them resulting in negative outcomes (Rosner, Kruse, & Hagl, 2010; Dyregrov & Yule, 2008; Haines, Ayers, Sandler, & Wolchik, 2008; Turner, 2006; Kaufman & Kaufman 2005; Granot, 2005; Goldman, 2005; Turner,

2004; Luecken, 2000; Dowdney, Wilson, Maughan, Allerton, Schofield, & Skuse, 1999; Smith, 1999; Black, 1996). Nevertheless, for Sam and his wife negative effects were minimised as a result of including their children and talking to them immediately after they found out about the death. From Sam's story, we learn that although emotions were high and in the whirlwind of arranging travel home, his children were made aware of what was happening and what was going to happen; they saw that it was a time of urgency and a time to follow directions from their parents. They were ready and willing to pack their clothes and bedding and assist their parents in whatever capacity they could, to make the journey back to Rotorua quicker. Throughout their travels and throughout the entire tangi proceedings Sam and his wife talked to their children about what was going on. To this day they still answer any questions their children have relating to their grandmother's passing.

Mead (2003) noted that when news of death is announced, Maori families mobilise quickly to travel back home, much like what happened in Sam's situation. What also contributed to the quick trip home was having his father there visiting with them in Auckland when his wife passed away. Therefore, it was of utmost importance for him to get his father and his family back to Rotorua quickly, to spend what time they had left alone with their grandmother, mother and wife before crowds of people descended upon them to mourn her loss. The children were also present when they went in to view their grandmother before they took her from the home. The children observed that their parents were saddened over the loss and they were sad too.

### *Conversations Generated in Various Situations & Settings*

Discussions I had with a number of parents indicated that there were frequent occasions in which their child/children initiated conversations about topics relating to death, dying and/or tangi in a variety of situation and settings. Furthermore, parents were also happy to generate discussions and answer questions that children had regarding the topic. Sam commented that questions about death and related topics were often generated by his son. These questions were addressed promptly where ever and whenever they arose. He stated:

*Every time there's a tangi or something in general life, my son might ask something about death... it could be while I'm driving along the road, and if that's the time he wants to talk about it, then that's when we'll talk about it. There are no specific settings, it just happens when it happens.*

At night times during tangi, when lying in the wharenuī, Rehua and her husband often find it an appropriate time to talk with their children about many aspects relating to death. She reported that they often openly discussed with their children whakapapa and ancestral ties to their deceased relative, the marae and to various tupuna, iwi and/or waka. She explained:

*When we stay in the wharenuī they always ask about the different Pou and stuff, and because in our whare when we walk in on your left hand side Kahungungu is one of the Pou on that side and because that links more to my husband's whakapapa whenever we stay in the marae we always sleep under Kahungungu for him and his whakapapa. So the kids know that's Kahungungu and stories about most of the Po because at night when we try to get them to go to sleep we tell them stories of who that tupuna was. It's important especially at tangihana. It provides that link and connection and that that's not just a dead body, it's one of your nannies, koros or aunties...*

Matiu told me of times in which he has engaged in discussions with his children about death and dying while out on the farm and round about their home. Many times his children initiated these conversations. He commented:

*Just Sunday gone we shot a pig, singed it and cleaned it all up and they saw all that. They might say "I patu koe i tetahi poaka ne papa?" ...or they'll say "Kua mate te ngeru ne papa?". They'd talk about a particular cat that was accidentally run over on the main road which they use to play with, or they'd say "Kua mate taku cousin ne Papa?" and I'll say "Kua mate ia". We'll see a photo of a particular koroua and they'll say "Kua mate a koro? And I'll say "Ae". So heaps of things trigger conversations and they're not afraid to say this person has passed on or that animal's dead...*

For Sam, Rehua and Matiu, conversations they had with their children took place in a number of settings including, but not limited to, travelling in cars, in the wharenui and on the farm. There were no specific places in which these conversations with children arose; conversations were brought up wherever or whenever they occurred. Tonkin (2003) supports these findings suggesting that children are curious by nature; therefore, when someone or something dies, children automatically generate questions in their minds pertaining to the death and how it happened.

### ***Giving Details***

Maori parents easily engage in conversations with their children surrounding topics of death. When asked whether they would go into great detail about how a person has died, particularly if it was through tragic circumstances, like suicide or in a car accident, the responses varied. For Dianne, it was important to give her children details irrespective of the circumstances of how they died. She further explained that she would rather be the person to tell her children what happened rather than letting them find out by some other means. She explained:

*Their uncle hung himself and they asked “Why did he do that mum?” I would tell them about their uncle...I’d rather my children hear about their uncle committing suicide from me rather than from somebody else. It also gives my children the sense that not all death happens from sickness or illness; that death doesn’t just occur from being ill or getting old...it’s important to let them know that.*

Much like Dianne, Lana from Tauranga believed that withholding information from her children about the circumstances of how a person died is not good practice. She said:

*Kids put one and one together so if you don’t tell them the truth and they find out later, that’s not a good thing... My uncle next door, his daughter, she committed suicide and they had a time frame to whether they were going to tell people it was actually suicide. Then my uncle said “No, we have to tell people to make them aware of when people are under*

*pressure”... We’re open with everything, that’s just my personality; you need to be up front.*

Dyregrov & Yule (2008) explained that parents may be tempted to keep information from children following more tragic deaths like suicide; some can even be tempted to give false details about the cause of death. However, in this study this was not the case. Accounts given by Dianne and Lana showed that both felt that children need to be given details despite the nature of the death or how it happened. This was mainly due to the fact that they would prefer to tell their children face to face, rather than their children finding out from other sources and/or informants.

Maori parents do well to avoid giving their children a watered down version of what has happened. Their children are well informed about it at the same time as everyone else or as soon as is possible by their parent/s. If it is later, the most important details and information about the death are relayed to their children in a similar way that it was relayed to them. Nothing is withheld, swept under the carpet or kept hidden from their knowledge. In this way children are not isolated from the event and know clearly what has happened instead of being put to one side and left wondering.

Talking to children about death and tangi is a normal and natural practice for many of the parents interviewed. For Maori parents, it is not a task, but a responsibility of teaching them about the true realities of death and the cultural practices that it entails. It is about being transparent and answering questions that their children generated at that specific time and place. Communication is reciprocal and permeates general conversation. It is not just limited to times of death, tangi or other family events, but is generated from photos, activities and fragments of memories long held by family members and shared.

### ***Emotions Expressed and the Grieving Child***

Lena, shared with me a time when her children dealt with the loss of both their grandmothers, both died not far apart from each other. Her sons were close to both their grandmothers; so when they died her sons grieved deeply. When she saw

they were grieving she encouraged them to cry and to express any emotions they felt freely. When they needed comfort and support she was there. She explained:

*Their father told them to be tough but I allowed them to cry....I wanted to see their expressions... I could see it in their faces that they were sad but they didn't tell me. I have always wanted them to acknowledge their emotions....The crying process works man... When they expressed emotions when grieving for them I just hugged and cuddled them and rubbed their back not saying anything...*

Astral from Northland also encourages her children to express their emotions. She stated:

*I tell them to never be ashamed to share their feelings. If they want to cry, then they can cry and don't worry about what anyone thinks of them. If they want to sit there and have a big sulk, then they can just sit there and do that. There's the ugly cry and the pretty cry, but the ugly cry is better because it's whole hearted. So if you want to have an ugly cry... then do it! You can't hold it in you have to get it out all at once.*

I was touched when Rangi talked soberly about the recent death of his mother and the impact it had on the life of his children and all her other grandchildren and immediate family. He shared these thoughts:

*Emotions were pretty pure. The hardest part of her tangi was putting the lid on the coffin...it took ages...and there was a lot of wailing, and this was from the grandkids, the mokos...It wasn't until my mother passed away this year that it really, for them it was more real...someone close to them. That was difficult for them...for all of us really; but more so for the grandchildren because she was close to all her mokos.*

During her tangi Rangi spoke of the concern that he had for one of his elder sons who grieved for his grandmother quite intensely and much to Rangi's surprise. He explained:

*With my mum passing, my biggest concern was my fourth oldest son. He's the biggest and one of the oldest but he tangied like an old kuia and it was like everyone was blown away! For me it was like "What the heck!" He's always been the quietest, shyest...but when we were putting that lid on it was like "Whoa!"...It was a real deep mamae. Whether it was just the way he is or his way of grieving who knows. That carried on for days, every time we went up to the cemetery he'd just go into that sad grieving. He was special to his Nan... He was always her special boy...*

Openly displaying emotions of grief over the death of a loved one is encouraged in Maori culture (Phillips & Huria, 2008; Sinclair, 1990). Therefore, it is not surprising to find that Maori parents also encourage their children to do the same. When it comes to grieving the loss of a loved one, Maori children's feelings and expressions of emotions are supported fully. They are encouraged to be cathartic in their approach, and expressions of grief are unashamedly displayed freely without restrictions.

Tama and Lana were interviewed together, 6 weeks after Lana's mother passed away. Their emotions, particularly Lana's, were still quite raw; however, they were willing to talk about the event and how it impacted on them and their children. She said:

*The kids would be watching TV and they would just start crying and say "I miss Nan" and then another time we were watching TV and then one of my sons bursts out crying saying "She did everything for us"...We were grieving pretty bad and you miss a lot of what is going on ...I think I kind of missed what they were doing after the funeral because I was too busy being sad myself...It's been six weeks but it just feels like yesterday. Everything was a blur, you ask how I felt and I can't remember, I don't even remember seeing my children...*

For both Rangi's and Lana's children, the death of their grandmothers impacted greatly on them all. Emotions were raw and unfeigned with sadness and grief permeating their countenances. In Lana's account we also learn that her own grief at times overshadowed her ability to support her children as they grieved too.

However, having Tama there to be the strength and support for Lana and his children in their grief helped considerably.

In times of death and tangi, a conscious effort was made by those interviewed to encourage their children to grieve openly, wholeheartedly and without repression. Many parents agreed that tangi created the opportunity for their children to do just that. They were able to purge their sadness and grief in an emotionally cathartic manner. In the presence of supportive family and kin, Maori children wept and wailed publicly and privately; sharing tears of deep sorrow one with another. In effect, this emotional exertion encouraged by those interviewed, functions to soften the grief and sorrow that their children were experiencing. In a safe and non-threatening environment, their children learnt by experience, how to heal their heartbreak and sorrow through emotional expressions of grief.

## **HOW MAORI CHILDREN UNDERSTAND AND CONCEPTUALISE DEATH**

A large amount of research shows that children comprehend and conceptualise death at various ages and stages of development (Speece & Brent, 1992; Lansdown & Benjamin, 1984; Kane, 1979; Koocher, 1973; Nagy, 1948). However, in this study, findings showed that most, if not all, Maori parents believed that there was no specific age or stage at which their children comprehended death or dying. Many parents reported that, for their own child/children, comprehending and conceptualising death came through personal experiences of losing a loved one and/or through early exposure to death and tangi rather than at a specific age or stage of development. Matiu was one of the many parents who commented about this. He said:

*My middle child is three years old and she can comprehend death, she realises that this person is no longer living and that the cat they were playing with is no longer there. I don't know at what age they can comprehend. To me it's not really about when's an appropriate age for her to comprehend particular things. They will get exposed to it regardless.*

Three other fathers I spoke with also shared similar stories, all believing that children understand concepts of death and tangi through personal experience rather than according to various ages or stages of development. Sam shared his thoughts on the matter by saying:

*I don't think age has got anything to do with it. My son was 9 months when his papa passed away. He knew then the concept of death; that papa had passed away. We talked to him about it when he was nine months. So he's since grown up from what fragments of memory that he has of him from birth to the first nine months. The rest are relived in the photos and the memories we have of his papa that way... I relate it more to their experiences rather than saying at 4 years old they need to know this much about death, tangi and afterlife and then at 6 they need to know this much, and at 12 they need to know this much. We were taught through our experiences at tangi... It was part of life. If it happened we learnt about it at that time...*

Rangi's remarks reflected on his own experience as a child. He stated:

*I think it starts when they're young. I was just thinking back from my experiences of losing my brother as a child; I was aware that there was death and there was life ... There isn't a specific age but it's when you lose a loved one because it becomes quite real...*

Leroy from Tokoroa also shared these words:

*I don't think there's a specific age because a lot of children know what death is; when you die they know what happens. I don't think it starts to sink in until they actually know and love someone who has passed away or has died...*

Children can become aware of death at an early age through exposure to it; developmental theories regarding ages and stages of comprehension are often irrelevant in this regard (Heaney, 2004; Young & Papadatou, 1997). From those who shared their experiences, all believed, or knew for a certainty, that children understood death through personal experience and early exposure to it rather than at specific developmental markers. Maori children's understanding and

comprehension of death comes through exposure to death and particularly more so at times in which they attend tangi of family members and loved ones, than by any other way.

### ***Exposure to Tupapaku***

All except one participant, (Leroy) had attended tangi of a loved one with their children. Those who had attended tangi with their children reported how their children experienced being exposed to tupapaku. Rangi explained:

*Since I've had my own children we attend a lot of tangi.... They're quite comfortable around tupapaku and marae and tangi... We go to different marae and they go through the tangi process and they're used to it... By attending, watching and listening as well, they learn...*

Tama and Lana clearly recalled how their children responded when exposed to their grandmother's tupapaku. They recalled:

*They weren't scared; they'd be over there by her giving her a rub and giving her a kiss. They weren't scared, but very, very sad; really sad...Then they'd go outside and play....that's the beauty about being a child. Then they'd say "Is it tea time yet?" and they'd get hungry... The day we buried her (their Nan) one of my sons was out playing and he missed the burial.....After we were all around he said "What happened to Nan afterwards mum?" I said "We buried her, where were you?". All the while the kids were playing in the orchid...*

Ivy also shared her thoughts relating to her children viewing tupapaku at tangi. She explained:

*My kids aren't scared of death or seeing someone dead because we tell them straight. We don't exclude them from what's happening. They are always included when we go and see the body...and that's one way they don't become scared. I've seen them sit next to the body looking and observing everything. I don't push them to kissing the body, it's up to them whether or not they want to...and I guess when they're ready they will...*

Dianne talked about her children's experiences of being exposed to the tupapaku of close relatives as opposed to distant relatives. She said:

*For them it's about going through the Powhiri process which includes the tupapaku and the whanau. We follow protocol, so it's not something they're afraid of and that's just the way it's done.*

A large majority of the accounts shared by Maori parents reported that their children were not fearful when exposed to tupapaku. In fact, many of their children became close observers. From the initial stage, when news of death is received, and throughout the tangihanga ceremony and its rituals that proceed, their children are present and included. Maori children mourned with their family members and kin, side by side; they participated in the elaborate rituals that the tangihanga ceremony afforded, including viewing, touching, and kissing the tupapaku of their, every so loved, family member. In this way their involvement and inclusion helped them to understand and comprehend the true realities of death much like the adults.

### ***Experiences with Wairua***

Several individuals engaged in deep conversation with me surrounding wairua and/or feeling the presence of spirits of those passed on. But only a few commented that their children also had various experiences with wairua. Dianne talked candidly with me about one particular instance in this regard.

*We were experiencing wairua in our house; some were good and some were not good. My children would ask me and I would tell them. I'd say "We have good wairua and some not so good wairua. The good wairua are ok but the bad wairua aren't and we need to send them away". Just because we don't see them we still may be able to feel them or hear them.*

Rehua's children have also experienced seeing and feeling wairua of those past on. She explained:

*I've had a lot of experiences hearing things, seeing things, dreaming things and talking to people that have been dead for a long time. In fact, this happens on a relatively regular basis... When my koro passed away*

*the kids saw him for a long time afterwards for several months. They would come in and say “Mum koro’s in my room” and I’d say “Did you say hello?”... If my kids are seeing spirits then that’s something I need to make sure that they’re ok with...So we’ve talked about that.*

Maori believe that in some instances, a person’s wairua lingers close to their family or place of belonging (Mead, 2003; Best, 1924). Findings from Dianne’s and Rehua’s accounts correlate with this notion. Their children were seeing, hearing and/or feeling wairua of their family members passed on.

### **LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE**

Participants in this study were asked to reflect on how they would approach or improve how they talk with their children about death and tangi when they encounter these events in the future. When speaking with Whiro about this she commented:

*“I would like time and wouldn’t want to be rushed. It would have to be just me and my partner and our kids... I wouldn’t talk to them at the marae because you very rarely find time to talk intimately with your own kids at the marae. If it’s my whanau lying there I’m going to be in the kitchen. I haven’t got time to be doing all that, unless I’m on the whanau pani, which I haven’t been yet...”*

Tangata whenua play host to those visiting the marae for tangi; often taking on numerous roles to ensure that everything run smoothly (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1950). So it was with Whiro. She explained that she had very little time to sit down and talk with her children about death and tangi because she was busy fulfilling various responsibilities required of her as part of the workforce. In hindsight, if the time does come to talk with her children about the death of a loved one (which has not happened in her family yet), she would like it to take place in the privacy of her own home with her partner supporting her.

Leroy attended many tangi growing up as a child. However, Leroy’s three children have had very little exposure to death and tangi themselves. He shared his thoughts on how he would help his children understand these things. He explained:

*I would like to teach my children the protocols for tangi so that when they go to one they have the same experiences I had and not be scared. So they know what to do on the marae when it comes to death coz then it takes the fear of death being there. So they know and think “I know what to do, mum and dad showed me, nanny and papa showed me, this is what we do when we have a tangi on a marae”.*

Leroy has a future desire to take his children to more tangi so they can learn about the tikanga pertaining to death and tangi practices and rituals. He learnt about death and tangi through observation and exposure to these events, so it is not surprising that he wants his children to learn about death and tangi the same way he did.

### ***Transmission of Knowledge***

All parents I interviewed hoped that when the time comes, their children would share similar knowledge and information they received with their own children about death, dying and tangi. These were Sam’s thoughts on the matter:

*I would like to think they’d use something similar to what we’ve been doing. I like to hope that if there’s anything they’ve learnt from us is having that communication level with their kids so they can talk through things like death, tangi etc. I think if we can talk through things like that we should be able to talk through whatever other issues arise in life. So if we can give our kids the same skills to be able to develop that with their kids, I think I’d be happy with that. They’d always know that we’d be there to help them, whether it is to have those conversations or to help with whatever.*

Jodie was undoubtedly sure that when her daughter becomes a parent herself, that she would share similar knowledge with her children, particularly about life after death. She commented:

*I definitely know she will share that knowledge on and that information... especially when she has her own family. I hope she teaches them to find comfort in dying and to still be comforted. Before I fully comprehended that there was life after death, death was extremely painful, especially*

*when our mum died. I felt extremely hurt, sorrowful and it even brought up thoughts of wanting to end my own life because I thought if she's dead everything's dead. Now that I have the knowledge that death carries on and life doesn't end, that's an important thing to share.*

From these two accounts we ascertain that Sam and Jodie have a strong belief that the transmission of knowledge relating to death, tangi and an afterlife will be passed down to the next generation. Matiu beautifully concluded his interview by describing the transmission of knowledge. He said:

*The transmission of knowledge is the role of the extended family as well. The communication of death, dying and afterlife isn't a two parent job it's a family job, a hapu job, a marae job and a cultural job. It's a job that the people of our culture have.*

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I start by summarising the overall findings of this study and then go on to consider its implications on Maori children in New Zealand and their parents and relatives. I conclude by discussing the limitations of the study and comment on areas for further research.

My engagement with Maori parents and grandparents about their memories as children, and how they approach the events of death and tangi with their children has been a privilege and an honour. They have taught me much. I have learned that at times of death and tangi, Maori children (1) received abundant support from kinship networks to help them cope with their grief, (2) they were included and involved in all aspects relating to death and tangi, (3) they were encouraged to express emotions openly without restraint, (4) they understood and comprehended death through personal experience and exposure to tangi, (5) the business of grieving came secondary to the fact that tangi was more like a holiday with family, (6) Maori parents informed and talked to their children about death and tangi, and (7) they often use both Christian ideologies and cultural beliefs to explained death and afterlife to their children.

As a whole, the findings of this study suggest that the experiences of Maori children, pertaining to the events of death and tangi are special, memorable and healthy, and children are allowed a place within the overall mourning experience and rituals of tangi. In summary, death was not hidden from my participants when they were children, and as parents they do not hide death from their children and talk with them in very open and age relevant ways. Moreover, they consider their children's participation in tangi as an important way to grieve and ensure continuity with kinship networks and support.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

There is a wealth of knowledge readily accessible in the library about communicating death to children, that advocates the 'talking approach', that is, talking and including children in mourning practices (Dyregrov & Yule, 2008; Goldman, 2005; Granot, 2005; Smith, 1999; Turner, 2006; Webb, 2010). While, I

did not ask them, none of the participants said they had accessed any written based materials in the library or via the internet to help them treat with their bereaved children. All of their knowledge came from their own childhood experiences that they in turn drew on that to inform their conversations and experiences with their own children. While Maori parents have prioritised honest and open dialogue about death and the life after, there is no guarantee that this will continue. This transfer of knowledge between generations cannot be taken for granted.

Many researchers (Durie, 1998; Mead, 2003; Metge, 1964; Nikora, 2007; Salmond, 1976) have highlighted the challenges of urbanisation and the barriers that Maori have to negotiate to engage in Maori world activities like tangi, unveilings and other episodic events. Maintaining extended kinship relationships is a challenge with families having to negotiate the competing demands of work, education, finances, transport and distance. For these reasons, extended kinship networks may well be shrinking with priority shifting to relationships within the nuclear unit rather than extended whanau. If this trend continues with resulting isolation and fragmentation, then increased stress within parent-child relationships may well be the outcome; meaning that children have only their parents and siblings to support them through crises rather than a much broader network of many parents and cousins.

Salmond (1976) highlighted the ease with which Maori orators moved between Christian beliefs and Maori beliefs about the afterlife. The people I spoke with in this study seemed to think in similar ways to those orators that Salmond observed, and did not appear to see any contradiction in their beliefs and conversations with children. All believed there was life after death. This brought them comfort and reassurance and they communicated this to their children, death is not an end, but rather, a transition to a new life with relatives, ancestors and friends who had passed before. Therapists need to bear this in mind and be careful of pursuing an 'either/or approach' to thinking about what Maori believe and be aware of a 'both/and' logic, a way of thinking in the Maori world insightfully described by Ritchie (1992).

Those that I spoke with explained to me that the marae served to provide them with a therapeutic space to mourn in an appropriately emotional and cathartic manner; a space in which family could reunite and children could play, a place where animated whaikorero, song and dance lightened the sombre mood that death occasioned. All in all, the marae setting functioned to allow these various activities to take place, which contributed to softening the sting of death. However, for those tangi held in other settings, like in the home, at educational institutions and funeral parlours (Edge, 2010); one cannot ensure that these settings will provide an adequate therapeutic space like a marae setting does. Whanau members need to be more aware that when choosing a venue to hold a tangi at, that these places make allowances for spaces that create a therapeutic atmosphere much like the marae setting does.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Reflecting on the study undertaken, a number of limitations are identified. Firstly, almost half of the participants in this study came from, or affiliated themselves to geographical locations within the Bay of Plenty's region. This was in part, due to the fact that they were more readily accessible for me, as the researcher, to meet with and interview. In hindsight, when recruiting participants, I could have ensured that there was a more even spread of Maori participants from other geographical locations like, the Hawke's Bay, Manawatu, Wairarapa, Wellington and South Island regions. In doing so, my findings may have differed.

This study examined Maori children's experiences of death and tangi from the perspective of Maori parents and grandparents. The accounts shared were retrospective and reminiscent of their own childhood experiences and their experiences of raising their own children. These perspectives have not come from Maori children themselves and it does beg the question as to whether the accounts shared are accurate of Maori children's experience today. To ensure that there is some validity to how Maori children truly interpret death and tangi, there is a need to expand this study to include their viewpoint.

There were also inconsistencies in how I, as the researcher, delivered the questions relating to the interview schedule set out. During some interviews conducted, not all questions outlined on the interview schedule were given to the

participants to answer, due to the lack of experience and skills of the researcher in conducting interviews. In other instances questions were not asked because they had already talked about the topic of interest in earlier questioning. If the study is done again, I would recommend that when going through the interview schedule the interviewer needs to adhere to the questions outlined and not deviate too far from the core topic being questioned. Also, it might be helpful to formulate prompt questions so that there is still structure and consistency in participant's responses if the interviewer does deviate somewhat.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study is the first of its kind, and as such, provides a starting point for further research into how Maori children experience and conceptualise death and tangi and how Maori parents teach them about these things. Future research questions are:

- From Maori children themselves, what are their experiences regarding death and tangihanga?
- Do Maori parents elicit help from therapists when dealing with complicated grief and bereavement exhibited by their children?
- Given that Maori parents find it easy to talk about an afterlife, how do they explain the pathways to get there? What must a person do to transition smoothly from this life to the next?
- Are there settings other than the marae that provide Maori with therapeutic spaces in which they can grieve in a healthy fashion?

From this study we have gained valuable knowledge into Maori children's experiences of death and tangi through the eyes of Maori parents. Even though these experiences have not come from Maori children themselves, by no means does it infer that the information gained from Maori parents is less relevant or insightful. What we have learnt from this study is foundational in understanding the relationship that Maori parents have with their children at times of death and tangi and the importance of transparency that is needed during these times. Most importantly, Maori parents talk with their children and involve them in all aspect of death and tangi. The challenge now is to ensure that these practices continue to persist between parents and their children, from this generation to the next.

## REFERENCES

- Beaglehole, E., & P. (1946). *Some modern Maoris*. Wellington, New Zealand: Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd.
- Best, E. (1924). *The Maori. Memoirs of the Polynesian Society (Vol. V)*. Wellington, NZ: The Board of Ethnological Research.
- Black, D. (1996). Childhood bereavement. *British Medical Journal*, 312 (7045), 1496.
- Blanche & Parkes (1997). Christianity. In C, Parkes., P. Laungani., & B, Young. (Eds). *Death and bereavement across cultures*. London, GRB: Routledge.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment: attachment and loss* (vol. 1), New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Separation: attachment and loss* (vol. 2), New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Loss: Sadness & Depression. Attachment and Loss* (vol. 3), New York: Basic Books.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Bhopal, R. & Donaldson, L. (1998). White, European, Western, Caucasian, or what? Inappropriate labelling in research on race, ethnicity, and health. *American Journal of Public Health*. 88(9), 1303-1307.
- Childers, P., & Wimmer, M. (1971). The concept of death in early childhood. *Child Development*, 42, 1293-1301.
- Cohen, J. A., & Mannarino, A. P. (2010). *Dulcan's textbook of child and adolescent psychiatry. Bereavement and traumatic grief*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatry Publishing.
- Cohen, J. A., Mannarino, A. P., & Deblinger, E. (2006). *Treating trauma and traumatic grief in children and adolescents*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Cuddy-Casey, M., & Orvaschel, H. (1997). Children's understanding of death in relation to child suicidality and homicidality. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 17(1), 33-45.
- Dansey, H. (1992). A view of death. In M. King (Eds.), *Te ao hurihuri: Aspects of Maoritanga* (pp. 105-116). Auckland: Reed.

- Dowdney, L. (2000). Annotation: Childhood bereavement following parental death. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 41, 819-830.
- Dowdney, L., Wilson, R., Maughan, B., Allerton, M., Schofield, P., & Skuse, D. (1999). Psychological disturbance and service provision in parentally bereaved children: Prospective case control study. *British Medical Journal*, 319(7206), 354-357.
- Drewery, W. & Bird, L. (2004). *Human development in Aotearoa. A journey through life* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Auckland, New Zealand: McGraw-Hill Australia Pty Limited.
- Durie, M. H. (1998). *Te mana te kawanatanga: The politics of Maori self determination*. Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press.
- Dyregrov, A. (1991). *Grief in children. A handbook for adults*. London, GRB: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Dyregrov, A., Gjestad, R., & Raundalen. (2002). Children exposed to warfare: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 15(1), 59-68.
- Dyregrov, A.; & Yule, W. (2008). *Grief in children: A handbook for adults*. London, GRB: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Edge, K., Nikora, L. W., & Rua, M. (2010). *Dual cultural identity and tangihanga: Conflict, resolution and unexpected outcomes*. Paper presented at the Nga Pae o te Maramatanga 4th International Indigenous Conference: Matauranga Taketake: Traditional Knowledge, 6-9 June, University of Auckland, Auckland [NZ]
- Edmans, M. S. & Marcellino-Boisvert, D. (2002). Reflections on a rose: a story of loss and longing. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 23(2), 107-119.
- Edwards, S., McCreanor, T., Ormsby, M., Tuwhangai & Tipene-Leach, D. (2009). Maori men and the grief of SIDS. *Death Studies*, 33(2), 130-152.
- Ellis, J. B. & Stump, J. E. (2000). Parents' perceptions of their children's death concept. *Death Studies*, 24 (1), 65-70.
- Fiorini, J. & Mullen, J. (2006). *Counselling children and adolescents through grief and loss*. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press.
- Families Commission. (2010). Changing Roles. The pleasures and pressures of being a grandparent in New Zealand. A Families Commission Report. Retrieved from <http://www.familiescommission.govt.nz/research/grandparents/changing-roles.pdf>

- Feifel, H. (1977). New meanings of death. In J. Flavell., & J. Ross (Eds), *Social cognitive development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fulton, R., & Owen, G. (1988). Death and society in twentieth century America. *Omega*, 18, 379–395.
- Gergen, K. J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London, GRB: Sage.
- Gibbs, M. (2001). Toward a strategy for undertaking cross-cultural collaborative research. *Society and Natural Resources*, 14, 673-687.
- Gill-White, P. (2006). *Sibling grief: Healing after the death of a sister or brother*. Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse.
- Goldman, L. (2005). *Children also grieve: Talking about death and healing*. London, GRB: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Granot, T. (2005). *Without you. Children and young people growing up with loss and its effects*. London, GRB: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Haines, R.A., Ayers, T.S., Sandler, I. N., & Wolchik, S.A. (2008). Evidence-based practices for parentally bereaved children and their families. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. 39(2), 113-121.
- Hanson, F.A., & Hanson, L. (1983). Counterpoint in maori culture. The gods enter in. GRB: Redwood Burn Ltd
- Heaney, P. (2004). *Children's grief. A guide for Parents*. Dunedin, New Zealand: Longacre Press.
- Hohepa, P. W. (1964). *A Maori community in Northland*. The Athropology Department, University of Auckland. Bulletin 1.
- Kane, B. (1979). Children's concepts of death. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 134, 141-153.
- Kaufman, K. R., & Kaufman, N. D. (2005). Childhood mourning: Prospective case analysis of multiple losses. *Death Studies*, 29, 237-249.
- Koocher, G. P. (1973). Childhood, death and cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology*, 9(3), 369-375.
- Lansdown, R., & Benjamin, G. (1984). The development of the concepts of death in children aged 5-9 years. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 11, 13-20.
- Luecken, L. J. (2000). Attachment and loss experiences during childhood are associated with adult hostility, depression and social support. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 49(1), 85-91.

- Lutzke, J. R., Ayers, T.S., Sandler, I.N., & Barr, A. (1997). Risks and interventions for parentally bereaved children. In Wolchik, S.A., & Sandler, I.N. (Eds.), *Handbook of children's coping with common life stressors: Linking theory, research and interventions* (pp. 215-243). New York: Plenum Press.
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: a data collector's field guide*. Research Triangle Park, North Carolina: Family Health International.
- Marten, J. A. (2002). *Children and war. A historical anthology*. New York: New York University Press.
- Matenga-Kohu, J., & Roberts, J. (2003). *Huihuinga. Collective gatherings: Tangihanga*. Cambridge, New Zealand: Kina Films Productions Ltd.
- McRae, K.O., & Nikora, L.W. (2006). Whangai: remembering, understanding and experiencing. *MAI Review*, 1, Intern Research Report 7. Retrieved from <http://waikato.researchgateway.ac.nz/bitstream/10289/1230/1/Nikora%20-%20Whangai.pdf>
- McRae, K. (2010). *Tangi and state funeral: Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu & Prime Minister Norman Kirk*. (Unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10289/4995>
- Mead, H. M. (2003). *Tikanga Maori. Living by Maori values*. Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers.
- Mireault, G. C. & Bond, L. A. (1992). Parental death in childhood: Perceived vulnerability and adult depression and anxiety. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 62, 517-524.
- Nikora, L. W. (2007). *Maori social identities in Hawai'i and New Zealand*. (Unpublished DPhil, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand). Retrieved from <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/bitstream/10289/2574/2/thesis.pdf>
- Nagy, M. (1948). The child's theories concerning death. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 73, 3-27.
- Ngata, P. (2005). Death dying and grief: A maori perspective. In Morgan, J., & Laungani, P. (Eds). *Death and bereavement around the world* (pp.29-38). Amityville, New York: Baywood Publishers.
- Oppenheim, R.S. (1973). *Maori death customs*. Wellington, New Zealand: A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd.

- Parker, J. A. (2003). *Helping children in times of need. Grief, loss, separation and divorce: A handbook for parents assisting children through grief and loss*. Canberra, Australia: National Capital Printings.
- Piaget, J. (1960). *The child's conception of the world*. Totowa, NJ: Littlefield Adams.
- Phillips & Huria, (2008). *Maori life and customs*. New Zealand: Penguin Group.
- Ritchie, J. E. (1992). *Becoming bicultural*. Thorndon, Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers & Daphne Brasell Associates.
- Ritchie, J., & Ritchie, J. E. (1979). *Growing up in Polynesia*. Sydney, Australia: George Allen & Unwin.
- Ritchie, J. E.(1963). *The making of Maori. A case study of a changing community*. Wellington, New Zealand: A. H. & A. W. Reed.
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (1997). Grief in small-scale societies. In Parkes, C., Laungani, P., & Young, B. (Eds). *Death and bereavement across cultures*. London, GRB: Routledge.
- Rosner, R., Kruse, J., & Hagl, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of interventions for bereaved children and adolescents. *Death Studies, 34*, 99-136.
- Rua, H., Rua, M. R., Te Awekotuku, N., & Nikora, L. W. (2010). *Waikirikiri marae: shared stories and experiences of the wharemate*. Paper presented at the Nga Pae o te Maramatanga 4th International Traditional Knowledge Conference. Retrieved from <http://www.maramatanga.ac.nz/sites/default/files/NPM2010TraditionalKnowledgeConferenceProceedings.pdf>
- Rutter, M. (1966). *Children of sick parents*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Salmond, A. (1976). *Hui. A study of maori ceremonial gatherings*. Wellington, New Zealand: A. H. & A. W. Reed Ltd.
- Sinclair, K. (1990). Tangi: Funeral rituals and the construction of Maori. In J. Linnekin & L. Poyer (Eds). *Cultural identity and ethnicity in the Pacific identity* (pp 219-236). Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Smith, L.T (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. London, GRB: Zed Books Ltd.
- Smith, S.C. (1999). *The forgotten mourner: Guidelines for working with bereaved children*. Philadelphia, USA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Speece, M., & Brent, S. (1992). The acquisition of a mature understanding of three components of the concept of death. *Death Studies, 16*, 221-229.
- Statistics New Zealand (2009). *New Zealand life tables: 2005–07*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand. Retrieved from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/births/new-zealand-life-tables-2005-07.pdf](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/births/new-zealand-life-tables-2005-07.pdf)
- Statistics New Zealand. (2010). *Demographic trends 2009*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand. Retrieved from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections/demographic-trends-2010.pdf](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/demographic-trends-2010.pdf)
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (3rd Ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Te Awekotuku, N., & Nikora, L. W. (2009). A proposal for research. Apakura: Death in the Maori world. University of Waikato.
- Te Rangi Hiroa, P. (1950). *The coming of Maori. Sickness and health*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Whitcombe & Tombs.
- Token, L. (2003). *Starting young. Supporting children to deal with changes, loss and grief in the early childhood years*. Christchurch: Port Hills Press.
- Turner, M. (2004). *Someone very important has just died: Immediate help for people caring for children of all ages at the time of a close bereavement*. London, GBR: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Turner, M. (2006). *Talking with children and young people about death and dying* (2<sup>nd</sup> Eds.). London, GBR: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- UNICEF. (2003). *Africa's orphaned generations*. New York, USA. Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/africas\\_orphans.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/africas_orphans.pdf)
- Vayda, A. (1960). *Maori warfare*. Wellington, New Zealand: Polynesian Society Inc.
- Vianello, R., & Lucamante, M. (2001). Children's understanding of death according to parents and pediatricians. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 149*(3), 305-316.
- Vianello, R., & Martin, M. L. (1985). *La comprensione della morte nel bambino* [Children's understanding of death]. Firenze, Italy: Giunti.

- Webb, N. B. (2010). *Helping bereaved children. A handbook for practitioners*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Wells, R. (1988). *Helping children cope with grief. Facing a death in the family*. Great Britain: Sheldon Press.
- Wenestam, C. G., & Wass, H. (1987). Swedish and U.S children's thinking about death: A qualitative study and cross culture comparison. *Death Studies, 11*, 99-121.
- Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. Mc Graw-Hill Publishing.
- World Trade Press. (2010). *New Zealand society and culture complete report: Lifecycle*. California, USA: World Trade Press.
- Young, B. & Papadatou, D. (1997). Childhood death and bereavement across cultures. In C, Parkes., P. Laungani., & B, Young. (Eds). *Death and bereavement across cultures*. London, GRB: Routledge.

## **APPENDICES**

University of Waikato

Psychology Department

**Information Sheet**

---

**Research Project: Communicating the Concept of Death and Tangihanga to Children: A Contemporary Maori Perspective**

---

**Name of Researcher:** Juanita Emily Jacob (Graduate Researcher)

**Name of Supervisors:** Associate Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora and  
Professor Jane Ritchie

Tena koe,

Thank you for expressing an interest in my study about how Maori parents and adults talk with children about death, dying, afterlife and tangi, and the responses children make. This research will form the basis of my Master Thesis study at the University of Waikato. This study, along with other studies will also contribute to the “Tangi Research Programme” being undertaken by the Maori and Psychology Research Unit (MPRU) based at the University. The broader scope of the Tangi Research Project will investigate various aspects of Maori ways of death, dying, grief and loss as well as the process of tangihanga.

**What is the study about?**

My study looks at how Maori parents and adults explain death, dying, afterlife and tangi to children, and the responses children make. It will involve taking part in a face-to-face interview conducted by me or my supervisor Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora. The interview itself will take about an hour depending on how much you would like to tell us. A support person (partner or family member) is welcome to attend and/or participate if you choose. The interviews will be held at a time and place agreed to by both the interviewer and the participant.

Prior to the interview participants will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire. The information gathered through the questionnaire will provide the researcher with a brief background about you and your family.

In the interview, we would like to audio-record a conversation with you about the following things:

- **Past experiences** – What are your own childhood memories or experiences of death and dying? What worldviews were you taught as a child regarding death and dying? What were your experiences as a child attending tangi?
- **Conceptualising death** – What is your world view now about death, dying and after life?
- **Talking to children about death, dying and afterlife** – How have you spoken to children or your child about death, dying and afterlife? What things were important for you to tell them? (Why?). What things were important for them to understand? (Why?).
- **Examples of talking to children** – Please tell us of your experiences of talking to a child or children about death, dying and afterlife. Where did you talk to your child? How did you broach the topic? What did you tell them? How did they respond (immediately and later; verbally, behaviourally)? Did you have any concerns? What do you think their understanding of these ideas were? How do you know?
- **Tangihanga and Tupapaku:** Please tell us of your experiences of taking children/your child or children to a tangi. How did you explain to them the idea of ‘tangi’? How did you explain to them the idea of ‘tupapaku’ (body, corpse)? How did you explain to them the idea of nehu (burial) or any other means of disposal (eg., cremation)? Where did you talk to children/your child? How did you broach the topic? What did you tell them? How did they respond (immediately and later; verbally, behaviourally)? Did you have any concerns? What do you think their understanding of these ideas were? How do you know?
- **Doing things differently:** If you were to have these experiences with your child(ren) again, is there anything you would do differently? (Why?)

- **Into the future:** If and when your children (biological or in your care) become parents, how do you think they will communicate the idea of death, dying, afterlife and tangi to their children?

Any information obtained from your interview will remain confidential and personal details will be kept anonymous unless you consent to us doing otherwise. Information you provide will be used for my Master thesis study. My supervisors and the lead researchers of the Tangi Research Programme will also have access to your Summary Report. Once the study is completed my thesis will be submitted to the University of Waikato and made publicly available. I may also publicly present my findings and write collaborative articles with my supervisors or members of the Tangi Research Programme.

### **What will happen to your information?**

During the interview I will make an audio-recording and take written notes. These will be used to write a summary report of our conversation with you. The report will paraphrase our conversation and may use verbatim quote directly from you. While writing up the summary report we may well need to contact you again to clarify points or gain further information. We will contact you by phone or email if we need to. Otherwise, once the summary report is completed, we will send it to you for your comment and review. You may change, add to or delete content from the report. Once you are satisfied that the report is a fair record of your experiences, we will ask you to allow your report to be entered into the information that will be used for my Master thesis. If you agree, your summary report will also be stored in the Tangi Research Programme document repository for use by the broader Tangi Research Programme.

### **How will this study benefit you?**

Not much is known about how Maori parents and adults explain and conceptualise death, dying, afterlife and tangi to their children, and the responses made by children. While this study may not benefit you directly, we hope that the information you provide will shed light on this topic and perhaps contribute to the healthy emotional development of Maori children.

## **What are my rights and what can I expect from the researcher?**

You can:

- Ask questions at any point during the study.
- Ask for the audio recorder to be turned off any point during the interview.
- Decline to answer any questions you don't want to answer.
- Withdraw from the research at any point during or after the interview up until my master's thesis is submitted.
- Change, add to, delete any information written in the summary report until you believe it to be a fair reflection of your experience.
- Request a summary of the final report and be given details of how to access the full report.
- Contact myself or my supervisors if you have any concerns, questions or would like further information about the study.
- Expect that the information you provide will be kept confidential and any identifying names or details removed or disguised so that the information you give will not be recognise by others who may know you, unless you consent otherwise.
- Expect that information you provide will be keep in secure storage during the study and once the study is completed the audio recordings will be destroyed unless you consent otherwise.

Below are the contact details of the principle researchers for this study. Feel free to make contact with them if you have any questions regarding this research.

### **Contact Details**

Research Supervisor: Associate Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora, Psychology Department

Email: [psyc2046@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:psyc2046@waikato.ac.nz)

Telephone: (07) 856-2889 ext.8200

Secondary Research Supervisor: Professor Jane Ritchie

Email: [psyc0123@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:psyc0123@waikato.ac.nz)

Telephone: (07) 856-2889 ext.8402

Graduate Researcher: Juanita Emily Jacob

Email : [jet8@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:jet8@waikato.ac.nz)

Telephone : (07) 858-2940 or 027-5640081

You may also contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 8384466 extn 8401, email [r.isler@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:r.isler@waikato.ac.nz)) or the Pro-Vice Chancellor Maori of the University of Waikato (Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, (07) 8562889 extn 4997, email [tuhiwai@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:tuhiwai@waikato.ac.nz)).

University of Waikato

Psychology Department

**CONSENT FORM**

**PARTICIPANT'S COPY**

---

Research Project: **Communicating the Concept of Death and Tangihanga to Children: A Contemporary Maori Perspective**

---

**Name of Graduate Researcher:** Juanita Emily Jacob

**Name of Supervisors:** Associate Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora & Professor Jane Ritchie

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 8384466 extn 8401, email r.isler@waikato.ac.nz) or the Pro-Vice Chancellor Maori of the University of Waikato (Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, (07) 8562889 extn 4997, email tuhiwai@waikato.ac.nz).

Participant's

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

University of Waikato

Psychology Department

**CONSENT FORM**

RESEARCHER'S COPY

---

Research Project: **Communicating the Concept of Death and Tangihanga to Children: A Contemporary Maori Perspective**

---

**Name of Graduate Researcher:** Juanita Emily Jacob

**Name of Supervisors:** Associate Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora & Professor Jane Ritchie

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 8384466 extn 8401, email r.isler@waikato.ac.nz) or the Pro-Vice Chancellor Maori of the University of Waikato (Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, (07) 8562889 extn 4997, email tuhiwai@waikato.ac.nz).

Participant's

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**University of Waikato**

Psychology Department

**Summary Report Deposit Form**

RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: **Communicating the Concept of Death and Tangihanga to Children: A Contemporary Maori Perspective**

**Name of Researcher:** Juanita Emily Jacob (Graduate Researcher)

**Name of Supervisors:** Associate Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora, Professor Jane Ritchie

Please initial

I have received a summary report of my interview. I have had an opportunity to make comments, suggest revisions or to have information withdrawn.

\_\_\_\_\_

I consent to the summary report of my interview becoming part of this study by Juanita Jacob (Graduate Researcher).

\_\_\_\_\_

I further consent to the summary report being made available to my supervisors and the lead researchers of the Tangi Research Programme for further analysis, and collaboratively making presentations and writing articles with Juanita Jacob.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Contact address

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email

\_\_\_\_\_

Mobile

\_\_\_\_\_

Home phone

---

Date

---

---

## ***Background Information Questionnaire***

This questionnaire will provide me with a brief introduction to you and your whanau/family before we meet to have our interview. The questionnaire will include questions about you, your ethnicity and your whanau/family. This questionnaire will help me to prepare for our interview. Any information that you provide here will remain confidential. Please read the “Information Sheet” if you would like some more information about what will happen to this information. Please only answer those questions you feel comfortable in doing so, and leave any you would prefer not to answer blank.

### **Information about You**

**Age Group:** *please circle one*

20-30 years    31-40 years    41-50 years    50+years

**Gender:** *please circle one*

Male

Female

**Usual occupation:** What is your occupation?

---

---

---

**Religion affiliations:** Describe any religious groups that you or your whanau/family affiliate with.

---

---

---

**Ethnicity:** Do you belong to other ethnic groups other than Maori?

---

---

---

**Children:**

How many children do you have? **(Please state their age and gender)**

---

How many children in you care?

---

---

---

**Iwi:** What Maori iwi do you belong to? State as many as you wish.

---

---

---

OR

Unknown to me

**Hapu:** What Maori hapu do you belong to? State as many as you wish.

---

---

---

OR

Unknown to me

**No. of siblings:** How many siblings do you have?

---

---

---

**Is there anything else you would like me to know before we have our interview?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

Name.....

Signature.....

Email.....

Mailing  
Address.....