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A Qualitative Study of Māori Experiences of Stepfamily Living

Angela Curtis-Clark

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persons other than the examiner.

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Abstract

For the past twenty five years family researchers have increasingly focused on stepfamily relationships. Some children and some adults have been shown to have considerable difficulty adjusting to the new family and are at an increased risk of poor outcomes. However there are no studies to date that focus on Māori stepfamilies. This study is an exploratory investigation of Māori experiences of stepfamily living, parenting and stepparenting. Particular attention is focused on the development of relationships and any challenges and supportive aspects of living in a Māori whānau (family) system. Two separate sets of participants were involved. The first set interviewed were 17 Māori parents and /or stepparents living in a stepfamily. Participants were interviewed about their experiences in a stepfamily. The second set included four key informants (Māori mental health workers). Participants were interviewed about stepfamily processes that were advantageous and challenging that they had encountered in their work as Māori professionals. Interview data was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis and employing a Māori Centred approach. For stepfamily participants, three themes relating to advantages and challenges were identified: The Quality of the Couple Relationship Is Important; Extended Family Supports Adaptive Step-Family Functioning; and Parenting is a Challenge. For key informants, two themes were identified: Understanding Social Pressures on Māori Stepfamilies is Important; and Manaakitanga: There are Māori Ways of Being a Stepfamily. These themes were discussed in relation to their fit with current and existing stepfamily literature and thus, provided implications for further research.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF TABLES	VII
LIST OF APPENDICES	VIII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND TO THIS RESEARCH	1
THE DEVELOPMENT OF STEPFAMILY RESEARCH	2
ETHNIC VARIATION IN FAMILIES	3
MĀORI IN STEPFAMILIES	4
AIMS OF THE RESEARCH	5
RATES OF SEPARATION AND DIVORCE IN NEW ZEALAND	5
STEPFAMILIES AS INCOMPLETE INSTITUTIONS	6
CHILDREN LIVING WITH MARRIED PARENTS	7
CHILDREN LIVING WITH UNMARRIED PARENTS	8
PATHWAYS TO STEPPARENTING	9
COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS	10
CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND OUTCOMES	12
THE NON-RESIDENT FATHER	14
IMPACT OF PARENTAL ADJUSTMENT ON CHILDREN	15
STEPPARENT-STEPCHILD RELATIONSHIPS	17
ESTABLISHING NEW ROLES AND NORMS	18
ETHNIC VARIATION IN SEPARATION AND DIVORCE	21
AFRICAN AMERICAN	21
ASIAN	22
LATINO	23
WHANAU AND RELATIONSHIP ISSUES AND PATTERNS FOR MĀORI: PAST AND PRESENT	25
IDENTITY, ACCULTURATION & POSITIONING OF MĀORI CHILDREN	27
CHAPTER TWO: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY	31
EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITIONING	31
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD	36
PARTICIPANTS	36
STEPFAMILY INTERVIEWS	36
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS	37

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES	37
PROCEDURE	39
DATA ANALYSIS	40
CHAPTER FOUR: PARENT AND STEPPARENT INTERVIEWS	43
THEME ONE: THE QUALITY OF THE COUPLE RELATIONSHIP IS IMPORTANT	43
MUTUALITY IN THE ADULTS' RELATIONSHIP HELPS	44
EXTERNAL AFFIRMATION / APPROVAL IS IMPORTANT	46
SHARING FINANCIAL AND PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES HELPS	47
THEME TWO: EXTENDED FAMILY SUPPORTS ADAPTIVE STEPFAMILY FUNCTIONING	48
ACTIVE PARTICIPATION WITH EXTENDED STEPFAMILY IS IMPORTANT	49
IT HELPS WHEN EXTENDED FAMILY ARE INCLUDED BY STEP/PARENTS	53
LOYALTIES, JEALOUSIES AND PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES ARE A CHALLENGE	56
THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NON-RESIDENT PARENT CAN BE DIFFICULT	57
THEME THREE: PARENTING/STEPPARENTING IS A CHALLENGE	58
RELATIONSHIPS WITH STEP/CHILDREN REQUIRE PATIENCE, TIME AND COMMUNICATION	59
SHARING ACTIVITIES HELPS	63
DISCIPLINE NEGOTIATION IS DIFFICULT	65
MAINTAINING CLOSENESS WITH A BIOLOGICAL CHILD IS IMPORTANT	70
MANAGING TEENAGERS CAN BE DIFFICULT	72
CHAPTER FIVE: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS	75
THEME ONE: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PRESSURES ON MĀORI FAMILIES IS IMPORTANT	77
THEME TWO: MANAAKITANGA: THERE ARE MĀORI WAYS OF BEING A FAMILY	83
ACCEPTING NEW PARTNERS CHILDREN CAN BE SEEN AS PART OF TRADITIONAL WHANAU VALUES	83
CHILDREN KNOWING THEIR BIOLOGICAL WHANAU IS IMPORTANT	88

CHAPTER SIX:	DISCUSSION	94
	MĀORI PARTICIPANTS AS PEOPLE AND THEIR CULTURE	94
	THE LANGUAGE OF MĀORI STEPFAMILIES:	
	CULTURE IN ACTION	95
	RELATIONSHIPS WITH SIGNIFICANT ADULTS	
	AND CHILDREN'S WELLBEING	97
	EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS WITH STEP/CHILDREN	99
	MĀORI AND RE-PARTNERING:	
	A CULTURAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GENDERED CONTEXT	102
	SUMMARY	102
	LIMITATIONS	103
	FUTURE RESEARCH	105
APPENDIX ONE:	REFERENCES	107
APPENDIX TWO:	APPENDICES	121

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE ONE: STEPFAMILY PARTICIPANTS

38

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE:	REFERENCES	107
APPENDIX TWO:	APPENDICES	121
	ADVERTISMENT FOR MĀORI STEPFAMILY PARTICIPANTS	122
	CONSENT FORM FOR MĀORI ADULTS IN STEPFAMILIES	123
	DEMOGRAPHICS SHEET FOR MĀORI STEPFAMILY PARTICIPANTS	125
	CONSENT FORM FOR MĀORI KEY INFORMANTS	126
	PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR MĀORI STEP/PARENTS	128
	PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR KEY INFORMANTS	131
	GUIDE FOR MĀORI STEP/PARENT INTERVIEWS	134
	GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS	138
	TRANSCRIPTION CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	141

Chapter One

Introduction

Background to this Research

A young 16th Century Norwich (England) woman, Katherine Andrews, once told her widower suitor “I will never be a stepmother, for I understand ye have children, and that should cause us never to agree” (Houlbrooke, 1984; 211). That disharmonious relationships were an expectation, as well as a consequence, of stepfamily life was almost always associated with social and economic realities which, for men and women of the time, were inescapable. The majority of written correspondence and court records of experiences attest to a considerable bias towards conflict in stepfamilies, stepchildren largely cited as catalysts for such tension (Houlbrooke, 1984).

In Pre-modern times remarriage was most often the result of the death of a spouse and the prompt remarriage of men, in particular, secured the services of a new wife and mother for the care of dependent children (Houlbrooke, 1984) . For women, the road to remarriage was less hastily pursued and likely affected by the woman’s attractiveness, age and number of dependents, family connections and economic position. Moreover, a second wife’s inheritance could be reduced by a stepchild, a situation with the potential to cause considerable grief to a stepmother who customarily outlived her husband and bore him additional children.

In contrast to modern times a stepparent was a replacement of a parent rather than an additional parent highlighting the more common reality these days that modern stepfamilies may consist of non-resident custodial parents as well as parents and stepparents living with step and biological children (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Thus the meanings of “stepfamily”, “stepmother”, and “stepchild” have changed and the economic realities associated with such labels have persisted but altered also. Nevertheless, widely held and negative connotations and stereotypes regarding stepfamilies remain remarkably persistent in attitudes today, even though

stepfamilies are most often formed via choice through divorce or separation rather than necessity.

While one third of New Zealand remarriages include a divorced partner (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) with children from the previous relationship, more recently stepfamilies are the result of couplings that have not or do not involve marriage (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). For example, since stepfather families are more prevalent, a first marriage is often created when a never married mother marries a man who has not fathered her children. In addition, sizable numbers of children are raised in households where parents are co-habiting in de-facto relationships. It is difficult to establish the percentage of children born to co-habiting couples or whether the children living with them are the product of prior relationships and currently the New Zealand Statistics Department has no firm numbers of children living in these arrangements (Statistics New Zealand, 1998).

The development of stepfamily research

Prior to 1970 mention of remarriage and stepfamily life were rare in family literature (Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). By 1980 more than 200 articles were reviewed by Pasley and Ihinger-Tallman (1992) addressing quality of remarriage and stepfamily adjustment. However, these studies often ignored the complexity of stepfamily structure and functioning and a deficit-comparison method in studies still prevailed as stepfamily functioning continued to be compared to that of nuclear families with inappropriate norms being applied to stepfamily relationships that reinforced first marriage families as the norm (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). One reason for such an approach in studies of stepfamilies may have been the moral leanings of clinicians of the day (Furstenberg, 1979), however, the work of John and Emily Visher (1979) who were themselves clinicians and stepparents was highly influential in changing clinical perceptions that stepfamilies function differently from first marriage families and highlighted the many strengths and positive attributes resulting from stepfamily relations and functioning.

Recognition of the uniqueness of stepfamily life by researchers and clinicians, perhaps not surprisingly, prompted a prolific outpouring of research in the 1990's (Coleman, Ganong & Fine, 2000). Much of the research focused on the quality and stability of remarriages and in the later part of the decade, remarriage dynamics. Perhaps because of the availability of stepfather families, stepparent role (usually stepfather), and the effects of remarriage and stepfamilies on children were a frequent focus of stepfamily studies throughout this decade (Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). More recently, research effort has emphasised the importance of the parent-child relationship (Cartwright, 2000; Pryor, 2008), its impact on the stepparent-stepchild relationship and marital quality, the biological parents relationship as well as continued focus on children's adjustment.

Ethnic variation in families

While the majority of stepfamily research originates from the US and UK, other Western countries show similar trends in prevalence rates, stereotypes and the formation and development of stepfamilies (Pryor, 2008). The US stepfamily research most often involves families of European or non-Hispanic descent. More recently, studies of French (Mignot, 2008), Japanese (Nozawa, 2008) and Mexican (Coltrane, Gutierrez & Parke, 2008) stepfamilies have added to the body of stepfamily research and included the added dimension of culture and ethnicity.

Some effects of cultural norms on adults who were in the early stages of transition into stepfamilies were highlighted in a recent Japanese study exploring processes in stepfamily formation (Nozawa, 2008) and the stressors and supportive aspects of available familial structures (e.g., step-grandparents, biological parents) and available social support groups (Jacobson, 1992). Interestingly, the nature of extended family networks in Japan may be causal in new step-couples hurrying into remarriage more so than their Western counterparts (Nozawa, 2008). The scarcity of social support for stepfamilies in Japan and the rigidity of extended family protocols and interdependence places enormous pressure on stepfamily members (Nozawa, 2008), particularly stepmothers (Ganong & Coleman, 1997) who often struggle to

cope. However, the more resilient stepfamilies eventually understand that successful stepfamily life requires long term investment (Papernow, 2008).

Comparatively, African American stepfamilies remain a largely understudied group in stepfamily research (Pryor, 2008) possibly because of factors such as shifting values and the more economically precarious position of many Black Americans (Franklin, 1997). Moreover, the utility of such studies is limited because the compounding effects of socioeconomic status and race are difficult to separate (Coleman & Ganong, 2004).

Māori in stepfamilies

Currently, there are no studies addressing the relevance of culture to stepfamily dynamics in New Zealand. This seems surprising given that Māori are separated, divorced or widowed in higher proportion than other ethnicities (Statistics New Zealand, 2005, modified 2011). Additionally, it is not known how often Māori repartner. However, what is known is that Māori are far more likely, when compared to other ethnic groupings in New Zealand, to be found in defacto relationships. This may be due, in part, to socio-cultural differences, in attitudes to marriage amongst Māori but may also result from a non-availability of preferred partners (Goldstein & Harknett, 2006).

Furthermore, Māori fertility rates, with the exception of Pacific Islanders, are amongst the highest in New Zealand with Māori commencing childbearing years at younger ages than other ethnicities. Māori have more children than other ethnicities, are more likely to be less educated, live in more crowded and inadequate dwellings, and earn less than members of other cultures and ethnicities (Statistics New Zealand, 2001; modified 2011). These social factors may place children of Māori descent at an increased risk of parental relationship dissolution and re-partnering throughout their lifetime compared to children from other ethnicities and cultures.

Aims of the Research

This thesis aims to add to the body of stepfamily literature and to increase understandings of stepfamily life from the point of view of Māori. It is exploratory involving qualitative interviews with a group of Māori stepfamilies and key informants. It will have relevance to Clinical Psychologists and other professionals working with Māori parents and stepparents.

When researching Māori experiences in stepfamilies, different themes might emerge from those that have emerged as important for European stepfamilies. Whilst this is an exploratory investigation a number of questions arise in regards to culture. For instance: What are the cultural understandings of stepfamily relationships and how do these impact on stepfamily members? What family and relationship issues are important for Māori stepfamilies? Are there added challenges for Māori in stepfamilies? Alternatively, are there aspects of living in Māori whanau systems that are supportive of Māori stepfamily members?

This initial chapter provides an overview of the nature and development of stepfamily literature throughout the past 30 years and the aims of this current thesis. Chapter Two addresses methodology followed by Method, Chapter Three. The exploratory nature of this project lent itself to a thematic technique within a Māori Centred framework investigated in Chapters Four (Stepfamily Participants) and Five (Key Informants). The final Chapter includes a discussion of the findings from the analysis and discusses possible directions for future research.

Rates of Separation, Divorce & Remarriage in New Zealand

The rate of separation, divorce and remarriage in New Zealand has changed dramatically since the 1970's (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Even though marriage rates declined, the average number of marriages (20,700 per annum) has remained stable in the last decade compared with an average of 25,300 marriages per annum between 1967-1976. The marriage rate has decreased from 45.5 per 1000 unmarried

people in the population (age 16 years or above) in 1971 to 13.5 per 1000 in 2006. The decline in marriage has occurred as many choose to delay marriage, remain single or cohabit.

For the last decade around 10,000 marriages have been dissolved annually meaning that approximately one third of all New Zealand marriages end in divorce (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). As divorce rates have increased so have rates of remarriage or repartnering. In 2006, 23% of men and 22% of women who married had been previously divorced. Adults who lived in defacto unions are not accounted for in the census statistics, but around 35% of men and women between the ages of 15 - 44 years were partnered but not legally married (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Hence, many adults and children live in stepfamily households in New Zealand. Although statistics regarding the number of children living in stepfamilies have not been collected in the census, an analysis of the Christchurch Health and Development Study, revealed that 18.4%, or more than 1 in 6 children, between the age of six and sixteen, had lived in a stepfamily (Nicholson, Fergusson & Horwood, 1999).

Similar trends may be found elsewhere in the Western world. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) (US Bureau of the Census, 2001b) estimated that about 5% of children under the age of 18 were living with at least one stepparent and this census is thought to capture only two thirds of all stepchildren (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004) estimated that stepfamilies comprised 7% of all families surveyed and the numbers of children under 18 experiencing divorce has increased steadily over the decade 1991 to 2001 to 53,400. Similar percentages are reported in Canada, in the UK (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008) and France (Mignot, 2008).

Stepfamilies as Incomplete Institutions.

Over the past 20 years the consequences of separation and divorce have yielded an outpouring of research exploring the transitory process of stepfamilies from first marriage family, to single parent household to cohabiting or remarried families (Amato 2000, Pryor & Trinder, 2004). The process may not have been an easy one

and early understandings of stepfamilies was the task of perhaps a courageous few, who themselves lived in stepfamilies and learned by experience (Vischer & Vischer, 1988). A preponderance of evidence for such a struggle is based in the predominance of the nuclear family model as the gold standard for family living (Levin, 1997) a less socially stigmatized family norm.

Andrew Cherlin (1978) who wrote the prolifically cited article “Remarriage as an Incomplete Institution” highlighted the invisibility of stepfamily members in literary and social arenas as a consequence of the centrality of a nuclear family “norm”. Their exclusion, in almost every social institution by way of social and legal policy, created numerous difficulties and ambiguities for stepfamilies. Besides providing an unflattering comparison that reinforced negative social stereotypes (Ganong & Coleman, 1995), stepfamilies have traditionally experienced a lack of institutionalized social support (Ganong, 1993). For instance, school enrollment forms often fail to accommodate the details of four sets of biological parents and stepparents. Access to stepchildren may be difficult for stepparents particularly in hospitals where parent only access is permitted (Ganong, 1993).

Children living with married parents.

A lack of appropriate terminology to describe relationships in stepfamilies such as the relationship between two adults who were formerly married and currently remarried to others, create subtle social insensitivities that encourage negative stereotypes of stepfamily relationships (Ganong & Coleman, 1997). Their very namelessness encourages invisibility and discourages positive identities and this is no more obvious than in the ambiguous positioning of stepchildren and stepparents in legal relationships (Mason, Fine & Carnochan, 2004). In New Zealand, stepchildren’s entitlements under the Family Protection Act (1955) only provide them with inheritance after the death of a stepparent if they were being maintained wholly or in part by their stepparent at the time of death (Atkin, 2008) regardless of the integrity of the relationship. Otherwise stepchildren have no other legal rights to inherit. For stepparents, their legal rights as well as responsibilities to stepchildren are few (Mason et al., 2004). Stepparents cannot be expected to take seriously,

obligations to stepchildren, when their relationships are not formally ratified and seem likely to remain as “incomplete institutions” (Jones, 1999; Visher & Visher, 1988).

Lastly, stepfamilies experience difficulty in accessing adequate clinical support when experiencing relationship difficulties (Visher & Visher, 1988). By comparing stepfamilies to first marriage families, clinicians and researchers may have unwittingly applied pressure to those in stepfamily relationships and encouraged the deficit comparison model (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Encouraging stepfamilies to apply a nuclear model to their families may result in role and responsibility confusion particularly when disciplining stepchildren and may encourage coalition (Bray, 1999; Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). and loyalty imbalance within the family (Bray, 1999; Hetherington, 1993; Lutz, 1983). It is well known that stepfamilies are at risk of separation and divorce when family relational behaviours remain unguided. Additionally, stepfamily members themselves sometimes feel pressured to operate as a first marriage family (Visher & Visher, 1996). A further complexity arises from the fact that remarried families are usually formed subsequent to separation and divorce of a first married couple with children, and the complexity of such families is evident in the number of additional relationships created by such unions with step-grandparents, step-aunts, step-uncles and step-cousins (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

Children living with unmarried parents.

Running alongside the additional relationships in remarried stepfamilies yet another layer of complexity to stepfamily form and function is added with stepfamilies whose adults have not been previously married and were cohabiting (Cherlin, 2004). Increasing numbers of first marriage families are stepfamilies and many more stepfamilies are formed without a marriage (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). Therefore, stepfamily research, more than ever before, may become more valuable in the family literature in informing the practice of therapy practitioners. In the meantime, many stepfamilies attempt to operate as first marriage families (Visher & Visher, 1988, 1996) and many therapists administer family therapy with stepfamilies as if they were first marriage families. Stepfamilies seeking help often describe therapy as

unhelpful resulting from a lack of therapists' knowledge and understanding of the unique challenges presented by stepfamily formation and living (Gonzales, 2009; Visher, Visher & Pasley, 1997). Moreover, the dearth of literature to inform clinical practice regarding stepfamily development and wellbeing presents a challenge for therapists who are unable to access appropriate and adequate information. With limited resources, therapists are expected to rely upon their own assumptions about stepfamilies with the possibility of perpetuating widely held beliefs about stepfamily deficiency and family functioning (Portrie & Hill, 2005).

Pathways to stepparenting

Current understandings of stepfamily structure are more easily and commonly understood amongst therapists as belonging to one of two typologies: simple (single) or complex (double) stepfamilies following the death of a spouse or divorce subsequent to single parenthood (Papernow, 1998, 2006). Simple stepfamilies consist of resident children from the prior relationship of one adult of the new couple, whereas complex stepfamilies include residential children from prior relationships of both adults. The importance of structural changes in stepfamilies from first marriage families is an important consideration in terms of assessment and therapy (Visher & Visher, 1996) as stepfamily living is a process rather than an event (Hetherington, 1993; Papernow, 1998).

Whether the stepfamily is simple or complex in structure, each stepfamily subsystem will come with its own boundaries, rules and history of operation built up over years within the family of origin and following separation in the single parent stage (Papernow, 1998). Hetherington (1993) asserts that the response to a remarriage can be particularly dependent on experiences in the single parent household. In other words, transition by stepfamily members can depend not only upon current circumstances but experiences from the nuclear and single parent households. Therefore, an understanding of the different phases of transition that a stepfamily moves through is a clinically important aspect that requires attention in therapy (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Greene & Anderson, 1999) in terms of psycho-education, and assists in the development of stepfamily norms. Furthermore, many stepfamilies experience an increase in stress and exposure to conflict in the early stages of

remarriage. In a complex stepfamily arrangement, children from both parents may bicker and argue as they struggle to find their place and new roles. Further, many couples display more negativity towards each other in these early years compared to first marriage couples and the new stepfamily may experience a period where there is a lack of cohesiveness (Bray & Berger, 1993). Papernow (1998) describes these transitional phases as the Fantasy Stage and Immersion Stages through the lens of Gestalt ideology. The Fantasy Stage may include adults' desires to create the ideal stepfamily with a more nurturing partner than their previous partner but conflict may arise in the parent-child subsystem when children may fantasise that their biological parents get back together. Immersion describes the, often painful, realisation that the ideal stepfamily does not exist giving way to individuals' feelings of frustration, resentment and inadequacy.

Further, different subsystems in the new stepfamily, such as the couple or child subsystem, may adapt and function differently to other systems in the stepfamily, and at different stages of development (Hetherington, 1993). In other words, some stepfamily individuals show deleterious and enduring effects through different phases of the marital transition, while other individuals who appear to adjust and cope well at some point may experience a disruption in functioning at other times. This is a common experience when there are children who have previously adjusted well to stepfamily life enter adolescence (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). Understanding these processes may be particularly important for clinicians in therapy who often fail to recognise the magnitude, effect and reasons for such differences between first marriage and stepfamilies (Gonzales, 2009).

Couple relationships.

The development of couple relationships in stepfamilies is very different from that of first marriage couples mainly because of the presence of children from the outset of the relationship and the variety of pre and post-divorce and single parent relationship and parenting experiences (Pryor, 2004). On the whole, step couple relationships are said to be less romantic and more egalitarian. Nevertheless, remarried couples are at greater risk of separation and divorce than first marriage

couples (Xu, Hudspeth & Bartkowski, 2006). One reason for this may be the experience of adults cohabiting prior to remarriage. Cohabitation prior to remarriage is significantly associated with lower marital happiness which in turn may account for the greater instability amongst remarried relationships when compared to first married couples. So far, the reasons for such a trend remain a question to be answered by future research (Booth & Edwards, 1992). Beaudry, Boisvert, Simand, Parent and Blais (2004) posit the main reason for breakdown in remarried couple relationships is a lack of communication skills. Couples who communicate effectively experience greater long term marital satisfaction regardless of other variables that threaten the integrity of marital happiness in the relationship such as lack of social and familial supports and quality of relationships with former spouses.

Perhaps interestingly, women are more likely than men to experience a decline in marital satisfaction at the two year post remarriage mark which may account for the higher rate of remarried separation and divorce. The geographical distances and loss of relationships with in-laws and extended family and friends that persist over time may explain this (Pryor, 2008). Lack of marital satisfaction, particularly for women, in a remarriage is an important factor in determining the outcome of relationships for children of these unions (Sanders, Halford & Behrens, 1999). Adult children from divorced family of origins are at significantly higher risk of a separation and divorce themselves. Women particularly, are almost twice as likely as men from a divorced family of origin to separate and divorce and show a greater likelihood of experiencing negative styles of communication and cognitions during conflict with their remarried partner than women from non-divorced families.

A further impact of separation and remarriage is an economic one. After separation or divorce, the parent with primary care of children, usually the women, often experience a period of hardship while managing their children through increased child care and household responsibilities, changes in housing, schooling and adjustments to reduced income (Hetherington, 1993). The financial burden on single mothers can be very difficult with some mothers experiencing a drop in income by as much as half (Ozawa & Yoon, 2008). Overall, marriage is less beneficial for low income persons compared to those on high incomes. For women experiencing

poverty, remarriage to a low income partner may increase the combined income above the poverty line. Nevertheless, the benefits are minimal in contrast to high income earners.

Once formed, stepfamilies tend to be larger and are more structurally complex (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). With more children, adults in stepfamilies are pressured to provide larger homes to accommodate the burgeoning household, particularly with the addition of children in common to the new couple. Additionally, parents relying on child support from former spouses and parents paying child support for non-resident children place an additional burden on stepfamilies, especially when payments are sporadic. As the role of women and women's participation in the workforce has increased (Ferri & Smith, 1998) stepfamily couples are more egalitarian and finances are often divided in such a way that adults have access to a pooled account while retaining their own finances (Pasley, Koch & Ihinger-Tallman, 1993). Nevertheless, the way in which finances are apportioned in stepfamilies is a major area of conflict impacting the way in which children are parented.

Child development and outcomes

The majority of research regarding children's adjustment prior to, during and post divorce includes children up to and including middle adolescence (Nicholson, Phillips, Peterson & Battistutta, 2002) with most research conducted from, perhaps unsurprisingly, a problem oriented perspective (Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). The post-divorce, lone parent household and the entry into the new stepfamily are difficult times for children (Nicholson, Fergusson & Horwood, 1999), particularly where children are part time residents of more than one household and where children are often partially or completely separated from their siblings (Howden, 2007). Many studies up until 2000 focussed on outcomes in terms of increased risk of reduced academic performance, increased internalising and externalising behaviours (Amato, 1993; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004), and earlier parenthood and disillusionment with their own relationships (Pryor & Trinder, 2004). A rule of thumb for therapists might be that the more family transitions a child has experienced, the higher the expected rate of externalising behaviours (Cavanagh, 2006). Some

significant effects of divorce may be long term as Fergusson and Horwood (2001) found in their longitudinal research, The Christchurch Health and Development Study, with some children developing longer term consequences of early onset depression and anxiety including increased risk of later life substance abuse and lost life opportunities, even when child abuse, family dysfunction and social disadvantage were controlled for.

Hence, separation and divorce sets in motion a number of transitions for children and adults precipitating change in family structure and relationships that may have deleterious effects for the adjustment of children and young people but these changes might also present the family members with opportunities for personal growth and a chance to develop a more fulfilling family environment (Bray & Berger, 1993; Bray & Hetherington, 1993). However, while there are adjustment difficulties for many children from separated and divorced families many do not experience adverse effects. Indeed, their risk is more or less the same as those who grow up in lone parent families (Nicholson et al., 1999; Pryor & Trinder, 2004). Many children and young adults survive divorce, separation, lone parenthood and transition into a new stepfamily successfully (Amato, 1993; Coleman, Ganong & Fine, 2000) particularly where the new stepfamily is formed when the children are young (Pryor, 2004).

In recent years, New Zealand stepfamily research regarding children's adjustment outcomes has focused on describing the diverse and difficult experiences that young people experience when their families are experiencing a transition (Cartwright, 2010). Many of the most difficult experiences for children derive from the parent-child relationship which, perhaps understandably, is a difficult relationship in the context of an emotional family breakup. Many conflicts in the new stepfamily seem centred around the establishment of new roles and relationships particularly for the parent-child relationship (Hetherington, 1993), however, most risk to the parent-child relationship appears to be associated with factors present prior to entry into the stepfamily rather than being a product of difficulties experienced during the transition (Nicholson et al., 1999).

The non-resident father.

An area of major concern for children is the loss of contact with the non-resident parent (Cartwright & Seymour, 2002), usually a father (Adamson, O'Brien & Pasley, 2007; Pryor, 2004). Sometimes, perhaps resulting from the significant pain and hurt of a separation and because one adult in the marriage has already moved on with their lives before a formal separation takes place, the resident parent, usually the mother, acts as gate keeper to the children's relationship to their non-resident father limiting the amount of contact the child has with that parent (Hawthorne & Lennings, 2008). Many fathers claim to have limited say in the parenting decisions and post separation arrangements of their children including decisions regarding their schooling. The less day-to-day contact a father has with their child, the greater the likelihood that ongoing contact with their children will be terminated (Amato, Meyers & Emery, 2009).

The amount of contact a child has with their father is often contingent on the parents being able to separate their romantic roles from that of parenting roles and to be able to foster a cooperative parenting relationship for the benefit of the child (Amato, Meyers & Emery, 2009). Conflict between adults is a major issue when separating and divorcing. Pryor (2004) demonstrated that the frequency of contact and the child's happiness with the frequency of contact with the non-resident parent had a positive effect on the resident parent-child relationship but the opposite is demonstrated where the interparental relationship is hostile (Amato, Meyers & Emery, 2009). The risk of children's adjustment difficulties, perhaps not surprisingly, increases significantly where parents are unable to communicate effectively without high levels of conflict after a separation. While parents struggle to cope with the breakup, children's perspectives or experiences are often overlooked (Pryor & Trinder, 2004). Children are often sad about what has happened between their parents and sometimes fantasise about their parents getting back together. Many children and young adults have no idea why their parents have separated, even years afterward (Pryor & Trinder, 2004). They may express feelings of betrayal (Cartwright & Seymour, 2002) with their parents and relatives with the way in which

the separation or divorce was handled and the adequacy of support during and after the divorce (Angarne-Lindeberg, Wadsby & Bertero, 2009).

Impact of parental adjustment on children.

Parental adjustment in transitioning families may impact parenting style of the primary care parent that in turn may have an impact on children. The mental health of parents transitioning through single parenthood and into new stepfamilies is another area of concern (Hetherington, 1993). Mavis Hetherington revealed in her Virginia Longitudinal Study that single motherhood promoted diversity in the way women coped with lone parenting. Two years post divorce 75% of divorced women reported being happier with their lives than they had been in the last year of their marriage and reported fewer physical health problems, less anxiety and drank less than women in unhappy first marriages, even throughout their children's adolescence. Comparatively, Bray and Kelly (1998) found that remarried mothers have been found to be three times more stressed than first married woman and both men and women experienced more depression two years after forming a new stepfamily (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994) particularly where children were adolescent and likely to be experiencing greater adolescent related behavioural and adjustment difficulties (Hetherington, 1993).

Stressed and depressed parents who are experiencing a tearing apart of the parent-child relationship post separation and divorce (Visher & Visher, 1988) are more likely to adopt a less authoritative (high control, high warmth) style of parenting with their children than parents in first married families, particularly in the early stages of transition when financial difficulties are being negotiated and new roles and relationships are being established by parents with their children. However, over time resident parenting becomes more similar to parenting in non-divorced families particularly where children are young at transition (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). Only when children are adolescent, does the parenting style of resident parents show less adjustment to an authoritative style over time, than non-divorced. Children, in general show adverse personal adjustment to authoritarian (high control, low warmth) parenting in stepfamilies (Lazar, Guttman & Abas, 2009). Further, children

prefer permissive (low control, high warmth) stepparenting (Howden, 2007; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001) possibly because, from the point of view of the child, the parent-child relationship has preceded the couple relationship (Howden, 2007) and the parent and child have their own history, routine and idiosyncrasies (Pryor, 2004). Often biological parents have more tolerance of their child's misbehaviour and parents may have different expectations and parenting experiences than a stepparent who may have no experience of parenting at all (Howden, 2007).

Moore and Cartwright (2005) found that children of remarried mothers prefer their mothers to manage discipline and that the stepparent should take a minor role at most. At least half the children in this study felt their mothers should prioritise their children over the stepparent presumably to reinforce the parent-child loyalty bond. Mostly, children wanted love, reassurance, support, time and attention from their mothers (Moore & Cartwright, 2005). These findings are supported by other research where children prefer stepparents to take a minor role in discipline, perhaps more a support role to the mother, becoming more involved in discipline over time, preferably behaving more like a companion or friend to the stepchild (Papernow, 1993; Visher & Visher, 1996).

Parents may be supported through counselling to recognise their different parenting styles and assisted in drawing the two styles together, such as might be experienced where a mother is permissive and a stepfather is authoritarian, to parent more effectively and kindly (Papernow, 2006). The task is more difficult where biological parents, living in separate residences, have different parenting styles. Co-parenting is common amongst first marriage families but uncommon when parents live apart. The most successful parenting between households occurs where parenting is co-operative and involves household rules being discussed with the child and the ex-spouse and being adhered to by both bio-parents. Parallel parenting, where there are different roles and rules in each household, may work well where conflict between bio-parents is low. Overall, conflictual parenting is the least effective parenting style and promotes more adjustment and behavioural difficulties in children (Hawkins, Amato & King, 2006).

At the heart a great deal of grief for children in stepfamilies is the loss of loved ones and loyalty binds (Papernow, 2006). Children in transition often feel torn between biological parents when they separate or divorce (Visher & Visher, 1988) or between parent and stepparent, which may precipitate grief and fear of the dilution of the parent-child bond (Howden, 2007). Some children feel guilty that they feel affection and love for their new stepparent and worry that this is wrong (Papernow, 2006). Other children worry that their parents will not love them anymore, or as much. The death of a parent may intensify loyalty binds between children and the surviving parent because children may worry memories of the parent may be lost. Children can be assisted in coping with their uncomfortable feelings by explaining to them that the stepparent is not a replacement parent but an additional adult in the household and that the position of the parent (and non-resident parent) are therefore sacred (Howden, 2007). Parents may be assisted in minimising loyalty binds by providing appropriate access to the non-resident parent (Hawkins, Amato & King, 2006) and by recognising that children's resistance to the new stepparent may reinforce coalitions between parent and child that may be unhelpful to the wellbeing of the stepfamily (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). Some coalitions, however, are adaptive, but only where stepparents are not excluded and the stepparent-stepchild relationship is positive and friendly (Cartwright, 2008).

Stepparent-stepchild relationships

An area given significant attention in the 80's and 90's stepfamily literature was the relationship between stepparent and stepchild (Pasley & Moorefield, 2004), a relationship that was believed to predict the overall happiness of the stepfamily by many researchers (Visher & Visher, 1998). More recently, focus has fallen on "within" family relationships (Pasley & Moorefield, 2004), particularly the quality of the mother-child (Cartwright, 2005; Moore & Cartwright, 2005) and non-resident father-child relationship (Amato, Meyers & Emery, 2009; Howden, 2007) and their effects on the stepparent-stepchild relationship (Marsiglio, 2004; Pryor, 2004); the couple relationship (McDonald & Demaris, 2002) and family wellbeing (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994; Papernow, 2006; Howden, 2007).

The beginning of a remarriage may be particularly difficult for children and waiting out the first two to seven years for the stepfamily to stabilize (Cherlin & Furstenburg, 1994; Hetherington & Jodl, 1994; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1997) is also hard for the new couple who may have had the expectation of “instant love” from the start (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Stern, 1978; Visher & Visher, 1979). Stepparents are often disappointed and hurt with stepchildren who shun them in this early period (Stern, 1978; Visher & Visher, 1979) and unrealistic expectations often lead to further resentments and rejections (Howden, 2007).

Establishing new roles and norms.

As there are no established roles for stepparents, it is commonplace for stepmothers to assume the gendered responsibilities of a former wife and mother to stepchildren, accepting an inequitable proportion of the household chores and childcare including dispensing discipline. Perhaps, not surprisingly, cultural (and empirically supported) beliefs such as the “wicked stepmother” (Ganong & Coleman, 1995) indicate that stepmothers experience more negative interactions with their stepchildren than stepfathers, in general (Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). Stepfathers, however, avoid such cultural stereotypes (Howden, 2007) since their role generally includes fewer responsibilities regarding discipline, monitoring and control of children and stepchildren (Bray & Kelly, 1998). Nevertheless, recent trends reveal that men appear to want greater involvement with their children and stepchildren and the way in which men operate within the stepfamily environment may be vital to the health and wellbeing of the stepfamily (Pryor, 2004).

It seems important that the new couple delineate the expectations of the stepparent in regards to their role in the stepfamily (Howden, 2007). Papernow (1998) posits the importance of the biological parents’ role in sanctioning and supporting the stepparent in finding their place and administering their role, not merely as an additional adult in the household but as an active member who collaboratively decides the parameters and boundaries of relationships within the family (Papernow, 1998). This includes co-operative efforts with other family members in creating norms and forms of acceptable behavior and etiquette. Problems might

occur when the members have unclear or unrealistic expectations (Visher & Visher, 1979). When a stepparent enters a family where expectations are not clear or the members have differing agendas, the risk of disappointment is high. In the early stages of remarriage the stepparent runs the risk of experiencing the stepchildren's feelings of displacement, resentment and fear that they may have been replaced in their parents' affections, particularly when the child had no say in the repartnering (Cartwright, 2005). Moreover, the parent-child connection, with its prior history of already established rules and expectations may become an unhelpful coalition were the stepparent to override the expectations of both partner and child. Therefore, it may be important to set up rules quickly regarding, discipline, including the extent of the stepparents' involvement in monitoring and controlling stepchildren, emotional support of stepchildren moving between households and involvement with the non-resident parent.

Discipline frequently causes problems in stepfamilies and may lead to the first serious arguments (Visher & Visher, 1979). Disciplining stepchildren and stepparenting in general is significantly easier for stepparents when stepchildren are younger while stepparenting step-adolescents can be particularly challenging (Fine, Coleman & Ganong, 1998). Negative interactions are often gender specific with stepdaughters being more difficult to stepparent than stepsons (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992) and in the long run stepfather-stepdaughter relationships (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992) are more likely to be conflictual than stepfather-stepson relationships even when the remarriage occurred when the child was preadolescent. As noted above, in the early stages of a remarriage at least, stepchildren prefer their biological parents to discipline and for a stepfather to support the custodial mothers' efforts to discipline, only exerting authority gradually over time after having established a relationship with their stepchildren by self disclosing and sharing common interests (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994).

One way in which to support stepparents' integration into the stepfamily and reduce tension for parents may be for therapists to provide psychoeducation regarding insider – outsider relationships (Papernow, 2006). Custodial parents often inhabit an

insider position with their biological children resulting from shared experiences and values and cooperative functioning developed through time which provides the parent-child relationship with a common “middleground” (Papernow, 1998; Papernow, 2006). Children may also be insiders but where they occasionally reside in the household of their non-resident parent, they may experience being an outsider, creating anxiety and sometimes panic resulting from feeling excluded and disconnected from other family members. Having realistic expectations of children during these transitions may ease their ability to cope with them. Over time, meal, holiday and bedtime rituals all become commonplace unless step-adults fail to develop awareness of the child’s needs and a shared understanding of what they are doing (Papernow, 1998). Stepparents, however, are likely to occupy outsider positions most of the time, especially when they have no children of their own. Marsiglio (2004) maintains that stepfathers should reprioritize and become more attuned to the needs of their stepchildren and build a healthy and intimate relationship with their partner and stepchildren, gradually establishing a parental team where all members feel included in the family core. Nevertheless, the task is a difficult one, complicated by the enormity of the parenting task in general.

The stepparent, often a stepfather, may be more successfully integrated into the family when their role is not in competition, nor usurping the role of the non-resident parent (Papernow, 1998). Children’s attachment to a non-resident parent may be important to acknowledge for stepchildren and ignoring the existence of this relationship may impede the stepparent-stepchild relationship, the couple relationship and the general wellbeing of the stepfamily. Involving the non-resident parent in setting rules and standards for discipline that may be reinforced within and across households may provide children and stepchildren with structure, consistency, predictability and security (Howden, 2007).

Ethnic Variation in Separation and Divorce

It seems appropriate to take a brief departure from the main stepfamily literature where the majority of studies have been conducted with middle class white or Caucasian families (Ganong & Coleman, 2004) to compare some racial trends in separation, divorce and remarriage prior to commencing the final section of this literature review regarding Māori.

African American

Around 75% of African American children will experience, by the age of 16, the separation and divorce of their parents compared to 40% of White children (Bray & Hetherington, 1993). African American children are also likely to spend considerably longer in single parent households or with a divorced mother where there is also a grandmother or the mothers' partner to whom she is not married. While teenage pregnancy and birth is a concern for African Americans, contrary to stereotypes, the majority of births to single African American women, are not to adolescents but to women who have experienced a prior marriage, divorce or have never been married and this now includes African American women who have attained middle class socioeconomic status and have been unable to find a new partner, opting instead to rear their children alone (McAdoo, 2002). Nevertheless, some studies have shown that African American fathers have more contact with their non-resident children than Caucasian or non-Caucasian fathers (King, 2006).

African Americans are less likely to remarry than Caucasians who are more likely to remarry than any other racial group (Ganong & Coleman, 2004) and show significant differences in unwillingness to marry outside their race than African Americans (Goldscheider & Kaufman, 2006). Studies of interracial marriage suggest that Caucasians are more willing to marry African Americans with children from previous relationships when they hold lower socio-economic and educational attainments. In the US, poverty is unevenly distributed amongst racial groups with significantly higher percentages of African Americans, Hispanic and Native American children being raised in poverty than Caucasian children (Magnuson & Duncan, 2002). Overall, for Caucasians and African Americans, the presence of children from prior

relationships is an impediment to forming a new relationship, particularly for women, since following separation and divorce 85% to 90% of children remain living primarily with the mother (Bray & Hetherington, 1993). Therefore, single parenting for African American women is commonplace and many authors have written about the high stresses, including racial barriers, scarce economic and financial resources and lack of opportunities experienced by mothers of children in these households. Traditionally, from enslavement, African American women have depended upon the support of family members, usually a grandmother, in raising their children compared to Caucasian women whose reliance on support has predominantly fallen on the conjugal relationship (McAdoo, 2002; Kreider & Ellis, 2011).

Asian

Until recently, Asian stepfamilies have received little attention in the stepfamily literature, possibly resulting from the stigmatised position of divorcees and stepfamilies in Asian countries such as Japan, which now has a comparable separation and divorce rate with Germany and higher rates than France but still significantly lower than the US (Nozawa, 2008). Remarriage for at least one partner constituted 25% of new marriages in Japan in 2005. Cherlin's (1978) assertion that stepfamilies were an incomplete institution may be particularly true for Japan where available alternatives to the traditional family model are restricted and the rigid gender related expectation that stepmothers take a mothering role with stepchildren creates enormous stress for stepmothers (Nozawa, 2008). In countries such as China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, child rearing practices are based in the Confucian and Buddhist beliefs where analogies of children as holding an innate goodness and innocence are revered thus guiding the rather more restrictive parenting goals and practices than in other societies and ethnicities (Chao & Tseng, 2002). The philosophy involves a great emphasis placed on respect and obedience to parents and elders and the child learns to see themselves as one in a network of relationships in which age and patriarchy often provide a rigid system of adherence. Children are cosseted until the age of 5 years when an authoritarian parenting style is most often commenced. Because family expectations and obligations are different, culture specific responses to parenting styles may be marked in children across

cultures. For instance, as Westerners, the purported beneficial effects of warmth and control in an authoritative parenting style may result in different behaviours were the same parenting style adopted with Asian children within the context of their particular culture. This does not mean that Asian children are less well-adjusted or happy. Rather, Asian parenting styles are congruent with Asian cultural expectations and children's responses are a product of that.

Latino

Latino is an umbrella term referring to peoples originating from Mexico, Central and South America (Cuban and Puerto Ricans) and the Spanish speaking Caribbean (Hispanics) (Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio & Miller, 2002). Latino peoples constitute the largest minority group in the US ahead of African American people; an estimated 12.5 % of the population at the 2000 census. Further, the majority of the research concerning this population is deficit focused. In the first 10 years of a remarriage 29% of Hispanic peoples will have divorced compared to 48% and 39% of African Americans and Caucasians in the US respectively (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Further, for Hispanic women the probability of remarriage within 5 years is approximately 44%, compared to 54%-58% for Caucasian women and 32% for African American women. Furthermore, remarriage rates within 10 years post separation or divorce are around 44% for Hispanic women compared to 79% and 32% for Caucasian and African American women respectively.

Characteristics of the Latino population include their relative poverty and higher unemployment rates compared to Caucasians (Harwood et al, 2002). Another source of variation among Latino people is the level of acculturation, since approximately 38% of the population emigrated to the US from their homeland. Additionally, most studies view acculturation from a deficit perspective and focus largely on the negative mental health outcomes and stressors on Latino families brought about through acculturative processes and experiences.

A distinguishing characteristic of Latino families is the reliance on multiple extended family networks (Coltrane, Gutierrez & Parke, 2008). These contacts remain even

after the members have ceased to provide financial support and housing when the family is able to afford accommodation of their own, particularly post emigration. An emphasis is placed on family obligation and duty for Latino children in general and the concept of “familismo” is the belief that the family is an extension of the self providing impetus for family solidarity, loyalty and reciprocity.

Whanau and Relationship Issues and Patterns for Māori: Past and Present

In pre-European families Māori children were often raised in several “kainga” (dwellings / homes) and were encouraged to build relationships with other adults, children and households. This occurred because the responsibility for children was considered to be that of the ‘collective’ (extended) whanau, as opposed to predominantly the parents. The reasons for doing so may have been both practical as well as psychological. Members of extended whanau provided economic support should the partners or parents of a related whanau member die, and emotional nurturance as well. Original Māori ancestors (pre-European Māori) occupied large areas of land the boundaries of which have remained relatively constant over time and can be identified by tribal name today. Land was owned by the whole tribe or “iwi”. Iwi were further sub-grouped into hapu or a number of whanau (family) groupings which occupied areas of land within iwi land boundaries known as papakainga (ancestral land). Hapu were identifiable by their own marae (meeting house) and fortified enclosure (Mead, 2003). Children whose parents belonged to different hapu within the same iwi could therefore belong to and reside in either hapu which occupy different regions of land within iwi boundaries but generally children identified with one hapu predominantly and resided permanently there (Walker, 1990). Whanau, or subgroups of hapu, consisted of three generations or so of related family members consisting of Kaumatua (elderly male/female) and Kuia (elderly female), their adult children and their partners and grandchildren (Durie, 2003).

Today, kinship links are often expressed in terms of one’s immediate or extended family grouping and a related ancestor and this is expressed through connections recited in “whakapapa” (lines of descent), which are extensive genealogies and narratives proclaiming connections from a common ancestor through to the basic whanau group (Durie, 2003; Walker, 1990). Not all Māori today claim connection through iwi or hapu groups, and many whanau have become particularly large and scattered geographically resulting in members who do not or will not identify with their extended whanau or their whakapapa for various reasons (Mead, 2003). Additionally, the concept of whanau appears to have changed such that today

whanau may include legally adopted persons and non-Māori people with which a special relationship has been established with the whanau. In essence whanau has become an inclusive term adopted by Māori to describe the multiple important relationships with people that they consider family but who are not necessarily blood relations.

Early 19th Century European anthropologists attempted to explain fragmentation of pre-European Māori society in terms of colonisation that “iwi” and “whanau” were reduced to individual economic units through the process of land war, intermarriage, changing geographical location, land sales and the developing colonial economy (Ballara, 1998). At the time Māori were said to have “detrribalised” as they relocated from their papakainga (ancestral lands) and became urbanised. Māori became perceived as ‘Māori’ by virtue of descent, but not in terms of their culture or way of living apparently (Anderson, 1991) and had become “brown skinned Pakehas”, a term used predominantly in the 1970’s and 80’s in New Zealand (Metge, 1995).

Nonetheless, many Māori today, whether detrribalised or “marae” (meeting house) based acknowledge their descent from an original founding ancestor, and may think of themselves as a part of the wider Māori cultural group and many identify themselves by their iwi and/or hapu, or whanau name. Many marae and iwi still advocate on behalf of their people (Durie, 2003) acting as trustees of their group’s tribal land, maintaining property and marae, negotiating the distribution of resources, directing community projects and ensuring that that important ritual functions, such as ‘hui’ (meetings) and ‘tangi’ (funerals) are able to continue (Durie, 2011).

Moreover, Māori affiliations often extend beyond iwi and range from gangs to church and sports groups; “kapa haka” (music and dance) and “kohanga reo” (preschools). Many Māori today may be experiencing and, acknowledging a growing interest and pride in their Māori ancestry, which might otherwise have been concealed in the past. The range and variety of Māori identity is a much discussed topic amongst Māori academics (Kukutai, 2011). Durie (2003) describes positive

mental health status and wellbeing in terms of a secure identity and satisfactory relationships with others, others being individuals and institutions from which individuals might draw support, strength and confidence. The strong reliance on relationships with others and the development of understanding and self awareness, by projecting outside from the self was a fundamental difference in world view for traditional Māori, and stands in contrast to a psychological Western view of the self whereby, in therapy, the restoration of balanced mental health is sought through the internal experience of thought, emotion and behaviour (Durie, 2003). While Māori do not discount the importance of personal genetic or biological factors, an imbalance in relationships is a central focus of address in problem solving and healing for Māori (Incayawar, Wintrob, Bouchard & Bartocci, 2009). Durie (2003) posits that Māori find emotional equilibrium and a secure sense of identity through the four domains of experience posited in the Te Whare Tapa Wha (Māori Model of Holistic Health and Wellness) with an emphasis on relationships with others. The domains include Wairua (spirituality), Hinengaro (intellect, affect and behaviour), Tinana (physical health) and Whanau (family and social) (Durie, 2003). Within a Māori world view relationships are reinforced with the practices of “whanaungatanga” (bonds of commitment, loyalty, obligation and aroha (love) that strengthen kinship ties); values such as reciprocity; spiritual values such as “tapu” (the quality of being scared; where access is restricted to something or someone) and language. Language or ‘te reo’ is considered a “taonga” or treasure and is nowadays frequently held up as a marker of a person’s Māori identity along with the degree of one’s grasp of ‘tikanga’ or Māori customs and protocol (Kukutai, 2011).

Identity, acculturation & the positioning of Māori children.

The above begs the question as to why identity is so important an issue for Māori today if Māori culture is so deeply ‘entrenched’ in New Zealand’s current cultural landscape. A central problem of identity maintenance for the Māori child or adult client may have arisen through the acculturative process (Kukutai, 2011). With reference to Māori, acculturation describes the contexts and degree to which Māori individuals have adopted the behaviours of the dominant culture and the extent to which these individuals avoid or spurn their own cultural traditions (Pope-Davis,

Coleman, Ming Liu & Toporek, 2003). In regards to Māori first marriage and stepfamilies, the level of acculturation may be associated with the willingness or extent to which the individuals or family interact with the larger society and may impact the presentation of difficulties experienced, and beliefs about causes and possible solutions (Kukutai, 2011; Ward, 2006). Other factors impacting identity and degree of acculturation include but are not limited to, the clients' level of education, access to community resources, past and present experiences of discrimination, socio-economic status and the cultural mix of parents. A number of New Zealand studies discuss experiences of cross cultural (Māori-Pakeha; Māori Chinese unions) relationships and the possible outcome of these situations on children. For the most part, people who have adopted a bicultural approach to modern living are thought to have the best adjustment to modern life and appear to be the successful outcome of acculturative processes (Kukutai, 2011; Pachter & Dumont-Mathieu, 2004).

The position of Māori women in Māori families is an interesting one and also relevant here. There is no written evidence of pre-European Māori to indicate that Māori women were exclusively involved in childrearing or held significant power over children's future. The whanau and hapu appear to have collectively supported children throughout their development and growth and men were involved in that process as far as we know. It seems likely that post-European roles for Māori women where a grandmother was a singular significant attachment figure for children was strongly influenced by European values (Cram, 2011). This is not to say that pre-European Māori women disengaged from their children after birth. The opposite is very likely as the new born formed an attachment to its mother through continued breastfeeding and close physical contact for warmth, hygiene as well as nutritional and emotional needs. Further, the newborn was likely viewed as an addition to the whanau or hapu and possibly coddled and passed about its many relatives.

Comparatively, colonial Pakeha families maintained an involuntary separation from their communities and from each other which appears to have been based on social class and economic situation (Sinclair, 1997). Ability to make decisions was quite

differently apportioned in the family such that father maintained a primary position of power, followed by various other related males (wifes and husbands father, uncle, brother and brother-in-law). Mother possessed little, if any, power to make decisions individually and any influence was mostly dependent on her husbands' direction.

Māori parenting is best understood when the Māori concept of whangai is considered in relation to the positioning of Māori children (Pitama, Ririnui, & Mikaere, 2002). Whangai was traditionally a form of informal adoption of Māori children, often to adults who were unable to have their own children, but mostly related by blood ties in some way to the child. The term whangai today includes children born by invitro-fertilization and surrogacy. Therefore, whangai is an inclusive term for all children outside the Western nuclear family construct but whose value and corresponding responsibilities to whanau are the same (Durie, 2001; McCrae & Nikora, 2006; Pitama, Ririnui, & Mikaere, 2002). Perhaps importantly, legal relationships in terms of guardianship and inheritance for whangai children may be said to be as tenuous as those for non-Māori stepchildren and children in non-Māori stepfamilies (Atkin, 2008).

The statistics for Māori today may be an indication of the contemporary pressures facing Māori families (Durie, 2001). In 1991 43% of Māori children lived in solo parent households, an increase from 17% during the previous decade (Durie, 2001). For the period 1981 to 2001, a quarter of Māori children under the age of 5 were living in one parent households, twice the proportion of New Zealand Pakeha children of the same age. In this age group a third or more Māori children lived in multiple households. Throughout this period, Māori children were also more likely to be living with a sole parent father who was also unemployed or living with a sole mother who was in receipt of the Domestic Purposes Benefit. The rate at which Māori have intermarried with Asian, Pacific Island, Pakeha (European / Caucasian New Zealanders) and people of other cultures in New Zealand is evident in the statistics whereby many Māori identify themselves with more than one culture. Indeed, Māori children are more likely than adults to have more than one ethnic affiliation (Statistics New Zealand, 2001).

Cooper, Braun and Pomare (2010) provide an exhaustive list of psychological research involving Māori participants. There were no studies identified there that focused on familial processes within stepfamilies for Māori people. Thus the current study is potentially ground-breaking. However, while this may be the case, any research on Māori stepfamilies will be difficult to generalise to all Māori families. There are wide differences between Māori families related to strength of Māori identity, levels of acculturation; region or whanau location, iwi they derive from and the degree of practice of traditional Māori parenting practices; for example, their adoption of whangai practices. Nevertheless, the current study may provide salient examples of the many advantages that Māori stepfamilies enjoy, while at the same time providing insights into the uniquely cultural ways in which Māori stepfamilies problem solve when confronted with the daily challenge of stepfamily life.

Chapter Two

Qualitative Research Methodology of This Study

The previous chapters laid foundations, through published literature, as to the aims of this study of Māori experiences in stepfamilies. This chapter introduces the use of qualitative research and, the specific epistemologies underpinning this study of Māori and stepfamilies.

Prior to the advent of qualitative research in psychology some 25 years ago the main research methods used were governed by a positivist paradigm, were empirical and, assumed an objective reality which was both predictable, controllable quantifiable and verifiable (Chwalisz, Shah & Hand, 2008). Since then researchers have also used qualitative approaches in order to obtain “a more naturalistic, contextual and holistic understanding of human beings in society” and in their natural setting (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 558; Willig 2001). As qualitative research is process-oriented, this approach facilitates the answering of “why” and “how” questions that may remain unanswered in quantitative research.

Epistemological Positioning

The current study draws from thematic data analysis from the perspective of both interpretative phenomenological and critical realist epistemological orientations both of which bear relation to, and are strongly influenced by, Kaupapa Māori research philosophies.

At the heart of an interpretative phenomenological epistemology (or the interpretative theory of knowledge) is the premise that human experience offers insights into *how* particular phenomena are experienced psychologically for individuals (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The specific research question asks for the meaning of a particular phenomenon for humans in order that we, the audience, may understand the participant’s experience of it (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). In this case the phenomenon of study is the process by which stepfamilies are formed and are experienced across time by Māori participants. This

would include individual Māori participant's personal accounts and understanding of their stepfamilies in ways that create meaning for them, within their social context (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

Interpretative phenomenology has been critiqued as being merely “descriptive” and lacking in scientific rigour (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). Other critiques include the problematic dual nature of the relationship between participant and researcher, such that the quality and usefulness of information derived from participant accounts is dependent upon, not only participant's ability to articulate their experience, but also researcher's abilities to reflect upon the material and the analytical process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Ryan, 2005). Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) provide two key indicators of a quality research project: reflexivity and reflection. *Reflexivity* involves the researchers' acknowledgement, be it thoughts, feelings and behaviours experienced throughout the research process but not necessarily understood by the researcher until after a specific action has taken place at which point the researcher has time to *reflect* on what these emotions, thoughts or behaviours mean. This process is important for the researchers learning and development. For example, *reflexivity* may be experienced throughout the collection of participant interviews such that the researcher becomes aware that they feel ambivalent or offended by participants' descriptions. Examples might include same-sex marriage or affirmative action in universities. Given time to *reflect* the researcher may develop an understanding that these feelings are related to some social or political environmental state with which they do not agree or may find difficult to understand. The degree to which the researcher is able and willing to acknowledge these contradictory and confusing feelings seems important for high quality research.

Analysis from an interpretative phenomenological stand-point would lend itself to a predominantly “bottom-up” or inductive approach whereby “the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.12). Hence, existing theory may be added to, rather than testing previously developed theories, and is achieved with open-ended questions, in a

semi-structured interview format. Realistically, most projects include both inductive and deductive analysis; deductive being an investigation and testing of priori formed hypotheses, theories and assumptions (Thomas, 2006). The current study is both inductive, in that themes may become apparent from the transcribed interview data, and deductive in that the identification of some themes will be informed by previous stepfamily theory, assumptions and hypotheses known by the researcher (Thomas, 2006).

Interpretive phenomenological and critical realist approaches to research share similar views (Bode, 1992) in that social phenomena require interpretation because they are context bound, but differ in that critical realists acknowledge underlying mechanisms (including power, social structures and institutions) that cause change (Zachariadis, Scott & Barrett, 2012). The basic thrust of critical realism is its rejection of an ultimate truth or theory of knowledge about human experience, and is fundamentally anti-empiricist (Fay, 1990).

The interpretative and critical realist approaches underpinning this research project are influenced and informed by a Kaupapa Māori research framework which allowed the study to take a Māori centred approach. Kaupapa Māori research is based on “a conceptualisation of Māori Knowledge” including ways in which the researcher might derive abstract ideas and reflect upon that knowledge and to engage critically with the knowledge while taking for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori culture, language, philosophy and principles (Smith, 1999). Kaupapa Māori research acknowledges that Māori participants are partners with Māori research team members and thus, can expect that results and benefits of the research will be disseminated to them as part of the responsibilities to the participants and their communities. Māori centred research permits a greater participation by Māori throughout the research process, be it mentoring, collecting data, analysing and discussing the results and at the very minimum disseminating the results of the research to participants through summarised reports. However, the outcome of Māori centred research may benefit other communities besides Māori. The current study’s results aimed to compare the existing body of stepfamily research with the

findings of this study while at the same time develop a new body of research that may benefit Māori families / stepfamilies were new information to appear (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2010). For both Kaupapa Māori and Māori centred research, the aim is to protect the interests of Māori and prevent information from being used to undermine Māori in a social, economic spiritual or cultural sense (Edwards, McManus, McCreanor & Whariki Research Group, 2005).

Kaupapa Māori research processes can involve the use of qualitative, exploratory research methods (Smith, 1999). The approach emphasises the use of *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face interviews); (Carpenter & McMurchy-Pilkington, 2008; Cram, McCreanor, Smith, Nairn & Johnstone, 2006), Interviews are conducted using Māori protocol and competencies which ensure Tikanga Māori (correct procedure, method, practice, custom) are upheld and include whakawhanaungatanga (creating meaningful relationships through connections), karakia (prayers), mihi (researcher and participant introduce themselves) and kai (food) and considered normal process in Māori Centred Research (Carpenter & McMurchy-Pilkington, 2008). These practices also ensure that due respect and sensitivity are awarded the participants, but also promotes a mutual exchange (the principle of reciprocity) of knowledge given the expenditure of time and effort by participants.

Criticisms of Kaupapa Māori and Māori centred research include the emphasis placed on empowerment for Māori, of bias and subjectivity (Walker, Eketone & Gibbs, 2006). And, therefore another concern is the potential for the researcher to feel that they have become overwhelmed by accountability to their participants, (conflict may arise over what data will be used for university qualifications, given that participants claim guardianship of the knowledge they have imparted). However, fundamental to Kaupapa Māori philosophy is the “collective care of knowledge, culture and values”. Given these differences, the Māori researcher would garner support and guidance by means of Kaumatua mentorship among other things (Smith, 1999).

For Māori, the transfer of knowledge through oral history would naturally lend itself to an examination of “talk” using qualitative approaches and therefore being able to be investigated with qualitative data analysis methods such as thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) one of the key advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility in that it provides the researcher with core skills that are required to conduct many forms of qualitative analyses and the thematic coding process can be applied across many epistemological positions including interpretative phenomenological analysis. Nevertheless, its flexibility may contribute to difficulty in distinguishing this method from other analytical methods, even though it is clearly used within the above epistemologies as the analytical tool of preference. Thematic analysis is a tool for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” and provides some uniformity to the data which may be described in rich and thick detail (p.79). Thematic analysis also has interpretive power in that themes are the means to access the phenomenon of interest we want to know about and around which a description of the phenomenon is constructed (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The primary aim of this study was to gain insights and descriptions into experiences of Māori stepfamily participants and insights from key informants lending the thematic analysis to an exploratory, interpretative and inductive or a “bottom-up” approach whereby themes were selected in answer to the research questions. Therefore, the themes derived from the study are very closely related to the participants’ own descriptions. However, as noted above, all research is in some way deductive, therefore, themes selected were likely influenced by researcher discretion having reviewed extensively the current and past stepfamily research.

Chapter Three

Method

Participants

Sixteen separate interviews were conducted in this study; 12 sets of Māori parents, and four key informants.

Stepfamily members:

The first set of interviews included 12 sets of Māori parents and Māori stepparents currently living in stepfamilies and totalled 17 participants. The individuals and their status in their stepfamily are acknowledged after their respective quotes. For example '*PI3, father and stepfather*', means that this participant was interviewed alone and identified as a parent and a stepparent in a stepfamily at the time of interview. Stepfamily interviews included five couples consisting of either a Māori parent or a Māori stepparent living in a stepfamily at the time of interview. Parents and stepparents in couple interviews are acknowledged by their status as a couple and as a parent or stepparent, and their status is noted after their respective quote. Therefore, '*PC5, mother*', means that this parent was involved in a couple interview and was a mother to biological children in the stepfamily (see Chapter Four).

Table One lists the interview participants and the approximate number of children only (including stepchildren) to protect the participants' identities, in the family at the time of interview. This does not mean that all the children lived together with the step-couple all the time, as children shifted between households and also developed, grew up and left home permanently. The table lists the skill level of the adult participants and their partners in terms of occupation, Māori and non-Māori. *Highly skilled* means that the adult referred to was University educated and employed in a specialised profession. *Semi-skilled* means that this adult left school with few or no qualifications, but some skills were gained through job training. Examples may include: administrative roles; clerical work; trainee restaurant manager and security guard. *Unskilled* means the adult left secondary school with

few or no qualifications. Examples of employment for this adult would include: bar work / waiter; labourer; cleaner; nurse aid.

Key informants:

The second set of interviews included four Māori Key Informants (Māori mental health professionals) who have worked and currently are working with Māori stepfamilies within the wider community. This would include private practice as well as governmental positions. Key informant interviews were acknowledged by number only after their respective quotes. For example 'KI3', means key informant interview 3 (see Chapter Five).

Interview Schedules

Semi-structured interview format was thought to be the most appropriate means of eliciting qualitative information from participants. This method was more likely to facilitate the collection of data and contribute to rapport between the researcher and participant (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000 Mischler, 1986).

Māori stepfamily interviewees (Māori parents and Māori stepparents) were asked to tell the “story” of living in a stepfamily and the relationship with their biological children and / or their stepchildren from the early period of the relationship until the present day (see Guide for Māori Parent & Māori Stepparent Interviews, Appendix 2). They were guided to talk about stepfamily relationships: initial stepfamily experiences (“What was it like when you started living together as a stepfamily?”, “How did you deal with that?”) and development of the couple’s relationship (“How did you two meet?”, “And then what happened?”) and the development of relationships between stepparents and children (“How was the relationship between you and your stepchild in the beginning?”). Often guides or prompts were not necessary because the issues became apparent as the participant spoke at length about their stepfamily.

Key Informant Interviewees were encouraged to talk about their views and observations regarding the impact of stepfamily processes and were sometimes

given various prompts (“What are the discipline issues, if any?”) and probes (“How does this affect the parent and child relationship, if at all?”). The interviewees’ attention was drawn to any difficulties or challenges that Māori stepfamilies face. Alternatively, aspects of living in a whanau system that may be experienced as supportive to the Māori stepfamily was also investigated. (see Guide for Interviews with Key Informants, Appendix 2). Most often prompts were not necessary as each key informant spoke at length and relevant stepfamily issues became apparent as the interview progressed.

Table One: Stepfamily Participants

Interview Number	Ethnic Identity of Husband / Wife	Current Marital Status Husband / Wife	Number of children in stepfamily	Occupation of Adults (Husband / Wife)	Time in a Stepfamily at interview
One (Individual)	Māori / Māori	Re-marriage for both parties	4	Highly Skilled	6 years
Two (Couple)	Māori / Māori	First marriage / Widowed	2	Unskilled / Semi-skilled	13 Years
Three (Couple)	Māori / Māori	Widowed / Second De Facto	4+	Unskilled / Full time parenting	10 years
Four (Couple)	Pakeha / Māori	First Marriage / Re-Marriage	4+	Skilled / Semi-skilled	11 years
Five (Couple)	Māori / Māori	De Facto	5+	Unemployed / Full time parenting	11 years
Six (Individual)	Pakeha-Māori / Māori	De Facto / previously Widowed	3	Unskilled	7 years
Seven (Individual)	Māori / Māori	De Facto	4	Semi-skilled	8 years
Eight (Individual)	Pacific Islander / Māori	Widowed/ De facto	4+	Unskilled/ Highly skilled	8 years
Nine (Individual)	Pakeha / Māori	Second De Facto /	2	Semi-skilled / Semi-	12 years

		Widowed		skilled	
Ten (Couple)	Māori / Māori	Widowed / Second De Facto	6+	Semi-skilled	20 Years
Eleven (Individual)	Pakeha / Māori	De facto	6+	Unskilled / Semiskilled	10 years
Twelve (individual)	Māori / Māori	De facto	4	Unskilled / Semi-skilled	7 years

Procedure

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. Cultural support for the study was achieved through the support of a Māori cultural advisor at the Faculty of Science, University of Auckland, a currently practicing Māori clinical psychologist and a Māori Kaumatua.

Recruitment of stepfamily participants was achieved through advertisements placed in community newspapers around the Auckland and Taranaki districts (see Appendix 2). Participants were able to phone the 0800 number provided or contact the researcher via e-mail. Initial phone contact included questions regarding the potential participants' eligibility to participate in this study and the possibility of supports should the participant become distressed at the interview. A Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 2) and Consent Form (see Appendix 2), were posted to the participant and the participant was asked to phone the researcher if they still wished to proceed with an interview. Once the participant had read the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2) and Consent Form (Appendix 2) and agreed to participate in an interview, a place of interview was decided by the participant. There was a choice of interview location given. This could be either at their home, their place of work, or at the University of Auckland. Most participants chose to be interviewed at home but some chose their work place and a few chose to be interviewed in a public place such as a cafe.

Each interview took between 1-2.5 hours each. At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked if they had any questions regarding the study before commencing and were asked to complete the Consent Form if not already completed previously.

After the interview all participants were asked if they would like to review their transcripts prior to the analysis being conducted and given the opportunity to alter their transcripts and / or withdraw from the study completely, as per ethical guidelines.

Each interview was audiotaped and subsequently transcribed in full by either the researcher or a transcriber of Māori decent, who was bound by a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 2). All participants and their corresponding tapes were given an identification number and their names were changed in the scripts, so that their confidentiality was protected at all times. The same process and attention to detail occurred for Key Informants interviews.

Data Analysis

Transcriptions were verbatim and included all pauses, repetitions and incomplete sentences. Listening was an important aspect of the transcription (Wengraf, 2001). Active listening including attending emotional responses to questions that might have included hurt, angry or elated emotions. These were also noted. The transcriptions were read over several times in order to become familiar with the data. The tapes were reviewed as the transcriptions were read in order to further understand the significance of emotions elicited throughout the interview.

Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis computer package was utilised to assist with the process of data analysis. A thematic analysis was conducted on both sets of interviews using the methods described by Braun and Clarke, (2006). The thematic analysis involved the following stages (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

Stage One: The initial stage of “transforming the spoken language (interviews) into written text” (Reissman, 1993, p. 12) is the process known as transcribing.

Subsequently, the researcher repeatedly read the transcripts with the intention of forming some initial ideas around themes or similarities common to each interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Reissman, 1993). These appeared to fall into two categories: Positive and Challenging experiences.

Stage Two: This process was followed by coding for potential themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). All scripts were downloaded onto Nvivo 8 and nodes and tree nodes were used to develop initial coding in a hierarchical format. While working through the entire data set, interview by interview, each meaningful extract of information about stepfamily processes was given a code, keeping in mind the importance of keeping the data in context. Throughout this process, the researcher attempted to answer the following questions: “What is the important issue raised by this extract of information?” and “Why is this information important?” in relation to the research question and aims of the project. Coding was then discussed with a Māori colleague. At this stage it was agreed to accumulate as many codes as necessary.

Stage Three: Coded information was then organised into a few broader areas which were Advantages and Challenges for both participant groups that better explained the overall analysis in relation to the research questions and aims of the project. Where ever possible the actual words of the participants were used to describe the coded extracts, that is, often Māori words were used to describe thinking and ideas described by the participants. An effort was made especially, to *not ignore* contradictions in the data and to be aware that these may provide insight and better ways of understanding the participants’ accounts. An example might include participants’ positive interactions with extended whanau which are ‘invited’ by participants but at the same time opposing the constraints and impositions these relationships produced. The colleague’s assistance was again garnered at this stage to provide validation of the researcher’s interpretation of main ideas developing from the coding. Advantages and Challenges appeared to naturally follow the line of questioning throughout interviews.

Stage Four: Coded data extract ideas were reviewed to ensure internal consistency and to ensure that they were discreet from each other. In other words, all ideas were checked to ensure sound evidence to support them from the transcripts. Problematic coded extracts that did not fit a coherent overall pattern were

discarded, refined or renewed. The overall result was the formation of a rough “thematic map” (Braun & Clark, 2006).

At this stage the themes for *stepfamily participants* as outlined by the thematic map included: Advantages (Adult responsibilities may be positively achieved by structural and emotional means; Māori stepfamilies provide solid emotional, social and physical support networks; Step-couple relationships provide comfort, acceptance, companionship, rich, loving relationships; Māori cultural norms facilitate opportunities for healthy interactions in Māori stepfamilies) and Challenges (Cultural norms may differ creating conflict; Couple relationships may experience problems; Discipline presents barriers to harmonious relationships; Teething problems in the adjustment years including with extended whanau). The transcribers assistance was again garnered at this stage. The transcriber was at least one other person who had extensive knowledge of the scripts contents besides the researcher. Overlap in several of the themes was discussed and agreed upon, but it was decided to continue with the analysis keeping in mind that any overlap may be dissolved as definitions for themes were developed. Discussion with another peer researcher who was engaged in stepfamily research also assisted with clarification of tentative themes at this stage.

Stage Five: Continued analysis of themes. Here clear names and definitions for themes were finally generated. Prior to this theme headings had been less clear and overlap had occurred in some instances which was finally remedied at this stage. At this stage extensive discussions with the researcher’s supervisor (and stepfamily researcher) intensified and included agreement or disagreement regarding themes. Where any disagreement regarding theme content occurred, a discussion of this was engaged until an agreement was reached, and any necessary changes to themes were made. An example of a change to a theme included: *Step-couple relationships provide comfort, acceptance, companionship, rich, loving relationships* was changed to *The Quality of the Couple Relationship is Important*.

Stage Six: Final analysis and report. The final report represents the themes and a discussion of what these themes means in regards the experiences of Māori in Stepfamilies.

Chapter Four

Parent and Stepparent Interviews

A thematic analysis was conducted on the advantages and challenging experiences of Māori parents and Māori stepparents in stepfamilies. The following three themes emerged:

- 1. The quality of the couple relationship is important**
- 2. Extended family supports adaptive step-family functioning**
- 3. Parenting is a challenge**

A number of subthemes including positive and negative aspects of participants' experiences, related to the three main themes.

Theme One: The Quality of the Couple Relationship is Important.

Interviews usually began with participants relating their experiences of meeting each other for the first time, resulting in participants talking about the positive and not so positive aspects of their couple relationships from the beginning and as the relationship progressed. Descriptions of the couple moving their children into a combined household to live as a step-family followed. An important aspect of a good quality relationship included the experience of being both supported by, and /or supportive of their partner in both practical and emotional ways. As well, external supports such as friends and extended family and sharing financial and parenting responsibilities appeared related to positive relationship experiences for couples in stepfamilies. Given many of these stepfamilies included more than two children, the quality of the couple relationship appeared important because when the couple were experiencing a satisfying relationship this appeared related to overall stepfamily functioning and 'happiness'.

Most interviews included suggestions by the couple or the individual interviewed, that the relationship had met at least some of their expectations in both emotional and practical ways, which served as positive reinforcement for the relationship, and possible contributors to the future continuation of the relationship. Only one

individual indicated that her needs were not met overall. Her account was of dissatisfaction, and at times resentment with her step-couple relationship.

In general, couples demonstrated their reciprocal affection and regard for each other with appropriate body language cues (couples sat close to each other, sometimes touched each other's hand or arm, nodded approvingly and talked quietly). They maintained appropriate eye contact with each other throughout the interviews (and also with the interviewer) and their verbal language reflected camaraderie, empathy, compassion and respect for their partner. Such behavioural observations were consistent with their verbal accounts.

Mutuality in the adults' relationship helps.

The first subtheme refers to mutuality in the couple relationship. While some participants described their couple relationship in terms of its "ease" or "naturalness", these participants also acknowledged that certain attributes contributed to the harmonious quality of the couple relationship including communicating readily, a sense of humour, continued effort and acknowledging past mistakes:

So...when I look at my relationship with Ivan we, we're not even a team, we're one unit now and we, we consult each other for everything and stand up against whoever. I think it makes you more whole or something you know um I don't think there's anything I do without asking what he thinks about it like wallpapering our room, um...whether I should plant corn or lettuces or something, you know, we just talk about everything..um.. I just need to talk to Ivan about it first...because I feel um...half-hearted if I don't. (PC5, mother)

Um .Well we do enjoy having a casual talk to each other with laughter involved and we do silly things which helps. Perseverance certainly helped. (PC2, father and stepfather).

Further, the quality of the couple relationship was derived for most couples from shared interests, goals and values, which appear to have been appreciated by participants. Most participants appeared to derive mutual positive reinforcement and positive identity as a couple through their shared family, social and work interests.

Cindy and I are totally parallel... we always, like we've said Cindy and I say to each other, we say ummm... if we ever broke up we'd probably just sorta hang together anyway. Because of the shared values. Umm so no, no things are smoother and clearer and ahhh I think cos you, also cos you got your goals in common and ya know, we've sorted out our goals. (PC1, father and stepfather)

Yeah, we do, um, we have lots of similar sorts of values which is one of the reason why we get on so well. (PC4, stepmother)

However, for most of participants, the maintenance of a harmonious couple relationship involved consistent effort. For example, a few participants verbally expressed their support of their partners and said that the quality of their couple relationship was in some way improved by the presence of "love", at least on their part. One participant expressed her "love" or affection for her partner in what appears to be an attempt to communicate her reliability as a partner. She appeared to do this by drawing parallels with her own personal experience in a stepfamily as a child, possibly in an effort to relate understanding and empathy for her partner's feelings of insecurity regarding the permanence of the relationship and offered him her reassurance of her continued dedication.

This is where he was starting to get very insecure because of what had happened with him and his ex. So I would try and turn it, and say, 'Stan, I'm here, I love you, I love you from here' [participant points to her heart]. I said 'So don't ever think that I'm going to do exactly what your ex did to you, cos that's not me'. (PC7, mother and stepmother)

Some participants stated that persevering through difficult times as a couple could be extremely challenging, but could also be emotionally rewarding and fulfilling in the end.

I think for us, um, where we've been, I feel like Ivan and I have been to hell and back and then went to hell and back, and then probably to hell and whatever's beyond that and come back and still and I....and I think that particularly in the last two years, we've become closer than ever...and I think we're...for me, I probably feel the closest that I've ever felt complete. (PC5, mother)

External affirmation / approval is important.

When discussing the quality of the couple relationship, many participants stated that external (to the couple unit) sources of support are important in the maintenance of positive interactions within the couple unit. This appeared to be a distinct area and separate from the individual and personal qualities the participants brought to the couple unit. For example, family members and friends expressed their approval and acceptance of many participant relationships, giving rise to the conditions likely to encourage positive interactions for the couple.

The interesting thing too is that umm once we hooked up it was interesting because, everybody who knows either of us would actually say, that's a great match. (PI1, father and stepfather)

I'll say from my family, my mum and dad, and brothers and sisters, were happy for me...me, when I first got welcomed back to the family so they could meet Pete. They were actually quite taken with him, and then said that, said to him 'hope you don't hit women' coz my last husband, I left him...abusive relationship. (PC9, mother and stepmother)

Alternatively, the lack of conflict arising from the disapproval of the relationship by in-laws step/children or friends, may positively impact the couple relationship. One participant mentioned that her relationship with her stepchildrens' father had been

positively affirmed by the stepchildren and this had had a very positive emotional impact on the participant.

And that they can see their father is um quite a different person with me than what he was like with their mother and um. That they are very happy about the difference that this person their father, um is now, to what he was like before. Mind you everybody has commented on that so. I feel good about that. (PI4, stepmother)

Sharing financial and parenting responsibilities helps.

A few participants appreciated shared financial and parenting. This also appears to be a related but distinct area from the individual inherent qualities each partner brings to the relationship. Given that most participants were either semi-skilled or unskilled workers and were likely to have at least three (usually more) children in the step-household, it seems surprising that so few comments were made by participants about financial difficulties. This indicated that these families either had no money worries which seems unlikely or simply that money was not a primary focus for them. They appeared to value relationship (familial as well as couple) quality more. For the few participants who mentioned sharing financial responsibilities the advantages to the couple relationship appeared to include feeling supported and more at ease that financial responsibilities regarding the step/children were being met.

Well....the key advantages, when you're emotionally happy, you're a better producing, performing individual...ummm, and the combination of of the two people isn't just one plus one, its, yeah its, it is multiplied, so you get four times as much output, effective output, effective. Yeah yeah, your finances are far more ummm efficient and effective. (PI1, father and stepfather)

Yeah so umm kinda glad too shes doing well ya know in terms of her career yeah. Umm, I said, 'the better we're both doing the better, our kids will be better off', ya know. Umm, and we share our expenses and stuff and umm with the kids, and that, umm, and my mum and dad have been a big help,

especially when she [participant's partner] was training to be a nurse. She's just been and got her ticket, so shes quite, ya know, is better paid.

For the few participants who mentioned sharing parenting responsibilities, the advantages to the couple relationship included feeling that their partner was committed and contributing to the couple relationship, and the step / children giving rise to a 'happier' couple.

Ummm your ability to take care of the kids, cos you've got two people you're just sorting out ahhh drop off and pick up...all those kind of things ummm commitment to just support the kids, kids in their schools, we've got all our kids at the same schools, put our time in to them. (PI1, father and stepfather)

Theme Two: Extended Family Supports Adaptive Step-Family Functioning.

When discussing their experiences as a stepfamily, participants often referred to interactions between extended family adults and children. This appears to be a distinct theme from positive external approval of the couples' relationship. Comparatively, this theme relates to support for the entire stepfamily, including the couple and their children. Additionally, this theme is dissimilar from the previous one because it involves adults' perceptions of their roles and expectations in relation to extended family members, and the extended family's reciprocal expectations and roles, and how the inability to fulfil such roles may lead to conflict.

All participants referred to an expectation that they would support extended family and /or be supported by extended family in some way and that support required that extended family members be included and actively participating with the stepfamily. Only one participant expressed some dissatisfaction with the level of extended family support they received. This participant had few relatives living close by to call upon for support and described a dissatisfying relationship with their partner, who themselves had no living relatives with whom they had a close

relationship. Another participant did not like parents of his new partner, even though she continued to interact with them on reasonably amicable terms.

Extended family included related (but not necessarily biological) adults such as aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews, and related persons such as in-laws and ex-partners or non-resident parents of the children, Māori and non-Māori. The interactions and arrangements discussed appear to have been “learned” across time and were ongoing. They also appeared to be emotionally rewarding, providing positive reinforcement for the participants and of emotional benefit to all members of the step-family and extended family.

Active participation with extended step-family is important.

Reciprocal support with extended family involved collectively attending tangi (funerals) and important hui (meetings) and appeared to be an extension of traditional marae, whanau, hapu and iwi systems for Māori. Most participants mentioned experiences attending marae functions with their extended families at some time or other including Māori reared in Pakeha environments, and the process of re-establishing familial connections (whakapapa; pepeha) with biologically related people with whom they did not have day-to-day contact. While not all participants necessarily wanted to attend these events, most felt obligated to be present in support of extended step / family. At marae events they would reveal their genealogical origins thus providing a familial link or connection between the person being spoken to and them. These interactions, a common courtesy at such events, appeared to reinforce acceptance of the person at the event and connect them to a common hapu, or iwi. For instance, the following participant was asked the name of her ‘Koro’ or grandfather which was likely to begin making connections.

Nicola (Stanley’s daughter / Charlottes bio-daughter), she went running around, because the tangi [at the marae], we were manuhiri [guests] for the tangi, they respected us in that [Māori] way, so with [relatives’ whanau], they were all there and Frank [distant relative]

knew straight away who I was. And Frank is from Taumaranui, yeah, well back then, um and then he knew straight away who I was. But by the time Stanley's whanau and rellies [relative] and all got onto the table, my girl [daughter] started running around. And she ran up to [relative] and Stanley was going to me 'Go and get that girl', and so I'd run up there and I'd have to get her and because the Koro there was 'kei te pai' (you're good!), and next minute the [relative] turned around and said, here my Moko' and she just set up a plate for Nicola and Nicola was sitting at the table too. And she asks me 'Whose your Koro?' (PC7, mother and stepmother)

A few participants expanded on the idea of reciprocal obligation to both family and the wider hapu or iwi and in so doing highlighted distinctive Māori kaupapa (philosophies) or ways of living for some Māori, particularly on the marae or at school, situations which were managed with traditional Māori tikanga (protocol) such as karakia (prayer), action songs and haka, and kai (food) after introductions and speeches.

Our mother had high aspirations for her children to do things for the good of the whanau. It was reinforced everywhere I went, including school. 'Err, ka pai's not good enough, boy. You do excellent or I'll tell your mother'. The obligation was huge. 'You will go to university'. Values were driven right through your fabric in action songs and haka. Like Apirana Ngata, 'err, you will send your eldest son to university'. He had a huge influence on education etc for Māori. These were the benefits of such a staunch background. Most tribes talk to a connection to settling canoes, yes, whakapapa. It was a way of thinking about ourselves. You were obligated to honour it. (PI1, father and stepfather)

For most stepfamily participants reciprocal support occurred by providing the venue for family gatherings or 'hui' where joint participation was sought with extended family in expressing family concerns and celebrations. These experiences appear to

have been valued by participants, and often involved kaupapa (philosophy) and tikanga (protocol) characteristic at such gatherings, similar to those practiced on marae, albeit in a less formal way, and usually when there were large numbers of people to accommodate. For example, the practice of arranging mattresses in the main living space for everyone present to sleep reflects traditional practices on the marae and in the whareniui (meeting house).

It's a family trait and you start opening up your door. You can't go back to the Marae, but all your family's in Auckland, in South Auckland. And your house becomes a marae for your family cos that's how you were brought up like that in your house, your house back at the marae. You see all your whanau get together. And then all the things they do down there ay, you kind of use that in your family, like for instance, living the lifestyle, like the chairs in the lounge and the mattresses on the floor. (PC4, father and stepfather)

Interestingly, some participants implied universal 'understandings' about Māori in general. It seems likely that these understandings may in some way be associated with communal or marae living that dominated traditional step/family life. This point is illustrated in the following extract, where the participant creates an analogy of Māori as similar in their need for the company of other *related Māori* people in the same way plants native to New Zealand will thrive only when grown in groups. The practice of describing Māori ways of understanding through analogy appears often in traditional Māori legends and narrative.

Mmm Natives...you see you always grow them in groups otherwise they won't grow, they get lonely. Mum grows plants from sticks, if you go in her garden there's just sticks in the ground but they turn into plants cos I used to grow some in different places over the years and say they're not growing, have you got them with something else?, no, put something else there, another native and it grows, mmm, so Māoris use analogy for lots of things.

(PC5, mother)

Some participants discussed specific childcare giving roles by extended family members, step and blood relatives. The following participants experienced the death

of a spouse in which extended family stepped in for support. In the latter case, in-laws applied pressure to remain involved with the children and appeared to be somewhat controlling, however, this was more than compensated for and appreciated by the participant, with the overwhelming support given:

I mean, she [daughter] doesn't remember her dad but just the idea of someone else trying to be a dad, yeah. It was hard for her to accept as well cos she'd had a father figure in my dad and my brother. They sorta stepped in to be that father figure and then had this stranger [stepfather] come along. She thought he was trying to be that [substitute father], she didn't like that at all". (PC3, mother)

Oh God, my sister-in-law, she's been incredible really. You know, I mean, I talk to her every other day. Yeah incredibly supportive, yeah, because they're not [partners'] children, I feel that I take on most of the responsibility of bringing them up, so, umm, and so really, yeah, so she really sort of shares in that as well. I think by taking them out, babysitting or just anything, like they want to make a cake, she'll help with that. It's quite neat really. (PI5, mother)

Highlighted in most interviews was that there would often be a number of extended family adults and children living in the same dwelling for a period. This might be considered a desirable and normal practice, despite there being costs in terms of available resources in the household, particularly for semi-skilled and unskilled participant households. Nevertheless, participants appeared not to complain about these responsibilities suggesting that participants expected to, or wanted to do this:

Yeah, they um come, they stay, most of Xmas's, New Years are at our house, um so we, our house, is very much full of um, nieces and nephews from my husbands' first wife's family. And they're comfortable coming over and being at our house and I don't mind having them around. Um, cos that's what whanau is about. Yeah, and prior to my getting together with him, I always had nieces and nephews who came and stayed with me, you know. Sort um like my own nieces and nephews, they'd come and stay with me for a year, 6 months, you know, between flats and jobs and things like that sort of thing.

So I was quite used to having lots of people around and you know sort of um young people around. So, that's not an issue. Yeah, so we have a full house a lot of the time". (PI4, stepmother)

It was just really nice to have someone around too all the time and because my sister and my dad had both lived, were living here. And my sister had a boyfriend living there too you know, it was quite a full house, lots of adults living in the house". (PI5, mother)

One participant expressed anguish at difficulties they were experiencing with a non-Māori in-law. The participant's script revealed that she had an expectation that the in-law should become more involved with the stepfamily and that this would be beneficial for the in-law as well as the family in general. She appeared to be anxious about her mother-in-law's judgements of her relationships. It is possible that this participant felt excluded by the in-law.

I think with Ivan and I being together has increased our family unit. I think that my family has given his mother [participants' mother-in-law] something richer, maybe. Umm, after we got married everyone came back to our house the next day and his mother [participants mother-in-law] was there and my sisters turned up. And, Henry's [participants' son] dad and Henry's dad's mother and his sisters and the Philipino's [friends of the participant], and um, I don't know what she [participants mother-in-law] thought. Then I was a bit worried about it cos there were [people] all over the place, but I just wanted her [participants mother-in-law] to realise that just because um...Murray [participants ex-husband; Henry's father] and I aren't together anymore didn't mean to say that we can't enrich our lives with our families. (5PC, mother and stepmother)

It helps when extended family children are included by step / parents.

Extended family children included nieces, nephews, biological, unrelated (children of friends usually), adopted children and children of remarried relatives; that is, step-

nephews / nieces. Most participants discussed including children from the wider extended family with their stepfamily on a regular basis, and stated that this increased positive interactions for everyone within the stepfamily. This was particularly strong amongst mothers and stepmothers.

Yeah, I've brought up a lot of, most of my nieces and nephews up when they were little. When I met Pete, I was looking after my niece, the same age as my daughter then, and everyone used to say 'oh, she's just family', used to think she was my girl (daughter). I went wow! (PC9, mother and stepmother)

I just hope that it's all good for her, should she want to come home yeah but she has got extended family here and she knows there's us or others that she can go to if she wants to and still feel at home. (PI7, mother)

Most participants said that harmonious and adaptive stepfamily relationships appeared to have been facilitated by inclusion and equal treatment of all the families' children and stepchildren, and including extended family children. The three-fold aim of this appeared to be to transmit affection to the children; to increase the children's feelings of positive self-regard, acceptance and of being valued; and had a practical basis in communicating that the child would be cared for in any circumstance.

Our kids, all the kids, all nine. See we adopted the little one five years ago, he's known to all the kids. We got nine in our family. There's no 'steps'. There's no half family. They're just all one. (PC9, mother and stepmother)

For me, it's never been 'stepsisters'. Always whanau. We don't have labels. We are all family. We are all one. I told him when I marry him I come with extra commitments, and to me that's my nieces and nephews and my sisters. I said, if you can live with that, that's how it would be. (PI6, mother and stepmother)

Another way in which some Māori participants supported extended family children was demonstrated by whangai relationships (temporary caregiver of biologically related children). Some participants discussed their experiences of either being a

whangai child themselves, having whangai'ed one of their own children to relatives, or had actively become a caregiver for a whangai child. For participants who discussed whangai, the extraordinary circumstances resulting in children becoming whangai involved the breakdown of the biological parents' ability or unwillingness to adequately care for that child, resulting in the necessity for the child's care to be transferred to an able relative. This, of course, meant that for some step/children whose step/parents were involved in this study, had likely come into contact with whangai 'sisters' or 'brothers', or at least been exposed to whangai at some point or other in their childhood, to this unique concept for Māori.

Whangai for me means...umm that you take a child from, or are given a child, or take a child from their original parents or their mother, because they're struggling in their situation, and then you look after that child, only until such time that that child can return or is able to return, or the parents want it back. Umm, so well it's more like just a carer for them, but the emotional stuff is a lot deeper than say, umm fostering, something like that. But, that's my interpretation. So when I took him, or when I was given him, he umm, I asked permission first when she was pregnant, umm and then her parents and her grandparents had to give permission, and so we all okayed that. And then I had him. I was at the birth. Had him when, he was passed over when he was two days old because that's the law. Umm and then I wasn't allowed to adopt him until he was six months old, umm, but at six months old I felt in my heart that that wasn't the proper thing to do, that, that I as a, us as a Māori family, adoptions not for us. That I felt if I adopted him, then he's no longer a Whangai. Then he becomes mine and I didn't think that was fair or right. (PC5, mother)

Most of the time they, Māori, call it whangai. Umm, usually say if I was bought up by a relation, I'm part of the family. Umm, blended families come in, ya know, umm in terms of having different family, say, children, different partners get together. It's different for Māori. In my experience, stepfamilies, the difference between stepfamilies and the difference for Māori in terms of non-Māori families, is they're not usually related. (PI3, father and stepfather)

Loyalties, jealousies and personality differences are a challenge.

Since stepfamilies appeared so complex, it was no surprise when relationship challenges were revealed between some stepfamily members and extended family. That is, participants and their extended families did not always get along and relationships were not always supportive. Divided loyalties, personality differences or disapproval of the relationship resulted where extended family felt side-lined by stepfamily relationships. There were also concerns over treatment of the children and worries concerning continued contact with members of the stepfamily, usually children. Some stepmothers experienced conflict with their partner's extended family at some stage. It seems likely that conflict experienced by the following stepmother is based upon loyalty binds between her partners' family, her partner and her stepchild (their grandchild). Alternatively, although without extended family views, conflict may have arisen as a result of personality differences, disapproval of the relationship or loyalty to the biological mother of the child. Sometimes interviewing participants with a partner present meant that participants were not entirely revealing of the reasons conflict might have arisen, perhaps so as not to offend their partner, or reveal their true thoughts or feelings about the situation. Nevertheless, these issues arose sometimes for some stepmothers, and appeared to derive from an extended family member attaching particular importance to the child they were biologically related to.

When we first started living together with the in-laws, right next to them, and things were a bit unfair I feel, my mum like would favour Jake [participants stepson], like she'd come in with lollies and drinks and chips and all that ...and um that's what started a lot of, a lot of tension in the house I reckon. And mum would get all defensive and it all blew up, it just blew up and I just waited for it to calm down. We never really solved any of those issues really. (PC3, mother and stepmother)

I do things differently, because she was telling my husband about how older siblings were too hard on the younger ones, but she kept going on and on and on to him, and he came home and he just totally lost his temper. I said

firstly, you can back off right there I said you don't bring your mothers blinking thoughts into our house without talking about it first. I said and this is not about you pleasing her, it's about you pleasing me. You pleasing me, at the end of the day. If you want to sleep with your mother, go home [Laughter]. (PI6, mother and stepmother)

Additionally, potential situations arose where extended family including aunts, uncles, cousins and, in particular grandparents, previous roles and contact with the stepfamily become precarious or threatened to cease to exist, at least from their point of view, and appeared to create strong feelings of exclusion, hurt and anxiety, and deep feelings of fear of loss of important relationships. There appeared a very real risk of resentment and misunderstandings developing, in a bid to hold onto valued relationships. The adults mentioned in the following quotes appear to have been at risk of losing something of significant emotional value to them. It appears that the extended family of this participant were afraid the childrens' affections for them will be transferred to step relations.

There was quite a bit of jealousy there for a time too, um, between um my late husband's family and [partners] family, but there certainly was nothing to fear there, cos there just was never that bond there [for the children] really with [partners'] family as there is with their fathers' family. (PI5, mother)

The relationship with the non-resident parent can be difficult.

Overall most participants were on amicable terms with the non-resident parent of their step /children, but a few participants talked about how contact with a non-resident parent was either an annoyance or simply difficult. Difficulties usually arose from perceived personality differences or, from interference of some kind from the non-resident parent. The following participant appeared to simply dislike the non-resident father of his stepchildren.

I'm marrying her, I going to take care of her and I'm going to take care of those boys, I've been in your situation, I know what it's like, its shit, umm but that's no reason to take it out on your wife' I said 'so I need you to know that I'm a good person, I'm going to take care of these boys' and he was just all ahh, what do you call it? Limp. (PI1, father and stepfather)

One stepmother talked about experiences where the non-resident parent apparently attempted to exert control over her household routine resulting in profoundly uncomfortable feelings for her, contributed to constant boundary and discipline issues with the step-child and difficulties with her couple relationship.

It's bed at 7.30, half an hour to spend with us, and aw but she wanted to bring her home at 9 and I said no, what's wrong with you, she's got school she has trouble getting up in the morning, no 9 o'clock is not appropriate for her to be out that long. Yeah well this is what has been, this is why we had a lot of problems in the house um because him and I are fighting, have been fighting because the mother has always got her foot in the door, she's always disrupting our household with her input. (PI2, mother and stepmother)

Theme Three: "Parenting/ Step-Parenting is a Challenge"

Most participants referred to strategies employed to engage with, and maintain amicable relationships with their step/children, to fulfil their step/parenting responsibilities and to assist the stepfamily to adjust and run smoothly. Thus, step / parents managed their step / children by exercising patience, taking the time to listen to children's concerns and worries and behaved in ways that would indicate to the children that they cared about their feelings. They kept lines of communication open and a few step / parents used structured time to discuss issues that arose with children. They also shared in the childrens' interests or had children share in their interests if children were willing. These attributes featured most frequently when discussing positive step/parent – step/child relationships.

Comparatively, discipline and boundary issues with step/children presented difficulties for participants. In response to such difficulties a few participants emphasised that a close biological parent – child relationship was vital for effective discipline, and for reassuring the biological parent that their child was being managed appropriately by the stepparent and / or extended family. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, managing teenagers presented unique problems. Nevertheless, some step/ parents experienced increased feelings of confidence and competence that they were adequately parenting, and a sense of permanence for the stepfamily resulting from their trials.

Relationships with step/children require patience, time and communication.

Some participants stated that to maintain positive relationships with step / children required patience and stated that childrens' coping or maturity contributed to many step/childrens emotional and behavioural difficulties or changes. Further, persistent consistent communication with the child about their concerns also helped the child and the step/parent – step/child relationship to evolve amicably. Regular communication regarding any parent or child issues appeared also to provide structure to verbal interaction from which actions and expectations might be expressed and explored.

The following participant appeared to understand that his stepdaughters' emotional difficulties were related to her adjustment and coping and employed a stance of patience with her throughout. He had recently begun to live with his new partner and her daughter, whose biological father was deceased. The child had enjoyed close relationships with her mother and extended family and likely found this new relationship threatening. The relationship appeared to improve with time.

When I was talking to her one time, when she was only young, I tried to calm down which I managed to do, um, I was trying to say I'm not trying to be your father and she said 'you'll never be my father' and I just kept telling her well I'm not going to try and be your father I said first, I just want to be your friend and I think she kinda accepted that. (PC2, father and stepfather)

Another participant said that he lacked the patience to deal with his daughter's emotional outbursts; nevertheless, he said his partner obliged where he would not, and took the time and made a consistent effort to discuss her stepdaughter's difficulties which likely contributed to the general impression of overall stepfamily happiness for this stepfamily.

Yeah, yeah, so emotionally immature because of her, her um condition yeah. So we've had to take, it takes a while to, you know the usual story, what happens is you get a blast of emotion then you've got to figure it out. And I don't have time and patience for that sort of thing so Cindy (stepmother) will sit down and she will talk it through until they've got it, got it right out of the system, ya you know? She can deal with anybody. So she will always sit down with the girls and Tahi understands completely. Anyway two minutes later she's rarking up about something else and you know so it's ahh, its ahh. (P11, father and stepfather)

Similarly, the following stepfather appeared to have accepted the emotional and behavioural changes in his stepdaughter and that these were related to her developing maturity. This appeared to assist him in coping with her behavioural changes. Where previously they had enjoyed open discussions regarding any subject, his stepdaughter was relating more to her friends and less to him.

She'd have no problem talking to me about anything, which umm, I don't know, just would view that as great, um, as Jane's saying, her period or anything, anything to do purely with female, emotions or anything. She'd have no problem discussing it with me, umm, through that period of time, from primary up to college. And, after that she'd just started to drift away, from about fourth form, bloody teenager, just felt like, you know, she couldn't confide in me about anything. She'd rather talk to her mates, so I just accepted it, and umm, yeah. She just stopped talking basically, well not

just stopped talking, but we didn't have discussions we used to, no, she'd just live on the phone all evening with her mates. (PC2, father and stepfather)

More than half the sample of participants' step / Children had experienced the death of a parent. All associated step/parents employed patience and took the time to talk to step / children about their deceased parent. By doing so they demonstrated empathy for step/childrens' feelings and adopted a position of reverence for the deceased parent, an effort which appeared to meet with a degree of acceptance and appreciation by the child. This might suggest that, in the child's mind at least, the deceased parent held a revered position for the stepparent, possibly providing the child with comfort that the absent parent was in some way present in their current lives, and possibly assisting the child to deal with feelings of loss.

I said to her, 'I know that you're missing your Mum, but before your Mum died, she asked your father to..look after you..your brother and your sisters, and when I married your Dad, I committed to helping him to do that, to honour his commitment to your Mum. Your behaviour in the last 6 months has not allowed us to do that..and your father is deeply hurt..I love you and I love your Dad and I love your brother and sisters..but we can't help, we can't honour Mums request if you continue to behave like you have been behaving'. (PI9, stepmother)

The following stepmother was assisting her stepchildren to prepare their deceased mothers' headstone to be laid at the burial ground or urupa. For many Māori, this practice occurs about a year after the deceased person has been buried. It is clear that this participant had respect for the stepchildren's mother and that likely assisted with her amicable relationships with the stepchildren overall.

Yeah, a year into our relationship I had Pete's kids, two older girls, help with fundraising towards their mothers' unveiling, and um helped them to do the cloth for their mothers' stone and even some of my other family goes, you

know. But I can't be, to me, it was just me, helping them. I knew I could help in that sorta area. And then they go, some of their friends will go 'jeez wouldn't that be hard?' And I go 'Oh no. I don't know their mother so why should I be jealous of someone I didn't know or help the kids along like this?' And then, and I started having our other kids by then and you know sooner or later we're all going to come together. Something towards their mum's memory, you know. Yeah it's a natural thing too. She does that in her own whanau and we see that she leads on. She's the leader of her whanau. She is the leader more or less. We all look up to her. (PC9, mother and stepmother)

A few participants employed structured communication time with their step/children to discuss issues that had arisen such as this stepmother who dealt with problems in a very systematic, organised and thorough way and with positive results most of the time.

We don't you know, don't believe in, beating people in order to achieve what we did so I made an appointment with her...um..she wanted to put the appointment off because she'd been up all night, drinking and I said, we're not putting it off, I made an appointment with you, I expect that to be honoured, I will be there in 5 minutes to pick you up and so I went to get her..and we went off..and sat down and we had um a talk. (PI4, stepmother)

For most participants long term psychological rewards developed often from a place of emotional hardship and perseverance, but which resulted in increased feelings of self-confidence, competence and a sense of permanence the stepfamily will last, at least for the meantime. Participants seemed resolved to be a stepfamily, derived pleasure from their stepfamilies and took deliberate steps to ensure that positive interactions occurred as often as possible. The potential for varied and intense emotions shared with related and unrelated human beings brought together in a "family" produced experiences of fear of failure, of joy, hope and success and referred to by participants as below.

I remember it was rough most nights but this particular night she swore black and blue and was yelling at her Mum. And you were getting quite upset over

it, you came back in the lounge and you were virtually in tears, so I said well I'll have a go, she would've been only 8 and a half. And um..yeah so I just went down to her room and quietly spoke to her and that settled her down night and she went to bed and Jane was quite relieved and I was quite surprised that I achieved it..cos I'd never been there, never done it before. (PC2, father and stepfather)

Me and Jake had had a good relationship and all that but everytime he played up he'd always say 'Sorry Mum' ya know, and he'd start again and that's why I never gave up on him cos I knew how mine and his relationship was..ya know..shit happens. (PC3, mother and stepmother)

I can sit there and live with that for a period of time although you know I do get a bit annoyed but then I realize you know, sort of that this will pass and we will, we will get past this, and we do. (PI4, stepmother)

Sharing activities helps.

Some step/parents said that they experienced more amicable relationships with their step/children when they shared in a child's hobbies or interests or included the child in their interests.

I used to take Moira on Saturdays you know, to pick up Lucy and go to the markets, um just our car-boot sales, local garage sales, go and do things like that..take her little purse, put some money in it and we enjoyed that because Moira comes home with same old things, lippys, face stuff you know and um but Lucy would be looking out for things for Moira or me, we'd all look for things for one another, that's our time. (PI2, mother and stepmother)

You know even with boyfriends, [daughter] didn't really even start going out with anyone till about [late teens] and that was quite hard for [stepfather] because he'd always, cos him and [daughter] were quite close and going down to [bach at the seaside] all the time, going down [place name], ya know, hanging out and stuff and ah then of course she gets herself a

boyfriend and yeah. (PI5, mother)

Shared interests for some participants included Māori cultural interests between step / parent and step/child. Such arrangements appeared to have encouraged positive experiences for both adult and child and reinforced repetition of Māori cultural activities by the child. Some adults said that such activities were valued, or became valued over time, by the child. It seems likely that cultural activities provided a measure of emotional scaffolding for the child's Māori cultural identity throughout their development.

Aww absolutely absolutely, cos you've got to remember, umm, my daughter Tahi utterly loves Kapa Haka. She's ahh utter utter Kapa Haka addict, and so Cindy having come from that umm successful Kapa Haka background, the two of them get on well in that area. Tahi will always bang ideas, question her and she utterly loves Kapa Haka. So they connect on some levels. And then she just has a few issues. (PI1, father and stepfather)

Yeah, so I've been helping him [stepson] with his Māori translations for his project, yeah. I let him do the main part and I just help him with the Whaka Māori (to translate into Māori), so that's been really good and yeah, we get on really good. (PI3, father and stepfather)

It's just what you bring to it, you know, whether it's a spiritual thing, whatever, ahh, well I know particularly with my youngest, she's quite into Māori things, she really enjoys it. So it's quite nice, so we've just never really had much to do with that side of things, not a lot at all really so, but now, she's sort of prompting me to do that so I try and make the effort. (PI5, mother).

Discipline negotiation is difficult.

Discipline for children was an issue for most participant families. Discipline was referred to most often in the initial stages of stepfamily formation and included children's preparedness and / or ability to adapt to the new situation. Discipline had already been decided by the biological parent of the child prior to the adults forming a new couple relationship, which presented problems. In most scenarios the biological parent, usually a mother, would side with her children when conflict arose between stepparent and stepchild. Many of the interviews included the experiences of stepmothers who were also main caregivers of biological children.

Participants had an organised approach to household rules and routine that they assumed would support the smooth administration of discipline. In other words, children were better equipped to anticipate consequences of rule breaking and adult's roles were more clearly defined which in turn suggested the greater likelihood a stepparent would feel more supported, and the stepparent-stepchild relationship would experience greater harmony.

The difficulty in establishing a role as a stepparent in terms of discipline and boundaries might be illustrated through the following example. Here both parent and stepparent felt comfortable that the "child in common" was disciplined by either parent.

If you're talking to somebody that's thinking of becoming a step parent, just um..really think it through..it's not something you can take lightly and um or easy yeah..it's a totally different thing aye from being their being a parent ya know, a biological parent..it's totally different dynamics..it really is. And I mean, now that we have our son, a son between the both of us, I feel like I can say whatever I want to him and not get in trouble if he doesn't like it, he'll just ask his mother anyway, um". (PC2, father and stepfather)

But I won't side, I won't take his side though, that's the thing, Dad says something, tough, deal with it. (PC1, mother)

Problems in disciplining children most often occurred when there was a lack of household routine. A structured household routine appears to have been very difficult to establish, particularly in the early stages of stepfamily formation and where the child was accustomed to a routine that differed from the previous household. Maintaining a routine, for some participants was an on-going problem, likely related to a lack of routine in the family of origin and carried on in the stepfamily. In these households the stepmother took overall responsibility for discipline in the household.

I think a lot of our trouble stems from..just our family not having a proper routine, always feeling insecure and when I hooked up with um..Richards' family, they knew what they were doing, they knew what they were all about..ya know..as a family, as a family unit, organised. (PC3, mother and stepmother)

Yeah, she was just being a bit wild really, not going to school and my husband just, he just didn't see that that was terribly important, and I just felt that um she needed to get some structure in her life, their life was absolutely chaotic. (PI4, stepmother)

A few stepmothers who appeared to take on a major role in disciplining step/children became frustrated largely from a lack of support from the biological father of the children, suggesting that the stepmother felt blamed for the childrens' behaviour in some instances and very much taken for granted.

Instead of you getting up and helping and dealing with the situation, you didn't, you'd wait until it got out of hand, see that was it, nag, nag, nag, but ya know, instead of dealing with it right on, it never got dealt with. (PC3, mother and stepmother)

It frustrates me incredibly that he, that he [partner] cannot find it within himself to actually tell them off when hes not happy, he expects me to do that and he will actually ask me to do it and I go No, if you are not happy with what they are doing, then you tell them, then you don't put me in the

position of being the nasty person, the bad person, when you are the one who has the problem with the issue, you go do it yourself. I'm not doing it for you! (PI4, stepmother)

It appeared that the greater control a biological parent had over discipline of their children, the less torn the biological parent felt between children and partner. Parents who followed this practice experienced close relationships with their children and in the first extract, their stepchildren as well.

I must say, yeah I was really protective with her [bio-daughter], if Richard growled her, I was 'Nah' I've had enough of this da-da-da ya know, she's going back to my Mum', cos back in those days, ya know, back in my Mums days, she couldn't defend us, yeah, so now ya know, because, back then she couldn't do it so for me, it's like my Mum couldn't do it for me so I'm going to do for my own kids, ya know. (PC3, mother and stepmother)

I get quite defensive if he [stepfather] tells them off. Yeah, yeah I won't allow anyone to discipline the children and I mean there's certainly never any smacking or anything, I've never smacked the kids so you know, so certainly no one else is going to. (PI5, mother)

Some biological parents, clearly preferred to discipline their own child, either because they felt that it was their responsibility to do so, or that having a stepparent discipline the child would be detrimental for the child, or place the stepparent in a difficult position where their relationship with the child might be detrimentally affected. In other words, the stepparent took a minor role in discipline and where this occurred the parents enjoyed close relationships with their biological children. Further, the overall interview scripts also suggest that this strategy determined a more harmonious stepparent-stepchild relationship in the long term. The key advantage in the biological parent disciplining their child and maintaining parent-child closeness appears to be a more harmonious step-parent relationship, as long as the stepparent is making the effort to communicate with their stepchild, is patient and makes some attempt to join with the child in activities or share common interests, so that a relationship can develop. The key difficulty here is likely the

adults formulating suitable rules, such that the child understands what the boundaries are while still maintaining closeness between parent and biological child.

First I offered to but you didn't want me to so I just..ok..leave it to her mother then..cos I don't consider myself a violent person, to raise my hand in any way..and um..what I consider discipline is more 'you can't do this or you can't do that'..but I found Maia had her own ways of disciplining. (PC2, father and stepfather)

It would be taking something away like no phone for a week ...no ? for a month..which we did do. It worked bloody well! (PC1, mother)

Many participants provided some notion of how best to cope with discipline, in hindsight of lessons learned over a number of years. The solutions suggest a means of both parents developing a consensus on discipline that was inclusive, fair to adults and children and, supported both parents from the outset for the stepfamily being formed. This meant the couple unit became a united decision making unit which not only ratified the rules for children but apparently fortified the couple unit. Perhaps another useful step might have been to include the children in deciding appropriate consequences for children who stepped outside boundaries.

I think I actually think from a parents point of view stepfamilies that I think its crucially important that the, even if Ivan had had children that we may have got around to it eventually, it's important for the parents to get together to decide as a unit what steps they want for their children rather than I'll look after my kids this way and you look after your kids that way which is probably what happens, yeah and so we were doing that fighting against each other thing and the kids probably set each other up, so I think that that would be probably step number 1 too for the parents to sit down and put, outline their expectations or their goals or rules for their children, and all the children have to abide by them, that's probably, which I think sometimes maybe I wish I'd done. (PC5, mother)

It's got to be fair, it's got to be even, what's good enough for one is good for the other, and that's not always the case, we get um, problems with the rules in the house. (PI2, mother and stepmother)

One participant suggested that problems with discipline be dealt with immediately through communication. The suggestion was that timeliness in dealing with issues of discipline seemed important to ascertain a positive outcome.

Communication is the key. Deal with it right on the spot, deal with it from the beginning, ahh, don't be too patient, I would say, nip it in the bud as soon as you can. Unified front, that would be one thing I would give to a family taking on [children / stepchildren] have to have a unified front cos if they don't, if one parent says this and another one says that, big divide there, so they have to have a unified front to know what they are doing. (PC3, mother and stepmother)

A few participants were clear that as biological parents they would be solely responsible for disciplining their child and their rationale appears to have been that this would prevent problems developing between step-parent and stepchild, as well as the likelihood that the children would likely not want to be disciplined by a stepparent.

Um..I think that you need to set a rule of who disciplines a child, you know, that should only be left to the biological parent, um if the stepparent does have an issue then they need to tell the biological parent to do that and even if they sit down and talk about it with them, because then the kids can, they'll probably fire off at the stepparent for that and that can create problems. (PI5, mother)

A few participants suggested that children having a personal space, such as their bedroom, where the child controlled the environment to a large degree provided compromise between step / parent and step / child.

I have had the control that I wanted except in their bedrooms, and the only time I say to them that I think they need to clean their bedrooms is when the

smell emanating from their bedrooms makes it very difficult to live in the rest of the house (laughs), and normally I'm closing doors to bedrooms, the public parts of the house I require them to be clean and tidy, and so they've got used to that and um public parts of the house are kept clean and tidy, but the other parts of the house, their bedrooms particularly are tips. (PI4, stepmother)

Maintaining closeness with a biological child is important.

Some parents discussed strong alliances with their biological children. Sometimes such close relationships created conflict for the couple, mostly in the earlier years of stepfamily formation when adjustment was most challenging. Biological parents appeared to attempt to deflect potential hurt feelings for their children, possibly since the child had already experienced hurt from losing a parent through death, separation or divorce.

She got away with a lot and she got a lot which in, when I think about it now, I didn't help her at all really, yeah, so he kind of, when there were arguments I sort of sided with her cos I thought he was being unfair, that's right aye dear? (PC1, mother)

Yeah that's how I felt or feel, um and Jane admitted it to me, she did admit it to me and apologized but um she's her mum, she can't help it and for me to try and see that then, trying to visualize my view on something, yeah, it did conflict with each other and if I felt like we weren't getting anywhere in the situation then I'd just back down. (PC2, father and stepfather)

It also appeared that parents attempted to protect the emotional bonds developed prior to re-partnering, with their children, which appear to be valued by both parent and child. The advantage for children, from the overall interview scripts appears to be happier and well-adjusted children. Parents' benefit emotionally from this close relationship in that their feelings of confidence and competence that they are parenting appropriately appear to increase or at least stay intact over the earlier adjustment period to the stepfamily and this has a flow on effect to the couple

relationship, regardless of external difficulties with in-laws, financial difficulties and so forth.

We have a really close bond though, her and I [mother and daughter]. I mean I was still tucking her in when I was pregnant with him [second child] that's since she was 16 (laughs), yeah, so it's really hard for him [partner] cos we do have that really tight bond her and I. (PC1, mother and stepmother)

From a child's perspective asserting ones alliance with a biological parent was simply described in this extract. It appears that the child attempted to separate the parent-child relationship from the couple relationship, perhaps to offer support to the parent in the absence of any real ability to protect the parent, that at least they have each other.

He didn't like the way she was speaking to him, you know, 'you're not my father. You just shut-up and let my mother alone!' (PC7, mother and stepmother)

Where children appeared to fear the loss of an important relationship with a biological parent, the consequences for the stepparent were bleak. Nevertheless, the following stepmother reported a strong desire to bond with her stepchildren and made many attempts to accommodate them and their needs. Other evidence throughout the interview demonstrated strong empathy for the childrens' perspective. This couple reported a strong emotionally stable relationship.

[At the beginning of the relationship] more jealousy, about me taking Pete, it ended up like that....you're taking my father away you know, when I got him to move from South Auckland to Glenfield . I'm not going out there and when we did move out to Glenfield Pete was running the two older girls back to Glenfield College to where they were going every morning. Well that didn't last for long, months later you just couldn't do it". (PC9, mother and stepmother)

Managing teenagers can be difficult.

In the majority of households in this study the mother, and in particular the stepmother, had assumed the majority of the responsibility for discipline. It might be safely assumed that the mother and stepmother would therefore be burdened with most of the blame when confronted with angry teenagers and upset partners. With fewer resources to cope with across a larger number of children, the teenage years for developing young adults might present these women with significant challenges. Most participants included references to teenage young persons and the difficulties involved in their care and the strain placed on the adults' relationship. Additionally, there is a greater likelihood that the adults in stepfamilies may be experiencing their own life transitions at this stage adding to psychological difficulties.

It was getting to the stage, he was getting older aye, getting older and harder to handleand they get bigger, I think he was about the same size as me when he left, 13..14, yeah....same size as me, still skinny, scrawny but , but other than that yeah, once again, just no communication, I wanted us to deal with it but Richard didn't want to work with me so ya know, we were working against each other so yeah. (PC3, mother and stepmother)

My daughter's 21 now but when she was with us, a couple of years ago, life was really hard, it was pushing our relationship was out the door really, there was nothing there because she's very dominating, our daughter. (PI2, mother and stepmother)

It's just like the youngest, the 18 year old who just is a typical 18 year old, everything is about me, um and it's still like that and she's the youngest and so she's naturally the loudest um because she has to be noticed and you know, everything's a big deal. I think it's just really um just basically um, not valuing anybody else except herself, you know, just being a sort of a really a normal teenager really. It's you know, me, me, me, me, me, and she really doesn't think um of anybody else but herself. (PI4, stepmother)

One stepmother applied stringent rules and boundaries for behavioural control,

really as a means of avoiding unnecessary problems related to successfully assimilating a household consisting of a number of teenagers. The difficulty in successfully accomplishing this was apparent in the following example where young persons could be easily offended:

You know the girl would just barge into this room like it's their room. And I said to him, 'this is your space', I said 'you've got a girlfriend now, you know so like, I think what you need to do is you need to make it clear to the girls that this is your space'. I said 'you have a lock on your door, so you can lock your door, which doesn't mean to say you can do whatever you want in here'. (PI4, stepmother)

Nevertheless, even for the above, well organised and articulate stepmother, her teenaged stepchildren left her feeling exhausted and despairing on occasions.

If you don't look after yourself you get completely and utterly um, trampled on and side-lined because in this situation I'm dealing with adults, I'm not dealing with little kids, I'm actually dealing with adults, um and you know you were saying that a lot of their patterns are in place, they've learned a whole lot of things, um behaviours and that, and for me to come in, in their adult life and to say those behaviours are just not acceptable, is like who the hell are you? (PI4, stepmother)

One couple sought counselling support to cope with conflict surrounding their teenager and they found this very helpful in re-focusing some energy on themselves as a couple, improving the status of their relationship.

He told us, kind of um, when it comes to kind of let your kids, let them go on their own, because at the end of the day, it's only going to be, you know, you and your husband left, and you don't want to be lonely, it's not going to be all about your kids when they grow up, they'll be their own person, and they, what did he say? (PC3, mother and stepmother)

What he was trying to say was, you don't want to turn around in your bed, 30 years down the track and think 'who the heck is this woman, I'm lying next

to....because all your energy's' been focused on your children.....this is about marriage counselling. (PC4, father and stepfather)

Chapter Five

Key Informant Interviews

Separate thematic analysis were conducted on key informant interviews. Advantages and difficulties for Māori families as perceived by key informants were categorised into the following two themes:

1. Understanding social pressures on Māori stepfamilies is important.

2. Manaakitanga: There are Māori ways of being a stepfamily

The key informants' interviews were conducted with four women who identified as New Zealand Māori and who had worked with Māori families for a number of years (6 to 40+ years' experience). The interviews differed in their focus to interviews with adults in stepfamilies (previous chapter) because key informants discussed their experiences working alongside Māori families, and included strengths and difficulties they observed in Māori families undergoing stepfamily processes. Two interviewees also discussed their personal experiences in stepfamilies as well.

There are perhaps four issues of significance to note at this point. Firstly, none of the interviewees spontaneously referred to Māori families, where adults with children had re-partnered, as "stepfamilies". "Stepfamily" appears to be a term that these Māori key informants used either for the benefit of the interviewer in distinguishing "stepfamily" members from biological family members, or in reference to "Pakeha" (or non-Māori) families where adults had re-partnered. Instead, key informants were more likely to refer to Māori in stepfamilies using specific terminology, usually Māori, and are highlighted in the following theme headings.

Secondly, all participants worked with Māori people in full or partial mental health settings, thus, the data derived from the participants included extraordinary experiences regarding their client groups that may differ markedly from the group whose data was presented in the previous chapter from Māori adults drawn from the general population.

Thirdly, these women spoke about their work, with Māori, being motivated by a strong desire to support Māori families, usually as a result of the determination to

ensure that Māori children in their care would remain with their families or with suitable related caregivers. There appeared to be a strong sense of responsibility to Māori children's safety and welfare in all interviews. There also appeared to be a strong cultural rationale behind these motives, in ensuring that Māori children might experience continuity and contact with family to retain a sense of their own identity as Māori people. This idea will be expanded upon in the Discussion section. Key informants sometimes spoke about their own difficult and sometimes traumatic experiences as Māori women, and this appeared to be a driver for their working with Māori families. Their motivation for such work appeared to spring from their personal experience of rearing and caring for their own children, and other peoples' children, some of whom were non-Māori, in a distinctively "Māori" way. The semi-structured nature of the interviews, particularly the outset of the interviews where key informants were asked to discuss the length of time in the profession, how they came to work in their professions and personal experiences that may have influenced their practice also likely influenced interview content. The interviews, overall, conveyed a sense that Māori adults and children with which the key informants' worked were the central focus of concern, rather than the interviewee being the object of discussion.

Lastly, all key informants discussed social factors that might have impacted Māori families they observed in their work. These discussions sometimes included their own experiences as Māori professionals, and assisted in providing a timeline and context for the experiences being discussed. The accounts of racial discrimination that follow seem relevant because they provide a possible link and associated explanation for the increased risk and likelihood, compared to children of other cultures in New Zealand, that Māori children have experienced being orphaned, adopted or have become a stepchild. Therefore, an attempt, by the researcher, is made in this chapter to make sense of the data collected by placing the information into context in terms of New Zealand history, to better understand how Māori have come to be more at risk of these outcomes. Also, the historical context is aimed primarily at persons who know little or nothing about New Zealand's cultural landscape while following the aims of the research to answer the question of the

cultural meaning of “step” for Māori. They are not simply extracts lifted from the scripts to suit the researchers’ personal views, although the researcher has views, and there is no attempt here to diminish the experiences of non-Māori children who were also removed from their families for reasons including gender discrimination resulting in the poor mental health of their mothers/caregivers, or other circumstances. Moreover, presented here are extracts from interviews of four Māori key informants discussing “stepfamily” processes for Māori, and these were their accounts.

Theme One: Understanding Social Pressures on Māori Families is Important.

Māori key informants discussed circumstances where Māori people have experienced a number of pressures over the past centuries which have significantly impacted Māori families. This appeared to be a very strong theme throughout key informant interviews thereby supporting the distinct theme heading. All key informants discussed Māori children who lost a parent (usually a mother) through death, throughout the early and mid 1900’s, were uplifted by, and placed with Pakeha families, a move that appears to have been considered altruistic but which possibly embodied the views of dominant Pakeha as possessing more adequate parenting and childcare philosophies, but which also likely served as a means to an end as well.

But colonisation for us, was a type of genocide as far as I’m concerned, I was taken from my grandparents, I never lived with my parents, but I was taken from my grandparents, when I was nearly 7, simply because my mother died. As I said being altruistic um, but nevertheless it was very painful and I never saw my grandparents again. I was placed in Pakeha homes where they were very cruel and um, people, welfare kids, instead of the 2 pounds a week, child benefit out of which they could buy a house, they got 11 pounds a week for these welfare kids. So they took them, so they were very unsuitable a lot of them, but they took the welfare kids. And we became tonono, workers for them and they treated us appallingly, um, and that has remained with a lot of our Māori people. You’ll find a lot of people my age and older who have

been through the welfare system they haven't dealt with the mamae (distress; hurt) that was caused to them, and it's sad, because I did and I dealt with it myself and in a way that was appropriate for me, and which I could actually forgive them for my own sake um. But, uh it's very sad. Even today I have people talking to me about their backgrounds, and what happened to them. I don't tell them what happened to me, but they seem to know that you understand. They're sad, and they've held this inside for all those years. Being "kaha" when it didn't need to be. (KI4)

Nevertheless, it appears that at some point in our more recent history, some altruistic members of a dominant culture, that is, some Pakeha, developed an understanding that removal of Māori children from their families and cultural environments negatively impacted Māori (and their families). It seems likely that a sense of social equity and justice (and possibly experiences as ostracised people themselves) motivated some Pakeha into enhancing social change with whatever means was at their disposal. The person/s referred to in this extract likely possessed the intelligence to acknowledge they were in possession of the power and influence to make those changes.

And so it, did you know that the [Newspaper] had a little blue book? Before this guy from [Country] took over, the [Newspaper] had a little blue book and it didn't matter how many Pakeha came before the courts, they were only to report, one case. It didn't matter how many Pacific Islander cases came before the court, they had to report two. It didn't matter how many Māori came before the court, they had to report 5. [Name's] family told me that. He told me that as a lecturer in [subject]. I said to him I want to see this little blue book. He showed it to me and yeah, it was true. Not now, because that [Ethnicity] fella got rid of that, when he bought the [Newspaper], but there was, Pakeha would say we got on with our Māori people here, not a problem because they had us under subjugation, um and whatever, and if we didn't make any ripples or waves it was fine. (KI4)

This is not to say that Māori were “perfect” and were not to be held accountable for inappropriate behaviours in a social sense in accordance with expectations for other New Zealanders. Nevertheless, that *all* Māori displayed behaviours that were socially inappropriate was arguably a widely held belief amongst a dominant culture and as one key informant so aptly put it, when one Māori ‘played up’ all other Māori suffered the consequences, that is shame, and frustration that something had not been done by extended family to help the children in these particular examples. In other words, far from blaming Pakeha for Māori grievances, this key informant, and indeed all key informants, appeared to take responsibility for some of what went on and held the extended whanau of these children responsible for the childrens’ situation:

So my query is ‘what is happening with the extended family of these children?’ ‘Why aren’t they in the picture?’ ‘Why haven’t they done anything about it?’ ‘Why haven’t they stopped the abuse?’ I suppose today you hear a lot about the deaths of our babies, around ,and it’s not until it happens that you get all of these families coming out of the woodwork and, if I woulda known, they all did know, but they chose not to do anything about it, until it’s too late. Then somebody gets the blame for it, and unfortunately, and the child is dead. My question and anger towards that is that, it’s just not their family that gets blamed, it’s the whole culture itself that gets blamed, so I’m tarnished with somebody else’s misfortune or anger or whatever. And I turn around and say as a culture we all need to take responsibility to try and stop it, you don’t have to be related to do it [report abuse]. (K12)

Nevertheless, Māori families appear to have taken responsibility for themselves in the past as the following key informant points out. It is possible also, that Māori were suspicious of Pakeha government services and perceived Pakeha value judgements about their families which possibly prevented Māori from approaching Pakeha services for help.

There was only two of us Māoris at the time that was working with [govt dept]. Umm, they were very, very prim and proper. Very. It was like wow,

this was a different environment to what I was used to, and there was a lot of discussion about where do Māoris go when they have to go with the family courts and that, through my experience in the family courts and that, it was hardly any Māoris that came through the Māori court. If there were Māoris it was due to them being forced to do it, from the lawyers, police involvement. Mmm, I saw a lot of Māoris from the other side of the fence, who came through another door through the district court, but um no, with Māoris in the family court there was hardly any. My belief is due to the fact, they tried to sort their own issues out prior to going down that track, and I think also, Māori was v-e-e-ery family orientated at the time, they talked amongst themselves, keep an eye on each other as much as then. Now, there's been a big, huge shift in terms of becoming individualistic then on Māori cohorts. In terms of stepfamily there wasn't anything back in those days, classed as stepfamilies, that concept wasn't even looked upon, more or less whangai-ed. (K12)

All key informants discussed the loss of traditional Māori access to resources and the decline of 'marae' justice. Māori appeared to become more disengaged from their cultural roots and this likely negatively impacted the way in which Māori raised healthy families. One had the sense that key informants thought Māori were trying to adjust to new ways of 'being' and this was, and continues to be a struggle.

So there's important ties, being pulled apart and I think it's got to do with education you know, to get a really good qualified education you have to leave the area, to get good work you have to leave the area um, and health, health is another one, you have to get out of the area, uhh, and all that and look at rongoa (solution; treatment)...Māori. Mmm, who in [location] has that knowledge of providing that. Bout the way things are done, all that link now is getting less and less, the structure of the environment has had a huge impact on Māori knowledge coz now, I remember my kuia, she turned around and said to my kaumatua, 'my pop come on, haere mai'. I said 'where you two going?' So they hopped on their old van. I went with them, you know to

[location]. I looked at her, hopped out, sugar bag, a knife, they went through [location], cutting keke (harakeke-New Zealand flax plant used by Māori for weaving), cutting all these, these things. She wouldn't, next minute the police turned up and she looked at them. I said to them 'look I'm sorry but they don't understand English but she come to grab some things. She uses harakeke' and um, that's what she did. 'We will let you off now, but you are not to do that again'. And I turned around to them, I said 'how can you deny her, her rights, of doing what she's been doing all her life. This be her possi, to get things to do what she does?' And he turned around and said 'it belongs to Doc (Department of Conservation)'. I said to her 'it belongs to Doc now', she said, 'Doc who?' So I took her back, and she did her harakeke and some of her things are now in the museum, she was asked to go to [location] university to teach how to do harakeke, and I said, you know what they're asking of you? As I said a lot of her things are in the museum and I remember her taking me up [location] and she wasn't allowed to, that it was that whole generation, that's what I mean about the changing of the environment, with our kaumatuas, they've come down then when before they didn't have that, they could go to [location], pick what they wanted and now they can't. (KI2)

Today, judges are now taking a lot of the Māori people, in court. I've been sent back onto the marae. The one thing they don't want to do is say CYFS, and face the old people, they don't want to do that, particularly judge [Name] and [Name] Nice family. [Name] I really like [Name], puts things back on marae. Māori law is harsher than pakeha law. You had the proper papakainga (ancestral) land, and victim on one side, whanau (family) and alleged offender on another side, which is made unclean, then you have your kaumatua (male elder) and kuia (female elder), on the taumata (higher level/ground) or pae pae (ridge; shelf; horizon), judges sitting there with their... It's like a court, but they have karakia (prayer) and mihi (greeting, acknowledgement) the young person has to stand up and tell them, I'd be so whakama (ashamed), no wonder they very seldom do offend, there's so little reoffending. Pakeha don't understand it, so it's not allowed. They don't want

it, if its explained to them and what it does, I know they would allow it, but they don't because they don't understand, and it's not a part of their law, and it's our law and it works. Our people. In a court it's all written down, oral and visual on marae its oral and visual and the young person knows what they've done and it's not up to the people, up to the victims to say what they want done, and it's for the judge the kaumatua and kuia to agree to it, and often they just want out right what they've put wrong, and for everyone, both whanau to come together. One marae, now that we've done this, this has been resolved, neither of you can go out of here and speak of this again. It's been dealt with, you can't say now this boy did such and such, coz that young boy or girl is putting that right, it cannot now be spoken of, it's a part of our history but it can't be spoken of because it's been put right. Be understood. If I have a raruraru (problem) and we take it on the marae we go into the wharenuī (meeting house), and you stand up and you can say whatever you like about me, and that boy, I can stand up and say whatever I like, that's when kaumatua says hey, your mamae, is hurt, now we need to put this right if we are both to blame, then this is what you need to do, we have to do, the moment we'd and we awahi (embrace), when we walk out. (KI4)

Where altruistic Pakeha stepped in to support determined Māori who worked to make significant changes in the way Māori families were managed in social services, improved alternatives developed over time. It seems likely that strong alliances and trust grew out of these unions.

I went down to Wellington, and I spoke before the select committee, and Mr [cabinet minister] was on one side, and [head of welfare] was on the other side. While I said I'm going to tell you a story, I've never told it to anyone before, and if you interrupt me I will get up and I will walk out. I started reading it, then put it aside and started telling my story. I said I don't ever want that happening to another Māori child. I was taken from my grandparents, who loved me unconditionally. I was placed into 13 different homes where I was treated cruelly. I wasn't allowed to speak te reo, so sad

what happened, anyway. [Cabinet Minister] passed me a hanky..... Why do I need that? It was because I was crying. But I didn't know, here's [cabinet minister], sobbing. I'm thinking what's wrong with him? There was no-one in there that wasn't crying, and I thought, and I said, 'I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset any of you, but that is what happened to me, and I don't blame you, I know that the system was being altruistic'. [Cabinet Minister], he loved Māori. He loved us, and he said 'I've always believed that there was a better alternative. But it's hard getting people to believe it', and uh, so anyway the law was changed. (KI4)

Theme Two: Manaakitanga: There are Māori Ways of Being a Family

This theme was divided into two subthemes:

Accepting new partners children can be seen as part of traditional whanau values.

Individual examples were given by each key informant that illustrated positive aspects for pro-functioning Māori families including those in a clinical setting. These positive aspects where step / children and adults were embraced and included within the family, illustrated the concept of 'manaakitanga' for these Māori key informants. The concept of 'manaakitanga' appears to have both emotional and physical significance. Manaakitanga appears to include assisting those 'coming into', the physical space of the immediate family, to feel emotionally at ease and 'as one' with the family. In essence the term conveys kindness, hospitality, generosity and also reciprocity where support from others is returned in kind. This was also expressed in practical physical terms by providing food and accommodation, either temporarily or indefinitely. Manaakitanga might then be described as being a unique customary familial practice that contributes to one's 'Māori-ness' or feeling of being Māori, and a positive experience. Key informants were asked to give examples to illustrate the situations and circumstances they discussed and as much as possible not to include identifying information for clients. Sometimes key informants used their own personal experiences to illustrate these circumstances.

Oh, to the truly traditional people, it's just here's another Mokopuna! Oh well, take that one in too, that's alright. An extension of what we do best, um yeah, that's what I think. (KI1)

Um.. its funny coz I, over the years that our kids grew up, like the boys used to sleep in their grotty little... it was better than it is now. They used to have the room downstairs, our two boys, and I'd go down their some mornings and they'd be this odd foot sticking out of the mattress on the floor. Oh who the hells that? Oh its [name] , and these two boys in particular came here, both Pakeha boys, one was from just down the road, and they'd just, the boys would have our old, we used to have a old holden station wagon and you'd see, we gave it to the boys, our next car, and they used to run all over town. Coz they were still at school then, just kinda starting work. The boys would go all over, go surfing all over the place, then we'd see this car being pulled coz its run outta gas, pushed to the petrol station and pushed again. And these two Pakeha kids were often oh... basically lived here and its okay with us, that's alright. {Name] even brought his mattress. And it was in the days of the telethon, I better stay up and watch the telethon, I don't know what time the boys came in.... uhhh you got my mattress, Mrs T? You got my mattress Mrs T. Oh I'm watching the telethon. Yeah, but I think that's in the spirit of what we as Māori know, it's just we gotta incorporate into the kids. (KI1)

Two key informants acknowledged differences between cultural and iwi customary practice that could initially be problematic for a families including where couples had repartnered, nevertheless; taking into account the principle of manaakitanga and with negotiation and flexibility these difficulties could be surmounted. The additional extended support systems and cultural networks might also be beneficial and likely strengthen Māori identity for family members, particularly for children.

Her husband he comes from [location] and she comes from here [Iwi location] and I said 'how do you, come from two different iwis, how do you manage to

bring that together to, when he's down here in [iwi location]. 'We do it my way', and he turned around and said 'when we go [iwi location] she does it my way', and she said 'thank god we live here'. So that's how they manage to work it out, her three boys are so, I look at the three boys and say 'what do you youse do?' They reckon they leave it to them and they do their own thing. When she goes up there, because the customs up there are totally different from down here in terms of when you go in the marae, but she knows it inside out, but so does he. So they both, when she goes up there she slips into it easy, and vice versa so it's cool and I think to myself why can't all people be like that? (K12)

The relationships [where adults have repartnered would be advantageous]. [There would] be a whole new family, whanau structure. A whole new iwi and hapu, maraes, you know. Are they the same religion um? Mmmm. All those opportunities for new experiences. I think, knowing different iwis and how they work, and it's just like myself, I mean, I know this iwi inside out, and I know all the kaumatuas in the maraes down here, and it's the same where I come from with my whanau, with my tane as well, when I go up there they say 'send her back, I'm yours'. I'm going, then, so yeah, but we have a lot of laughs. He gets treated exactly the same way as I get treated down here, and he reckons the way we do things up there is a bit weird, different. He goes 'oh yeah weird', 'you're just as weird down your way' Open mind, open heart, to communicate like that and have a bit of a laugh about what you do. It's going to work, and it's how it is, but you know, the benefits, the kids will get benefits and you as a parent [will too]. (K12)

An extension of manaakitanga is evident in whangai relationships and children of repartnered couples, were likely included in these arrangements. Discussed in the following extracts by key informants it appears whangai provides a guideline or framework of parenting for families where children whose biological parents due to illness or other circumstances were unable to parent the child themselves. All participants used the term whangai to express this relationship with children,

however, not all were in agreement as to whether the children were biologically related to the 'whangai-parent'. Two key informants referred to whangai children that were not biologically related to the parent, but were the children of friends. Although "stepchildren" were not specifically mentioned in these arrangements it seems likely that some "step-children" at some stage were whangai. The difficulty in understanding where 'steps' sit in the scheme of whangai is to change one's 'hat' so to speak. Re-partnering is frequent amongst Māori today and likely was in the past due to various reasons, one being the high rates of death amongst Māori adults, and likely strongly influenced by the urban shift of Māori from rural to city based locations in search of employment in the last century. Therefore, the lack of agreement between key informants that a whangai-parent is related biologically to the whangai-child is more understandable in this light. If historical cultural and racial discrimination mentioned by all key informants is to be taken seriously, it is quite likely that Māori did not distinguish between 'steps', whangai, and biological children possibly in response to knowing how it felt to be left out, discarded or ignored by a dominant culture. Alternatively, whangai incorporates all children whether step or otherwise and is possibly an extension of traditional Māori marae living at its optimum where children played freely on the pa site and were chastised and cosseted where and when necessary by an available adult or tuakana (elder sibling or cousin) charged with their care.

Nonetheless, despite the best efforts of Māori adults to include step-children or whangai children, it appears that the experience of being whangai for some children could be traumatic for the whangai child and for related children in the household especially where the child is returned to biological relatives eventually. Often circumstances of the family of origin meant that this relationship was a suitable, sometimes necessary and possibly the only arrangement to ensure the whangai child could receive child-care in the meantime, and by Māori, which also appears to have been important to key informants, given the many experiences related where Māori children were placed with Pakeha families when a parent, usually a mother, had died.

Yeah, yeah so, wherever you go, you've got whangai. That's what I started to tell you. About my first cousin who's a month older than me. He died six

years ago now. We were at somebody's [family gathering], talking like you do, and [first cousin] said "you know, I didn't know till recently that I was more part of your family than my own", and I said "of course, of course you were"! I was shocked that he thought anything else! Coz he was after-all a first cousin. What had happened was that we were brought up together, ummm. I was really really upset more than I've been in [all] my life. Ahh, I was 6 or 7. I remember this heart wrenching feeling of awfulness and horribleness, when he had to go home. Anyway, when he died, his sister said at his tangi umm, we didn't know we had an older brother until one day this boy came into our house and Mum and Dad said this is your oldest brother. He's come home to live with us. She used to have to lock the door at night so he wouldn't get out of the house. He used to knock on the wall, call out "na na" to our grandmother. Umm coz he wanted to come home. Come home". "We [our whanau] saw it [whangai] as permanent. Coz it was permanent then he had to go home for [various reasons]. (K11)

I'm actually one of those children who was whangai'd. Mmm, I was whangai'd by my grandparents, uhh, I was the eldest grandchild, and as I grew up, I started to seek out who my biological parents were and the funny thing about it my biological mother, mmm, I grew up to think she was my sister she was actually my mother. And that's a common thing for Māori aye. Yeah but I think it's something that we all, but then, and like all our eldest were classed back then as aunties and uncles, there was no ummm, no distinction between 'she's not your aunty', you were just that. (K12)

Most key informants acknowledged the possible confusion that might occur for children, particularly children of re-partnerings when multiple familial links occur in Māori step-families and particularly where children had not been told of connections or the exact nature of relationships with wider family. This might be seen by some as a severe oversight, but in understanding whanau and whangai relationships in a traditional Māori sense, a sense of belongingness comes from being part of a larger group / collective, rather than being a stand out individual on one's own.

I found out when I was 20, that my real mother was, my sister was my real mother. That's a common thing for Māori. And for anybody. Coz Pakeha do that apparently, maybe not as much as Māori. And in a lot of instances I don't think it's deliberate. For instance, our grandpa, grandpa, um... his children obviously called him dad. And so we used to call him dad. So they had to call him grandpa. So we would call him grandpa. So it's like he's your grandpa too! No he's my dad, this is aunty [name]. No he's my father. But you call, like [as] a child. But you call him grandpa! Coz you kids used to call him dad when we used to call him dad. So you know. And that's what happens with lots of kids who have been brought up by their grandparents'. (K11)

Not like it is today, today my children come in and say aww nan, aunty so and so, came down and I'd say whose your aunty, so and so? And they'd tell me and I'd say [name], that isn't your aunty, 'yes it is nana', I said 'who told you that?' And then he'd say 'she said', and I'd say 'no that's not your aunty', okay, I said just because of brown skin, not all brown skins are your whanau, but I start thinking to myself, oh my god! Why am I saying this, have I changed this differently, from back in the days to now? (K12)

Children knowing their biological whanau is important.

Even though key informants spoke to group related inclusiveness and manaakitanga, for traditional Māori families the need for children to retain links with their biological families appeared an important related but distinct aspect for this theme, and is therefore presented here as the second subtheme for 'manaakitanga'. In other words, Māori families function well when manaakitanga is present but a group mentality is not a replacement or substitute for important attachment relationships with biological family. Apart from a close emotional attachment figure and stabilising influence, close relationships with individuals were important in transferring cultural knowledge and practice.

I think it's for me, it's like when you have both parents or both male and female coming together, they're bringing along with them their past

baggage's, which they haven't even cleared up, they go from one relationship to another, and on and on and I've found that a lot in Māori, and multiple relationships. There's actually one family I am actually dealing with now, um, she's looking after these children but they don't even belong to her, they belong to previous relationships and down here, and he's taken off and left the kids, so she's left, she's now become mother, stepmother, whatever to these children that there is no blood ties but then she says I can't just throw them away and she's going to care for them, which is good, so I said what do you need to do now? To make it safe for you? I said it's gonna be so hard to get custody of these children. What if he comes back? Comes back and just takes them off her? It's terrible for the whole core group, the children would of have grown to care for mum, or for stepmum, and she would've have cared... and yup there's nothing to stop him coming in [and taking over]. (K12)

I think there's a whole different change of how the kaumatuas and the elderly are treated, not so good [now]. Not as good as it used to be, like um, some of them are, I think they still are, in one sense, a lot of children out there that has a mixture of influences from non-Māori and their own too, and seems to take them away from that link, with the elderly. (K12)

Key informants often spoke about the way in which the role of Māori elderly, also known as elders or kaumatua have changed. Māori elders were responsible for passing on the multitude of oral knowledge. Their role incorporated the medical, psychological, emotional and physical. They likely organised suitable marriages between members of their own iwi and other iwi for practical and strategic reason. Their knowledge likely embued them with status amongst their peers which one would think assisted whanau / hapu / iwi members with some sort of calm and stability. Nevertheless, all iwi members shared in decision making and the meeting house was a place where every member of the whanau / hapu / iwi could go to discuss important issues which to our knowledge were decided democratically. Elders brought pressing issues to these meetings and presided over them. It seems then that the role of grandparents, in post-European times evolved to include greater

powers for grandparents as pressure to conform to Pakeha values mounted and Māori continued the exodus from their rural communities to urban territory in search of employment. These were likely difficult times for whanau and ultimately iwi, who began to lose the very resource that their culture relied upon for survival, that being their young people. It seems likely that the influence of Māori elders continued to decline thereafter.

A few key informants appeared to agree that close relationships with a significant biological other, mainly a Grandmother, was beneficial for children and supported moves by grandmothers to secure their step and biological grandchildren in order that the children should develop amongst 'their own' wherever possible. From key informants' extensive experience this appears to have the best outcome for children. Arguably, therefore, key informants thought that Māori children should grow up amongst Māori wherever possible. Interestingly, one key informant said that the practice of 'taking' a child was not uncommon, and raised questions as to the breaking of a previous attachment with the biological parent. Such practices possibly contribute to the aforementioned negative stereotypes of Māori parenting, including criticisms that Māori do not include childrens' views in the decisions making process regarding their own care.

So, um, moving from an extended family where we had, a house on the hill and a house on the flat and there were four generations between these two houses. So in the bottom house there was granny and grandpa- great grandparents, na – and her level, mum and dad and their peers, and then us kids. And it was the most idyllic upbringing for us. It was just incredible! Just incredible. It was just absolutely wonderful; we just had the happiest childhood out. And then um... so for years and years, in my head it was just a wonderful childhood, not very long ago, maybe ten years ago, fifteen, 20 years ago I realised gosh it was wonderful for us. But I wasn't sure if it was wonderful for mum and dad. (K11)

It's common in Māori writers, the pulling, the emotional tie to the grandmother. You know and it's like it was an amazing childhood, and it wasn't till around 40 when I realised it might not of have been such a good life for my mum and dad. (K11)

You know, what happened back in those days? And how come I was brought up with my grandparents and my grandparents they used to say, coz you were our first grandchild, you know, it's the, we have the right to take our first grandchild and I didn't understand that concept either, and um, and when I did ask my mum, what happened, she says your grandparents just came and took you, I thought was that allowed? Were they allowed, well why didn't you fight for me? She goes, do you know your grandmother and how big she is? She goes whether she was right or wrong she didn't have a choice. And I think I mean I loved my upbringing with my grandparents don't get me wrong, I adored it, I just adored it, but I felt sorry for my mum who didn't have a choice, as a mother, coz I know when I had my first child, my mother came I went 'Don't even go down that track with me, not gonna work with me, just because it happened to me when it happened, don't think it's gonna bounce back and happen to you!' I says, 'You're not having him and that's that, final, you can have as much contact, as you wish with him, but that's about it, no more!' I said, 'whatever happened back in the days, it's gonna stop with me now, you are not gonna take my kids!' and, she goes, 'Well what happens when I grow old?' I says, 'Poor you', I said, 'When I grow old you can have all my moko's (mokopuna-grandchildren) then, you'll be kicking them all out!' (K12)

There is a lot of that happening now, especially [where there is a Māori grandmother. They tend to, instead of the kids going [being fostered] to Pakeha families, they [Grandmother] will go to apply for the kids, which quite often means going to court, and quite often it means the mother has gone off on her own journey and she's not looking after the kids. And so in the end the kids are being uplifted and put with the grandparent. (K13)

All key informants discussed the importance of children's continued contact with biological whanau which appeared to be very important for childrens coping with negative experiences with a stepparent particularly where a stepparent did not engage, accept or like the children. Given that key informants worked primarily in a clinical environment, many examples of situations and circumstances included references to the more negative aspects of working with Māori stepfamilies. Stepfathers appear to have initiated more physical discipline towards children, whereas stepmothers' emotional intimidation or 'coldness' created the most difficulties for children in stepfamilies. For some extracts it was clear that the lack of contact with attached biological family and absence of manaakitanga by a stepparent had a profoundly negative effect on childrens' happiness and wellbeing, even where a parent continued a close relationship with the children.

I think in lots of families where there are stepparents there are genuine difficulties, umm and I saw, yeah, I saw that a lot as [work status], coz you do in [government depart], where there were genuine, "oh my bastard, my other partner used to beat the crap out of me", stuff like that. "Always favoured his own kids, or their own kids, never liked me" and I heard that story a hundred, a hundred times. (KI1)

With a lot of stepfamilies, that I had come across and uh, I feel sorry for those kids, to the extent where I actually talked to the children and I say to them, what do you want for youse? I know you've got, mum and stepdad or you've got a dad and a stepdad and a mum, which is the hardest, you know, and they said ' a stepmum is more, harder than the stepdad', on the majority of the children. I said to them why? With a stepdad they can understand if we are doing wrong, we get reprimanded, put away, and, but stepdad would talk to them and try include himself in the family. Mmm, ahh, with a stepmum it's totally different. You get shut off completely emotionally and I think it's that emotional isolation for children, from babies, they don't understand, you know, trying to figure what it is they've done wrong. There's no emotional link between...., that's why they say to me, they rather prefer to have a stepdad than a stepmothers. There's a lot of children who have stepmothers, stepdads

and I normally say to them, which do you prefer? And hearing from these different families, they say the hardest thing is having a parent who has not got that emotional link they just cut off and they don't know where they stand and that they feel in limbo. Even if Dad tries and gives them all the emotional love and all of that caring, they are still wondering. They say, 'it's the eyes'. I went 'what you mean stepmothers eyes?' They reckon, they know when they're not wanted, not loved, so they go within themselves and I go god that must be hard, they said 'it is hard'. They kind of shut down, and the fear of coming home after school things like that, knowing what's waiting for them". Which is hard. The coldness I suppose? Hmm, at least with a stepdad they say at least we know what is waiting for them. With a stepmum what do you do? Try and do everything but you're not accepted, it's like they want to, get rid of you, so a lot of the kids I've actually got them into a lot of groups, getting them to talk it through um, getting involved with the extended whanau, and telling those extended whanau, 'you've got families here, take care of them, they need you now'. Stepfathers as I said aren't too bad. They can sit and joke and do this and that, only difference with stepfathers is they use their hands a lot. As in slapping.. poking, doing the physical hurt and stepmother do the emotional hurt. I'm not quite sure which two is the better. (K12)

The following key informant was adamant that contact with the whanau of origin should be maintained to demonstrate to the children that their basic human rights were not only important but recognised and acknowledged.

I believe that the kids have got rights, and they need to know who they are, they need to be with their own family. (K13)

Chapter Five

Discussion

The aims of the research, which assumed qualitative form, included an exploration of the experiences of parenting and step-parenting in stepfamilies, for Māori. The focus remained on understanding the development of familial relationships within stepfamilies from the point of view of the Māori parent (biological and adoptive), the Māori stepparent and also members of the wider family (whanau) or Māori community. No research of this nature has been completed previously into Māori stepfamilies. This study aimed to provide understanding of ways in which Māori experience being in a stepfamily, and in particular, the cultural meaning of “stepfamily” for Māori. Advantages and difficulties for these families were also a pivotal focus for the researcher. Interviews conducted included five couples (including a Māori parent / stepparent and included four Māori males); seven individuals (two Māori males); and four Māori mental health professionals.

In this discussion themes that emerged from this investigation are examined in the context of previous studies and research with European families. Further, implications for clinical psychologists and other mental health professionals who work with Māori in stepfamilies are discussed. Thematic analysis within a Māori Centred framework was employed. Since a large empirical base of studies of predominantly European participants exists, a Māori centred research philosophy provided an opportunity for Māori stepfamily ‘voices’ to be heard by participants whose experience in a stepfamily ranged up to 20 years, and to critique assumptions about Māori step / families through the ‘eyes’ of Māori understanding, knowledge and most importantly experience developed over the course of up to 40 plus years for key informants.

Māori Participants as People and their Culture.

One aspect of the interviews was the way in which Māori participants spoke about their culture and how this reflected upon them as Māori people. Throughout all participant interviews there was a strong impression that these people were proud to be Māori. They were proud of their families. They liked, even loved, the way they functioned. This included when households were full with several children and adults

under the same roof and resources were scarce, and despite extended family sometimes impinging upon their personal space and offended them, all participants wanted these people around 'a lot'. They often spoke reverently about cosseting or being cosseted by their 'whanau'. This 'clannish' behaviour is likely a feature of many other family forms, and cultures, but participants of this study, spoke to being Māori and part of their family with a sense of dignity and pride. Occasionally, participants would burst forward and abruptly exclaim that they might have some grievance with a family member or with Māori in general, but the overriding 'feeling' from interviews was that these Māori wanted what was best for their families, including extended family, including non-Māori family members, and including Māori in general. Generosity combined with reciprocity, therefore, appeared to be a strong feature and common thread for all participants.

On the other hand, some participants' struggles also reflected that being Māori could also be a kind of encumbrance that affected the way in which they felt perceived by others, particularly society at large, perhaps highlighting the struggle for Māori to be recognised, valued and accepted in a social sense. Perhaps this is the reason that participants' families appeared so important to them, because family provided them with a safe 'cultural' haven which positively reinforced the way in which their families were structured and functioned as legitimate, and which were 'good' and 'safe'. Amid historical hype of Māori families as dysfunctional, as has often been promoted by the media (Nairn, Pega, McCreanor, Rankine & Barnes, 2006) and socially validated by the number of Māori in Correctional facilities in New Zealand, these participants also seemed determined to demonstrate the many advantages their families enjoyed and maintained, as if to say 'this is how we are, and we're ok'.

The Language of Māori Stepfamilies: Culture in Action.

Perhaps interestingly, stepfamily participants very rarely used the word 'step' to describe family members. More often, the term 'step' was a term used by stepfamily participants to assist the researcher in differentiating individuals. Key informants were more likely to use the term 'step' to describe relationships and this might be

expected given their professional status and the need to be clear and specific regarding relationships in large families that could potentially be very confusing. One key informant did not use the term 'step' at all in their interview. This could suggest a number of things. Perhaps key informants did not think step-relationships were important to discuss and did not understand the structural complexity and functioning issues so often ignored for stepfamilies (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). However, this seems unlikely since stepfamily processes were indeed mentioned by all but one key informant (who was one of two key informants to have experienced a stepfamily of their own). Further, two key informants had 'whangai-ed' or adopted children several of whom had no biological relationship to the key informant. One key informant, who was also a bio-parent in a stepfamily, had whangai-ed 13 children in addition to their biological children. For separated / divorced Māori, the remarried household, might also include non-biological, extended family children or adopted children (or all three) who reside either short-term, but often permanently in the same household. It seems likely then that comparisons between Māori and European stepfamilies are difficult.

All participants referred to cultural practices such as sharing accommodation 'mattresses' and which participants found comforting, familiar. These cultural practices are in sharp contrast to European practices of sleeping in individual beds in different rooms which several participants found 'weird'.

Another difference from a European researcher's perspective is the naming of individuals and whanau members by Māori. For instance individual's names appeared to include 'nana'; 'koro', 'grandfather'; 'aunty'; 'uncle'; and 'cousin'. Terms such as 'son', 'daughter', 'sister' and 'brother' were used occasionally, but it was more likely that the person was referred to by their given name. The persons being discussed might not be biologically related or even related through marriage, which at times could be confusing. Therefore, as pointed out earlier, for Māori, definitions of family have also changed over time from including only biologically (DNA) related family members to family that may not be biologically related in any way at all.

‘Whangai’ was a term used by all key informants and in several interviews with parents / stepparents. However, the key informants use of the term ‘whangai’ appeared to be in the 40 to 60+ years age group. Additionally, ‘whangai’ presented in interviews of stepfamily members who would be considered ‘tuturu Māori’ meaning reared in a very Māori environment, having a strong identity with Māori; living by Māori values and customs, and likely spoke Te Reo Māori (Māori language). This trend, albeit very small, amongst this older set of participants and younger ‘tuturu Māori’ may possibly reflect that ‘whangai’ is practiced today only amongst Māori who have been reared in very Māori traditional ways. Furthermore, at least one key informant (K12) emphasised Māori have become very “individualised”, perhaps indicating that Māori families / stepfamilies have become more like Pakeha families and more ‘distanced’ from traditional ways of managing their families, in some ways at least. This, of course, is reflected in this key informants’ own experiences wherein the traditional experience of grandparents ‘taking’ a first child for their own and rearing that child in ‘tuturu’ ways, is now practiced infrequently. Nonetheless, the extracts presented indicate that even ‘Pakeha-fied” Māori appear to practice some forms of family practice that reflects a cultural practice influenced by experiences of being Māori and being reared in New Zealand’s unique cultural environment.

Moreover, key informants interviews indicated that ‘tuturu Māori’ stepfamilies experienced greater difficulty in accessing adequate clinical support. Families they worked with however, presented with extreme difficulties resulting from classic clinical presentations such as addictions. Nevertheless, all key informants indicated that whether Māori families / stepfamilies were tuturu Māori or not, operating as a family, incorporating the principle of manaakitanga was something Māori do well when functioning optimally, and *want* to do well.

Relationships with Significant Adults and Children’s Wellbeing.

The body of existing research was reflected by Māori stepfamily participants’ accounts in the following ways. A biological parent-child relationship and the relationship with a stepparent were thought to be significantly linked to children’s

wellbeing and adjustment to the new stepfamily which is strongly supported in New Zealand research with stepfamilies (Cartwright, 2010; Pryor, 2008). Parents in Māori stepfamilies appeared to value the bond formed pre-divorce / separation / death with a biological child and preferred that these connections continue when they re-partnered, particularly in the early stages of the relationship. Sibling rivalry, jealousies and loyalty binds appeared between children and stepchildren, parents and stepparents when a child's relationship with a biological parent was threatened. This occurred often in the first few years of stepfamily life and is an observation consistent with previous overseas stepfamily research (Bray, 1999; Hetherington, 1993; Lutz, 1983). Further where Māori parents disciplined their own biological children, which they appeared to prefer to do, the children's wellbeing, trust, and confidence in the security and reliability of this relationship was reported to be more likely maintained, as observed in research with non-Māori New Zealanders (Moore & Cartwright, 2005). Furthermore, as long as a biological parent disciplined their child and where a stepparent (usually a stepfather) took the time to listen patiently to step-children's concerns; and shared in the children's interests, the outcome for the stepparent-stepchild relationship and wellbeing appeared significantly better in the long term than families that did not follow this practice (Visher & Visher, 1996). Māori parents / stepparents valued time and attention in relationships with their children / stepchildren where cultural activities were shared, encouraged and relatively common, including for Māori adults reared in very Pakeha environments.

Stepmothers in this study appeared to assume the brunt of any blame for family discontent and contributed disproportionately more to child rearing and household tasks, which contributed significantly to stepmother distress and negative wellbeing. This is strongly indicated in previous research with non-Māori (Bray & Kelly, 1998). This occurred particularly where a biological father was not willing or prepared to contribute or manage discipline or child rearing responsibilities with his own children. Household routines and couple consensus concerning a range of issues including rules and boundaries were important with all children, but more so with teenagers. Step /parents often struggle with the 'perfect' image of the deceased parent, and non-resident parents may have impinged on family routine with various

demands. Where step / parents demonstrated empathy and reverence for stepchildren's deceased parent or provided access to the non-resident parent, the stepparent-stepchild relationship was experienced as stable and positive most of the time, particularly in the long term. This is also observed in research with non-Māori steffamilies (Papernow, 2006; Howden, 2007).

Both step / parents and key informants discussed whangai parent relationships with children, which is a particular phenomenon discussed by other New Zealand researchers (Durie, 2001; Families in Transition Seminar, 2009). The parents' role in these circumstances appeared not to usurp the role of biological parent but to provide a framework of parenting and support for children whose biological parent was unable to care for them adequately. In other words, the role of the whangai parent appeared to be complementary to the biological parent in such arrangements. Questions, of course, are raised here as to the wellbeing of children who experience being a whangai child, and adults' experiences as well, once the child is returned to the biological parents, where this occurs. Other relationships enjoyed by the whangai child with other whanau children might also be adversely affected.

Extended Family Relationships with Step / Children.

Compared to the step / parent interviews, key informants focused on the overall functioning of the Māori step / family and children's positive wellbeing and rights as a function of that. Parents' or caregivers' welfare appeared to be more greatly emphasised by key informants resulting from their experiences with clinical cases in their work. Parents' mental health issues was regarded as a salient factor in regards to step / parenting (see also: Hetherington, 1993). Overall, key informants discussed historical social pressures on Māori that had devastating effects on Māori families. Māori children whose parents had died, were removed and placed with Pakeha families. Later this practice would include Māori children who were genuinely in need of adequate care. It seems very likely that many stepchildren were amongst them. For many Māori this created 'mamae' (hurt) from which many elderly Māori have not recovered. It seems likely that in response to racial discrimination, fear,

contempt, anger and possibly an inability or unwillingness to dispense with traditional Māori ways of being a family (Pope-Davis, Coleman, Ming Liu & Toporek, 2003) contributed to tension. In comparison, some stepfamily participants appeared to have adopted a bi-cultural approach, or at the very least a culturally inclusive approach, to their everyday life and appeared to have adjusted well for the most part (Pachter & Dumont-Mathieu, 2004). Where discordance had occurred between Māori cultural values and Pakeha there appeared to be stress and this impacted the stepfamily, an example being thwarting of extended family relationship roles, or for key informants, preventing Māori clients to live with several adults and children together in what might be described as overcrowded conditions.

Key informants emphasised important relationships between extended family members such as grandparents and whangai parents which provided significant attachment figures for step / children throughout important developmental stages and stepfamily participants were in agreement with this (Durie, 2003). In other words, knowing one's biological family was important for healthy step / children. Reinforced traditional Māori values of 'manaakitanga' and Māori customary practices such as attending 'hui' (meetings) and 'tangi' (funerals) were a significant practice for many Māori in this study indicating that Māori cultural practice was a valued part of these participants' lives.

Step / children of this study appeared to be more likely to learn Te Reo and other Māori cultural practices in these environments, which appeared to strengthen positive Māori identity and appeared to be enhanced by good parenting. Key informants and stepfamily adults agreed that significant adults in the children's immediate environment take up care-giving roles, provided they were willing and able, and that these relationships were positive in terms of adjustment and general wellbeing for both children and adults. More importantly, a related Māori caregiver was considered by both groups of participants, often to be more important in passing on familial genealogical information and other cultural information.

Māori step / parents generally expected extended family to participate with the stepfamily. Similarly, extended family members expected to support the stepfamily. Even smaller stepfamilies with one or two children, and Māori parents who had been reared in European environments, clearly stated the advantages of such arrangements, particularly for the wellbeing of extended family members and their children.

Further, where roles for extended family members were threatened loyalty binds, jealousies and discontent were most likely to erupt, particularly where relatives felt they were being ousted from what appeared to be pre-defined roles. The general impression from both participant groups appeared to be that a few arguments amongst extended family members were not sufficient reason for breaking extended family contact. If anything, the impression given was that this was a time to be taking stock of ones' position in the scheme of things and attending to the issues at hand. The importance of the reciprocal extended family support system described above for Māori step / families was clearly delineated in key informants as a way forward in attempting, where Māori families were fragmented, to piece together the Māori step / family, by bringing members of the extended family together for support, as long as this was what the family wanted and so long as any safety issues were addressed first.

Moreover, as per previous research by Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman (1992), Māori step-couples (some included non-Māori) experienced a good quality relationship where they felt supported and were supportive of their partner in both practical and emotional ways. Where financial and parenting responsibilities were shared the quality of the relationship was even better (Ferri & Smith, 1998; Pasley et al., 1993). Also, where the couple received external affirmation, and /or there was an absence of disapproval, of the relationship that might ordinarily arise post-divorce or separation, this positively impacted on the relationship. Additionally, where couples shared a sense of humour, shared interests and goals and were prepared to work at communication the relationship fared best (Beaudry et al., 2004). This seems important considering the lack of satisfaction, especially for women, in a remarriage

is an important factor in determining the outcome of future relationships for children from these unions (Sanders et al., 1999).

Māori and Re-partnering: A Cultural & Socio-Economic Context.

Stepfamily research conducted in New Zealand appears to have been conducted with European participants for the most part and with participants of middleclass and mixed socio-economic status. However, if the demographics of this current study are considered, we have a sample of predominantly working class, likely poor, indigenous Māori which would suggest that these families prioritise basic needs. Further differences from previous non-Māori based studies would likely reveal themselves on further inspection. For instance, many participants of this study are in de facto relationships. The predominance of de facto or unmarried relationships is also reflected in overseas research where parents are of lower socio-economic status (Cherlin, 2004) and / or mixed race (Goldstein & Harknett, 2006).

As New Zealand authors Pryor and Trinder (2004) reported, persons who marry or partner at a younger age are also more likely to enter parenthood at a younger age and to separate / divorce and remarry more frequently. Māori partner earlier and have children earlier compared with other New Zealanders (Statistics New Zealand, 2005; modified 2011). Where subsequent re-partnering occurs too quickly, the consequences for children of these unions in international studies suggest poorer outcomes (Amato, 1993; Cherlin, 2008; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). If historical racial discrimination referred to by key informants is to be taken seriously, it seems possible that racism negatively impacted Māori ways of being a family, or at least negatively influenced their healthy development in some way leading to poorer outcomes for Māori children today. Nevertheless, *how* racism has impacted Māori families has not been discussed in this study.

Summary

Māori experiences in stepfamilies in some ways, particularly in terms of developmental stages and where adult-child relationships are concerned, bear many resemblances to European stepfamilies. For instance, step-relationships are most

fraught at the commencement of the new household. Stepmothers appear to shoulder greater responsibility for childcare than fathers and stepfathers, as per the European literature. Furthermore, parents and stepparents in general appear to experience similar struggles with children and stepchildren throughout a remarriage. However, this does not mean that Māori experience these stages and relationships in the same ways. For instance, the current study revealed, that the cultural meaning of stepfamily is different for Māori. For instance, most often, related and non-related members of the re-partnered family are rarely referred to as 'step' relations. Further, their inclusion in the stepfamily is often an expectation. Where the inclusion of step-relations is thwarted in some way, friction and conflict occur, implying that their inclusion for Māori is important. Where Pakeha grandparents may step back, not wanting to interfere in step-relationships, Māori grandparents often push themselves forward.

Māori stepfamilies also differ from European stepfamilies in that their experience as families is influenced, sometimes very strongly, by customary cultural practices, such as hui and tangi. Furthermore, Māori experiences in stepfamilies may differ as a result of their experiences as Māori people in a country that has been colonised. The impact of some of these experiences is highlighted in the key informant interviews. Finally, the cultural meaning of stepfamily for Māori appears to be fluid and changing. Where there is the expectation that perhaps Māori families and stepfamilies are moving away from Māori cultural normative practices and becoming more 'individualised' or 'individuated' a younger generation of Māori are becoming reacquainted with their whakapapa and principles of Māori family life such as manaakitanga. Therefore, the 'shape' and future of Māori stepfamilies is uncertain and difficult to envisage.

Limitations

This study was deliberately one involving a small sample of participants, which limits its generalisation. Furthermore, the way in which this study was conducted was likely influenced by the particular perspective of the researcher, who has not experienced

a stepfamily situation in her lifetime. The personal perspective of the researcher inevitably has some influence on the research. Additionally, the researcher introduces further potential bias as a middle-aged, middle-class Māori woman married to a Pakeha husband, with cross cultural children; and who grew up in a cross cultural household with Māori and Pakeha parents. Both households included first marriage family life that was, or has been, conducted primarily in a very 'Pakeha' or European way. Therefore, stepfamily processes that might seem most important to stepfamily advocates might not appear here. Further, the experiences of Māori partnered with Māori in this study may not reflect the experiences of these couples or individuals who have experienced their relationships as 'tuturu Māori', or 'very Māori' in protocol, tradition and experience.

Moreover, Māori parents, stepparents and professionals interviewed belonged to different age groups. A close analysis of the interview scripts revealed that two couples, four individuals and all key informants belonged in the 40 to 60+ age group possibly. Their parenting practices and beliefs may be, at least to some extent, reflections of their generation. Put another way, a younger set of participants may reveal somewhat different accounts.

Nevertheless, it seems important to note that no study of a qualitative nature takes place in a vacuum where the motives, urges and emotions of the researcher, and the social environment in which the study is undertaken, have no influence over the focus and interpretation of the data and analysis. The researcher was likely influenced by the academic environment, culture and power structures in which they were submerged as much as personal experience and attitude. For instance, this study was under way when the first full-time employed staff member of Māori descent was appointed to the department in which this study was completed. Another limitation of the research includes that Māori key informants worked primarily in a clinical setting. Nevertheless, the current study has been productive in highlighting some issues for Māori stepfamilies, including Māori stepfamilies who

clearly give productive accounts of pro-functioning stepfamilies.

Future Research

The current study has demonstrated that Māori stepfamilies experience resemblances to European families, but in some ways also differ. The dearth of studies regarding stepfamily processes for Māori and insufficient information regarding the developmental stages and various dynamics for these families provide an incomplete picture overall. Even where developmental stages for Māori stepfamilies are the same as for European families this does not mean that the stage is experienced in the same way for Māori. Further research regarding childrens' experiences in stepfamilies might also highlight some of the difficulties for Māori children, including cross-cultural Māori children, and extricate more explicitly the variables that create tension and conflict in their families as well as variables that enhance stepfamily function, wellbeing and 'happiness'.

Appendix One:

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Appendix Two:



THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Faculty of Science

Human Sciences Building
Floor 6, 10 Symonds Street,
Telephone 64 9 373 7599 ext. 82287
Facsimile 64 9 373 7450
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

Tena Koe!

Are you a Māori Parent or a Māori Stepparent living in a Stepfamily?

I am looking for participants to take part in a study about Māori parenting and Māori stepparenting in stepfamilies. A stepfamily includes one or both partners who have been previously married (or partnered) and their children.

You can still take part in this research if your partner is not Māori. As long as you are a Māori parent or a Māori stepparent living with your stepfamily, you can participate.

Participating will mean taking part in one interview, of up to 2 hours.

This study is being undertaken by Angela Moana Curtis-Clark (Hapu: Puketapu, Ngati Rahiri; Iwi: Te Atiawa), a mature Māori student, as part of a Doctorate of Clinical Psychology.

If you are interested in participating, or would like more information, please contact:

Angela on free phone: 0800 – MĀORI S or 0800 626 747

or e-mail: acur006@aucklanduni.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE On 12 March, 2008 for a period of three years, from 12 March, 2008 to 12 March, 2011. Reference : 2007 / 428



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Auckland, New Zealand

Consent Form for Māori Adults in Stepfamilies.

(This consent form will be held for a period of six years)

Title of Project: Māori Parenting and Māori Stepparenting in Stepfamilies

Researcher: Angela Moana Curtis-Clark,
Doctorate of Clinical Psychology student.
(Hapu: Puketapu, Ngati Rahiri; Iwi: Te Atiawa).

To Participants:

- I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet relating to this research.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that I am volunteering to take part in one interview, up to two hours long.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself from the interview at any time. I can withdraw all of the information provided by me and ask for my tape, for up to one month following the interview, without giving a reason.
- I understand that my interview will be audio taped and that I may ask for the tape recorder to be turned off if I need a break.
- I understand that my interview will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

- I understand that the only people who will have access to my consent form, demographic details (age, occupation etc), audio tape and transcribed interview will be the researcher Angela Curtis-Clark and her Supervisor Professor Fred Seymour. My audio tape and demographic information will be kept for the three year approval period of this study. At the end of this period my tape will be offered to me or destroyed along with my demographic information. My transcript will be kept securely and safely for a period of six years and then destroyed, in accordance with the protocols of the Department of Psychology, University of Auckland.
- I understand that I would not be able to keep confidential any information that indicated that a child or adult was at risk of abuse.
- I understand that I will not be identifiable as an individual or as part of a group in any publication or report resulting from this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of results Yes / No
(please delete one)
- Here is my e-mail or mailing address to which the summary of results can be sent:

- I agree to take part in this research.

Signed: _____

Name:
(Please print carefully)

Date: _____

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Demographics Sheet:

Please circle your selection:

1. What is the persons gender?

Male

Female

2. What is your age group?

Less than 20

20-30

31-40

41-50

50+

3. What is the ethnic group you most strongly identify yourself as?

Māori

Pakeha

Pacific Island

Asian

Indian

African

Other (if other, please specify) _____

4. Parent or step-parent in a current Stepfamily?

Couple?



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Auckland, New Zealand

Consent Form for Kaumatua, Māori Psychologists and Māori Mental Health Professionals

(This consent form will be held for a period of six years)

Title of Project: Māori Parenting and Māori Stepparenting in Stepfamilies

Researcher: Angela Moana Curtis-Clark,
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology student.
(Hapu: Puketapu, Ngati Rahiri; Iwi: Te Atiawa).

To Participants:

- I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet relating to this study.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that I am volunteering to take part in one interview, up to two hours long.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself from the interview at any time. I can withdraw all of the information provided by me and ask for my tape, for up to one month following the interview, without giving a reason.
- I understand that my interview will be audio taped and that I may ask for the tape recorder to be turned off if I need a break.
- I understand that my interview will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- I understand that the only people who will have access to my consent form, demographic details (age, occupation etc), audio tape and transcribed interview will be the researcher Angela Curtis-Clark and her Supervisor Professor Fred Seymour. My audio tape and demographic information will be kept for the approval period of this study. At the end of this period my tape will be offered to me or destroyed along with my demographic information. My transcript will be kept securely and safely for a period of six years and

then destroyed, in accordance with the protocols of the Department of Psychology, University of Auckland.

- I understand that I will not be identifiable as an individual or as part of a group in any publication or report resulting from this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of results Yes / No
(please delete one)
- Here is my e-mail or mailing address to which the summary of results can be sent:

- I agree to take part in this research.

Signed:

Name:

(Please print carefully)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE On 12 March, 2008 for the period 12 March, 2008 to 1st September 2011 Reference: 2007 / 428



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Participant Information Sheet for Māori Parents and Māori Stepparents in Stepfamilies

Title: Māori Parenting and Māori Stepparenting in Stepfamilies

Ko Tokomaru taku Waka
Ko Taranaki taku Maunga
Ko Waitara taku Awa
Ko Te Atiawa taku Iwi
Ko Manukorihi taku Marae

My name is Angela Moana Curtis-Clark. While I am not a native speaker of Te Reo Māori, I am a mature Māori student at the University of Auckland conducting research on Māori stepfamilies. I am currently enrolled in the Doctorate of Clinical Psychology in the Department of Psychology. I am conducting this research for the purpose of my Doctoral thesis, supervised by Dr Claire Cartwright and Professor Fred Seymour. The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of parenting and stepparenting for Māori in stepfamilies.

Purpose of the Research:

The European definition of stepfamily includes one or both partners who have been previously married (or partnered) and their children. Parents and stepparents in stepfamilies face similar challenges to parents in nuclear families. However, living in a stepfamily can have added challenges. So far, most research has been conducted with European families. There is no research exploring the experiences of Māori parents and Māori stepparents in stepfamilies. Through this research I hope to establish a kete korero (basket of knowledge) to guide Māori parents, Māori stepparents and Health Professionals working with Māori stepfamilies. To achieve this, this research focuses on the challenges Māori parents and Māori stepparents experience in stepfamilies in their relationships as a couple, and their relationships with their children, stepchildren and extended family / whanau. I also plan to interview Māori Psychologists, Māori Mental Health Professionals and some Kaumatua who have worked with stepfamilies regarding the cultural meaning of stepfamily for Māori and any challenges or supports in their stepfamilies and any strategies used to assist them.

Your Involvement:

I would like to invite you to take part in this research but you are under no obligation to do so. If you do decide to take part, this involves one face-to-face interview of up to two hours. If your partner is a Māori parent or Māori stepparent, they are also invited to take part. You can still take part in this research if your partner is not Māori but you are Māori. You are also welcome to have a support person with you at the interview.

Confidentiality:

If you decide to take part in this research, I will require your consent. A consent form is presented to you for signing before starting the interview. All interviews are private and confidential and could take place at a location that is convenient for you. Most people prefer interviews at their home, marae or at the researchers' office at the University of Auckland. If you think you would like to meet me and discuss the research before deciding whether to take part, that can also be arranged. However you are still under no obligation to take part unless you want to.

For research purposes, the interviews will be audio-taped, although the tape could be turned off at any time, if you request it. You can end the session at any time and withdraw all of your information and ask for your tape at any time for up to one month after the interview. To protect your confidentiality, your audiotape does not have any information on it concerning your identity. Your tape will be assigned a number and your number, personal details and audiotapes are kept securely and separately so that you can not be identified at any time throughout the research process or in the final publication or report.

Audiotapes will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The only people to have access to your consent forms, audiotapes, transcripts or interviewing material are myself and my university research supervisor, Dr Claire Cartwright. At the end of the three year approval period for this research your tape will be wiped or offered to you and your personal details will be destroyed. The data will be stored for six years in order for the results from this research to be published. When the results are published, any information you provide will not be identifiable and your privacy and confidentiality will be carefully protected.

There are circumstances in which I would not be able to keep confidentiality. This would include if it became clear that a child or another adult are at serious risk or are experiencing current abuse. If this situation arises in your interview, I would need to seek guidance from my Supervisor as to how to proceed.

It is possible that you may become distressed when discussing some issues about your stepfamily. If this occurs we can take a break in the interview. However, if you remain distressed you can also request a referral to an appropriate service for support.

Acknowledgments:

In order to acknowledge your contribution to this study, you will be asked to indicate on the Consent Form whether you would like to receive a brief written report that I am required to submit as a part of the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology.

Queries:

Thank you for your interest in making this study possible. If you have any queries or wish to take part in this study, please phone me on **0800-626 747** or **0800-MĀORI S** (free phone- non commercial phone number) or write to me at:

Angela Curtis-Clark
Dept of Psychology
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland

The Head of Department is:

Professor Fred Seymour.
Dept of Psychology,
The University of Auckland.
Private Bag 92019, Auckland.
Telephone 373-7599 ext 88414

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair,
The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee,
University of Auckland,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.
Tel. (09) 373-7599 extn. 87830

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE On 12 March, 2008 for a period of three years, from 12 March, 2008 to 12 March, 2011 Reference : 2007 / 428



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Auckland, New Zealand

Participant Information Sheet for Māori Mental Health Professionals, Māori Psychologists and Kaumatua

Title: Māori Parenting and Māori Stepparenting in Stepfamilies

Ko Tokomaru taku Waka
Ko Taranaki taku Maunga
Ko Waitara taku Awa
Ko Te Atiawa taku Iwi
Ko Manukorihi taku Marae

My name is Angela Moana Curtis-Clark.

I am a mature Māori student at the University of Auckland conducting research on Māori stepfamilies. I am currently enrolled in the Doctorate of Clinical Psychology in the Department of Psychology. This research is for the purpose of my Doctoral thesis, supervised by Professor Fred Seymour. The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of parenting and stepparenting for Māori in stepfamilies.

The European definition of stepfamily includes one or both partners who have been previously married (or partnered) and their children. Parents and stepparents in stepfamilies face similar challenges to parents in nuclear families. However, living in a stepfamily can have added challenges. So far, most research has been conducted with European families. There is little research exploring the experiences of Māori parents and Māori stepparents in stepfamilies. Through this research I hope to establish a kete korero (basket of knowledge) to guide Māori parents, Māori stepparents and Health Professionals working with Māori stepfamilies. To achieve this, I plan to interview Māori Psychologists, Māori Mental Health Professionals and some Kaumatua who have worked with Māori stepfamilies regarding the cultural meaning of stepfamily for Māori, any challenges or supports in Māori stepfamilies and any strategies used to assist them. I also plan to interview Māori parents and

Māori stepparents in stepfamilies about their relationships as a couple and their relationships with their children, stepchildren and extended family / whanau.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview as a Māori Mental Health Professional or as a Kaumatua who is working with Māori parents and Māori stepparents in stepfamilies. I am hopeful that my interviews will allow me to develop understanding

and insight into the clinical experience of Māori who are parenting and stepparenting in stepfamilies, particularly in relation to difficult stepfamily dynamics.

Confidentiality:

I would like to invite you to take part in this research but you are under no obligation to do so. If you do decide to take part, this involves one face-to-face interview of up to two hours and is at a time and a venue which is chosen by you. This might include my office at the University of Auckland or your office, home or marae.

If you decide to take part in this research, I will require your consent. A consent form is presented to you for signing before starting the interview. If you think you would like to meet me and discuss the research before deciding whether to take part that can also be arranged. However you are still under no obligation to take part unless you want to.

For research purposes, the interviews will be audio-taped, although the tape could be turned off at any time, if you request it. You can end the session at any time and withdraw all of your information and ask for your tape at any time for up to one month after the interview. To protect your confidentiality, your audiotape does not have any information on it concerning your identity. Your tape will be assigned a number and your number, demographic details and audiotapes are kept securely and separately so that you can not be identified at any time throughout the research process or in the final publication or report.

Audiotapes will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The only people to have access to your consent forms, demographic details, audiotapes and transcripts are myself and my university research supervisor, Dr Fred Seymour. At the end of the approval period of this research, your tape will be wiped or offered to you and your demographic details will be destroyed. The data will be stored for six years in order for the results from this research to be published. When the results are published, any information you provide will not be identifiable and your privacy and confidentiality will be carefully protected.

In order to protect the confidentiality of families and people you discuss in your interview, I ask that you do not mention the names of individuals or groups or any other information that may identify them. Instead, I am interested to learn about your observations of issues that impact on Māori stepfamilies generally.

Acknowledgments:

In order to acknowledge your contribution to this study, you will be asked to indicate on the Consent Form whether you would like to receive a brief written report that I am required to submit as a part of the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology.

Queries:

Thank you for your interest in making this study possible. If you are willing to take part in this study or you have any queries, please phone me on **0800 - 626 747** or

0800 - MĀORIS (free phone- non commercial phone number) or write to me at:

Angela Curtis-Clark
Dept of Psychology
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland

My Supervisor is: Professor Fred Seymour.
Dept of Psychology,
The University of Auckland.
Private Bag 92019, Auckland.
Telephone 373-7599 ext 88414

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:
The Chair,
The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee,
The University of Auckland,
Office of the Vice Chancellor,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.
Tel. (09) 373-7599 extn. 87830

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN
PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE On 12 March, 2008 for the period 12
March, 2008 to 1st September, 2011 Reference : 2007 / 428**

Guide for Māori Parent and Māori Stepparent Interviews:

Title: Māori Parenting and Māori Stepparenting in Stepfamilies

Introduction:

I am hoping to understand how relationships in your (step) family have developed over the time you have all been together. When I use the term family, I mean your “stepfamily” – you, your children, your partner and your partners’ children. When I talk about extended whanau or extended family I mean yours and your partners’ parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents etc.

My reason for asking about your stepfamily is because there is no research around how Māori experience being in a stepfamily even though it is a common experience for many Māori men and women. It would be good to hear about the things you have found challenging and the things you feel were positive throughout the development of your new family (stepfamily).

Sometimes talking about ones own family can be difficult. Are you sure that you are feeling ok to talk about it? We can stop and turn off the tape for a break if you want to. Is there someone you can talk to after this interview if you feel that you need to? (If they are with a support person, I will ask them if they are ok with being present at the interview as a courtesy).

As was outlined in the PIS that I sent to you, there are circumstances in which I would not be able to keep confidentiality. This would include if it became clear that a child or another adult are at serious risk or are experiencing current abuse. If this situation arises in your interview, I would need to seek guidance from my Supervisor as to how to proceed. Are you ok with this?

Personal Information:

The Interviewer asks for the following information regarding the participant and their stepfamily.

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Marital status
- Ethnicity of Partner / Husband / Wife
- Occupation
- Occupation of Partner

- **Number of own children prior to your remarriage / number stepchildren / children from the current remarriage**

Current stepfamily information:

The interviewer asks the participant for the following information regarding the current stepfamily situation:

- Length of time in stepfamily
- The members of the stepfamily and their relationship to each other
- Residential arrangements for children

You can take as much time to answer as you like and you can say whatever it is that you have to say. I am not in a hurry.

Is it ok for me to turn on the audio tape now?

❖ *Turn on audio tape here*

Question 1: Māori parent and partner relationship:

Can we start with the relationship with your partner? Can you tell me about how your relationship started and how it was for you in the first year or two?

Probes to be asked if not covered by above:

What do you feel were some of the positive aspects?
 What were some of the difficulties?
 How did you cope with the difficulties?
 What worked for you in the early phase?

Question 2: Māori parent and partner relationship:

Can you tell me about your relationship since then?

Probes to be asked if not covered by above:

What have the difficulties been?
 What have been the positive aspects?
 How do you cope with difficulties?
 What has worked for you??

What has been the reaction of extended whanau?
Do you think being Māori has influenced your relationship? How?

Question 3: Māori parent / stepparent relationships with their own children:

How about the relationship with your own children? How has it been since you have been together?

Probes to be asked if not covered by above:

What have the difficulties been?
What have been the positive aspects?
How do you cope with difficulties?
What has worked for you??
Has being a Māori parent influenced your relationship with your child? How?
How much influence have extended family had with the children?

Question 4: Māori parent / stepparent relationships with their stepchildren:

How about the relationship with your stepchildren? How has it been since you have been together?

Probes to be asked if not covered by above:

What have the difficulties been?
What have been the positive aspects?
How do you cope with difficulties?
What has worked for you??
Has being a Māori stepparent influenced your relationship with your stepchild?
How?

Question 5: Māori parent / stepparent relationships with stepchildren:

How about your partner? How well do you feel he / she has gotten along with your children since you got together?

Probes to be asked if not covered by above:

What have the difficulties been?
What have been the positive aspects?
How do you cope with difficulties?
What has worked for you??

Question 6: Do you have any advice you would give to a couple starting a stepfamily?

Question 7: Do you think there are any added issues for you being Māori and being in a stepfamily?

Question 8: Do you think there are any strengths in being Māori and being in a stepfamily.

Guide for Interviews with Kaumatua, Māori Psychologists & Māori Mental Health Professionals

Title: Māori Parenting and Māori Stepparenting in Stepfamilies

Personal Information:

The Interviewer asks for the following information regarding the participant.

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Occupation
- Place of work

❖ Turn on audio tape here:

Māori Stepfamilies

From our telephone conversation and from the Participant Information Sheet that I sent you, you will be aware that my research interest lies in how Māori parents and Māori stepparents experience being in a stepfamily.

My reason for asking about Māori stepfamilies, and as you will know already, is that there is no research around how Māori experience being in a stepfamily situation, even though many Māori experience it.

You can take as much time as you like to say what you have to say. And, if you want to make a point about something that you think I may have missed, that's fine too.

Confidentiality: It is important that we remember when discussing stepfamily issues that we do not identify any specific individuals by name so that we also protect the privacy of others.

Question 1: In general, the European term for stepfamily means parent, stepparent and their children from the current union as well as children from previous unions. Can you explain to me how this definition may differ for Māori, in general, and what do Māori call a stepfamily?

Question 2: Can you describe to me some of the challenges and barriers to relationships you have observed in the dynamics of stepfamilies where Māori are re-partnered with Māori?

- **What are some of the advantages or strengths of these unions?**

Question 3: How about when Māori are re-partnered with people of other cultures? What are some of the challenges and barriers to relationships you might observe in the dynamics of these stepfamilies?

- **What are the advantages or strengths of these unions?**

Prompts:

The Interviewer may prompt the participant to discuss the following areas in order to assess the relevance. **“So far you haven’t mentionedWould it be relevant in the families you have worked with?”**

- Relationships between parent and stepparent
- Relationships between parent and biological and stepchildren
- Relationships between stepparent and their biological and stepchildren.
- Relationships with extended family / whanau (aunts, uncles, grandparents etc).
- Loyalties and jealousies.
- Children’s feelings about non-residential parents and loss of previous family and wider family associations
- Adults feelings about non-residential parents and loss of previous family and wider family associations
- Discipline
- Finances
- Employment
- Housing
- Issues with shared parenting such as time.
- Racial identity of parents, children, extended family / whanau

Question 4: In the past, say, in our grandparents and great grandparents time, what strategies were used by Māori to help Māori stepfamilies / families in need of support and how have these changed from the strategies used today?

Prompts:

The Interviewer may prompt the therapist to discuss the following areas in order to assess the relevance. **“So far you haven’t mentionedFrom your perspective and experience with stepfamilies, how relevant is this concept today?”**

- Karakia (prayers)
- Tikanga (correct procedure, method, practice, custom)
- Whanaungatanga (kinship, sense of family connection)
- Manaaki (support, to protect, to take care of)
- Whakapapa (genealogies)
- Wairua (Spirit, spirituality)

Closing:

Question 5: This research aims to understand Māori parenting and Māori stepparenting in stepfamilies. Are there any aspects of working with Māori that you feel are very important, which are not being addressed for Māori at present?

Is there anything else you would like to say?



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Transcription Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Project: Experiences of Māori Parenting and Māori Stepparenting in stepfamilies.

Researcher: Angela Curtis-Clark, Doctorate of Clinical Psychology student.

Date: xx xx xx

I am undertaking transcription of audio taped data for the above named project. I know that I am bound by ethical confidentiality guidelines regarding these data, and will not break confidentiality in any way. I will not communicate about the data, or the participants, with anyone other than Angela Curtis-Clark.

- I agree to undertake this transcription in accordance with these stated conditions.

Signed: _____

Name: _____
(please print clearly)

Date: _____