HE AROHA WHAEA, HE POTIKI PIRIPOHO

THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES OF MĀORI ADOPTIVE MOTHERS IN THE 'CLOSED STRANGER' ADOPTION SYSTEM

VALERIE MARURU PERKINS (NĒE DEVONSHIRE)

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ABSTRACT

'Closed stranger' adoption in Aotearoa / New Zealand from approximately 1940 to 1990 involved the practice of a complete break between the birth mother and her child and the legal transfer of the child to adoptive parents. In Aotearoa / New Zealand between 1940 and 1990, 108,899 adoptions took place, and most consisted of 'closed stranger' adoptions. These adoptions have caused much joy as well as some heartache for parties involved in the experience namely, birth mothers, adoptees and adoptive mothers and their whānau. This thesis reports original research which aims to investigate the unique experiences of Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption period and enable the impact of legal adoption on these Māori women who have not previously warranted research, to be valued.

A qualitative methodology, Māori-centred research and unstructured kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) interviews were utilized to gather data from six Māori adoptive mothers. The intention of Māori centred research as its name suggests, is to locate Māori people and Māori knowledge at the centre of the research action. A thematic analysis utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used.

The unique experiences of Māori women legally adopting in the 'closed stranger' adoption system were about whānau business, and grouped under that superordinate theme were experiences of 'not blood', land succession, naming and caring for whānau. The stigma of adoption resonated throughout the women's narratives. As well, most of these Māori adoptive mothers found that they experienced 'closed stranger' adoption as a 'rollercoaster of emotions'.

KEYWORDS: 'closed stranger' adoption, Māori adoptive mothers, indigenous, Māori land succession, whāngai, stigma.

HE PEPEHA

Ko Tararua te maunga

Ko Manawatu te awa

Ko Ngāti Raukawa ki te tonga te iwi

Ko Ngāti Rākau te hapū

Ko Tainui te waka

Ko Edward Charles Devonshire tōku pāpā

Ko Rawinia Te Orata Devonshire nēe Renata tōku māmā

Ko Valerie Perkins ahau.

MANA WAHINE

Me aro koe ki te ha o Hineahuone

Pay heed to the dignity of women

"Te mana wahine is the concept which symbolises and defines the status, power and authority of Māori women. In the context of Māori culture, mana wahine is a reminder of Māori women's matrilineal descent from Papatuanuku, the Earth Mother. It is the vital source of Māori women's contemporary power and authority. It justifies their status in Māori society and carries the promise that that status will continue for future generations of Māori women" (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1990, p. 126).

He mihi nui ki a koutou he wāhine toa. Tēnā koutou katoa.

HE TIMATANGA

(THE BEGINNING)

Mai i te timatanga ko te kore
Ka puta ki waho te kore tino nui
Te Po
Te Po Roa
Te Po Nui
Ka puta ki waho Ko-Te-Ata

In the beginning there was Te Kore
The Nothingness
Out of this great Nothingness came
Te Po, the Night,
Te Po Roa, the long Night,
Te Po Nui, the Great Night
Eventually came Te Ata, The Dawn.

Taukuri e! Ko Ranginui
Taukuri e! Ko Papatuanuku.
E awhi ana ia rua.

Behold! There was Ranginui, The Sky Father
With his beloved Papatuanuku, The Earth Mother,
Cradled in each others arms.

Tane Mahuta, tetahi o nga tama,
I wehe ona matua.
Ranginui ki runga,
Papatuanuku ki raro.

One of their children, Tane Mahuta,
Forced them far apart,
The Sky Father above,
The Earth Mother below.

Ka tangi tonu a Ranginui mo Papatuanuku
Mai i te wehenga tae mai ki tenei ra.

Ranginui wept bitterly for his beloved
And his tears are the rain that falls to this very day.

Ka kakahutia e Tane a Papatuanuku ki nga korowai o ana tamariki.
Ngā manu me ngā ngangara o te whenua.
Tane ki a Ranginui ko te korowai o ngā whetu Te Ao Turoa.
Ngā taonga a Tane ki ona matua
Ko te Ra me te marama.

Tane clothed Papatuanuku in the plants, the trees, the forests.
He gave the birds of the air and the insects of the earth.
He gave Ranginui a beautiful cloak of stars.
The sun and the moon were gifts for his parents.

Ko Tane Mahuta te Atua o Te Ngahere.
I kokiri te maramatanga me te matauranga ki Te Ao Turoa
Maramatanga me te matauranga,
Te Po me Te Ao Marama.

And so it was that Tane Mahuta, God of the Forest
brought Light and Knowledge into the world.
Light and Knowledge.
Night and Day.

Tihei mauri ora!

This kōrero was originally presented at the opening of the Aotearoa / New Zealand Law Society Conference, Dunedin, April 1996. It tells the story of creation according to a Māori worldview.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Closed stranger adoption can now be seen for what it was – a social experiment with
unknown and uninvestigated outcomes, conducted on a massive scale
(Else, 1991, p. 197).

Introduction

Robert Ludbrook (1995) in his foreword to Keith Griffith's book N.Z. Adoption History and
Practice Social and Legal 1840-1996, sums up the emotional nature and the finality of legal
adoption; the lawful hand over of parental rights of a child from the biological parent(s) to
adoptive parent(s). There are numerous motives for selecting adoption to create or enlarge a
family; for example, being infertile or in a same-sex relationship. Adoption is an absorbing
issue especially when looking at its history and how the process has affected people's lives. It
generates profound feelings of grief and self-reproach when birth parents give up their
children; confused identity for adoptees; family disputes; reunion and redemption and further
stress when birth mother and child meet; and when this happens, adoptive parents sometimes
fear that they may lose their child (Petta & Steed, 2005). Not so long ago adoption was
bounded by concealment and restrictions but today is open with birth parents choosing the
adoptive parents themselves and sometimes having an ongoing relationship with them.

Some of the particularly Māori aspects of adoption such as the practice of whāngai or
customary adoption unlike the Western practice have no need to be legalized. Whāngai does
not practice secrecy as the child is generally a member of the whānau or hapū. The
relationship can be permanent or temporary as the child may return to his / her birth parents if
they become willing and able to nurture a child once more.

This primary chapter establishes the aims, justifications and background for researching
Māori adoptive mothers in 'closed stranger' adoption. I reveal my personal standpoint and
give a synopsis of all chapters.

Aim of the Study

The current research aims to investigate the unique experiences of Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. 'Closed stranger' adoption refers to the adoption of a child by parent(s) unrelated and unknown to the child. I aim to show how legal adoption in the 'closed stranger' adoption period influenced Māori adoptive mothers and to accentuate a silent and undervalued group. The word undervalued refers to the fact that there is no research on Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption system although there is much on adoptees and birth mothers.

Background and Justification for the study

The practice of 'closed stranger' adoption in Aotearoa / New Zealand covers the period from approximately 1940 to 1990. 'Closed stranger' adoption was the practice of a complete break between the birth family and their child (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997c). There was no further contact between them and neither the birth family nor the child had any information about the other. No contact was considered best for both parties (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997c; Mann, 1997). Legislators expected the birth mother would continue her life and not desire to see her baby again, and that the child would not wish to find out about his / her origins. Therefore, complete break secrecy requirements were placed in the 1955 Adoption Act with no query or dialogue with the people most affected, the birth mother and her child (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997c; Mann, 1997). According to Griffith, "a complete break would allow the adoptive context full reign to take over and shape the adoptee's life into the mould of the adoptive family" (Griffith, 1997c, p. 10).

Most studies on adoptive parents have investigated them as a component of the adoptive family. "This denies the aspect of their unique role in the adoption narrative and fails to recognise the individuality of their story" (Mann, 1997, p. 259). There are few studies in Aotearoa / New Zealand investigating the experiences of adoptive mothers (Griffith, 1997c), and none concerning Māori adoptive mothers in the period of 'closed stranger' adoption. Their unique role in the adoption narrative has also been denied. The time has come for this gap in the literature to be addressed for these women, their children and their whānau. This research is also important because these women are, in the main, in their sixties, seventies and eighties and this thesis is an opportunity to record their stories. Many Māori women who

legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption system as opposed to whāngai have already passed on.

It is a goal of this research to draw attention to and explore the experiences of these women. What was their motivation for adopting? If they have interests in Māori land, how do they and their whānau feel about their adopted child succeeding to that land? This research will be a significant addition to the existing body of knowledge about adoption and whāngai by making known the experiences of Māori women adopting in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. While I have elected to limit this research to Māori adoptive mothers, I do recognize the experiences of other adoptive mothers, birth mothers and adoptees.

Locating myself in the study

My own interest in adoption stems from being a Māori adoptive mother who adopted during the 'closed stranger' adoption period in 1976. Being Māori I was in a minority as most people adopting at that time were Pākehā. Most of the children available for adoption were Māori. At the time my husband and I adopted there was much concern about the 'population explosion' and talk about people only having two children to replace themselves. The 'population explosion' or zero population growth movement (ZPG), which began in the 1960s, is a global attempt to manage the earth's population. Advocates of ZPG encourage parents to have no more than two offspring, which is believed to be the quantity required to prevent a rise in population ("ZPG goals," 1974). For this reason and already having two biological daughters we decided to adopt our third child, a son. At the time I thought we were unique but on reading the literature I found that other adoptive parents had the same motivation (Else, 1991; Shannon, 1994). Thus began our journey through legal adoption as opposed to whāngai (Māori customary adoption).

The practice of whāngai ended in my whānau with my parents. My grandfather wanted to whāngai my oldest brother but did not because my mother had already named him. When I was two Granddad and his wife came for me but my mother refused them. My grandfather did not speak to my mother again until we were leaving Foxton four years later. Little did I know that one day I would be an adoptive parent in a completely different situation. Because of law changes, I became an adoptive mother in the 'closed stranger' adoption system.

Consequently, I am interested in the experiences of other Māori women adopting in this period and how that might affect our identity, our 'being' in the world.

Review of Chapters

Chapter One presents the thesis topic and goals, the background, and justification for the present research. My location to the study is stated and a summary of each chapter is given.

Chapter Two explores the adoption literature in particular that relating to adoptive mothers. The literature reveals that there is much information on adoptees and birth mothers, less on adoptive families, even less on adoptive mothers and nothing on Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. This lack shows that Māori adoptive mothers are not deemed a significant group in our society. I discuss literature which points to adoptive mothers being stigmatized and accused of being unable to love their adoptive children because they have not been able to come to terms with their infertility. I examine literature regarding whāngai as it is important in considering the effects on Māori women of legally adopting children in the 'closed stranger' period.

Chapter Three explains the theoretical foundations and the research methodology. Māori centred research was chosen as the qualitative methodology most suitable for this research involving Māori women who legally adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. Unstructured interviews were utilized to gather data from six Māori women who legally adopted in this period. A thematic analysis utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to bring into play an innate tendency for self-reflection by the participants.

Chapter Four presents the data analysis from the interviews utilising applicable literature to outline and further expand on extracts from the participants' transcripts. The stories of the six women are offered using thematic analysis of the adoption procedure and their early experiences of adoption. IPA is used to analyse their transcripts.

Chapter Five, the second analysis chapter, again analyses the data from the women's' transcripts. In this chapter the focus is on the Māori women's' continuing experiences of mothering an adopted child.

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter, restates and answers the research question using the analysis and the literature. It then summarises the main points and highlights of the research and the relevance and implications of the research findings. Ideas for future research are presented and I include my reflections and learnings of the research process.

Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the thesis, which investigates how six Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period were affected by that experience. I have presented the issue of adoption and offered a short background and justification for the research. In the next chapter I review the relevant literature concerning 'closed stranger' adoption.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Adoptive parents are in a double bind; they are encouraged to raise the child "as if" born to them, while having to explain the fact that this is not so! (Griffith, 1997a, p. 84).

Introduction

Adoption is a legal process that affects the transfer of a child from his / her biological parents to another person or persons who will thereafter raise that child as their own. New Zealand's Adoption Act 1955 s.16 (2) (a) specifies the result of an adoption contract. It states that: 'the child shall be deemed to become the child of the adoptive parent, and the adoptive parent shall be deemed to become the parent of the child, as if the child had been born to the parent in lawful wedlock' (as cited in Browning, 2005; Else, 1991; Gillard-Glass & England, 2002; Griffith, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000; Ludbrook, 1997). Between 1945 and the 1980s most adoptions were 'closed stranger' adoptions which meant that there was no contact or exchange of information between the child and the birth parents.

Many people are not aware how prevalent the practice of adoption has been in Aotearoa / New Zealand. Adoption is a subject not often spoken about, but when it is discussed it is interesting to note how many people in a group have been touched by adoption directly or indirectly. It is also interesting to note that the focus is firstly on the adoptee and secondly on the birth mother. There is not as much consideration given to the adoptive parents or adoptive mother. This chapter aims to review the literature around adoption, in particular, the literature relating to Māori adoptive mothers. Firstly though, let us look at some of the legislation concerning 'closed stranger' adoption.

Adoption legislation

To trace New Zealand adoption legislation is to outline the history of adoption in New Zealand. Initially the law acknowledged the legitimacy of the practice of whāngai in the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852, passed in Great Britain to launch independence in New

Zealand (Griffith, 1991, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000). Twenty-nine years later, George Waterhouse was mainly responsible for our initial Adoption Act in 1881. The purpose of the Bill was to provide foster parents with more guarantee of permanent status over children in their custody and to persuade couples to accept orphaned, abandoned and uncared for children into their families so that the children would no longer be the responsibility of and a cost to the government (Ludbrook, 1990). Waterhouse said that there was a need for legal adoption and those who would gain from it were those who had no biological parents, and who might, but for those who took on the position of parents, be open to poverty and hardship (Griffith, 1997c). Legally acknowledging tamaiti whāngai (adopted children) in the Constitution Act meant that they were legally entitled to succeed to the land of their mātua whāngai (adoptive parents).

Accordingly, in 1901 the Native Land Claims Adjustment and Laws Amendment Act ruled that no tamaiti whāngai could succeed to the estate of any Māori who died after 31 March 1902 that is, not even their mātua whāngai (adoptive parents). Claims would only be acknowledged if the adoption had been recorded in the Native Land Court (Else, 1991). This was the first of many legal moves which led to 'outlawing' the practice of whāngai. The government would have likely relied on mātua whāngai not recording the customary adoption in the Native Land Court if indeed they were aware of this ruling. This legislation was enacted purely so that Pākehā could acquire Māori land more easily. If the many tamaiti whāngai were unable to make claims to the land it would be easier for Pākehā to buy or even steal land (Herewini, 1984).

However, when the 1909 Native Land Act came into being, Māori adoptions had to be *endorsed* by the Māori Land Court meaning that Māori could not use the whāngai system for assuming the care of a child to which they had not given birth; the practice of whāngai care was able to continue but the mātua whāngai acquired no legal rights or responsibilities in relation to the child (Dalley, 1998; Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Law Commission, 2000). The 1909 Native Land Act ruled that: "No Native shall, after the commencement of this Act, be capable of adopting a child in accordance with Native custom, whether the adoption is registered in the Native Land Court or not" ("Native Land Act ", 1909 Part 1X, Adoption of Children by Natives, s.161 (1)). In spite of this Māori did continue to practice

whāngai care (Dalley, 1998; Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000).

The Native Land Act was also designed to prevent the adoption by Māori of Pākehā children. The Act affirmed that "No person other than a Native or a descendant of a Native shall be capable of being adopted by a Native" ("Native Land Act ", 1909 Part IX, Adoption of Children by Natives, s.164). There were various reasons given for this ruling. Hone Heke, then MP for Northern Māori, was in favour of the ruling because he was worried that "dishonest adopted Pākehā might acquire land when their adoptive parent died, instead of the spouses or biological children of the Native title-holder" (NZPD, 1906, 137 pp. 121-2 as cited in Else, 1991, p. 179). A number of Pākehā Members of Parliament (M.P's) supported the ruling because they said that it prevented Pākehā mothers from leaving their babies with Māori families where they were not cared for in the manner that they should be. The prohibition remained law until 1955 (Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Else, 1991). Ludbrook stated that:

> Increasingly, the Courts are being challenged to acknowledge and give effect to Maori cultural values when making decisions affecting Maori. Judges and lawyers in the 1990s are far better informed about such matters but are usually constrained by the monocultural nature of the Adoption Act 1955 (Ludbrook, 2003b PA2.14).

In 1909, all-Māori adoptions had to be granted by a judge of the Native Land Court (Dalley, 1998). There was a mesh of limitations around Māori adoption until 1955: If both parents and the child were Māori, the adoption would be considered in the Māori Land Court under the 1909 legislation; but if the adopting parents were Pākehā and the child Māori, the 1908 Infants Act applied. That act gave the adopted child the legal status of a legitimate child (Griffith, 1997c); a Māori / Pākehā couple could adopt a Māori child, however the adoption would be considered in the Magistrate's court; the child's sex made the situation more complicated: A Pākehā husband and Māori wife could only adopt a male Pākehā child; a Māori husband and Pākehā wife a female Pākehā child (Dalley, 1998). Māori Land Court adoption proceedings continued to be public and features of every Māori adoption were printed in Māori and Pākehā newspapers. Māori Land Court judges at all times adhered to the notion that an adopted Māori must know who his / her biological parents were, as in atawhai or whāngai practices.

Until the 1940s adoptees could access their original birth certificate. Then, in the 1940s and 1950s secret adoption came into being (Browning, 2006; Dalley, 1998; Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000). The Adoption Act 1955 sealed the birth records of adoptees so that they, their birth parents and adoptive parents could not access the information. When a child is adopted, he / she is given a new birth certificate (Else, 1991; Gillard-Glass & England, 2002; Griffith, 1997b, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000). The only information contained in this certificate is the adoptive parents' names and their ages when the child was born. This cover-up of the child's whakapapa (genealogy) was the 'secret' of adoption (Else, 1991; Gillard-Glass & England, 2002; Griffith, 1997b, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000).

The Adoption Act 1955 always intended that complete lawful rights of parenting were shifted from the birth parent(s) to the adoptive parent(s). Parenting after that was up to the adoptive parents with no intervention from the birth parents. The complete break theory took this to its farthest extreme; adoptees were forced to be disconnected from their hereditary beginnings not just through their childhood, but for their entire existence. There was to be no further communication between birth mother and child and neither party was to have any information about the other (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997b, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000; Mann, 1997). Bradley (1997) says that adoption policies in Aotearoa / New Zealand continue to pursue an individual philosophy compared to other more progressive child welfare policies that embrace a collective philosophy more appropriate for Māori.

Thirty years after the passing of the Adoption Act 1955 the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 opened the birth records of adoptees and was the result of ten years of campaigning by Keith Griffith, a New Zealand adoptee, and others. Because of their work, Aotearoa / New Zealand was the first country in the world to obtain open records legislation (Griffith, 1991, 1997b, 1997c). The Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 gave adult adoptees over the age of 20 the right to access their original birth records and birth parents of adult adoptees the right to request that an approach be made to the adoptee with a view to them giving permission for their name and address to be passed to the birth parent. However, adoptees and birth parents could put a veto on the release of any details that might identify them and these vetoes continued for 10 years and could then be renewed. Birthparents cannot place a veto on adoptions that have taken place post 1 March 1986. The purpose of the vetoes was to provide security for the adoptees and their birth parents. According to Griffith (1991) they

were fine as a concept but in fact made adoptees more resolute in their desire to look for and make contact with their birth parent(s).

It can be seen that adoption legislation was intentionally designed to eliminate the practice of whāngai and to facilitate the acquisition of Māori land. In eliminating the practice of whāngai Pākehā aimed to force Māori into their system of 'closed stranger' adoption.

'Closed stranger' adoption

'Closed stranger' adoption was the practice of birth mothers relinquishing their babies to be legally adopted by strangers. With urbanisation, Māori moving away from their turangawaewae (place to stand), illegitimacy becoming stigmatised with legal adoption being promoted as the answer, some Māori women as well as Pākehā women relinquished their babies for adoption. This practice started following the Second World War when there were many ex-nuptial births (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000) and culminated in the Adoption Act of 1955 that prohibited the release of information that would identify birth origins or adoptive parent particulars. In Aotearoa / New Zealand between 1940 and 1990, 108,899 adoptions were carried out, most of which were 'closed stranger' adoptions (Griffith, 1997c). Else (1991) noted that there were only small numbers of Māori or Māori-Pākehā couples wanting to adopt and often this was because there were no babies available in the whānau. One social worker working in a predominantly Māori country district placed several unrelated children, many of whom came from outside of the region (Else, 1991).

Ani Mikaere (2003) in her thesis monograph criticises 'closed stranger' adoption from a feminist and Māori perspective. She agrees with others e.g. (Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Else, 1991; Shawyer, 1979) that 'closed stranger' adoption inflicted damage on families. This is of concern to Māori as whānau is the most important unit in Māoridom. Mikaere refers to the purported 'real' family which consists of a married couple and children. She further writes of the wife as only allowed to have sex with one man meaning that she is owned by him. Children born outside of this 'real' family were illegitimate and this was immoral and shameful.

Mikaere states that legislation, in outlawing the practice of whāngai was assimilationist and aimed to have Māori embracing 'closed stranger' adoption rather than whāngai. Pākehā regarded this as progressing Māori. The 1962 amendment to the N.Z. Adoption Act 1955 was assimilationist as it called for a single law for everyone. The fundamental premise of assimilation was that Pākehā civilisation and ways of being were contemporary, progressive and superior to traditional Māori customs which were now redundant (Department of Social Welfare, 1986). Mr. Hanan, the Attorney-General, rebuffed the idea that older whānau members ought to adopt children, instead commending young Pākehā couples who adopted Māori infants (Griffith, 1997c; Mikaere, 2003). Mikaere also referred to adopted children being owned by both their birth parents and adoptive parents and that; providing the questions of ownership are determined when birth parents hand over their child to the adoptive parents, the future will be satisfactory for all parties (Andersen, 1991; Shawyer, 1979).

In 1962 there were three ways to adopt Māori offspring. The first was traditional whāngai adoption with no participation by the courts (Griffith, 1997c; Mikaere, 2003). The second was a compromise between whāngai and 'closed stranger' adoption which was a legal contract with the involvement of Māori welfare officers, but aimed for openness and the retention of children within the whānau. According to Mikaere (2003) this would happen when the birth and adoptive parents knew each other or were related and an officer's help was required to legalise the agreement. The third method, legal adoption assisted by child welfare officers, was the most damaging and caused permanent harm to Māori whānau. The welfare officers were called by institutions when unmarried mothers gave birth to their children (Mikaere, 2003). Sometimes the young woman would be living away from her home, disconnected from her whānau or too whakamā (ashamed) to let her parents know of her situation. If Māori welfare officers had made contact with the woman's whānau, they would likely have supported the mother and claimed the mokopuna (grandchild). Instead, the Māori welfare officers would pressure the young woman with the arguments that; her baby would be financially better off, illegitimacy was disgraceful and shameful so she should not tell her whānau that she was pregnant, and that to retain her baby would be selfish (Else, 1991; Shawyer, 1979). She could have more children when she became a respectable married woman. The substitution of children and parents was therefore sanctioned. There were other instances where the mother was Pākehā and the child's father was Māori and his whānau

either had no knowledge of the adoption or were opposed to it but had no say (Else, 1991; Mikaere, 2003). The damage inflicted by 'closed stranger' adoption on Māori women and children, is only a fraction of the multifaceted mesh of domination ensuing from colonisation (Mikaere, 2003).

The theory of environmentalism which is the principle of the environment prevailing over heredity, was current during the 'closed stranger' adoption system and was another issue that influenced adoptive mothers / parents (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997b). The theory was that a child will develop in the correct way if it is nurtured in the right environment. I naively believed that children 'came blank' and were influenced only by their environment not by their genes. For example, Dr Benjamin Spock, a well-known 'child-rearing expert' in the 1950s asserted that there was no likelihood of children inheriting such things as alcoholism, mental illness or criminality (Spock, 1954). It was only the environment that would affect them.

After relinquishing her baby to adoption it was expected that the birth mother would continue her life and not desire to see her baby again, and that the child would be brought up contentedly and not wish to find out about his / her origins. This separation and loss of contact was known in some circles as the complete break feature of adoption (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997b, 1997c; Law Commission, 2000); a complete break between the birth mother and her child. Complete break secrecy requirements were placed in the 1955 Adoption Act with no query or discussion with the people most affected, the birth mother and her child (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997a; Iwanek, 1997; Law Commission, 2000; Mann, 1997). According to Griffith (1997c, p. 10) "A complete break would allow the adoptive environment full reign to take over and shape the adoptee's life into the mould of the adoptive family". The facts and reality of their birth records were concealed from the adoptee and therefore the adoptive parents, forever. It is interesting to note that the Adoption Act 1955 itself does not refer to either closed or open adoptions. The interpretation and practical implementation of the Act resulted in the secrecy and lack of sharing of information between the birthparents and adoptive parents (J. Cunningham, personal communication, April 17, 2009).

The way in which the Pākehā legal system affected the experiences of Māori women adopting children under the 'closed stranger' system meant that they were in very different

circumstances from traditional mātua whāngai. In whānau where traditional whāngai was practiced, the need for adoptees to find out about their birth parents is already taken into account, and they always know who their birth parents are and the reasons that their mātua whāngai sought to care for them and this is central to the current research.

Whāngai

Whāngai is the Māori practice of adoption where children are given to people other than their biological parents to raise. Traditionally, this practice took place within the whānau or hapū of the biological parents so that the child had access to his whānau and knew who his birth parents were and grew up with them (J. Bradley, 1997; Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Griffith, 1997c; McRae & Nikora, 2006; Metge, 1995). In Māoridom, tamariki whāngai is the most common term for children raised by someone other than their birth parents. Today's practice of open adoption is more in line with the practice of whāngai and was influenced by Puao-te-ata-tu which in 1988 called for a return to the values and custom of having tamariki (children) and mokopuna (grandchildren) given back to be looked after by whānau (extended family). In 1984 the agenda within which this plan had been taken was the 'Mātua Whāngai' programme, which was then a programme of family guardianship and deinstitutionalisation encouraged by the departments of Maori Affairs, Justice and Social Welfare. As a programme, Mātua Whāngai attempted to be all things to Māori, which brought about the Rangihau committee in 1986 to demand a return to its primary aim of caring for offspring in the whānau rather than having a youngster entering into care (Department of Social Welfare, 1986).

Adoption in the 'closed stranger' period clashed with traditional Māori principles, values and customs regarding children being brought up by people who were not members of their whānau. When speaking of whāngai Metge (1995) says that disparities in the manner that Māori and Pākehā regard adoption are mirrored in the vocabulary that they employ and the manner in which they make use of them when talking about adoption. For example, she declares that Pākehā usually associate adoption with legal adoption and regard it as the opposite of fostering whereas Māori regard legal adoption as a sub-category of adoption / whāngai, rather than equating them as the law does. Māori set a positive assessment on the practice of whāngai and the position of every one concerned (Metge, 1995).

This positive assessment also relates to the three Māori expressions for adoption, atawhai, taurima and whāngai. Atawhai denotes "show kindness to, be liberal, foster; be inclined to, desire" and taurima signifies "entertain; treat with care, tend". Whāngai indicates "feed; nourish, bring up" (Williams, 1971 as cited in Metge, 1995, p. 211). The word whāngai also has the suggestion of the English 'care for', meaning the nourishing of mind and spirit not just the body (Metge, 1995). J. Bradley (1997), states that the sense of this expression supposes that the child is being cared for in the complete meaning of the word, including instruction and affection as well as being fed. Māori use these adoption terms while conversing in English and Māori (Metge, 1995). Atawhai, taurima and whāngai are options preferred by various iwi: atawhai in Tai Tokerau, taurima in Taranaki and the remainder tend to use whāngai. The connotations of these three expressions are alike but not exactly the same.

Māori generally use the words atawhai, taurima and whāngai when referring to adoption whether it is legal adoption or customary Māori adoption (Metge, 1995). The three terms all operate both as verbs and as adjectives for example, tamaiti (child), tama (son), tamāhine (daughter), kōtiro (daughter in Tai Tokerau), whaea (mother), matua (father) and mātua (parents). They can be applied as nouns as well: he atawhai, he taurima, he whāngai. According to Metge (1995) however, not one has a meaning which matches precisely to the English noun 'adoption'. In this thesis the term whāngai will be used.

The positive assessment that Māori have of whāngai means that providing they offer them to whānau, biological parents who relinquish offspring are not thought of as avoiding their obligations or of not having aroha for their tamaiti. On the contrary they are admired for their kindness (Metge, 1995). As biological and whāngai parents are usually members of the same whānau there is not the 'difference' issue encountered in 'closed stranger' adoption. Giving children clandestinely to outsiders is definitely disapproved of, because then they are not only lost to the birth parents but to the grandparents and the wider whānau as well. Usually, tamariki atawhai are children who are genuinely sought after (Metge, 1995).

Whāngai associations happen for many reasons and in many situations. Motives for relinquishing a child to other members of the whānau were the enhancement of that whānau by the building of lasting ties, advantaging childless couples, and giving respite for parents

who were having difficulty coping (Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Metge, 1995; Mikaere, 2003). Aroha as unselfish love is mixed with aroha as whānau obligation. For example, the necessity to take care of children born to single mothers has at all times been a significant motive for whāngai care, both previous to and after the availability of the Domestic Purposes Benefit. However, according to Metge (1995) a considerable number of whāngai as well come from people who are married to each other.

A very common practice was for grandparents to whāngai grandchildren especially the first grandchild, but there was absolutely no secrecy involved, for it was imperative that the child know his / her whakapapa (Metge, 1995; Mikaere, 2003). According to McRae & Nikora (2006) if whānau settings are healthy particularly in regards to an affirmed cultural identity, and if whāngai have the chance to mix with and know their wider whānau, it would be best that Māori look for sustenance from their whānau rather than obtaining support or yielding jurisdiction to the government to choose what is best for their children. The openness which is characteristic of whāngai is in direct opposition to that of 'closed stranger' adoption.

In the case of whāngai, and with all children in Māoridom, the child belongs to the whānau rather than exclusively to his / her parents (Metge, 1995; Mikaere, 2003). There was certainly no stigma attached to tamariki whāngai. In fact, they were sometimes thought to be more privileged than other children. Rose Pere, who was brought up by her grandparents in her early years, sees herself as a mokopuna (grandchild) who was loved and adored (Else, 1991; Mikaere, 2003). Often, whāngai were favoured, and were specifically selected by kaumātua because of their abilities and their promise. Whāngai agreements did not have to last forever: Children are not possessions. Māori children may experience numerous households, but they only have one whānau (Vercoe, 1994).

The practice of whāngai was a Māori cultural practice which had worked extremely well for Māori for many years. However, in the case of children being legally adopted by Māori women in the 'closed stranger' adoption system an important issue arises over whether the children are entitled to inherit property when their mātua whāngai die. Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption system perhaps removed from their whenua (land), may have been unfamiliar with land succession and might not have considered the question of

whether or not to leave their Māori land if they have any, to their adopted child. This question is a very important aspect of this research.

Succession to Māori land

Whatu ngarongaro te tangata

Toitu te whenua

People will perish

But the land is permanent

I had not considered the issue of land succession when first contemplating my thesis, but it was brought to my attention at a scholarship hui that I was attending when I mentioned my planned thesis topic. At the time I decided that it was an adoptee issue rather than an adoptive mother issue. However, at another hui when asked to elaborate on my study, the question was again posed "Would I ask my participants how they felt about leaving their Māori land to their adopted child?" When I voiced my opinion that it was an adoptee issue I was told that it was not and that it would be a good idea to ask these mothers how they and their whānau felt about the issue (M. Durie, personal communication, November 9, 2007). I then realised that it was a much more important issue than I had thought and it needed to be included in my thesis.

Māori land can be owned by one person, or often by numerous people. Sometimes one block or title can have hundreds of owners. Upon the death of an owner, it is vital to transfer his / her land interests to those entitled to obtain those interests. The name of that procedure is succession (Te Kooti Whenua Maori, 2008). According to Metge (1995) if it was property that the mātua whāngai had accumulated in their lifetime then it was quite acceptable to pass it on to the whāngai. However, if it was "property tuku iho nō ngā tūpuna (handed down from the ancestors) and held in trust for other descendants" (Metge, 1995 p. 248) then there were other considerations.

Succession to advantageous interests in Māori land is controlled by particular legislation which allocates the determination of ownership and succession to the Māori Land Court. The

Te Ture Whenua Māori / Māori Land Act which supplanted the previous legislation in 1993 expressly allows for Māori owners of interests in Māori land to dispose of them by will to whāngai whom it describes as "a person adopted in accordance with tikanga Māori" (Law Commission, 2000). The 1993 Act also allows for legally adopted children to inherit Māori land even if those children are Pākehā. If there is no will, section 109 of the Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 states that: "Subject to any spouse's interest (as above), the deceased's children are entitled to any interests in equal shares. Children legally adopted into the family are included but not children legally adopted out. Any recognized whāngai children may also be included". Still, like so many features of the whāngai association, there is no one, universal, constant law governing the inheritance of property by whāngai (Metge, 1995). As far as legal adoption is concerned, some iwi do not allow them to succeed. Other iwi leave this responsibility to individual hapū to decide.

Succession to Māori land is a particularly important issue because land is integral to a Māori identity. It is our turangawaewae, the place of our tupuna (ancestors). Our pepeha (mihi given by Māori that states where they are from) tells of our maunga (mountain), awa (river) and our iwi (tribe). The intimate spiritual connection that Māori have with the land originates from their customary belief of the fundamental source of mankind developing from the tender bond of the earth mother, Papa-tu-a-nuku, with the sky-father, Rangi-nui-tu-nei. Health and welfare are linked to mana whenua (tribal land ownership) (Durie, 1998). John Te Rangihau (1987, p. 6) stated that "the birth, life and death of Māori all came back to the land".

Land succession has its difficulties and complexities when a child is adopted but this is not an issue for a biological parent. Māori women who legally adopted children under the 'closed stranger' system would likely wish to have their adopted child succeed to their land and this could be an uncomplicated decision unless whānau members or iwi disagree with it. When this happens the mother is liable to feel angry or sad but part of her mothering role is to perform the difficult task of telling her child that he / she is not able to succeed to her Māori land.

Mothering

Fontenot (2007) reviewed research on adoptive mothers' transistion to motherhood with the aim of strengthening the clinical practice of nurses by enabling them to offer more thorough care for adoptive mothers. According to Fontenot in order to gain an understanding of and to arrive at conclusions about particular mothering populations such as adoptive mothers it is necessary to scrutinise the established theories of maternal transition. Mercer's theory of the transition to motherhood consists of four phases: "(a) commitment, attachment, and preparation (pregnancy); (b) acquaintance, learning, and physical restoration (2-6 weeks post birth); (c) moving toward a new normal (2 weeks to 4 months); and (d) achievement of the maternal identity (around 4 months)" (Mercer, 2004, p. 231). Nelson (2003, p. 471) declared, "Engagement is the basic social process in maternal transition, which enables the often simultaneous process of growth and transformation". Five themes transpired in Nelson's metasynthesis of qualitative research of the transition to motherhood, with 13 subthemes: "(a) commitment: making the decision to mother, feeling the maternal-infant bond, and accepting responsibility, (b) daily life: learning mothering, and using role models, (c) relationships: adapting to changed relationship with partner, and adapting to changed relationship with family and friends, (d) work: decisions about returning to work, living with the timing of the return, and dealing with conflicts / search for balance, and (e) self: facing the past, facing oneself, and coming to feel like a mother". According to Rubin (1975, 1984) cognitive processes concerned with becoming a mother were taking on, taking in, and letting go.

Both biological and adoptive parents have to conquer numerous physical and mental obstacles in the transition to parenthood, as becoming a mother is demanding and multifaceted. Adoptive mothers though, do not experience the introductory stages of pregnancy nor do they have a similar level of health care participation and management as does a biological mother (Fontenot, 2007). Investigators still do not have a complete understanding of how adoptive mothers transition to motherhood. Some of the issues that adoptive parents have had to deal with have been infertility, not knowing when the baby would arrive, experiencing the scrutiny of interviews to establish whether or not they will be accepted as adoptive parents, stigma, and not having other adoptive parents as role models (Brodzinsky & Huffman, 1988). Sherwen, Smith & Cueman (1984) found that prospective adoptive mothers felt anxious about

> …acceptance of infertility, difficulty in preparing for adoptive parenthood, inadequate support
> systems, fear of expressing negative feelings about the child, underestimation of the impact of

cultural differences, the child's lack of responsiveness or attachment behaviours, expenses and daily care involved for handicapped children, difficulties with adoption agencies, and fears about reappearance of biological parents (Fontenot, 2007, p. 176).

The preadoptive stage begins when a woman elects to adopt and ends when she is given a child. Prospective adoptive mothers encounter a variety of feelings, such as pressure, doubt, expectation, risk taking, separation, investment, attachment, delight, and love (Lobar & Phillips, 1996 as cited in Fontenot, 2007; Sandelowski, Harris, & Holditch-Davis, 1993; Solchany, 1998). Researchers originally thought that the doubt and further pressure experienced by the adoptive parents may have affected their transition to parenthood (Fontenot, 2007; Holditch-Davis, Sandelowski, & Harris, 1998; Levy-Shiff, Bar, & Har-Even, 1990) but their investigations depicted the adoptive mothers as managing and acclimatizing admirably to their new tasks. Solchany (1998) typified the preadoptive stage using seven themes: taking control, creating a family, anticipating, celebrating the pictures, honoring the child's origins, investing personally and bonding. Adoptive mothers believed that they were fated to adopt a family. There were three preadoption stages acknowledged by Lobar and Phillips (1996): making the decision to adopt; the adoption path; and "pregnancy wait".

Receiving a baby and the early mothering stage marks the beginning of the postadoptive stage. In the research evaluated, generally adoptive parents operated in the same way as biological parents and were not held back at all in their initial parenting (Fontenot, 2007). Biological mothers and adoptive mothers had similar emotions and experiences when they became mothers (Koepke, Anglin, Austin, & Delesalle, 1991). Both groups of women in the main were optimistic about the way that the babies fitted in to their lives. Adoptive mothers tended to talk more about how the babies belonged to them, whilst the birth mothers talked more about the babies' physical qualities (Fontenot, 2007). The birth mothers of course would have no need to describe how the babies were theirs. Adoptive mothers appeared to be happier in comparison to birth mothers who felt tense, exhausted and trapped. Both biological and adoptive mothers had their particular learning experiences.

Mothering is a role that Māori adoptive mothers grew into in the same way as biological mothers did albeit without the experience of pregnancy to prepare them for the role. They had the same issues of mothering that biological mothers encountered but also had the extra issues of dealing with others' feelings about adoption and adoptive families. Sometimes this

included the issue of race if their baby was a lot darker than the mother herself and did not 'match'.

Race

The question of 'race' is found all the way through the narrative of 'closed adoption' in Aotearoa / New Zealand (Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Else, 1991). There were few Pākehā couples who were prepared to adopt Māori or part-Māori children, or for that matter any child not of European descent. This was considered a significant difficulty in adoption, as shown by Social Welfare records (Else, 1991). Because the law stated that on adoption the child became as if born to the adoptive parents, attempts were made to match the baby to the adoptive parents in that they were matched to look as much like each other as possible (Else, 1991; Griffith, 1997c). When it came to matching children to parents, race was typically regarded as merely a matter of colouring. For instance advertisements might state that the baby, although Māori, was quite fair-skinned.

The majority of people wanting to adopt were Pākehā, so cross cultural adoption went completely against the notion of physical matching (Else, 1991). Māori children as well as being deprived of their inheritance because they had no knowledge of their parents and whakapapa had to face racism in the pursuit of appropriate adoptive parents (Else, 1991; Mikaere, 2003). It was comparatively easy to find families for Māori baby girls if they were fair. However, finding families for boys was more challenging and particularly so if they were dark- skinned. This was thought to be related to families not wanting to give their name to an adopted child.

Physical features were the most obvious way to match (Else, 1991) but birth mothers could also match by stipulating the religion of the family who adopted her child. The number of babies available made no difference, fair Pākehā babies from 'good' circumstances were the first to be adopted, and dark, mixed-race babies from 'poor' circumstances were the last. The establishment's method of matching for marginality meant that Māori children were frequently placed with adoptive parents who were somehow deemed marginal. On the other hand, these babies could end up in a succession of foster homes or institutions. Nevertheless, all of this was thought to be better than the stigma of illegitimacy or the 'less enlightened'

alternative of staying inside the whānau (Else, 1991). The powers operating made matching for marginality an essential element of the Aotearoa / New Zealand adoption structure.

Race was a prevalent part of legal adoption in the 'closed stranger' system as there were more Māori and Island babies than Pākehā available for adoption and more Pākehā couples adopting. Māori women adopting at this time sometimes experienced racism and being 'matched' to a baby. Generally Māori women received Māori babies but sometimes they were offered a Pākehā baby and so experienced cross-cultural adoption.

Cross-cultural adoption

Cross-cultural adoption occurs when the adoptive parents and their adopted child are of different cultures. Types of cross-cultural adoption are "transracial" adoption and "transnational" adoption. There are some similarities between adoption in the 'closed stranger' period in Aotearoa / New Zealand and transracial adoptions in the United States of America (U.S.A.). In both countries transracial adoptions occurred when there was a scarcity of Māori or African American adoptive families and smaller numbers of Pākehā or White American babies and children offered for adoption (C. Bradley & Hawkins-Leon, 2002; Else, 1991). Since the early 1970s the custom of transracial adoption has been very contentious (Alexander & Curtis, 1996; Shireman & Johnson, 1986). The foundation of a great deal of this debate is credited to an opinion document (Shireman & Johnson, 1986; Simon & Altstein, 1977, p. 202) drawn up by the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) that "vehemently opposed" (p.15) White American families adopting African American children and called this kind of adoption a type of 'cultural genocide'.

The expression 'cultural genocide' originally came into being when in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s Native American children were taken away from their tribes, relatives, customs, and identity into White American families (Hawkins-Leōn, 1997-1998). There were so many of these out of home placements that Congress enacted the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 to stem the permanent annihilation of the Native American tribal structure (Hawkins-Leōn, 1997-1998). ICWA gives Native American Indian Nations and Tribes, as well as the Alaskan Aleuts, the entitlement to manage adoptions that concern their tribal people because it takes priority over the local adoption laws of every state (Limb, Chance, & Brown, 2003).

In relation to the transracial adoption of African American children, the NABSW (in 1972) asserted this:

> …Black children belong, physically, psychologically and culturally in Black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves and develop a sound projection of their future ...Included in the socialisation process is the child's cultural heritage which is an important segment of the total process. This must begin at the earliest moment; otherwise our children will not have the background and knowledge which is necessary to survive in a racist society. This is impossible if the child is placed with White parents in a White environment (as cited in Simon & Altstein, 1977, p. 50).

The majority of the argument concerning transracial adoption has centred on whether African American children can acquire strong racial and cultural identities in White American families (Curtis, 1996). Therefore, the socialisation process for African American children has been recognized as being distinct from that for White American children. Congress vigorously joined in the transracial adoption discussion by passing the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA, 1994 as cited in C. Bradley & Hawkins-Leon, 2002). MEPA forbade organizations in receipt of federal funds from refusing anyone the chance to become an adoptive parent, because of their race, colour or nationality, or the child concerned to encourage the adoption of more African American children.

As well as the issues mentioned by NABSW, African American child-rearing specialists have confirmed over the last 30 years that African American parents have the complicated responsibility of training their offspring to do well in a culture that has a record of being antagonistic and racist toward African Americans (Bradley, 1998; Robinson & Ginter, 1999 as cited in C. Bradley & Hawkins-Leon, 2002). To offset the force of these communal stresses on African American children, African American parents have utilised an assortment of adaptive plans to present their children with accurate and positive details concerning African American people and their past. This course of action has been called racial socialization. As stated by Greene (1992), in applying this practice:

> African American parents must find ways of warning their children about racial dangers and disappointments without overwhelming them or being overly protective.

> Either extreme will facilitate the development of defensive styles that leave a child inadequately prepared to negotiate the world with a realistic perspective (p.64).

The discussion on transracial adoption is ongoing. C. Bradley & Hawkins-León (2002) assert that as long as states carry on passing laws and regulations approved in acquiescence with the creed of the federal MEPA / Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption Act (IEA) and Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), it will be a long time before the implications of these laws are fully appreciated.

These same issues of placing Black children in Black families apply to Māori as well. I argue that Māori babies should be placed in their whānau or hapū if at all possible so that they know who they are and where they come from that is, know their identity, as in the practice of whāngai. The notion of African American parents being responsible for teaching their children to succeed in a hostile and racist society is one that Māori parents could and sometimes do aspire to, difficult though that might be.

Transnational adoption is a form of cross-cultural adoption that has been in operation since the end of the Second World War and the Korean War which saw the occurrence of many dispossessed offspring in Europe and Asia (Gailey, 2006; Simon & Altstein, 1977; Volkman, 2005). The adoption of children between countries started to rise in the 1990s (Noy-Sharav, 2005; Volkman, 2005). The present upsurge in adoption had not been seen before. In the latter years of the twentieth century, adoptions from overseas to Western countries climbed progressively, with almost 140,000 transnational adoptions taking place in the United States (Volkman, 2005). Because of a multifaceted blend of political, financial, and social disturbances, sometimes related to the changing reproductive policies of the country, the list of sending countries, that is countries that give children for adoption, altered significantly at this time. In the late 1990s China and Russia both sent approximately 5000 children annually to the U.S.A. Later, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Romania, South Korea, the Ukraine and Vietnam began sending children.

Associates of one Internet adoption listserv (an electronic mailing list) for transnational adoptees in 2004 had resided in 16 countries, primarily the United States, Europe and Australia, with some associates in a number of Asian countries, and they had been adopted

from 36 countries, from Albania to Vietnam. Transnational adoptees vigorously question the basic notions of community, culture, family, identity and roots (Volkman, 2005). The manner in which these notions and procedures are being debated is more and more global, and more and more intergenerational, as older adoptees mentor the new generation of adoptees or newer legions of adoptive parents, and have in effect become their families because they are the only people who know and have the same lived experience of transnational adoption.

In transnational adoption, unlike in the 'closed stranger' adoption period it has been the adoptive mothers' voices that have been heard in the literature. This is possibly because they have been the ones who have made the journey across the world to adopt babies and perhaps because many of them are educated and middle class. Adoptive parents at times speculate whether they are doing things better than the generation that paved the way for them (Volkman, 2005). They believe they are making room for articulating anger, grieving, accepting birth parents, admitting difference, valuing culture and so on. Adoptive parents hope that the new generation of transnational adoptees might become more political rather than being motivated by individual anger and segregation and more by concerns in favour of social justice and equality. In the transnational adoption triad it is the birth parent who is not heard (Volkman, 2005)unlike in Western adoption.

Transracial local adoption and Native American adoption have several structural matters in common with transnational adoption (Volkman, 2005). Every adoption that crosses boundaries such as class, country, culture, ethnicity or race, is fashioned by intense inequalities in power, and by inconsistencies and ambivalence. Pauline Turner Strong, in her writings on extratribal (Native American) adoption, encapsulates this expressively: "Adoption across political and cultural borders may simultaneously be an act of violence and an act of love, an excruciating rupture and a generous incorporation, an appropriation of valued resources and a constitution of personal ties" (Strong, 2002, p. 471).

Mention must be made here of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation regarding Intercountry Adoption (the Hague Convention). Aotearoa / New Zealand is a participant in the Hague Convention. Every adoption by New Zealanders of a child from a different nation that is a contributor to the Hague Convention, has to be consistent with the full requirements placed in the Convention (which is specified in Schedule

2 to the Aspects of International Child Abduction (AICA) and which has the power of law in Aotearoa / New Zealand because of s.2 of that Act). The Hague Convention states that the child ought to be raised in a family unit, in an environment of contentment, affection and appreciation. The purpose of the Convention was to ensure that the best interests of the child were the paramount consideration and to safeguard his / her basic human rights, and to put a stop to the kidnap or sale of children (Griffith, 1997c).

Cross-cultural adoption whether it be transracial or transnational adoption has much relevance to 'closed stranger' adoption in Aotearoa / New Zealand. Transracial and transnational adoption involve children being adopted into families of a different culture as did many Aotearoa / New Zealand adoptions in the 'closed stranger' period. All of these adoptions involve stigma which Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' system experienced and which is evident throughout the current research.

Stigma

Stigma is a topic found in the literature on adoption particularly on adoptive mothers. Kirk was the first to discuss adoption stigma (Kirk, 1964, 1981). His books are seminal works for researchers of adoptive parents and are cited in many studies for example (Else, 1991; Fisher, 2003; Mann, 1997; Wegar, 1995, 2000). Kirk first noticed stigmatising remarks when he informed others that he was going to adopt a child (Kirk, 1964, 1981). He developed the Shared Fate theory of rejection of difference (R/D) and acknowledgement of difference (A/D) as ways in which adoptive parents operate with respect to adoption. Kirk rationalized that A/D facilitates parental empathy with the child's situation, and in turn facilitates the parent's willingness to allow the child to unreservedly ask about the connotations of adoption. According to Kirk this is the more preferred way of operating. Coping behavior of the R/D sort might help the adoptive parents in appeasing the hurt of their own deprivation; however, these methods of coping do not ultimately advance the attainment of their family's integration.

Shawyer was an early Aotearoa / New Zealand adoption author who was one of the first to stigmatise adoptive mothers stating that:

Some women adopt when their youngest goes to school in order to resolve the problem of what to do whilst the children are at school. But mostly children are adopted because people who have already had the icing off the cake of opportunity feel entitled to steal the crumbs they inadvertently left over for the poor – their children (1979, p. 25).

Shawyer is referring here to the fact that generally adoptive parents were middle class and well-off therefore 'have already had the icing off the cake' (1979). She also pointed out that if there had not been waiting lists of people wanting to adopt, women would not have been pressured to give up their babies. This statement in no uncertain terms puts the blame on adoptive mothers rather than the moral and social climate of the time that regarded illegitimacy as a sin. I also feel that the reverse is true, that if there had not been babies available for adoption, there would not have been so many people looking to adopt. Indeed, Mann, (1997) stated that policy and practice altered because so many babies had been relinquished for adoption. In the 1960s and early 1970s the enthusiastic conscription of adoptive parents that took place was in complete contrast to the practice of the 1990s when the number of people wanting to adopt was much larger than the number of children relinquished. There are reasons for this: the Domestic Purposes benefit became available; and the moral and social climate changed so that illegitimacy was no longer regarded as a sin.

Research indicates that the "nuclear family unit of a heterosexual couple and their biological children" is what constitutes a 'real' family (Andersen, 1991; Mikaere, 2003) therefore rendering adoptive families as possibly 'unreal' or at least 'not as good as'. According to Mann (1997) and Sorosky, Baran and Pannor (1984) disapproving societal opinions have led to themes that they have observed in adoptive mothers such as, perfectionism, confusion, powerlessness, overprotectiveness and shame. The perfectionism was caused by adoptive parents believing that they had to be perfect parents because they were raising another's child. Remarks like "you would never know she / he was adopted" are seemingly complimentary however result in both child and parent feeling flawed (Mann, 1997). Overprotectiveness is allied to responsibility. Adoptive parents feel protective of their children and consequently can sometimes make light of their behaviour however, they feel that they need always be perceived to be managing and helpful as well (Mann, 1997; Sorosky, Baran, & Pannor, 1984). The need to be perfect because you are raising another person's child and the feeling of protectiveness because your child is considered less than a child raised by his / her biological parents, causes couples to feel stigmatized in the wider society. Stigmatism meant or not,

affects how adoptive parents consider themselves. Hoffman-Reim states: "Because of their artificial construction [adoptive parents] define their own family status by comparing it with that of normal families" (1989, p. 26 as cited in Mann, 1997). The application of 'artificial construction' as contrasted to 'normal family' at once locates adoptive families as second rate as far as parenthood is concerned. This seems to be based on 'closed stranger' adoption / nuclear family models rather than the whāngai / whānau models.

Miall (1987) studied seventy-one infertile women who gave their opinions of public perceptions of adoption. In particular, these women thought that a biological bond as well as being significant for the formation of an affectionate connection with a child, was recognized as the single precondition for parenthood by the wider community. That is to say, no matter what their parenting ability or the type of bond they had built with their adopted children, the respondents sensed that the community still does not regard them as 'real' parents. Their biological or birth parents are considered the real parents of their children. One respondent said:

> It appears to me there is a denial of the legitimacy of the adoptive family ... You start
> to have this feeling that you are never really the parent; that it's only the birth parents
> who are the real parents and that they are always better off with the birth parent.
> (p. 37).

As well as the query regarding beliefs, respondents were asked if they thought that others had ideas about adoption which they kept to themselves. Almost 80% agreed. When the open-ended replies were analysed the results showed once more that the respondents found these tacit considerations to be disapproving and to be connected to the lack of a biological connection. One respondent observed, "Yes, I do believe that. I think it's true" (Miall, 1996, p. 37).

Some literature portrays infertile adoptive mothers as being a danger to their adopted children (Wegar, 1995). After the psychological wellbeing of adoptees initially appeared as a research issue, psychiatrists hypothesized concerning "the sterile woman ['s ability to] overcome the narcissistic mortification of her inferiority as a woman" so much so that they wondered if she were able to develop into a decent mother (H. Deutsch, 1945, p. 397). The original psychodynamic assumptions to emerge in the adoption literature in the mid-1940s were

concerned with the harmful mental outcome of sterility on an adoptive mother's ability to completely give the adopted child her motherly love (Marquis & Detweiler, 1985; Wegar, 1995). Such references are no longer commonly used in the adoption literature but the implications of infertility on the adopted mother continued to be an issue. The infertile sterile man and his possible effect on the adoptive child is noticeably absent in the literature.

This supposed inability to completely love her adopted child has had infertile adoptive mothers depicted as incompetent and liable to bring about or at least affect mental health problems in their adopted offspring (Marquis & Detweiler, 1985; Wegar, 1995). The psychodynamic focus reflects the practical requirements of adoption case workers. However, it is inclined to label problems in adoptive families as biologically determined and portrays adoptive relationships as intrinsically atypical, substandard and imperfect. Wegar (1995) felt that conversely, the social context of mothering, as well as disapproving societal opinions on infertility and adoption, has been ignored.

A positive research finding on the effect of infertility on parenting stated that it does not seem to influence early parenting (Holditch-Davis, et al., 1998). Their research investigated infertile couples who become parents either by adoption or by pregnancy. Their initial parent–infant communications were observed. Holditch-Davis et al. established that overall, the number of behaviours displayed by infertile biological parents were very similar to those of fertile parents. Behavioural differences of adoptive parents and biological parents are likely to be behavioural reactions of their babies who were generally older than those of biological parents, not as confirmation of dissimilar parenting approaches. This research showed that there is no substantiation that a record of infertility has a harmful outcome on parenting. To sum up, the results propose that neither infertility nor adoption as such prejudice early parenting.

A more recent review which showed that adoptive parents were likely to be competent parents was conducted by O'Brien and Zamostny (2003). They conducted a review of 22 experimental investigations concerning adoptive children and their parents and 16 journal articles comparing adoptive and biological families between 1985 and 2003 in the disciplines of social work and psychology. They thought that a number of adoptive parents may have skills and traits that lead them to be competent parents and buffer them against dominant harmful effects. Adoptive parents are generally older and financially better off. Numerous

adoptive parents found infertility and choices connected to the significance of raising a child difficult to cope with (Berry, Barth, & Needell, 1996). Parents whose relationships endured the tests linked with infertility and with choosing to follow an alternative way of constructing a family might have a solid base for a united attitude to parenting. Numerous adoptive parents set great store on being parents and have conquered many barriers to achieve their dream of a family. They can be in a good position to enjoy the pleasures of family life. As well, adoptive parents have to suffer a screening procedure when their aptitude to parent is assessed and they are invited to talk about important parenting matters. The road to adoption teaches prospective parents about the trials and delights related to adoption (O'Brien & Zamostny, 2003).

Another accusation levelled at adoptive parents is that they legally adopt their children because it gives them ownership or possession of their adopted child (Griffith, 1997c; Ludbrook, 1991) and the idea that children are objects or parental possessions is still present in adoption law (Trapski's Family Law cited in Griffith, 1997c). It seems that the principles of capitalism, which concern ownership, property and greed, led to the inflexibility of adoption laws, particularly following the Second World War. Children's needs appear to have received little consideration (Iwanek, 1997; Ludbrook, 1990, 1991, 1994). Though adoption in Aotearoa / New Zealand is perceived as being part of family law Ludbrook (1994) believes that it would be more appropriate to include it in property law. Biological parents as guardians of their children under New Zealand law are, like adoptive parents, also owners of their biological child unless they relinquish them to adoption or guardianship by another person. If applied literally children adopted *and* biological remain possessions of their parents until their twentieth birthday.

In terms of adoptive parents Mann, (1997) talked of their silence and how she became aware that they did not speak out about their experiences. She said that there are support groups for adoptive parents but they tend to be silent. Mann also spoke of being at adoption seminars where anger was being levelled at adoptive parents and they did not defend themselves. Where there is stigma there is often shame and it is this shame that can lead to the keeping of secrets and silence so prevalent in the practice of 'closed stranger' adoption. Mann stated that adoptive parents' voices need to be heard in adoption discussion, the literature and policy. This research will give a voice to six Māori adoptive mothers.

Fisher (2003) had doubts as to whether or not adoption was still stigmatised because surveys of the American public and some research indicated that opinions of adoption were positive. However, research by Wegar (1995; 2000) and Miall (1996) asserts that adoption and the adoptive family *are* stigmatised. Fisher (2003) believes that how stigma is defined decides if adoption is stigmatised or not. Therefore, if one defines stigma as members of adoptive families being discriminated against in terms of housing and employment Fisher would say that adoption is not stigmatised. However, if one defines stigma as being socially diminished in a social context then he would claim that adoption is stigmatised. He concluded that although Americans describe adoption favourably the number of adoptions has declined considerably meaning that adoption is still stigmatised. Adoption is *rated* positively but not often practiced.

Research that contrasted the quality of family relationships and well-being across five different family structures with a specific concentration on adoptive families was conducted (Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001). The investigation contrasted adoptive families with households that incorporated two biological parents, single mothers, stepfathers and stepmothers. Lansford et al. hold that investigators have researched adoptees more than they have adoptive parents (2001). Adoptive parents do not seem to be more vulnerable to negative adjustment and family difficulties than are other parents (Borders, Black, & Pasley, 1998) even though adoptive families frequently have to deal with discrimination and stigmatisation (Brodzinsky, 1987). Society assumes that men and women would rather have a biological family and this stigmatises adoptive families (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996). This leads to adoptive parents querying the validity and substance of their parental position (Miall, 1987). Lansford et al. found that the practices taking place in all these types of family, are more significant than family configuration in forecasting happiness and relationship effects (2001).

As Goffman stated in his work on stigma, the stigmatized individual discovers and embodies in the course of socialization "the standpoint of the normal, acquiring thereby the identity beliefs of the wider society and a general idea of what it would be like to possess a particular stigma" (1963, p. 32). Likewise, feelings are unable to be understood separately from the social relations, figures of speech, and structures of meaning in which they are practiced and conveyed (Franks & McCarthy, 1989).

The stigma of adoption is evident throughout the literature and concerns the lack of a biological tie. Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption system experienced the stigma of adoption. Adoptive mothers have been the focus of fewer studies than adoptees, birth mothers and adoptive families. Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' system have been further stigmatised because they do not exist in the literature hence the importance of the current research.

Literature focus on adoptees and birth mothers

The focus in the adoption literature has been on adoptees and birth mothers rather than adoptive parents (Griffith, 1994; Lansford, et al., 2001). Often the literature has been dedicated to researching whether adopted children are in greater danger of mental, learning, and behavioural difficulties. For a while, a great deal of this writing affirmed that they were. For instance, findings have indicated that adoptees are more prone to be identified as having learning problems, such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) and to have more recurrent education-connected behaviour issues (Brand & Brinich, 1999; C. Deutsch et al., 1982; Taichert & Harvin, 1975). These findings have been contradicted by other research which established that adopted teenagers felt more confident and in control than did the non-matched set of non-adopted teenagers (Marquis & Detweiler, 1985), other adopted teenagers gave an account of positive identities, robust ties with mothers and fathers, and positive signs of mental wellbeing at equivalent rates to their non-adopted brothers and sisters (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994; Borders, et al., 1998; Brodzinsky, Schechter, Braff, & Singer, 1984). The findings of Borders et al. "challenged pathological as-sumptions (sic) and myths about adopted children and their parents, suggesting that deficiency models are inadequate for researching and working with adopted children and their families" (p.237).

Birth mothers have also featured frequently in the adoption literature. A review of the literature on birth mothers found that they often suffered from unresolved sorrow, seclusion, problems with future relationships, and distress. When bearing in mind the distinctive life situations that cause birth parents to relinquish their babies, frameworks used for comprehending domination, advantage, identity, and recognition of diversity experienced by birth parents can be of assistance (Wiley & Baden, 2005). Fravel, McRoy & Grotevant (2000) found that the relinquished children were psychologically in attendance, not only at

important times such as birthdays and Christmas but while the birth-mother moved around her usual, everyday existence as well, and a study of 20 relinquishing mothers had still not resolved pathological grief responses even though several years had passed from the time of relinquishment. This group's scores for depression and psychosomatic indicators were unusually elevated (Condon, 1986).

There is less literature on adoptive parents than on adoptees and birth mothers (Griffith, 1994; Lansford, et al., 2001). Apart from the topic of stigma, some of that literature has centred on how adoptive parents were 'screened' for adoption to ensure that they were 'suitable' and that children did not get into the wrong hands (Else, 1991). Else observes that the basic facts were relatively easy to check up on, but the 'psychological' factors were much more difficult to investigate. One factor that was investigated in Aotearoa / New Zealand was the adoptive couple's relationship which was observed during the screening interviews. This would have been scarcely enough time to tell how healthy the relationship really was and it is likely couples would have been 'putting their best face forward' if they were having relationship problems.

Other factors investigated were motives for adopting, and attitudes to infertility, parenting, illegitimacy and 'telling' (that is, telling the child that he or she was adopted). Prospective adoptive parents who approached Child Welfare or various private organizations had as a minimum one interview prior to being placed on the waiting list (Else, 1991). It was not easy however, to make any sort of vetting work successfully. Regardless of Child Welfare's self-assured declarations, there was no established or conventional method of examining character and emotional aspects, and no general accord on which of these aspects were the most significant, what questions to pose, or how to measure the replies. In Aotearoa / New Zealand today birth mothers choose the adoptive parents themselves after viewing profiles of prospective adopters. This is in contrast to whāngai where the decision is likely to be a collective one made in conjunction with other members of the whānau.

The contrast between the whāngai and 'closed adoption' models is further illustrated by the fact that the law at the time did not specify how much the adoptive parents were permitted to know about the child. A number of these parents did not want any information possibly because they felt uncomfortable as though they would be selecting a child and preferred to simply be given a child (Else, 1991). A few declined to have details of the baby's family,

maintaining that was of no concern or significance, as they themselves would now totally replace the previous family.

There is less literature on adoptive mothers per se Griffith (1994) but Else (1991) stated that some adoptive mothers were very interested in the background of their adopted child and wanted more information. Many realized that the infant when older would want as much information about his / her background as possible and that this would be in the child's best interests. Nevertheless, these mothers felt that they could not interrogate social workers. An adoptive mother interviewed by Else said:

> I was very curious about her parentage, but I felt very reticent about asking …I did ask quite a number of questions, but I was very conscious that I mustn't ask too much. I wanted to know about the circumstances of her birth, what her mother had looked like – it seemed there were no details of the father – what her mother was interested in, what the grandparents did, what her whole family background was – for the obvious reason, to pass all this on to the child later – I felt she would want to know – and also because I thought it would help enormously in understanding the development of that child (1991, p. 96).

Although there is some information on adoptive mothers my search of the literature revealed none on Māori adoptive mothers. Hence my interest in researching this overlooked group of women. What were their motivations for adopting? How did they and their whānau feel about their adopted child succeeding to their Māori land? Did the experience of adoption compromise their cultural identity? How did they fare when not only raising someone else's child, but carrying out that task with little knowledge of the child's background, his / her whānau?

Conclusion

The review of the literature indicated that 'closed stranger' adoption was harmful to Māori and the institution of whānau. Adoption legislation was assimilationist and designed to end the practice of whāngai. The fact that the literature focused on adoptees, birth mothers, adoptive families and adoptive mothers in that order was discussed, ending with the statement that there is no literature on Māori adoptive mothers. Another important theme evident in the literature is that of the stigma of adoption.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The "universal" approach, at least as it has been practised in New Zealand, falls well short of being able to locate Māori at the centre of the exercise or even to seriously incorporate Māori needs; nor has it significantly contributed to growing Māori researchers or promoting methodologies appropriate to Māori (Durie, 1996, p. 2).

Introduction

Good research design begins with choosing an appropriate epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods (Crotty, 1998b). Methodology is the theory of design, procedure or planning underpinning the selection and utilization of specific methods and connecting the selection and utilization of methods to the preferred results (Crotty, 1998a).

Traditionally empiricism holds the idea that our knowledge comes from sensory experience, in particular, observation is highly valued (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). There is less attention given to what we can hear and feel and taste. This relates to why we go out and collect data; we need to encounter the world to get data. In an empiricist epistemology these data are deemed to be *facts* about the world that can be recognized and chronicled without interpretation (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Packer, 1985). The researchers themselves are not necessary to the process, only what they do (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990). Empiricism is reductionist; elements are broken down into their smallest parts *and this limits meaning*. There is also an assumption of biological reductionism, that all 'beings' human and animal, share the same processes at a cellular level (Coolican, 1996; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). The empiricist epistemology assumes that knowledge comes from measuring and quantifying. Empiricism also assumes its findings to be ahistorical, that is, they are only considered in one moment in time but are assumed to be factual over time, unless other findings disconfirm them (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Packer, 1985).

Customarily, the discipline of psychology has valued positivist empiricism as the scientific methodology through which knowledge of human beings can be discovered, and facts can be

established. Walker (1997) asserts that in the past, science has been an instrument of colonialism. According to Smith (2001) Māori experience is both defined and overlooked by positivist paradigms. It is necessary for the procedures chosen for *this* inquiry to be culturally suitable and confirm Māori epistemology or Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) and Māori ontology. Bishop (1998) stated that Western investigators in Aotearoa / New Zealand have cultivated a practice of research that has maintained colonial principles, thus underrating and disparaging Māori knowledge and ways of learning so as to boost those of the colonizers and supporters of neo-colonial models.

Because this study concerns Māori women and their experiences the chosen methodology needs to place the women's kōrero (talk) in a framework that supports their many actualities (Morrison-Ngatai, 2004). Theoretical considerations concern how women and Māori have been marginalized over the years including being researched by men and by Western researchers (Bishop, 1998). Mead (1996) talks about 'Pākehā research' as being more than just positivist research; it is research which brings to any study of Māori, a different culture, set of values, and a different idea of such things as time, space and subjectivity. It is obvious that a quantitative empiricist methodology would not suffice, because this investigation does not conform to the deterministic controls of a quantitative model that does impose a different set of values on Māori (Crotty, 1998b; Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

Tomlins-Jahnke stated that to a degree "concerns by Māori regarding an appropriate methodology for conducting research about Māori people, finds parallels with proponents of qualitative studies (such as critical theory and action research) and feminist research" (1997 p. 7). Researchers employing qualitative methods seek to understand the world through interacting with, empathising with and interpreting the actions and perceptions of its actors (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Consequently, for the purpose of this research I have chosen a qualitative methodology as the best way to investigate the experiences of Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. The methodology utilized is Māori centred research and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is used to guide data collection and analysis.

Māori centred research

Māori centred research as defined below does not disregard other research methods, or the part that medical and health sciences have played in the development of research methods (Durie, 1996). However, its intention as its name suggests is to locate Māori people and Māori knowledge at the centre of the research action. The shift towards a Māori centred approach in Māori health research has been hastened by three developments. These are; the fact that indigenous peoples all over the world have gained greater self determination and independence since the latter part of the 20th Century, New Zealand's restated obligation to the Treaty of Waitangi and the realisation that Māori world views and Mātauranga Māori (Māori comprehension of knowledge) are unique (Durie, 1996). Cunningham (1999, p. 2) writes that "It is possible to argue that Māori traditionally operated in ways not dissimilar to researchers, scientists and technologists, albeit subject to their own methodologies, philosophies and world view".

Māori centred research calls upon the researcher to utilize "culturally appropriate practices and procedures" (Durie, 1996 p. 2) such as the use of karakia at the beginning and end of hui (meetings) including interviews, and the provision of kai (food) to participants before the same. It is also important to whakawhanaungatanga (establish kinship ties) to build rapport through culturally sensitive practices before beginning an interview. For Māori to begin the interview without kōrero and the opportunity to establish connections first would not be culturally appropriate. Utilising these culturally suitable customs and processes is intended to enable the women in this research to feel comfortable and more relaxed when it comes to sharing their lived experiences of legally adopting children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period.

Māori centred research takes into account the hopes and inclinations of the participants more than does traditional psychological research (Durie, 1996). As a researcher I would consider it important to have an understanding of Māori tikanga and to show respect for those issues always remembering that Māori are diverse, not homogenous. For instance, kai is an important part of Māori tikanga therefore I would ensure that I offered this when I went to an interview. I would always endeavour to be aware of participants' feelings and wishes.

According to Durie (1996) one principle which is especially appropriate to a Māori centred method of health research is that of "*whakapiki tangata* – enablement, or enhancement, or empowerment" (p.6). The intention of research action ought to be to improve the health of participants in order that either their wellbeing advances because of the research or they are better situated to manage their own health, or ideally, both. In the case of this research it could mean that through having the opportunity to narrate their lived experiences of legally adopting children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period, these Māori adoptive mothers possibly for the first time, are able to come, explore and obtain a broader view of their experience. Previous research of Māori has not always benefited them and it is not surprising that Māori have felt cynical about the effectiveness of such research (Bishop, 1998; Pomare et al., 1995; Tomlins-Jahnke, 1997; H. Walker, 1997). Māori centred research puts participants first and values them and their kōrero as more important than the researcher and has some common values with the principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative methodology developed specifically for psychology. It was developed by Jonathan Smith in the mid 1990s and is an endeavour to unpick the meanings contained in participants' stories by a course of interpretative engagement with the transcripts (Eatough & Smith, 2008; J. Smith, 1995). IPA endeavours to draw on an innate tendency for self-reflection by participants (J. Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997). In this research, IPA enables the Māori adoptive mothers to narrate their particular stories of adopting in the 'closed stranger' adoption period in their particular language. IPA is about taking the trouble to ascertain meanings and looks at how participants make sense of their experiences rather than extracting facts (J. Smith, et al., 1997). It enables the researcher to create a result that is a combination of the researcher and the participant's reflections. The goal of IPA is to investigate the participant's point of view and to take on, as much as possible, an 'insider's perspective' (Conrad, 1987) of the matter under examination (J. Smith, et al., 1997).

Theoretically, IPA relates to a participant's individual view or explanation of an entity or occurrence such as 'closed stranger' adoption rather than an effort to make objective declarations about the entity or occurrence itself and this is what renders the method

phenomenological (J. Smith, 1995; J. Smith, et al., 1997; J. Smith & Osborn, 2004). It is influenced by transcendental phenomenology (e.g. Husserl and symbolic interactionism). IPA acknowledges that research implementation is an active procedure. Even as the researcher tries to understand the participant's private world, he / she is not able to perform this precisely or totally. Right of entry is together dependant on, and made difficult because of the particular ideas that the researcher brings to the research, and which are necessary to understand the private world of the participants during a course of interpretative action (J. Smith, et al., 1997). In other words, a key concept is that interpretation and the research process is dynamic – the researcher is active in conducting the research and also in interpreting the participant's responses.

For this reason the expression 'interpretative phenomenological analysis' is employed to indicate these double aspects of the methodology (J. Smith, 1995; J. Smith & Osborn, 2003; J. Smith & Osborn, 2004). This is the phenomenal experience of the participants, and the interpretation of participants and researcher. "The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (J. Smith & Osborn, 2003 p. 51). Though IPA and associated qualitative methods have started to have a more respected position in psychology quite recently, in the main, they relate to an extended academic record in the social sciences. A significant theoretical criterion for phenomenology is that it has an extensive history in the social sciences and began with Husserl's endeavors to build a philosophical science of discernment at the beginning of the last century (J. Smith, et al., 1997).

IPA is considered invaluable in situations where topics are under-researched (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004) as in this research endeavour. IPA enables me to understand what Māori adoptive mothers feel and think in relation to 'closed stranger' adoption. Consequently, whilst knowing that their opinions are not transparently obtainable from, for instance, interview transcripts; IPA takes part in the analytic process with the expectation of being able to systematically articulate interpretations on the subject of those opinions (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004).

Although distinguishing the space which may be present between adoption and the participant's view of it, a phenomenological investigator might certainly wish to clarify the character of that space (J. Smith, et al., 1997). In the case of this project, IPA enables me to

investigate the *meaning* of experiences and circumstances to the Māori adoptive mothers going through them. IPA is appropriate for an extremely broad variety of research inquiries in psychology where we wish to learn more about the meaning of events to participants (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004). The articulations of these Māori adoptive mothers has meaning and 'reality' for them not only in this research, but it is an element of their continuing life-story and symbolises their psychological being, and it is this psychological actuality that is particularly interesting (J. Smith, 1995). IPA will be applied to enable the accounts of the Māori adoptive mothers to be privileged in the research and also to comprehensively identify themes that address the research questions. What I am looking for is specificity of experience rather than making general sweeping statements.

Similarities between Māori centred research and IPA

The principle of putting people first is common ground between Māori centred research and IPA. As its name implies Māori centred research puts Māori at the heart of the research and IPA also respects participants and takes their wishes into account (Durie, 1996; J. Smith, et al., 1997). When conducting research the researcher is asking participants for a favour. I am relying on them to help me with my research therefore I need to respect my participants and not squander their time. The "universal" method of scientific enquiry, as it has been conducted in Aotearoa / New Zealand, is a long way from being capable of placing people including Māori at the centre of the research or to genuinely fit with Māori desires (Durie, 1996).

IPA and Māori centred research are similar also in that they are both about whakawhanaungatanga (connectedness or relationships). In the case of Māori centred research this is about making whānau, hapū and iwi connections which is integral to Māori upon first meeting someone new (Durie, 1996). The reason that IPA is often labelled as a subjective methodology is because the participants and researcher work together in order to confront and understand the phenomenon and this necessitates them having a relationship. Unlike quantitative methods, IPA supports an unrestricted conversation or connectedness between the researcher and participants which could also make possible unexpected responses, together with a novel viewpoint on the research question. Māori centred research and IPA are ultimately both concerned with the wellbeing of the participants and the

respectful relationship between participant and researcher (Durie, 1996; Eatough & Smith, 2008).

Method

For this project I have chosen a small sample of six Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. They have participated mainly in one-to-one, kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) interviews and our conversation has been transcribed and analysed according to IPA principles. Ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics committee was obtained for the study Application No. 08/06 before I set out to recruit participants using purposive sampling; that is, for this investigation only Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period were appropriate participants. This is the type of sampling most suited to IPA (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004). It was intended that participants would be recruited using snowball sampling (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004) whereby the researcher and participants spread the word about the research among any other Māori women they knew who had adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period and who may have been interested in participating in the research.

The essential notion of snowball sampling is that participants are chosen from associates of current participants rather than from a sampling frame (Babbie, 2008; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). The investigators decide on a small quantity of 'seeds' who are the initial persons to join the research. Other participants are enlisted by these 'seeds'. This procedure of current participants drafting other participants persists until the required sample range is arrived at (Babbie, 2008; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004).

An advantage of snowball sampling is that it is successful in infiltrating hidden populations such as homeless individuals, or as in the current study which is seeking Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption system (Babbie, 2008; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Snowball sampling was deemed appropriate for this research because current participants referring people they knew to the study involved aspects of whakawhanaungatanga, connectedness and relationships so integral to Māori centred research. Because snowball sampling results in samples with questionable representativeness,

it is used primarily for exploratory purposes (Babbie, 2007, 2008; A. Rubin & Babbie, 2007) so is appropriate for this research. Generally, snowball sampling is utilised within a qualitative research project rather than a quantitative one (Bryman, 2004).

However, only one of the women recruited knew other Māori women who had legally adopted a child in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. This was a very interesting discovery because it showed that the secret nature of 'closed stranger' adoption was alive and well and the fact that adoption is not a topic that is readily discussed was reiterated. Another factor contributing to these women not knowing others was that there had not been many Māori women adopting in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. Most of the women adopting were Pākehā. These circumstances made recruitment very challenging so I decided to contact the Ethics committee to see if I could advertise or make contact with people I knew on email lists.

The challenges associated with recruiting led us to go back to the Ethics committee for permission to advertise for participants and to use email to spread the word about my research and find participants. The ethics committee had concerns about this issue and it proved to be much more difficult than I had anticipated and was a very frustrating and time-consuming exercise. I found that communicating with the Ethics committee by email did not always make for clarity and understanding on either side. Eventually, I asked if we could meet with the Chairperson of the committee kanohi ki te kanohi as I believed it would be much more fruitful and both parties would have an opportunity to explain their positions in more detail. We were able to have a telephone conference call and as anticipated both sides were able to explain their standpoint and the details were agreed upon. This was a huge relief and a high point of the research for me. In fact, I found that ups and downs or highs and lows are integral to research.

I adapted the snowballing to better suit the circumstances of the women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period and asked others if they knew Māori women who had adopted in this system. Whilst completing my ethics application, I made contact with the Adoption Information & Services Unit of Child Youth & Family Services and this proved very beneficial. The manager was helpful and put me in touch with two Māori adoptive mothers personally known to her from the 'closed stranger' adoption period who consequently participated in my research. A whānau member in the Māori Women's Welfare League contacted members of her division to see if anyone might fit the criteria for my

research but no participants eventuated. Ultimately, all participants were recruited through people known to me.

Information sheets (Appendix A) were passed on to women who were eligible to participate. The information sheet explained the nature of the study and those who agreed to participate were contacted and invited to an interview. Six participants were recruited to take part. This was judged to be sufficient as sample sizes in qualitative research do not need to be as large as in quantitative research because one gets saturation quite quickly, and because I am not trying to generalize the results to the population (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

The participants were six Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. They lived in various parts of the North Island of Aotearoa / New Zealand and belonged to different iwi. These women were aged in their fifties through to their eighties. One of the women had two biological children born after she adopted children and the others had no biological children. Four of the women are currently married; one is widowed and one is remarried. Adoption on its own is a sensitive issue, but the addition of land succession makes this research even more sensitive. Consequently, I have refrained from giving a full description of the demographic profiles of these women for instance, employment or geographic factors, and especially hapū or iwi details, in an attempt to safeguard their confidentiality.

Data Collection

The data collection method that I used in this research, unstructured in-depth interviews or hui arises out of the phenomenological epistemology and the qualitative methodology used in the research. When phenomena are under researched or where there is intricacy and complexity expected in the participants' experiences, the qualitative unstructured interview is an effective method (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Kvale, 1996). In a phenomenological epistemology we seek to understand and interpret in order to obtain meaning about human action and one way to do that is via conversations or interviews. This method of data collection is very suitable for divulging the meaning of lived experience (Mishler, 1986 as cited in Lindseth & Norberg, 2004) and we all have a pre-understanding of existence, which can be articulated in narratives that are told during interviews (Ricoeur, 1984).

Dates, times and venues for the interviews or hui were negotiated by the interviewees and the researcher. This again is respecting participants' wishes. Most of the women preferred to be interviewed in their homes. After filling out consent forms (Appendix B), the interviews were conducted and the data collected. The data was the narratives of the Māori women's experiences of being adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption period.

A total of six interviews were conducted. Five unstructured kanohi ki te kanohi interviews and one telephone interview were used to generate data with the participants. It was originally proposed to videotape the interviews (with the permission of the participants) which would have made it easier for me as hearing-impaired to transcribe the interviews as I could then lipread the participants. Videotapes would also give richer data as I would be able to see body language and emotions that would not be evident on an audiotape. The first interview was videotaped. After this transcription, I decided to audiotape the remaining interviews. Reasons for this decision were that video transcription took longer because I could only transcribe the videotape at home, not at the university because of privacy issues. However, the most important reason for changing from videotape to audiotape was that some of the participants were reluctant to be filmed, so I needed to make alternative arrangements. That is, because of my hearing impairment I asked another person to transcribe the audiotapes after she had filled out a confidentiality form (Appendix C).

An unstructured method of interviewing permits open communication between the investigator and the participant and is not an invasive method as it does not require the investigator to spend extended periods of time in the participant's life. The open-ended questions used allow the participant to expand upon their answer and the investigator to generate theory through exploring the participant's perceptions of reality (Tomlins-Jahnke, 1997). As Reinharz upholds; "(t)his asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women" (1992 p. 19). When researching Māori, unstructured interviewing might be perceived as making up for the past legacy of disregarding the voices and thoughts of Māori or having non-Māori speak for Māori (Tomlins-Jahnke, 1997).

Before conducting my first interview I asked my supervisor for some advice on interviewing. One of my concerns was about 'butting in' on my participants. She suggested that I conduct a conversational interview where I could add a little if I felt the need. However, at all times the interview needed to relate to the participants' experiences and preferably allow *them* to direct the conversation rather than me. She said that it was fine to be quiet most of the time if the participant was comfortable with doing most of the talking. She also added that it would not be appropriate to interrupt, but sometimes I could say - oh yes, I know what you mean or similar phrases that I felt comfortable with. She concurred that reflecting is always a useful tactic - but as a rule simply being myself and chatting with another woman who has a tale to convey is all that is needed.

As well she cautioned me to be careful that I did not lose too much valuable data if I attempted to limit the interview to about one hour – she said that it was important to discuss time with my participant as well – to ascertain at the beginning of the interview whether she needed to finish at a particular time. My supervisor thought that if the participant had time, it would be advantageous to allow the interview to flow and that I could determine later whether there were segments I did not need to transcribe which would shorten the transcribing period. She also warned me that she had known of researchers who had been given excellent data after the tape had been stopped! I found this advice most helpful and proceeded to my first interview in a more relaxed frame of mind.

Smith (2001) discusses story telling and how it has become an essential component of indigenous studies. She believes that each person's narrative is compelling and that these fresh narratives add to a communal story where all indigenous people belong. Stories have always been the vehicle whereby indigenous people have passed down the principles and philosophies of their culture and in the past these stories were always oral. The story and the story teller are both important because they connect the generations and they connect the people to the land. As a research tool, Bishop (1996, p. 24) proposes that "story telling is a helpful and culturally suitable method of symbolising the 'diversities of truth' where the story teller not the researcher maintains power". Bishop further proposes that "the indigenous community becomes a story that is a collection of individual stories, ever unfolding through the lives of the people who share the life of that community" (p. 169).

In order to put these Māori women at the centre of the research I supported them to tell their stories of being adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption period as openly as they could. "It is this openness that enables dialogical encounters that yield larger horizons of understanding (through fusions)" (Martin & Sugarman, 2001, p. 203). Interviews are consistent with Māori principles because they favour Māori kaupapa, such as holding hui (meetings) and encouraging participants to speak openly about a particular subject of debate. They are also kanohi ki te kanohi which is appropriate for Māori and is a traditional preference. Unstructured interviews were conducted to identify themes (commonalities) that might contribute to an understanding of the participants' lived experiences, and how they represented those experiences.

In respect to Māori centred research I followed Māori tikanga or principles when conducting the interviews. An essential part of a hui is that of karakia (prayer). Karakia is traditionally used to open and close a hui and to bless the food and was utilized in this way after ensuring that the participants were comfortable with that process. I always offered participants the opportunity to say karakia but if they preferred not to, I was happy to do so. I also provided kai (food) as is usual in a hui process. Cooked kai is considered noa (not tapu or sacred) (Phillips 1954 as cited in Durie, 2001). When people meet for the first time as in a powhiri they are tapu until the formalities are over when the sharing of kai removes the tapu and makes them noa. Eating together also gives people the opportunity to relax and feel more comfortable with each other. Therefore this was an example of whakawhanaungatanga in action. The interviews lasted between one and two hours.

One participant preferred to answer questions in writing therefore the interview questions were posted to her to complete. She did not respond to the questions, but indicated that she was expecting to receive a questionnaire rather than open-ended interview questions. I sent Christmas cards to all of my participants to keep in touch and in her card assured this participant that there was absolutely no compulsion to participate in the research if she did not wish to. I also enclosed my pepeha. Upon receiving this she phoned my auntie and asked if she knew me. When my auntie explained our relationship my participant said "Oh she's whānau and I haven't answered her questions" whereupon my auntie told her that she should do so as soon as possible. My auntie also suggested that I contact this participant but I did not wish to pressure her further. I was therefore delighted when she phoned me and we conducted an impromptu interview over the phone. This highlighted two issues for me. One

was the importance of including my pepeha from the beginning, that is, on the information sheet. The second issue highlighted was the connectivity of Māoridom which I have spoken of, and the importance of letting participants know who we are rather than remaining anonymous as in positivist research.

Data analysis

Once the data had been collected and transcribed, I perused each transcript carefully several times to become as conversant as possible with the participants' accounts as recommended by (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004). Starting with the first transcript I methodically looked for themes. Comments concerning important phrases, initial interpretations and any associations or disagreements in the participants' transcripts were written in the left hand margin. Next I built links between these themes setting up superordinate themes for each transcript. I then went on to the next one and gradually made my way through the participants' transcripts (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004). The process was cyclical and each transcript had to be reread for any new themes as they emerged.

Next I searched for similarities between the transcripts in order to create superordinate themes for all of the transcripts (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004). In IPA this collection of master themes is formatted as a table, and every theme has examples from the transcripts to back it up. Having found the major themes for the set of participants, I interpreted the table of themes and presented them as a narrative explanation. The themes were explained fully and substantiated with word for word examples taken from the interviews with the participants. When this was done the participants' voices had the effect of placing them in the finished report (J. Smith & Osborn, 2004).

Ethical concerns

The study aimed to provide a respectful and safe environment for the participants so that they felt able to express themselves freely. There was a need also to respect the talk and experiences of the participants so that they felt valued in order to interpret the meaning of their experiences as Māori women adopting in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. The participants' individual interpretations of their experiences were respected as were mine as the

researcher. Research, while being accountable to academia is also accountable to the population being researched, and attempts to advantage every research participant.

When thinking about my research and interviewing participants, I wondered how the land succession question would affect them and I wondered about the ethics around that issue. Concerns around Māori land and succession could be a delicate subject. After submitting my ethics application to the Massey University Human Ethics committee, I received an email stating that the committee was concerned that there was a danger that whānau and community relationships might be damaged if anonymity of participants was at risk (for example as a result of the snowball recruitment approach) and as concerns around Māori land and succession could be a delicate subject there was a danger that whānau and community relationships might be damaged. We were asked to comment and come up with tactics to reduce any such threat.

We replied stating that snowballing does not tell people who refer friends or relatives to the research whether or not they have agreed to participate. Confidentiality is only breached when participants decide to inform people, including their whānau, that they are a part of the research. When this happens, it is their decision to be frank and to entrust their whānau with the knowledge. We also said that inclusion of the land issue was the result of cultural consultation.

Confidentiality: One strategy we stated we would employ was that there would be no identifying information in any articles that were published about this thesis. Conclusions on the land (succession) question would be couched in non-specific terms so that for instance, whānau, hapū and iwi would not be identified. Where required even particular relationships in broad terms (that is, koroua, kuia) (grandparent) would be disguised by using a term such as whānau member instead.

I then received a phone call from a member of the Ethics committee concerning the land succession issue explaining that the committee was not just referring to the snowball recruiting as causing harm. They wanted me to think of other strategies that would prevent harm in whānau and communities. We talked about reports not identifying participants to

prevent harm to whānau and community groups. I said that it was difficult for me to say at that stage but any report would be general so that participants could not be identified and their anonymity breached. I was informed that once this question was cleared up my ethics application would be approved. Ensuring that participants' confidentiality is not breached is always an extremely complicated issue.

No identifiable information about the participants was given to third parties. The participants were not anonymous because I knew their identity. However, confidentiality of the participants' identities was maintained in the treatment and use of the data by the use of pseudonyms in the report. Participants signed forms consenting to being videotaped or audiotaped and forms and videotapes were stored by the supervisor in separate locked cabinets. Audiotapes will be deleted from the researcher's computer which is password protected after five years. All of the data was collected by the researcher only. Confidentiality of people the participants mentioned during the course of the interviews was protected by not naming them or identifying them in the report. The second transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement. The supervisor will be responsible for disposal of the consent forms when the five year storage period has elapsed.

Informed consent: Another important consideration with respect to the proposed research is obtaining the participants' informed consent. This was in accordance with the Privacy Act (1993) as a condition of participation. Participants were posted or given an information sheet which provided the title of the research, the name of the researcher and supervisor, with details of the study aims, objectives and processes. Participants were informed of their right to ask questions and to withdraw from the study up until two months after they released their transcript. Participants signed the consent form and posted it back to the researcher.

How the data will be used: Findings from the research will be made available to all participants, to the Adoption Information & Services unit and to the general public, in the form of a report and a journal article. A copy of the transcript from their particular interview was posted to participants so that they could make comments or delete words that they did not want incorporated into the analysis. I did not want them to feel obliged to leave anything in the transcript that they were now uncomfortable with. The participants returned the

transcripts with the signed Authority for the Release of Transcripts form (Appendix D). I consider that the offering of information from the research and any new reforms as a consequence of the proposed research as utu (reciprocity). Utu is an essential element of Māori tradition and way of life and persists in guiding thoughts and communication in modern times (Metge, 1995). Dealings rooted in straight up hierarchies are not valued as much as dealings that are based on certain understandings of mutuality and reciprocal responsibilities (Durie, 2001).

Diversity and Power Relations: I respected and valued the ethnicity and indigeneity of the women in the study by providing kai (food) and the use of karakia (prayer) before and after the interviews and by the practice of whakawhanaungatanga. However, I also needed to respect the diversity of the women's lives and experiences (B. Greene & Sanchez-Hucles, 1997), not assuming that because they were all Māori that they were all the same, or that because they were all women they were the same. A general stereotype faced by racial-cultural minorities is the idea that every person of a specific culture is homogenous (Fischer & McWhirter, 2001). According to Greene & Sanchez-Hucles (1997) women of colour have had their psychological needs ignored. Māori adoptive mothers have many identity claims – mother, Māori and linguistic identities among them.

Anybody who is socially advantaged and holds the power concomitant with it can participate in oppressive behaviour (B. Greene & Sanchez-Hucles, 1997). Because of that possibility, it is at all times vital in research to decide the location of both the participant and the researcher, along the continuum of oppression and power. I needed to position and concede my locus of social privilege and the result of this, on my point of view of the research participants (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). In this way I hoped to respect these Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption system.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the methodology and the methods used in this thesis. I have stated that good research design begins with choosing an appropriate

epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. In this research I am using principles from both Māori centred research and hermeneutic phenomenological theories, focusing on the lived experience of Māori women who adopted children during the 'closed stranger' adoption period so it is the Māori centred / hermeneutic phenomenological combination that theoretically informs my research. I have described how I sampled six Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. They were interviewed, their conversation transcribed and IPA was applied to their data in order to understand and interpret their understandings of their experiences of being Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption system. Ethical concerns such as respect, confidentiality and cultural issues were explained.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION PART ONE:
ADOPTION PROCESS

SUMMARY TABLE
1. Not having a baby
Infertility
Pressure to have a child
2. Wanting a baby
Applied to adopt
Offered a baby
3. Ownership / Security
Adoption not whāngai
4. Adoption process
Going to see baby
5. Baby comes home
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6. Becoming a mother
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Family history
7. Whānau business
Not blood
Land Succession
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Caring for whānau
8. Being a mother
Shared with all mothers
9. Searching and reunion
Specific to adoption other mothers do not experience this
Who searched?
Reunion experiences

> She's, you know, for a little child…um…you know only to be in four different places but… as
> I said to the lady at the Welfare and I said 'Well why didn't they treat the scabs'? There was
> no way I could describe it, and I said 'Why didn't they get treated, why didn't they take her to
> her doctor? What was wrong with the Welfare? But they didn't do something about it…
> (Kura, 331).

Introduction

In Chapter Three I gave details of the methodology supporting this investigation, and the methods utilised. In the following two analysis chapters we learn about 'closed stranger' adoption from the research participants' lived experiences of being Māori adoptive mothers in this system. The process of analysing the data resulted in the emergence of nine superordinate themes, with seventeen subordinate themes as shown in the chart above. Separating the data into themes was extremely complicated because the information was closely interrelated and overlapping. This is a manifestation of a Māori worldview which encircles the interrelatedness of every living entity. This analysis reflects my standpoint and knowledge as a Māori adoptive mother. Therefore, I conduct this study as an insider as well as a researcher.

Here I will reiterate the goals of this investigation. I set out to investigate the unique experiences of Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. I wanted to explore and understand the effect on Māori women of legally adopting a child in this period and to emphasize a voiceless and underestimated group in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

The women's stories generally began with the fact that they had not become pregnant after being married for a particular length of time. This led to some of them exploring adoption whilst others were approached by ministers, lawyers or social workers and asked to adopt a child before they had made that decision themselves. Those who had decided to adopt described their process which differed from participant to participant but there was a general feeling of a lack of information throughout the adoption procedure. Participants described bringing the baby home and talked about life with their children and how good it was to have the opportunity to be a family. They recounted the feelings they experienced when their children met or chose not to meet their birth mothers. Finally, some of the women expressed how the adoption had been for them overall and how it had affected their lives. The themes

relating to the adoption process are considered in the current chapter, and those relating to the overall experience of adoption are discussed in the following chapter.

Not having a baby

This superordinate theme led to all of the women in this study legally adopting children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. This might seem an obvious statement to make but women who had biological children also became adoptive mothers in this system. Some of the women in this study adopted soon after marriage whilst others were married for several years before adopting. As one participant put it:

> …and I just assumed we'd have a babe straight away. I was so naïve gosh when I look back...
> (Amiri, 657).

> Valerie: So I'd just like you to tell me about your experiences of adopting, legally adopting a child in the 'closed' adoption system. You know, what were your motivations for adopting?
> ...well, (husband) and I had been married seven years and there were no signs of babies but we weren't particularly concerned at the time... (Huhana, 13).

Amiri married young and expected to have a baby soon after marriage. Huhana had been married for longer but she and her husband had not got to the stage of being concerned that they did not have a baby and were one of the couples who were offered a baby.

Not having a baby can become painful for women who have not chosen to be childless. There can be many reasons for this situation for instance infertility, being in a same-sex relationship or being in a relationship with someone who does not want a baby. The painful feeling can be heightened when people ask if you have children or why you have not yet had a baby. Concomitant with this feeling of pain is shame and a sense of not being good enough because motherhood is an expectation that many people have of women. "A childless married woman's life could quickly come to appear pointless, both to her and to others" (Else, 1991, p. 49) although not all women participating in this study purported to feel this way.

Infertility

Infertility occurs when an individual is biologically incapable of playing a part in conception. Infertility might apply to the medical condition of a female who is unable to carry a pregnancy to full term as well. There are numerous biological reasons for infertility, some of which can be circumvented with medical intervention. Some women in this study suspected a biological basis to their inability to conceive children although they chose to forgo fertility tests. One participant did have her infertility checked out medically.

> …and of course it actually started. They all seemed to focus on the female first so I went through all those tests and everything … (Marama, 17).

Marama's words show that infertility is generally assumed to be a 'female' problem. This is reiterated as the stigma of infertility that refers to the adoptive mother not the adoptive father. The stigma of infertility also relates to 'not being a woman' but not all adoptive mothers took on that stigma.

> ...It didn't make me feel any less feminine which is the stigma that some people who feel that it's important to get pregnant and have a child that proves their femininity and some people do think like that (Huhana, 321).

According to Else (1991) people often think that infertility is a 'natural' happening, but it is mainly cultural and social issues that decide its pervasiveness. Else believes that culture decides the way in which couples respond and the decisions they make when they want a baby but have not conceived. According to her, cultural conditions also affect how many couples with children, 'increase their family' by adopting (or adopting again).

Infertility often invokes emotions such as grief, inadequacy, fear, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, sadness, rage and guilt in the individual concerned (Gillard-Glass & England, 2002). However, the participants in this research did not express those feelings about infertility. It was interesting considering the amount of research dedicated to the topic of infertility, and the stigma that is attached to it, that there was little discussion. Indeed, only two participants mentioned infertility.

...I used to say, it doesn't make me any less a woman because I haven't given birth. What have I missed out on a big tummy and a sore bum? (Laughter) Excuse me! (Huhana, 312).

... and we thought oh there must be something wrong. And, um...then (husband) and I went through the medical process of checking... (Marama, 15).

Infertility is a pervasive topic in the adoption literature but it is not the only motivation for adopting a baby. Other motivations may include being in a same-sex relationship, repeated miscarriages, having had a hysterectomy or, in the time of 'closed stranger' adoption, the zero population philosophy. This was a social and moral concern in the 1960s and the 1970s and people were encouraged to have no more than two biological children to replace themselves. This was an attempt to halt the world's burgeoning population. Families of more than two children were commonplace at that time and those who heeded the call to only have two biological children often wanted more. Adoption was a way of extending one's family without increasing the population.

Now there is an expectation that infertile couples or couples who have not conceived will choose reproductive technology to have a child whereas in the time of 'closed' adoption the assumption was that the couple would adopt a child (Speirs, 1997). However, if reproductive technology fails to result in conception and birth an infertile couple may then choose to adopt a child: that is, it is their second choice. Reproductive technology is likely a first choice because it guarantees that at least one parent will be a biological parent to their child.

Pressure To Have a Child

Some of the women in this study felt pressured to have a child and the feeling they experienced when this happened was similar to that regarding infertility; shame for not being regarded as a 'complete' woman. There is an assumption that a woman becomes 'complete' when she gives birth to a baby. Indeed having a baby *is* an important aspect of a woman's adult identity. As well as contributing to a woman's identity having a baby is a societal expectation. Society expects that a woman will have a baby after she has been in a relationship with a man and if this has not happened after two or three years pressure will be brought to bear by those close to the woman who hold the expectation. Unfortunately, people who apply this pressure do not always consider that the couple might want a child but for

some reason have not conceived. Inability to conceive can cause the couple and the woman in particular to think that she and / or her relationship have a problem. As another participant observed when talking about societal opinions overall:

> … and during that time, before we put our name down for adoption, there was a lot of pressure on us to um... it, it started quite subtly at first… and then it was just straight out you know 'why haven't you started a family yet' and all those sort of things (Marama, 10).

> ...but I wanted another child (laughing). Oh and he did too because both coming from big families and Māoris you know. Oh it would have been terrible to go without children so um ...(Irahapeti, 95).

Both Marama and Irahapeti describe the pressure to have a child. The pressure that Marama felt came from outside of her whereas the pressure exerted on Irahapeti came from within. It came from her belief and observation that Māori have and want a large whānau. This belief points to the importance of whānau to Māori. Irahapeti also expresses her gratitude that although not able to have biological children she was able to adopt children and so have a family. Another participant perceived the pressure to have children as being apt to come from older Māori women as well as other whānau members.

> …with a lot of the older Māori women you know, they they feel that, they say to me, why haven't you got a child, had a baby, why haven't you given (husband) you know, a baby? I'd say, excuse me, you know, that's my business ah and I would if I could. But ah yeah they don't, you know, if you're a woman, you've got to have babies, I don't know if that's what, that's what I believe of the older Māori women, you know (Huhana, 305).

Having children is very important for Māori. In the past, in particular, the importance of having children was linked to the continuation of the iwi. These tamaiti and mokopuna were to be cherished and treated as taonga. As well as being cherished because they ensured the future of the iwi these tamaiti were important to issues of land and wellbeing. Their presence guaranteed that there would be descendants to act as kaitiaki (guardians) of the tribal lands. Part of the kaitiaki role involved defending their land against other iwi and later, against Pākehā. In addition, these kaitiaki needed to be familiar with their land and know how best to utilize it to sustain and nourish their iwi.

This conscious or unconscious need for the sustenance and nourishment of the iwi likely explains why the older Māori women pressured these Māori adoptive mothers to have babies. However, when one has not been able to fulfil that obligation and wishes to, the pressure can be painful.

Wanting a baby

Wanting a baby could be connected to wider ideas of 'whānau', encompassing the past and looking forward to the future, not merely to the individual nuclear family existence of the here and now (Else, 1991).

> ...He [father] took to the bottle so he was in the house but he didn't know or care or ask nor but um my husband was an absolute gentleman and we finally got married when I was 17 and I guess because I missed that family… (Amiri, 652).

The family that Amiri is referring to here is her nuclear family especially her mother and her siblings and the loneliness and responsibility that she felt when and after her mother died. Her father was not available to her; she was the youngest in her family and the only one living at home when her mother died. This led to her wanting to create her own family and possibly wanting to be part of another family that of her husband. From what Amiri told me about the family that she and her husband created, the meaning of family for her is several children, devotion and love for the children by the parents, loyalty to her children and honesty. Honesty was expressed by her and her husband in their determination that their adopted children would know from the beginning that they were adopted.

> … so we decided that um the children would know that they were adopted right from early it wasn't going to be a big issue that was going to be later on someone letting the cat out of the bag and come as a big shock to them that we wanted them to know right from the start that we had desperately wanted a family and they were really special um (Amiri, 131).

Amiri and Marama spoke of their desire to have children.

> …of course all I was focused on was getting the baby and I remember one social worker saying to me one day you know they don't stay babies (laughs) I was young 19 and at 20 I

mean what do you understand about...um young ones who are going to be 20 themselves and ask questions I couldn't see that far ahead all I could think of was oh my babies (Amiri, 694).

They [nieces and nephews] would come and stay with us for the holidays and we would take them out, pick them up after school... spend a few oh ok. They would come and stay with us for the weekend and, and um... and it would just sort let the family know that we were still out there and we were being supportive but for me, it fulfilled that role as well as being... I suppose that wanting to have our own children (Marama, 65).

These two participants particularly expressed their 'wanting' to have a baby whilst other participants were more relaxed about their desire for a baby.

Applied to adopt

In the 'closed stranger' adoption system babies available for adoption were sometimes advertised. Some of these advertisements were racist, specifying the baby's ethnicity and stating how much the baby did or more often did not appear to have Māori or Island blood, for instance. One reason for advertising was the large number of babies available for adoption in the 1950s and 1960s. Although prospective adopters may not have known that babies were advertised, their attention would likely have been drawn to anything written about babies. For those couples who had made the decision to adopt there was a general lack of information available about how to apply. Hence some couples started the process informally by answering an advertisement.

…ok um, I married very young um at age 17 and um it be good to have a family immediately and didn't and um and in those times in the [paper] …there used to be a Personal Column. And one night I saw in the Personal Column um a baby for adoption um and it just had a number um oh and an address. I didn't ring the number but I wrote a letter um saying how much I wanted this baby and didn't hear anything and then I got this big, brown envelope in the mail with OHMS on it (wags finger) and I thought (sigh) wow what's this about and it was I had no idea I was writing to a government department (Amiri, 13).

Amiri's surprise at finding that she was writing to a government department is indicative of the lack of information available. The receipt of the letter would have been followed by filling out a formal application.

…but um that was an application to adopt… so ah we filled that in um… (Amiri, 24).

Other couples did apply through the Social Welfare department although it is unclear how they came by their information.

…and um, so um… we applied through the Child... I suppose through Social Welfare type of thing at that time ... (Irahapeti, 29).

Well I applied to the welfare and um, anyway, they put my name down. But I insisted I wanted a baby [as opposed to a child]… (Kura, 21).

...and then we put our name down for adoption and we had to wait for 12 years (Marama, 26).

Offered a baby

Sometimes women were offered a baby before they had got to the stage of considering adoption. There is an assumption that all or most adoptive mothers made a conscious decision to adopt and then applied to Social Welfare. However in some instances childless women were approached to adopt by solicitors, social workers or ministers. These people were involved in the adoption system and were aware of babies waiting to be adopted and as many of these babies were Māori it probably seemed logical to 'match' them up with Māori mothers. Being offered a baby rather than applying to adopt seems to fly in the face of the stereotype of adoptive mothers who were like vultures waiting to pounce on a baby.

... and he said well I'm a solicitor for the Social Welfare in ...and he said we're looking for, we're always looking for parents for ah babies because there are so many babies wanting homes. And I said, oh goodness me, adoption hadn't even entered my head. But he said, look, I'll go back, when I go back to… I'll go and see Social Welfare and he said how about I send somebody up and talk to you? (Huhana, 20).

… and Social Welfare used to come and stay …when they visited people in the area and um just before we left this lovely lady, I forget who she was now rang me, and she said …'there is another little baby here, a little girl um that would just fit into your little family perfectly'. And I said look, we'll have to think about that because we've got to leave here and we're

going to a house where the grass is up to the window sills and you know there is no power, there is nothing and I can't imagine myself going up there with a new baby (Huhana, 84).

…we got this phone call out the blue from Social welfare saying 'we've got a little baby girl here that um is going to go into a foster home tomorrow, if she's not placed. How do you feel about coming and seeing her and taking her into your family'? And I said oh my goodness me, and I looked at [first baby] and she was out of nappies and running around she was 3 and a half (Huhana, 98).

What strikes me about this quote is the pressure that Social Welfare was applying to Huhana to adopt this baby. I believe some of the mothers in this research were offered Māori babies because they were Māori and this pressure was a result of the practice of 'matching' that social workers engaged in.

Ownership or security

According to Griffith (1997c) and Ludbrook (1991) legal adoption of children is a form of ownership or possession. Legal adoption gives adoptive parents ownership of their adopted child in the sense that they have sole control over the adoptee's childhood until they reach maturity. Biological parents as guardians of their children under New Zealand law are, like adoptive parents also owners of their biological child unless they relinquish them to adoption or guardianship by another person. Guardianship begins when the child is born and ends on his or her 20th birthday, unless the child marries before that age (Ludbrook, 1991).

Although some regard legal adoption as a means of acquiring ownership of a child many adoptive parents see it rather as security of knowing that the adopted child cannot be taken from them. They too want a family, continuity of whānau, with the delight, enrichment and joy of mokopuna to warm their old age rather than a foster parent relationship which is less secure. Like biological parents they desire a permanent family rather than the experience of nurturing a child and then giving him / her up with the resultant heartache and loneliness. In fact, the practice of 'closed stranger' adoption in Aotearoa / New Zealand developed from the need to persuade couples to provide for needy children by offering them the security of knowing that biological parents were not able to reclaim their children in the future (Rockel & Ryburn, 1988).

...we couldn't have children and we didn't want...and I'm so pleased it would've been dreadful to be on your own now wouldn't it? (Irahapeti, 308).

...she gave me three beautiful grandchildren mmm, and these are all my great grandchildren (shows photo). I've got nine. That's...eldest daughter's daughter. She was a flower girl. That's her again. And that's another granddaughter. That and that one there is um... (daughter's) and uh, that one, no... Uh... that's...and that's, that's...up there, that boy... (Kura, 70).

... yes, yes, I had a real fear that he would come and and they'd find him and they'd come and they'd want the baby back…it was terrible you know, I didn't like it. You couldn't have that enjoyment... (Irahapeti, 610).

Despite the security that 'closed' adoption brings, the adoptive parents can feel as though they are scapegoats of adoption in the same manner as birthparents (Pavao, 1997) especially when they encounter stigma and are accused of wanting to own or possess a child.

Adoption not whāngai

As explained above legal adoption gives adoptive parents the security of knowing that their child cannot be taken from them. For this reason some of the women in this study chose legal adoption over whāngai which does not involve the same sense of ownership as legal adoption. In whāngai situations children can move from the mātua whāngai to other members of the whānau and hapū and back to their birth parents if they are willing and able to have them again. This differs from 'closed stranger' adoption where the child is usually given to strangers and birth parents have no rights to the return of the child.

...yes whāngai, one from the family and that particular time my brother, my second to eldest brother his wife was having a child. And uh, Mum said "you ask for that one you see" and I said "No mum, no, I'd like one of my own, why take it from one good home and perhaps give it another good home you know". The child was needed, was wanted. What I was trying to say to Mum no I'd rather have one that wasn't wanted.

Valerie: Right

Because I felt as though um, if I had adopted in the family, it wouldn't have been my own because the parents were still here and they may not like the way I bring up children or...you know... (Irahapeti, 13).

...and have um... not so much contribute to their life but be part of their life. I talked to him about how my whānau whāngaied, my aunty's whāngaied different members of the family and that so you know, how did he feel about that? And he said well he wasn't quite sure how he'd cope with the family coming and you know being there all the time and I said but they're part of us anyway (Marama, 61).

While whāngai was a possibility for these Māori women they chose 'closed stranger' adoption for quite specific reasons such as caring for unwanted children or accommodating their partner's wishes. Other participants did not have the opportunity to choose between whāngai and adoption.

Adoption process

The process of adoption was often painful. For instance participants mentioned the difficulties of the waiting period between adoption application and arrival of the baby. Some parents found that they had to wait years before being notified that a baby was available. Yet others had the painful experience of taking a baby and then having the birth mother change her mind and take the baby back.

…um and then almost immediately they placed a baby with us whose mum hadn't made up quite made up her mind and that was our first babe um and at 5 months mum changed her mind and took him back so that was floods of tears um... (Amiri, 24).

...well I applied to the Welfare and um, anyway, they put my name down. But I insisted I wanted a baby anyway, about a couple of months later they rung up and said they had a little girl which I wanted was a girl and they had a little girl but she wasn't a baby. So I said well how old is she: And they said well, she'd, she was just on two. So I said well, I really wanted a baby (Kura, 21).

... and then we put our name down for adoption and we had to wait for 12 years... and of course while we were on the list we had to attend a parenting course and that's where we

investigated things about why you want to adopt...and um... what you feel about closed adoptions, open adoptions... um... adopting children from other ethnic groups, having trying adopting overseas, all these sort of issues and (husband) was... he found that really difficult because for men, for him anyway he said it's pretty straight forward, you either want to adopt a child or you don't (Marama, 26).

Another anxious time in the adoption process was waiting for the adoption to be legalized. Once that was confirmed the journey as a mother could begin. Here I consider the adoption process itself as ending once the adoption is legalized although of course one could say that the process of adoption is one that continues forever especially when you take account of the descendants of the adopted child.

> ... we had to wait 18 months...anyone that knocked on the doors during the day I was scared...you couldn't have that enjoyment...so much, be at the back of you mind or you hear noises...sort of 'oh', run in, oh no she's there and I locked that door you know...it is, until we got it finally signed. Then I was happy, yea.
>
> Whaea Val: and relieved
>
> Oh yes. You felt like a tonne weight taken off you you know heck, I don't know what I would've done, or both of us, both of would've done. My husband might have said 'That's it, no more'... (Irahapeti, 601).

One participant thought that more services were needed for Māori seeking to adopt a child. She found that the system was very oriented to Pākehā and did not cater for Māori who in her opinion were not as experienced at dealing with government departments and lawyers.

> As a Māori woman adopting ...I think there needed to be more services ...for Māori people...I don't think they have the full understanding ...of what we as Māori people...and what our needs and things ...and also some of the issues that affect us too...I didn't find them very helpful at all...the last thing you need is somebody like that if you're trying to adopt a child...then you think oh my God how do I get past that person to find someone else... you feel quite vulnerable as well...to the system you don't know...we were talking about going to finding a lawyer. That's how that's how I felt about the whole thing... (Marama, 831).

For those who were seeking to adopt there was often a long and painful period of waiting for a child, and there was little information. This was particularly difficult for some participants

because the adoption process was a thoroughly Pākehā one and therefore alienating for Māori mothers.

Going to see baby

Going to see the baby for the first time is a very exciting and nerve-wracking experience. The adoptive parents will wonder what baby looks like as appearance is all they have to go on at this point. They may or may not have told friends and family that their sometimes long-awaited baby has arrived as it is not yet certain that they will actually take this baby. If they have other children, biological or adopted, they will have let them know about baby and will most likely take them to visit as well. Adoptive parents can react in various ways when they first see the new baby. Some feel nothing for the baby, others may think he / she is beautiful and others have decided beforehand that they are going to take this baby no matter what. This could be because their desire for a baby is so strong, or they do not feel that they can reject a baby or they may think that if it were their biological child they would accept him / her regardless. There is also a 'love at first sight' discourse in adoption and this is the reaction that some parents experience. The sibling(s) of the new baby also have their reactions as narrated by the women in this research and two of the families asked their children whether they should take the babies home. One can only wonder what would have happened if the children had said no. When the adoptive parents leave the hospital they may be excited or uncertain of the decision they are going to make.

> ... and off we went to um… went to see this little wee baby who was 5 pound 3 born, absolutely gorgeous little thing, like a little pixie and we were told that we couldn't take her until she was 10 days old and she had to be 6 pounds (Huhana, 41).

> ... and um at the end of… they invited us to go to the hospital and have a look. There was a child up for adoption. And when we went in, there was nothing so...
> Valerie: There was nothing?
> You know. She was a lovely child and I often wonder what happened to her but there was nothing telling us that that's your baby you know you know there was no feeling or any sort so we left that one...and then in… they rang up again ...and as soon as I saw her, I looked at this uh, baby, and I thought she's exactly like my nieces nieces. You know the one I was going to

adopt...*very* much like that family you see. And I just remember going "Oh this is it, this is it, that's my baby" (Irahapeti, 31).

Of course when we saw him, we just fell in love with him straight away. I mean he had, you know a bit of a medical condition, condition and things happening in his life at the time but we thought hey, we can deal with that...there's always, ways to deal with those sort of things it was that and emotionally we were like on this high sort of up there and... and the other side and he would say well what's, there's his whānau to consider... there's um... you know his Mum and his Dad. What's going to happen? We didn't know about those things (Marama, 112).

Baby comes home

When we adopted our son the staff at the hospital did not offer any information on the formula that he had been fed with up until then and I did not think to ask. We therefore called in to a pharmacy and when the assistant asked what formula I needed I said that I did not know as we had just adopted our baby and were taking him home. She was quite startled and excited at the news and with her help I chose a baby formula. When we arrived home our neighbours came over to admire the new baby and they took the first family photograph of us with our son. He was quite unsettled that first night no doubt due to the new surroundings, people and formula. After that it was a matter of us all getting used to each other and bonding which was very easy for us as he was beautiful and a very easy baby. Participants in this study told of their experiences of bringing baby home:

> ...um we got her home and um so that was just wonderful. The older one had just started to walk and um (laughter)...so we had one of each which was lovely and...was a beautiful baby she um yeah she was very beautiful um and I remember having her on my knee and my other the little boy next to her and I'm talking to him about his baby sister and he bent over (laughter) sunk his teeth into her arm (laughter) and aahh (laughter) so at 13 months he decided he didn't like this sister too much. He should've been on my knee (Amiri, 75).

Baby coming home can be even more exciting than going to see him / her in hospital. Sometimes the parents are well prepared in terms of having everything they need for the baby and sometimes not. The baby clothes for this special occasion will likely have been chosen

with great care and sometimes the birth mother may have left a gift for the baby in the hope that it will be a keepsake for the baby when she / he grows up.

> ... and uh my husband at that stage used to call our daughter...nickname you see...and he looked at this baby you see and I had him and uh he said to his daughter um "What do you think?... Will we take him home?" and she went "Yes Dad, yes"...and grabbed his clothes, they had his clothes in a washing basket. So we went down, put him in our car...and got to...and we decided, those clothes, no, we didn't, no they were a mess you know and he was a mess so we got rid of the clothes you know got him home and he was all sort of rashed at the bottom you know and um. Anyway it didn't take long for that one. Only took about 6 months.
> Valerie: Oh yes for the signature?
> Yes for the signature. But he was a legitimate... (Irahapeti, 105).

> …so they brought her out and I put her on the table and I never seen such a scrawny… little girl in all my life. And her hair was covered in scabs and they were great big ones...and for Welfare people I couldn't believe...yes but she was she'd been in four different foster homes. And I put my hand out, she went like this (shrunk back) and um I looked at the Welfare lady and I said to her, I said, "Why is she doing that? And she said "She's frightened. She's been in all these places". So anyway I took, we took her home and she was petrified. I gave her an ice-cream. She didn't even know what an ice-cream was...so anyway, I took her straight to the doctor so he cut all the hair away. So I went and bought clothes... I went mad and um, you know, we gradually got her to... and she was a beautiful child she really was (Kura, 32).

Sometimes babies had not been well cared for by their foster families and this was a concern for the adoptive mothers. It seems also that hospital staff gave adoptive parents little information on how to look after their baby when they took her / him home and antenatal classes would not have been an option for adopting mothers. For first time mothers this must have been quite daunting and stressful.

> But we had I was so nervous we had to stop at a chemist shop on the way out to get something to calm me down...I was so nervous...we came back to our friends, um with this baby...I had her bottle. I was told that she had to be fed every 2 hours ah because you know...we had family and friends arrive at our friends' house that evening to celebrate the arrival of our new baby...and from, because when I first picked her up and held her, that little baby just snuggled

into me like that. And um she she just felt comfortable immediately obviously and she slept all night (Huhana, 45).

These quotes show different scenarios of bringing baby home. There is the situation of the second adoptive child in the family so there is not the newness or nervousness associated with first-time motherhood. Then there is a very nervous first-time mother but the baby appears to be settled and content in her new surroundings. Another example shows that not all children were adopted as babies and sometimes they experienced a number of temporary homes before being adopted and had not always been cared for as well as they could have been.

Shock / Suddenness

Adopting a baby is often shocking in its suddenness. Sometimes there is little time between being told a baby is available and bringing baby home. It is not only a shock to the parents but to their friends and family as well. This is because of the vast difference between biological birth and adoption. With a biological birth there is a designated time frame for baby's arrival but with adoption there is no due date. Consequently, there is no pressure for the adoptive parents to choose a name or to have the clothes and furniture ready for the expected baby. Instead of a forty week gestation period adoptive parents could be notified in a week or on the other hand could be waiting for years before being told that there is a baby available for adoption. Friends and family are as unprepared as the adoptive parents, for instance they do not see the mother's body expanding as the baby grows so there are naturally no enquiries concerning her health and no joyful exclamations when they see her. As a result there is a lack of anticipation for and from family and friends as life proceeds as normal and no-one talks about the adoption because there is little to say except to enquire occasionally if one remembers, whether there is any news. These enquiries likely cease when there is once again nothing to report. It is this very lack of anticipation, not talking and silence which leads to everyone concerned being shocked even if happily shocked when baby *does* arrive.

> ...and um I think it was about 9 o'clock when I tucked her up and...I got into bed and went to sleep. I was woken by this baby crying and I sat up...and I both sat up and looked "Where the hell are we? You know, oh that's right, we've got a baby and she had slept all night" (Huhana, 58).

Uh the Matron there she said now just wait in this room but I thought I was going to go up and, dress the baby and everything you see

Valerie: Right

She said "No, give me the clothes". So she took the clothes and went away and dressed up the baby and brought them back and said "Here's your baby and here's the formula" and that was it that was it (laughing).

Valerie: It was a bit of a shock?

Yes! (Irahapeti, 50).

The shock of this homecoming was the fact that there were no instructions given on how to look after the baby. This mother had also been looking forward to dressing her baby with the carefully chosen clothes and was clearly disappointed when she was not offered the option of doing so. She and the baby were treated as objects, the mother as not worth speaking to except for a few words of information, and the baby like a doll. It would be easy to imagine the nurse then wiping her hands of them both and proceeding to her paperwork. However, it was not only the parents who had to cope with the surprise of baby's arrival but family members as well.

And the next day, we drove from...to the motel...we drove into the motel...came up to the car (hello hello). "Yes we got her yesterday", now this is just how quickly it happened. And um we waited for her husband...to come back from work and we had her in the bedroom. He came in and we said go and look and see what's in there. Anyway he came out with this baby and he said "Oh, what a darling" um yea so that was our... (Huhana, 116).

And I worked you see. I worked right up until we went and picked her up because... left on the Friday, picked her up on the Sunday. Went for a walk downtown on the Monday (laughing) pushing this pram and they said to me 'Which niece have you got there? [laughing] so used to having...

Valerie: Yes, this is the suddenness of having a baby.

…Yes, my husband's aunt died and we buried her on the Saturday. On the Sunday I thought oh, I've got to do some work, I've got to get these things ready because we were picking our daughter up you see. And that's why I say on the Monday from downtown shopping you know.

Valerie: With the baby?

Yes with the baby you know, it's amazing (laughing) (Irahapeti, 552).

Associated with the not talking or silence when parents are waiting for an adopted baby, are secrets and stigma. In adoption the first stigma concerned illegitimacy that targeted unmarried mothers and made it difficult for them to retain their babies. This was because of the shame associated with sex before marriage which was taboo in the social and moral climate of the 1950s and 1960s. Although sex before marriage was morally forbidden it patently still happened. When a single woman became pregnant it was an embarrassing, shameful and shocking reminder of this fact especially if you were the woman in question or her parents, but less so for the father-to-be. Along with silence and secrets are lies which are necessary in order to keep the secrets. Mothers who relinquished their babies have said that the most upsetting thing were the lies and secrecy (Svendsen, 1997). The women in Svendsen's research indicated that lies were the most harmful aspect of their experience. The second stigma concerned infertility which has been discussed earlier.

Becoming a mother

Many women have constantly fantasised about becoming mothers. Other women, myself included, by no means fantasised that they would be mothers. Regardless of the sort of preparation that went into becoming a mother, most women become one. Although I have no memory of fantasizing about motherhood I had a vague assumption that I would become a mother. My husband and I had thought that we would start a family approximately two years after marriage. When the time came I was rather ambivalent about the decision and simply could not imagine myself becoming a mother especially being pregnant. To my surprise I did conceive. I had a healthy pregnancy and a difficult birth and my baby was taken away from me and placed in an incubator as she weighed only five pounds four ounces. It was five days before I was able to hold her and in that time I did not feel like a mother. It was strange to listen to other women in the maternity home describing their experiences of mothering and talking about their babies. Sometimes I wondered what I was doing there. Of course the day came when my baby was brought to my room and then I truly took on the identity of mother with all its joys and trials.

I found being a mother very difficult and time-consuming. I seemed to always be feeding the baby or feeding myself and my husband, bathing baby or doing washing and housework. I remember one morning being just about to step into the bath when I heard a cry from the

bedroom and I felt very resentful that I could not even have a bath when I wanted to. I had no idea that being a mother was going to be so difficult. I found the total dependency of my baby very tough and exhausting and was happier when she became more independent. Becoming a mother was also a period of great anxiety because at times I did not know why my baby was crying and I seemed helpless to console her. Friendships with other mothers of young babies were helpful because there is nothing like being with other people who understand because they are in the same situation as oneself. However, the unconditional love I felt for my baby was soon rewarded with smiles and I can remember thinking that I could never love another baby as much as I loved this one. Becoming a mother is one of life's milestones and is irreversible. As long as you live you will be a mother.

However a woman enters motherhood, whether by adoption or biologically, she has some distinctive challenges to confront in her new role. "The transition to motherhood is a major developmental life event. Becoming a mother involves moving from a known, current reality to an unknown, new reality" (Mercer, 2004 p. 226).

> Until the next morning I get up to um, to feed the baby, wash the baby, and get the baby's bath and I half fill it don't I? And my husband was getting ready to go to work and he said "Oh my God, you'll drown it" (laughing). Tips half of the water out and I thought "Now you know she could have easily have slipped aye"?
>
> Valerie: Mmmm
>
> You know when you're holding it because in those days, they never had all of these uh, flash gears that they put in the bath or baby lies on it you know (Irahapeti, 48).

In the past, Māori mothers would have learned their mothering from their mothers and older women at the pā. They would have also had much support from other women in the whānau so that it would not have been the burden that it can be now within the nuclear family. No doubt these mothers would have been taught their mothering in the manner of their whānau and or hapū. The baby would have been treasured as children are generally considered taonga in Māoridom. Kura explained how she took a long time to get attached to [daughter] until she got her into *her* way of doing things.

> I wouldn't know yea. It took me a long time to get attached to [daughter] when I got her but then I got her into my own way of doing things and that and then um... I could give her cuddles um but it took a long time for it... until I got her to be like me.
>
> Valerie: Right, mmm but with your husband it was different?

Oh yes

Valerie: It was immediate?

He just adored her. He thought she was the most beautiful thing on earth

Valerie: Laughing oh... that's lovely yes.

Oh. He was only a little man but he just thought she was beautiful.

Valerie: Yes. So you can understand the bond.

Mmm.

Valerie: And how she felt when he died.

Yes, yea (Kura, 419).

It was not until she had her daughter into *her* way of doing things that Kura was able to show affection towards her. The fact that her daughter was two years old when they adopted her would have played a part in the slower bonding process. Her husband however, adored their daughter from the day she arrived and bonded with her instantly. Some mothers, like me, were not well prepared for motherhood and whether our babies arrived naturally or through adoption, we faced the challenges of learning to mother without the close contact with older women from our whānau that was traditional for Māori mothers.

Lack of information

When participants adopted they were given little information about the baby's birth parents. One mother was given verbal information only. When my husband and I adopted we were given a single page of written information. According to Else (1991), there was nothing in the law that specified what information adopting parents should be given. She states that some parents did not want any information before they saw the baby because they did not want to choose presumably because one is not able to choose when giving birth. Others declined information deeming it to be unnecessary since upbringing would determine the adult that the child became. This would have been due to the environmental theory which was the social discourse at the time. It discounted genetics in favour of the environment that the child was raised in. Else (1991) does note though that some mothers *were* more interested in receiving information about their child's background. They believed that their child would want access to this information when they were older.

…but we had um we weren't told anything much about the parents um

Valerie: Did you get any written information?

No.

Valerie: So just verbal?

We were told um with our eldest one I was told that the mother was very young 15 or something and that the father of the baby was a married man and so there was a huge um raruraru (conflict) in the background because some family members wanted him charged because she was underage... (Amiri, 110).

Participants were told if their child was of Māori descent just as my husband and I were told that our son was Māori when we adopted. It seemed that Social Welfare were open about this as their advertisements stated if a baby was of Maōri or Island descent and it would often be obvious by the baby's appearance.

I remember asking about the Māori side and being told nothing was known about the father who was Māori.

Valerie: Right.

And that was really sad because we I at that time felt that she had a right you know to her roots ...um yeah it was very awkward they didn't give any information... (Amiri, 135).

... oh and that she had Māori blood in her. They told us that. No my son, there was nothing. Nothing, but he had uh, that he was quarter cast Māori... (Irahapeti, 173).

Amiri was also told that it was a very unhappy time for the birth mother emotionally and that she had had a very difficult birth. In most cases it would have been an unhappy time for the birth mothers because of the shame of illegitimacy and because they had been sent away from their families and had to face the birth and relinquishment of their baby in isolation. To have no whānau support and to give up their babies would have been painful and lonely.

...and so it was a a very unhappy time.

Valerie: Right.

Amiri: And she'd had a very very difficult birth... (Amiri, 115).

Participants were usually told the age of the birth mother and her marital status which was often single but not always. Some of the women were given information about their child's birth father.

We were told um with our eldest one I was told that the mother was very young 15 or something and that the father of the baby was a married man …um didn't get told anything more than that um with the second one with…um I was told the mother the birth mother was the same age as I was by that time I was 20... (Amiri, 114).

... the only information that we got was that the mother was 25, married with other children and that she worked in a crayfish shop. That was all... (Irahapeti, 167).

… you see when he was born that was all I knew of him. And his father, I'm not sure whether they said he was an All Black or might have been All Black material you know.
Valerie: Oh I see, you're not sure.
No.
Valerie: A good rugby player…
Yes he was a good rugby player. And I believe that too because my son wasn't too bad. (Irahapeti, 438).

Family history

Family history plays a large part in our lived experience and who we become. Family history and their particular upbringing experiences affected participants and the way they themselves mothered. For instance, one participant experienced separation from her mother who had tuberculosis (T.B.). Her mother had to be hospitalized and the participant and her sister were institutionalised because there was no-one else to care for them.

No um my Mum died when I was 15 um and I was with her I was the only one with her and she'd had an asthma attack and my Mum had like a lot of Māori women um had um TB as a young woman and my sister and I had been put in the Home…for a long time while she was in what used to be called the …ward yes yes the TB ward um and she had yeah she had asthma um... (Amiri, 606).

Many Māori thought of hospitals as a place where one went to die (Lange, 1999, p. 126). According to Buck (1950) Māori did not like the thought of lying in a bed where someone else may have died. Lange says that they also had a fear that they could be washed from basins that had been used in the kitchen which would be a breach of tapu. He goes on to state

that many Māori had a horror of surgery and post-mortems because they believed that these would disadvantage them in the next world. All these issues led to a fear of doctors and hospitals.

> … and she was quite fearful of doctors which had been passed down and she kept saying to me "Don't call the doctor" um by the time I realized that I did need to ring the doctor and of course we didn't have a phone um I ran to a neighbour's and rang the doctor but it was too late and um yes so all my brothers and sisters they were all married so it was only me at home with Mum. (Amiri, 606).

If you are unable to prevent a loved one from dying you could be prone to self-blame. This participant felt guilty because she hadn't called the doctor earlier.

> Valerie: Were you the youngest?
> Yes.
> Valerie: Yes so that must have been traumatic.
> Mm I blamed myself for a long time that I didn't get the doctor earlier. Now I understand but um it's always sort of been sitting there um so I guess I'd met yeah I'd met my husband about three months after she died and he was 24, 25 and it was oh oh but there was nobody there to say and we went out together for a year and got engaged... (Amiri, 606).

Another participant was the only girl in her family and had six brothers. This led to her desire to have a daughter. One brother could always be relied upon for support but another often fought with her when their parents were not present. This participant had a very hard life having to milk the cows, mow the lawns as well as help in the house.

> Yes. No he was my brother, eldest brother. And he was lovely. You know. He used to always stick up for me [laughing].
> Valerie: Oh that's a good brother.
> People would, people would say 'Oh she must have been spoilt, she must have been spoilt only girl, six boys. And he'd say no, no. She was never ever spoilt and I can vouch for that.
> Valerie: Laughing.
> He's the only one. Oh yes he would stick up for me but he'd always say that. He'd always say no, she was never spoilt. I'd always say to Mum, "Oh thank you Mum for not spoiling me... (Irahapeti, 741).

Conclusion

Participants' various experiences within their own families influenced their experiences of becoming a mother in diverse ways, some of which would be similar for some Pākehā mothers too, such as growing up in a family of boys and therefore wanting to mother a daughter. Participants also experienced specifically Māori influences, such as the fear of doctors and hospitals as reported by Amiri. For most participants there were some very specific enduring matters that concerned whānau business and were uniquely Māori. These are discussed in the following chapter where the themes relating to the participants ongoing experiences of mothering adopted children are discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION PART TWO:
MOTHERING EXPERIENCES

Adoptive mothers navigated a stressful and uncertain path to motherhood and were successful in their adaptation (Fontenot, 2007 p.180).

Introduction

In the previous chapter themes related to the adoption process and participants' first experiences with their adopted children were discussed. In this chapter the themes related to participants' ongoing experiences of adoptive mothering are considered.

Whānau business

Whānau business concerns the unique experiences of Māori adoptive mothers, that is, those that pertain particularly to this group. The sub-themes within this superordinate theme involve the consequences of mothers not having blood ties to their children, issues related to land succession and naming, and the implications of adoption for caring for whānau. The sub-themes involve the common thread of not sharing a whakapapa within the adopting whānau and the difficulties associated with that especially in relation to land succession. Stigma in adoption is connected to the lack of a blood tie.

'Not blood'

'Not blood' is about not having a biological connection which means that there is no whakapapa connection. Therefore when Māori adoptive mothers legally adopted children as opposed to whāngai they found that there was a stigma attached to adoption because these children did not whakapapa to their adoptive parents' whānau, hapū or iwi. Because of this they were not accepted by the whānau or others in the same way as a biological child would have been. Not having a biological connection also positions a 'not blood whānau' as

different and therefore not normal which leads to the stigma encountered by adoptive families.

> And it's a funny thing how some people, um, they always look secondly in Māoridom.
> Valerie: They what?
> You know in Māoridom sometimes if they're adopted and not blood. They don't quite accept (Irahapeti, 232).

> No, I don't know whether my husband's relations, she, they were the ones that said 'Oh no, you can't have them'. It's not blood. Mind you I think it's the only time we come across it. But it made us very wary you know, very sort of suspicious. Ah yes, it sort of taught us (Irahapeti, 633).

Land Succession

As Māori we have many methods of distinguishing our indigenous identity. Perhaps the most significant is that of our pepeha (the way we introduce ourselves in Māori) where we identify our maunga, awa (river) and iwi (tribe). "Through this form of introduction we locate ourselves in a set of identities which have been framed geographically, politically and genealogically" (L. Smith, 2001, p. 126). When reciting our pepeha we stake a claim to our turangawaewae (place to stand) and make connections with others. Land then is integral to who we are.

Land succession refers to the question of whether or not Māori adoptive mothers intend to leave their Māori land to their adopted children and what their whānau think about this issue[1]. There was no clear answer in this research. One participant said that she was unable to leave her Māori land to her adopted daughter because her iwi did not allow it. This situation was not easy for the mother. Her adopted daughter had accompanied her to the opening of her marae and was very interested in te ao Māori, so the fact that she could not succeed to the land was upsetting for her adoptive mother. This was especially so because her biological children could succeed but were not as interested as her adopted daughter in things Māori.

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[1] This section is obviously not relevant for those participants who were disenfranchised of their Māori land.

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Another participant said that she would leave land to her adopted children and her whānau would be happy about that.

> So although I felt sad that she [birth mother] denied uh my daughter the knowledge of her roots and that and that was big we both cried over that because for both of us that was really important and particularly because of me being [iwi] they don't um yeah I think they might be the only tribe that don't accept um adoption as like I couldn't I can't pass my land to an adopted child …I haven't resolved that because it's one of integrity um and I part of me thinks but I don't agree with their policy um I think she should be um because she was denied and she might be [iwi] anyway who knows um so yeah I try and always justify it to myself (laughter) (Amiri, 317).

> That is why if there was anything that belonged to me, be it Māori land or which like I said at the beginning that I haven't got anything anyway except that they're going to put me onto the title um then my girls certainly, our girls certainly will follow on with what ever I've got and the whānau will be happy with that (Huhana, 382).

In another instance the deceased adoptive father lost succession to *his* father's land because he had not left a will and the adoptive mother cautioned her children against fighting for that land possibly to keep the peace, to avoid raruraru. She did point out to them though that they were entitled to the land. She was of that opinion because she thought her adopted children were as entitled as biological children to succeed to the land. In fact, the Pākehā law states that legally adopted children are entitled to succeed to their adopted parents' Māori land. In spite of this there appears to be some ambiguity over this question with some saying that adoptive parents need to state the succession of land in their wills. It also seems that whānau, hapū or iwi can have their own rules regardless of the law.

> So I said to my children "No, stay away from it. I know you're entitled to it but stay away from it'. I said and "You have what your father and I worked for. That is yours and nobody can take it away from you, nobody". But this I said "No, stay away, you're better away and just have what you know that they can't have any say". They said "Oh Mum, it's the principle of it, it's Dad's. They might sell it and Dad didn't want to sell it (Irahapeti, 650).

One of the adopted mothers spoke at length with her whānau about the issue of land succession and a whānau member was unwavering in her opinion that adopted children could

not succeed to Māori land. This adoptive mother felt very angry with her whānau member and protective of her son. She also spoke to another whānau member who first intimated that her son could succeed to their land but then intimated that he couldn't or shouldn't. Then there is the difficult task of telling your child that they are not able to succeed to your Māori land. Succession to Māori land was one of the issues that Māori adoptive mothers did not envisage having to grapple with when they set out to adopt a child.

> She was really adamant that um, that he wouldn't succeed to any land in the whānau. She was really adamant on that … Um, I didn't think about those issues at all when we adopted. I never thought about those. I um, have... when it came to it my whānau member felt, let me know how strongly she felt about that and she's always said to me "It's not about blood, he's not about whānau, he's not succeeding to anything that I've actually um, succeeded from". And I said to her "That's fine". You know that was her feelings. And at the time I got really angry with her because I thought who are you to tell me that I can't do this and you know I can't, you know, he may not be my blood but he's part of me and um, (husband) also got angry with her response to it as well but then when I thought about it, because there's a lot more to think about these things (Marama, 341).

> I went back home and spoke to another whānau member… and he said to me "It's our responsibility to look after that …for the whānau. He said not just for you but, to perpetuate… you know for the future generations and to manage it the best as we can". He said "If your son can do that" he said? Why not? ...but then in the other hand he said to, "He's still not our whānau" he said "I love your boy, he's part of the family". He said "We'll always love him, we'll always be there for him" but he said, "With issues like that **…**you have to really look at these things um"... so I did... and I decided that he wouldn't succeed to the land that it would go to another whānau member and um... I haven't told him that yet (Marama, 353).

> And I talked to (son) up about things like that, he said "I don't need that Mum", he said "I've got you and Dad and um"... and then he says "Anyway… this is my house here that we're living in aye. This is" and I said yes it is, I said it's yours and (daughter's) so... And he says "Well… I don't need anything else" (Marama, 378).

The issue of land succession is indeed complex and one that engenders much pain for some of these Māori adoptive mothers. They had not envisaged having to face these matters when they adopted their children but of course land is so integral to whakapapa that the question of

succession could hardly be avoided. Land is essential to a Māori identity, in fact to any indigenous identity.

Naming

Naming has been in the media in recent times in terms of Māori reclaiming place names. One particularly contentious case was whether Wanganui should be left as it is or changed to Whanganui, the Māori spelling. In this case the public were invited to give their opinion to the New Zealand Geographic Board. The board had just released their decision to reinstate the (h) into the spelling of Whanganui at the time I was completing this research. The decision of the Board is causing fierce debate so it seems as though the battle may not yet be over. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2001) the importance of naming for Māori is apparent in similar battles over the names of a number of Aotearoa / New Zealand's maunga and other important places which were arbitrarily given new names of British citizens after they arrived on our shores. Several of the Māori names have now been reinstated, such as Mt Egmont which has now officially reverted to Mt Taranaki. Another current issue is whether to restore the original Māori names of the North and South Islands of Aotearoa / New Zealand.

As well as the naming of geographical landmarks the naming of children was an important ritual in Māoridom. More often than not it was the grandparents' role and responsibility to name children and much consideration was given to that name. Often they would choose the name of a tupuna of the whānau, hapū or iwi, sometimes a much-loved recent tupuna, other times a more distant but revered tupuna. Indigenous names commemorate people, places and happenings (L. Smith, 2001). These days it is less common for the grandparents to choose the child's name because of the effects of colonization and the consequent moving away from Māori tikanga and also because of intermarriage with Pākehā and other ethnicities. After the Second World War some Māori named their children after places they had fought in overseas. It was a widespread practice in the 1940s and 1950s to give Māori children a Pākehā name which was more acceptable in our colonial racist society or to give them a Māori name as their middle name where it would not offend (L. Smith, 2001). For instance, my middle name is Maruru, the name of my great-grandmother who helped my grandfather raise my mother and who was much loved by my mother.

One of the participants in this research was advised by her mother to whāngai from within the family but she decided not to because she felt as though the child would not have been fully hers and because she wanted a child that was 'not wanted' and so relinquished for adoption. Then when the whānau baby was born the parents honoured this participant by naming the baby after her.

> So instead of adopting that one, they called her after me…so she had my full name ...you see (Irahapeti, 23).

This same participant found that she and her husband were refused permission to name their daughter after a whānau member. Although adoption was not given as the reason the husband knew instinctively that they were denied the name because their daughter was adopted, 'not blood' and therefore neither as good as a biological child nor entitled to a whānau name. The father reacted by not wanting the child to have a Māori name at all but the mother bestowed her own name on their daughter because nobody could deny her that right.

> Yes ah well we were going to have a certain name. My husband, because I wanted my daughter to have a Māori name and so he right, we'll have this name. And he must have mentioned it to a relation of his. And she said to him "No" he can't have that. So he says to me, "that's it. There'll be no Māori names".
> Valerie: So he didn't ask why.
> Oh well no, he knew straight away because it was an adopted child, he knew straight away. Because he knew our children were adopted and he knew too. The reason, that that was the reason. And uh he said "no Māori names" and I said oh yes, she can have mine you know (Irahapeti, 242).

Another whānau member later offered this couple her name and they would have accepted gladly but they had already named their daughter. This shows the diversity of Māori and the diversity of attitudes to adoption as the grand-aunt had no objection to her name going to an adopted child.

> Yes. And then… was uh, uh after, you know to take my Māori name because it was my grandmother's name so there was no hesitation, they couldn't say, you can't have it. Because when I was talking to my grandma, my grandmother's sister not my mother, she said "Oh dear

you could have had my name"…Yea [laughing] so just totally different aye...and she was an old Māori lady, just totally different. "Oh dear" she said, I thought, gee Aunty I wish I had known that I would of ...because I would have loved to have had her name. Such a lovely lady you know (Irahapeti, 277).

Caring for whānau

Caring for whānau has often been related as being valued by Māori, even as a part of Māori tikanga, especially as regards tamariki and kaumātua. An important aspect of caring for whānau is that of aroha (love). Aroha encourages whānau to care for themselves as well as for strangers (Metge, 1995). This means of behaving towards whānau members as well as others is explained in Māori as kawenga (encumbrances, therefore responsibilities), herenga (requisites, or duties) and mahi-a-ngākau, a vague expression that could translate as 'work done from the heart' and 'work laid upon the heart' according to Metge. Two responsibilities are explicitly concentrated: the responsibility to appreciate and treasure those of the older age group, the tūpuna and kaumātua of the whānau, and the responsibility to appreciate and treasure those of the youngest, the tamariki and mokopuna. In every instance, the language is all-encompassing, referring to indirect as well as direct whakapapa associations. Tūpuna and mokopuna are both recognized as taonga.

> So when uh, my mother got, uh sick when she was, well before that, but when she turned 90 she uh, she more or less looked after herself up until she was nearly 90 and 89 and that. And uh, I had to go in and have a double bypass. So I went in and I had my double bypass and came out and still tried to look after my mother you see who had dementia.
> Valerie: Oh, mmm.
> In the old days you see. And my daughter just came down one day and took her and said "I'll look after her otherwise Mum, you'll race her to the hole, you'll be in the hole before she is" sort of. Which I was most thankful for because I found it very heavy to lift the things like that and you had to watch you couldn't do those things when you came out of hospital (Irahapeti, 380).

Irahapeti displayed aroha, kawenga and herenga towards her mother even after she had just had a double bypass. She still wanted to care for her mother who had dementia. Her adopted daughter showed these same caring traits and mahi-a-ngākau. She was caring for her

grandmother and for her mother at the same time and her mother was most grateful. The daughter was caring for her taonga.

> Oh with what I had. And so she looked after her for two and a half years before she died. Mmmm and she always used to sit there "There's my very own didn't even come. It takes my mokos here to look after me and I thought oh. I suppose Mum felt I didn't realise that she sort of probably thought oh it wasn't her blood aye my children but, oh she thought the world of them.
>
> Valerie: Mmm.
>
> You know and she was able to accept my young brother's children [also adopted]. Didn't sort of upset her or anything (Irahapeti, 393).

These themes that are unique to Māori adoptive mothers are all related to the whānau and stigma again runs through them. Irahapeti was the only participant who discussed naming and caring for whānau but they are still very significant themes and deserve to be included as unique experiences for Māori adoptive mothers.

Being a mother

Adoptive mothers very much wanted to be mothers. The literature has much to say about adoptive mothers and one of the issues raised is that often they feel a need to make up for or compensate for their child being adopted. Reasons for this feeling might be that they feel aroha for the child because he / she has been relinquished, they are so pleased to have a baby that they lavish love and attention on him / her or it could be making up for the stigma of adoption.

> …I mean he was just he was probably spoilt rotten really that was probably half his problem really at one stage he was in hospital for six months and he was really I mean he was really naughty he would've been 17 then and he was in hospital then so every night and I was we were running the family home at this stage.
>
> Valerie: Oh yes.
>
> …So I had 10 or 11 other kids um cause we took up to 12. Every single night for six months my either my husband or myself would drive and buy him chicken and chips (laughs) and take them to the hospital (laughs) um for food and he wanted chicken and chips so I and all this

worry and tears and you know all the effort we went to to try and keep him on the right track um (sighs) (pause)... (Amiri, 529).

Similar to making up for or compensating for, is protectiveness in adoptive mothers. This appears to operate along with responsibility (Mann, 1997). Adoptive parents are often given little support and put aside their own feelings in order to protect their children. They may also minimize their child's behaviour in order to protect them from added pain. Mann (1997) states that some adoptive mothers feel that they ought to always be able to manage and must always show compassion and love to their children.

> …It was like an instant bonding thing. And um... then I suppose in a way that's why we actually spoilt him when... when we took him home and everything for us we built around this baby and, and we really wanted the best for him and we wanted to give him everything we could …more so between him and I than him and (husband) because I've, I've... it was always like from the time he was born it was like I was protecting him thing (Marama, 187).

Because Marama felt so much aroha for her son and because she and her husband wanted the best for him she was very protective of him.

Another issue faced by adoptive mothers is illustrated by infertile women in Miall's (1987) study who thought that public perception of adoptive parents was that they were not 'real' parents. Miall suggests that it might be that consciousness of opinions in the wider community concerning adoption reinforces a feeling of stigma in adoptive parents that affects their view of their families as 'real' or authentic. However, women in this research felt that adoptive parents *were* the real parents.

> …Um I it was hurtful a bit but I I kind of understood um I think it's that idea I've found my 'real' mother um and not yet being at a point to know a real Mum is the one who does the Mum job you know yes someone can give birth to you and that's your birth Mum but whoever brings you up and does the Mum job that's the Mum (Amiri, 451).

> …Um I was fine because I'm her mother as far as I was concerned. I was her mother and nothing was going to change that so I was quite confident within myself to do this and I was happy to do it. And I wrote this letter, I've got copies of them somewhere (Huhana, 219).

Shared with all mothers

There are many issues that Māori adoptive mothers share with all mothers for instance the nervousness of first time mothering (Holditch-Davis, et al., 1998; Koepke, et al., 1991). Most of us would feel nervous at first because to be responsible for a helpless infant when one has little or no experience is an extremely daunting task. Even if one has cared for babies in the whānau or elsewhere this time *you* and your husband or partner are responsible for the child. It takes time to grow into the mothering role and gain confidence in oneself. Today there can be a surplus of information that may have the effect of confusing first-time mothers and might lead to great anxiety as to whether one is doing the 'correct' thing or not. It takes courage to ignore the books and trust your instincts but this is acquired with experience. Accepting help from others can also help to allay one's nervousness.

Other things that are shared with all mothers are: that children can cause us to become angry; that looking after children can sometimes be boring; that mothers have times when they question why they made the decision to have children. However, this does not mean that these motherly statements indicate that mothers do not care for their offspring. As well as these negative feelings, most mothers also experience love, joy and pride in their children.

Love for their children is another thing that participants and / or their husbands shared with all mothers. Kura's husband adored their daughter from the day that they first saw her and so not surprisingly, his adoration was fully reciprocated. When he died his daughter was devastated.

> ...a beautiful looking girl and um, my husband adored her. He really adored her and she adored the father and when he died, she used to go up to the cemetery everyday... (Kura, 61).

Irahapeti described how her children loved her and her husband and then illustrated this with following narrative.

> …and yet they both, both of them love you know, loved us very much and they would. And my husband and my son, he was what 27 I think. Yea 27, 28 (pause) um, he'd never been to the hospital my husband you see and all of a sudden he had to go into hospital. Three weeks in the hospital, discovered he had cancer and then five weeks he was dead... well I brought

him home when we found out he had cancer, brought him home and I rung my son. And I said go around and get the things ready while I get ready and because my daughter lived in... and my son lived here in... and uh, I said go home and get it all ready. So he shot home. When we got home he come up to the car and I said, 'Just help your father up the steps, up the back step'. Well he just picked his father up... just picked him up like this, carried him inside, sat him down and bawled his eyes out. And he's a BIG boy you know. I looked at my son. He just *bawled* you know... (Irahapeti, 193).

This story took me back in a circle to the day that this couple adopted their son. On that day the father picked his son up at the beginning of his life, put him under his arm and carried him out to their car. Now all these years later the son picked his father up near the end of his life and carrieed him into the house and expressed his grief and his love for his father.

...and you know I just lifted this child up and he just put his arms out like this. So my husband grabbed him, stuck him under his arm like that, like that because he was already a chubby baby you know (Irahapeti, 112).

Amiri talks about her love for her son in spite of the fact that his behaviour was very difficult to live with.

...because he and I were always very close always um and I know that you have favourites in your children but um he had been mine and um not inasmuch that anybody else would know but um I loved him to bits even though he was difficult he was really difficult but anyway we got over that... (Amiri, 409).

Advocating for their children is a practice that Māori adoptive mothers shared with other mothers although not necessarily all mothers. In one instance, Marama was concerned with the lack of progress her son was making at school and after three meetings with his teacher with no improvement in the situation Marama decided that she needed to take some action.

... I just said then um I don't think that um, the classroom you run is conducive to good learning for my, learning for my child and um I said we will move him. And anyway I'd been at school for a volunteering and I'd been supporting the school and um... you know through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and all that sort of thing and I just went up to the head master and I said "Well we've decided to do" and he was really upset and didn't realise how

bad the situation had got. So um he moved, we agreed to move (son) to another class and um... just, (son) just flourished under her (Marama, 540).

Advocacy plays an active part in the choices that affect your child's wellbeing and many parents have been happy to do that. Advocating for her son brought good results and Marama was extremely pleased that she had done so. Amiri on the other hand regretted that she had not been more assertive in advocating for her child.

> …and the nuns told me that I had the best-behaved child and the worst-behaved child in the same class and um I think that sort of set the tone um he was quite a difficult kid to manage and my daughter was very good and very diligent and didn't answer back and was a very good kid um and of course her getting praised made it more difficult for him.
>
> Valerie: Yes.
>
> …and I didn't realize how much impact that had on him at the time. I think today I would say look this is not working for him um but I wasn't didn't have the confidence to challenge the school in those days (laughter) I you know today I'd be much more assertive (Amiri, 168).

I can relate to this feeling of regret myself. When my children were young I was apt to put teachers and others whom I regarded as experts up on a pedestal. Now that I am older I tend not to do this. I would recognize the fact that I know my children or grandchildren better than the teacher did.

An issue that some adoptive mothers as well as biological mothers experience is that of looking after grandchildren because of parental problems for example substance abuse, mistreatment and lack of care, separation or bereavement. This situation is becoming more prevalent (Dolan, Casanueva, Smith, & Bradley, 2009; Dolbin-MacNab & Keiley, 2009; Edwards & Taub, 2009). It is a position full of legal and economic complexities and many grandparents are forced into the position of substitute parent with little time to consider their decision or opportunity for discussion with others. Sometimes the offspring have been taken from their parents by Child Youth and Family and grandparents will take them rather than have them go to strangers. In the days when whānau lived at the pā it would have been much easier to look after children because there was support available. Today people tend to live in nuclear families without the support of whānau and without financial support which makes the situation even more difficult. Participants describe their situation:

> …no that's fine. Electric puha if you know what that is

Valerie: And was that her only child?

…well she was then. And the stream of men, you know all that sort of stuff and... hated it.

Valerie: How did it affect you?

…oh, well, what can you say to a 30 year old you know? You can say all you can, meant to say which was said but, ah it made no difference so I just asked... would you like to live with Nana and Poppa and she said yes Nana. So she came and lived with us until she was 17 (Huhana, 402).

Huhana and her husband had also looked after this mokopuna from the time she was born until she was five years old. Some adoptive mothers in this situation may fear the parents will want to reclaim the mokopuna. They might have had to give up employment and to forgo luxuries that they could have afforded previously. The thought of how they would cope when the children were teenagers can be another concern.

…you know considering what she has seen um in her life, little, young life…

Valerie: And how was [daughter] with you taking [granddaughter]?

…oh, that was fine... that was fine because that was one less responsibility see. Because... when she was born um I had her more often than her mother did, right up until we left there to come here.

Valerie: And how old was she then?

…she was from birth until, she was nearly 5.

Valerie: Right so you had that bond?

…yes, very strong bond and um um and we still have. You know if she comes down for holiday, she comes here. She goes and visits her mother... (Huhana, 422).

…and I don't know how to cope, how to deal with it at the moment. Um she's got this 4 year old, gorgeous little boy, 4 years old but his behaviour is out of um er control. He's alright here with us ah but I don't have him very often because I work full time and I just haven't got the, I mean at my age, I haven't got the time.

Valerie: Or the energy?

…the energy but in the weekends…

Valerie: I know what you mean.

…I'm ready for...

Valerie: Do you worry about him?

…oh I do all the time; he's never far from here. I wake in the night and I lie there thinking about what can I do? But I'm not going to stop work because I haven't got long in the

workforce...and why should I? You know what I mean. She's the mother and she's got to know that all these issues that he has are stemming from her behaviour. Therefore it all has to be addressed but, um and by, if I took over that is just a relief for...

Valerie: I know it's very difficult I know isn't it…

…it is (Huhana, 439).

Huhana's words illustrate the difficulty faced by grandmothers when their children are unable to look after *their* children and grandmothers are faced with the possibility of raising them. There are many issues for the grandmothers to consider when making the decision to bring up their mokopuna. Other Māori adoptive mothers in this research although not bringing up their grandchildren have children with substance abuse problems which is the most common reason for grandparents raising grandchildren.

Searching and reunion

Searching and reunion are important aspects of the adoption story for all parties in the adoption triad. Like most other features of adoption they are fraught with emotions such as fear of the unknown. For birth mothers and adoptees there will be questions: Will he / she want to meet me? Will he / she like me? What will he / she look like? For adoptive mothers there will also be questions: Will I lose him / her? Will he / she love her more than me? Will she be better, more beautiful or more loving than me?

Specific to adoption, other mothers do not experience this

Searching and reunion are specific to adoption although it can also be experienced by parents and children who have been separated for other reasons for example, when children have been in care. Kirton, Peltier and Webb (2001) found that compared to adoptees, individuals who have been in care were inclined to access their records when they were older and their numbers are more evenly balanced as far as gender is concerned. That is, there is a small male majority for people who have been in care, but twice as many female compared to male adoptees access their records. Kirton et al.'s (2001) study showed that black and white searchers had extensively different experiences in care with black searchers remaining in care longer and being less likely to be in touch with, or reunited with their biological families.

Because teenage years stimulate an exploration of identity, adoptive parents are frequently confronted with the perplexing job of how to assist their child to incorporate a total discernment of identity while parts of his / her legacy may be challenging or even completely absent (Pavao, 1997).

> …she went through the um teenage years... but um she was quite a handful actually, but she eventually grew out of that. I used to say at the time, now would it help if I looked for your birth families.... blah blah [daughter's] reply. But as they got older, um they decided that it would be good to know, particularly since she's got three children...um... [other daughter] got 1 daughter... who is 19, just turned 19 and she's got a four year old... been with [husband] 15 years and they've got... who's just turned 12... gorgeous um children. Look at them (Huhana, 163).

Huhana experienced her teenager exploring her identity and chose to help her and her sibling by offering to look for their birth families. Her children were not receptive to the idea at first but as they got older they decided that it was a good idea.

Who searched?

Who was it who searched? Whether it was the birth mother, the adoptee or the adoptive mother who searched made a difference. According to Petta & Steed (2005) most research is in agreement with the motivations for adoptees to search for their birth mothers. The three main motivations for searching are; wanting to know their whakapapa or lineage, wanting information about their birth, and identity issues. I always wanted my adopted son to search for and meet his birth mother but when she searched for and found him instead, I realised that was so much better because he knew then that she wanted to meet him. He would not have known that if he had initiated the search.

> …but what happened was, in about 1995 I just decided, I said to the girls, wrote to them both and said um "I am going to look for your birth mothers" and they both agreed that would be a good idea so I wrote away for their original birth certificates and got those. And then started the process of finding them by their maiden names I had on the birth certificates... mother had remarried. We got that name through an agency... How did it... what happened. No, [husband] and I went to ... he went first and started looking through the roll, the um

> Valerie: The electoral roll?
>
> …the electoral roll and he, in the time that he had he went from me to what ever it was and then I had some time a few weeks later and I went. It was right in the last... and there was... anyway, I got the details from that and then um came home and wrote her a letter (Huhana, 205).

Huhana took matters into her own hands, asked her children how they felt about her searching for their birth mothers and proceeded with the help of her husband to search.   They searched through the electoral roll to find the birth mother's name and address and Huhana wrote to her. Irahapeti's experience was not so open because she and her children did not talk to each other about reunion with their birth mothers although her son had at least one conversation with his father about it.

> …well my husband is telling me he must have asked our son and our son must have said to him "What for? You're my mum and dad". So he didn't worry but I think um my daughter, she hasn't actually told me but I've heard it from others, well her partner and that said that she went about two or three years ago I think, or it might be a bit longer (Irahapeti, 138).

Although most of the children did meet their birth mothers there were two who did not wish to. Irahapeti's son appeared to have no desire to reunite with his mother but her daughter did. However, it seems that she wasn't able to tell her adoptive mother that she had met her birth mother.

> Valerie: Yes. So did [daughter] ever reunite with her birth parents?
>
> …yes she did. Um, she asked me and I said well, it's up to you. But I said if you get knocked back, it's your problem. So she found out her birth mother but her birth mother didn't want anything to do with her (Kura, 89).

Kura's daughter wanted to look for her birth mother but Kura was not very enthusiastic about the notion and warned her daughter that there could be unpleasant consequences.   Her daughter searched for her mother regardless and was indeed 'knocked back'. Marama's son's uncle not his birth mother searched for him.

…and um... and he said "Do you mind if we meet"? and I said "No, that's fine, come on down" I said "When you come pick up your daughter, come in and we'll have a cup of tea, have a sit down, have a kōrero". And unbeknown to me, it was all connected and I didn't know and anyway he come in and he said to me, "This is your letter" and I saw the letter address I knew straight away it was my handwriting and I looked at it and I said, "Oh" I said, "How come you've got it"? and then he said "Well" he said "Actually it was addressed to my sis... it was sent to my sister". And so we've, and that's how we made a link with (son's) whānau (Marama, 235).

This was a very unusual situation because a friend of Marama's daughter mentioned that her brother looked very much like his uncle. When the friend came to their house and saw their photos he again talked about the physical resemblance between her brother and his uncle. This led to the uncle contacting Marama. Amiri's daughter searched for her birth mother when she became pregnant with her first baby and coincidentally the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 had just become law so she was able to access her original birth certificate.

…after she after she got married and she was having her first baby that was when the um law changed and um they could go and access yes they could access their um so she was although she'd never shown any interest or asking questions much um she was I think first through the door to find out.

Valerie: Right.

…yeah and the funny thing was it caused quite a rift between her and her brother her elder brother because he felt that that was not an ok thing to do he felt that that was somehow a slight against us, and I remember trying to say to him I didn't feel threatened by it at all um that it was fine um but he was but then of course they didn't have a good relationship (Amiri, 187).

Amiri's son did not approve of his sister searching for her birth mother because he felt that it was showing disloyalty to their adoptive parents. Loyalty to adoptive parents was a feeling many adoptive children experienced (Griffith, 1997c). Possibly his sister felt more secure in herself and her relationship with her adoptive parents so that she could search for her birth mother. Also, the siblings did not have a very good relationship and Amiri felt that he would have probably been looking for a reason to be angry with his sister.

...and my son his mother traced him (pauses) (Amiri, 362).

Valerie: Tell me about that

… but anyway later on his Mum contacted him and um

Valerie: How old was he then?

…he would've he would've been in his 30s and um she said she was coming on one date and so the day before they were having this big cleanup and he was unshaven and wearing scraggy clothes and the house was a tip cause they lived pretty um let's say house cleaning wasn't um a priority um but they were having a big tidy up for this lady and she came a day early (laughs) and that was not a good start except that it kind of went like love at first sight and she invited them to go on holiday with her and um... (Amiri, 435).

In Amiri's son's case his birth mother contacted him and the reunion started off really well evidenced by Amiri's words 'love at first sight'. However, after four days of holidaying together his birth mother 'kicked' her son out.

Reunion experiences

There are many unknowns in reunions and this is daunting. How will it go and what will happen afterwards? Will the relationship continue and if so for how long and in what form? There will be much negotiation for some time if the relationship does continue. Reunions evoke a great deal of emotion in all three parties of the adoption triad that is, birth mothers, adoptees and adoptive parents. Although some may think that reunions are an issue only for adoptees and birth mothers, in fact adoptive mothers are very much affected when their children reunite with their birth mothers. They often have a fear of losing their child and they can suffer the child's feelings about the reunion along with them in an 'if my child hurts, I hurt' manner. Adoptive parents who had trusted assurances of privacy when they adopted in the 'closed stranger' system were now faced with their children meeting their birth parents and all that that entailed. In this research when birth mothers and adoptees met sometimes the adoptive mothers and other members of the adoptive family were there as well. The particular emotions felt at reunion will be wide-ranging but anxiety is likely to be experienced by most participants.

…um but [daughter] got back to her and she finally agreed to meet us in another town. [Daughter] wanted her husband there but she also wanted me there and um I I was happy to go

with her. I felt nothing but gratitude for this woman who'd given me my daughter um and we travelled and I was anxious and [daughter] was anxious and we were all anxious um and when we got there um poor lady she was so nervous. She had never told her husband (Amiri, 212).

Amiri's daughter's birth mother tried to fob her daughter off at first but eventually agreed to meet her and Amiri came as support for her daughter. Her birth mother insisted on meeting in another town because she had not told her husband or children that she had relinquished a baby for adoption and was fearful of being found out. This would have been a huge experience for her. Amiri expressed empathy towards the birth mother.

Sometimes adoptees and adoptive mothers were motivated to search for birth mothers because they wanted medical information or knowledge about conditions that were common in their family.

> …um and she said other things that really upset [daughter] without meaning to. She asked [daughter] what what she did. She said "Oh I'm a teacher" and and poor lady she said um "Oh you didn't get your brains from me" and [daughter] [daughter] asked her about if there was any family defects with feet um and she the lady got really defensive and um "Oh I know nothing about that. Um no, everyone in my family's fine" (Amiri, 224).

Amiri's daughter's birth mother became very defensive when asked whether there were any 'family defects with feet' and this and other upsetting remarks caused her daughter to 'shut down'.

> …and so I knew part of the reason we were there was to find out about her Māori side um so I started asking about like you know um about her dad and she was very evasive. She said she couldn't remember um couldn't remember his name, couldn't remember the area he came from, um later on she said made reference that he was her girlfriend's brother and I thought you wouldn't forget your girlfriend's brother's name um but she clearly did not want to go there.
>
> Valerie: Mm.
>
> …um made a couple of (pause) not so nice remarks about about him um and about the Māori way which didn't go down well with [daughter] either um and I did as much pushing as I could to get some lead that we could follow to find out um because I knew that that was one of the things that she'd wanted out of it um but it didn't happen... (Amiri, 230).

Amiri's daughter's birth mother denied knowledge of the Māori birth father's name and therefore his whānau even though Amiri did her best to find out by 'pushing' to get some lead. Amiri thought that the birth mother did know the father's name but was unwilling to disclose it. Both Amiri and her daughter felt very sad that she could not find out who her father was and what iwi he was from. The inability to gain this knowledge was especially 'big' as Amiri was unable to leave her Māori land to her daughter because of her iwi's succession ruling and because her daughter could not trace her birth father she was unable to succeed to his land either. Both Amiri and her daughter cried over this later.

> …um I was so grateful and I told her that I was so grateful that she'd um given me my daughter and she said she could actually remember in the hospital seeing my eldest one toddle around um so she knew that her baby had an older brother.
> Valerie: Yes...
> …the odd thing was I think the thing that really upset my daughter was out of the blue she said "Of course the first adoption failed" and my daughter looked at me and I thought I don't know what she's talking about. I said "What do you mean?" She said "Well the first adoption failed and I rung my parents up and they said well you can't bring her home here". Well this must have been really terrible for my daughter sitting there. But what I've worked it out is that somebody obviously before us had been given the opportunity to go up to the hospital to see to see her and whether she didn't fit into whatever they were looking for I don't know. They had obviously said no and because she was only 14 days old. She can't have even left the hospital so there was no other adoption um but... (Amiri, 245).

Amiri expressed her gratitude to the birth mother for giving her a daughter. Then the birth mother casually said that 'the first adoption had failed'. This was a shock to Amiri and her daughter. They could not understand what the birth mother meant and then deduced that another adoptive couple must have come to look at the baby and decided not to take her. Her daughter initially thought that Amiri had withheld this information from her but it was as much a shock to Amiri as it was to her daughter. Amiri felt for her daughter because this was evidence of more rejection from both the prospective adoptive couple and from the birth mother's parents who said that she could not bring the baby home. This would have been because of the stigma and shame of having a baby out of wedlock. Amiri then went on to speak about her son's reunion and more about her daughter's reunion.

... it was difficult because at that time he went off me big time.

Valerie: It was painful?

…it was very painful um yes it was very painful and in fact there was even a time with [daughter] when we were when she first discovered her mother her name and the name she'd given she went through a brief period calling me Amiri instead of Mum and that was very painful and of course my other daughter was furious with her um you know she was...

Valerie: Protective of you?

…absolutely and didn't understand at all had no understanding at all of what it was like um I it was hurtful a bit... so both times I've felt like I was being pushed aside um

Valerie: Yes.

…but only briefly because once [daughter] got used to the idea and and then she insisted that I go with her to meet this lady I don't know if it would have been if it would have been that way if the lady had been keen to meet her straight away I think it might have been difficult I think it might have been difficult for me to stand aside and but as it was like I was [daughter's] support

Valerie: Yes.

…person because she'd realized by then that this lady didn't want to meet her but she was determined to meet her anyway um so that sort of got to that (Amiri, 442).

Amiri expressed feelings of difficulty, pain, hurt and being pushed aside. These feelings were alleviated to some extent by her daughter's desire to have her with her as a support person to awhi (support) her when she met her birth mother.

... but with this other one um [son] chose not to tell me anything very much at all um but they went away and stayed with her but after about four days big big arguments and she kicked him out and then um as far as I know have not heard so very sad...(Amiri, 464).

Valerie: Yes so you found the reunions painful?

…um I found this one a little bit painful, um not so much that it had happened or that he went on holiday but that he didn't want to talk to me about it I think that was it (Amiri, 495).

Amiri's pain this time was caused by her son choosing to tell her little of what happened between him and his birth mother. Amiri also expressed sorrow that the reunion did not work out for her son and that he and his birth mother had no further contact.

… ah with [daughter] I found that painful because [daughter] was like "Oh I didn't like her" um and [daughter] was quite judgmental of her and I was just really really sorry for this lady um because (pause) I don't think my daughter had any any understanding what it would've been like.

Valerie: Yes... (Amiri, 495).

…she'd never talk to me about it really but I think in her head because she has many times since said to me "the moment [birth mother] opened the door I knew I'd made a mistake" so before the poor lady had a chance to say a word, and my daughter had like this image it's not what I had in my head so that was painful but in a different way like that time I wasn't feeling sorry for me I was feeling sorry for this poor lady (Amiri, 508).

Amiri found her daughter's reunion painful because her daughter was judgmental of her birth mother and Amiri felt sorry for her. Her daughter appeared to be disappointed with her birth mother possibly because she had not lived up to her expectations, and because she then had to relinquish her dream of reuniting with her mother in the same way that she had been relinquished by her mother years earlier. Amiri then spoke about the criticism levelled at her and her husband by her son's birth mother.

Valerie: So you never met her?

…no apparently she was very critical of us I don't know why maybe because of the way [son] turned out I but and he never told me that, his wife told me that um but...(Amiri, 482).

Valerie: So did you have any other feelings about it?

… um.

Valerie: About the reunion?

…no I think probably if I'm truthful when my daughter-in-law said she [birth mother] didn't think much of the way we brought him up she was very critical I think I probably I think I felt angry at times because he had been such a challenge and we had just loved him unconditionally over the most awful times... um because I felt that that was unjustified cause she didn't really know us she'd never met us and she was meeting him in his 30s and yeah I think I let that get to me a little bit not that he would've ever known or anybody else for that matter but um yeah I think deep down in me I was like how can you say that? You didn't know and it was really really hard to bring up ...(Amiri, 523).

Amiri felt angry when her son's birth mother criticized the way Amiri and her husband had brought up their son because his birth mother had no inclination of how difficult it had been.

Huhana's reunion experience was different to Amiri's because Huhana had initiated the reunion so consequently she had control of the situation. The reunion was in her home and she was very welcoming to the birth family and the reunion went well.

> …and I waited and waited then one evening I got this phone call and this woman said she was... and that she was [birth mother's] um sister. And she said "I thought I had better ring you because you'll be wondering whether [birth mother] is going to reply to you or not" but she said "She will reply to you, she's just finding it difficult to get her head around it all". And we had a long, long chat and ... said that she didn't even know [daughter] had been born until she was eight and her sister you know told her one day that she had had this baby... (Huhana, 222).

> ...and I eventually got a letter from [birth mother] and she said she would love to come down and meet her so I said "Right". So we made a date, and of course you can imagine the excitement and the nervousness about this happening and her, she said that her son ... would come from ... and he would pick his sister ... from ... and they would come down as well. So we were going to have a family weekend. And um that afternoon we were all you know, I was sort of pacing the house, I didn't know where to put myself because it was such a you know an emotional time, you can imagine, her seeing [daughter], she had never seen since she was born. Um and with [daughter] it was an emotional time too, here was her birth mother coming but anyway she duly arrived and you know there was hugs and all this sort of stuff. ...and ... arrived down later that night um and yeah. So we all just sat around and talked and the next day we talked and talked and talked and Sunday they went back. But then we did keep in touch ... and I took ... that's her daughter and I went up too another weekend and spent time with her but they embraced [daughter] you know. They sort of welcomed her um yeah, they embraced her, she was very very lucky and before, I couldn't see the reason for the feelings that she's got to persist you know, because she met them and like I've said to her since, you know, I thought that by meeting your family that was going to make a difference to the way you felt but she's still chasing that elusive something unfortunately (Huhana, 242).

Huhana's daughter's reunion was full of emotions such as excitement and nervousness and Huhana was 'pacing the floor' with nervousness. She also did not know 'where to put herself'. They had a family weekend with members of her daughter's birth family and talked

and talked and hugged each other on arrival so it was a very open and loving reunion. After the reunion they kept in touch and Huhana took her mokopuna to visit her new grandmother. The birth family embraced their daughter so Huhana found it difficult to understand why her daughter is still unhappy with her life. Huhana had the expectation that meeting her birth mother would solve her daughter's problems or at least make her happier. Huhana's second daughter's reunion appeared to go well but her birth mother has not kept in touch. Irahapeti's son had not made contact with his birth mother. It appeared that her daughter had reunited with her birth mother but she did not tell Irahapeti who heard it from another family member.

> … no no. It was secret and you couldn't go. But um, my child [son] never asked. But I don't know. And uh [daughter] met her mother I think it was or a brother, one of her brother's, four brothers and sister, but she didn't tell me though.
>
> Valerie: But she didn't tell you
>
> … no she didn't tell me. You know. I don't know she might have thought it might hurt me you know.
>
> Valerie: Yes I think some children do.
>
> …no which was sad because I think she should have you know. I mean I would've even gone with her. You know and I think in a way, I think in a way that, I think you should learn about the health of the blood parents and that.
>
> Valerie: Yes that is what sends some people searching sometimes. If they had something wrong with them or they want to know the medical background.
>
> …the medical background I think should be, you know you should research that
>
> (Irahapeti, 137).

Irahapeti's daughter did not tell her that she had met members of her birth family. Irahapeti assumed that it was because her daughter was afraid of hurting her feelings. This is another example of the loyalty that adopted children sometimes feel towards their adoptive parents. Irahapeti goes on to say that she felt sad that her daughter did not tell her about the reunion and that she 'would've even gone with her'. It appears though, that Irahapeti has not discussed this issue with her daughter. This could be because of loyalty to her daughter; not wishing her daughter to know that someone has told her mother or it could just be the nature of the relationship that they share. Kura talks briefly about her daughter's relationship with her birth whānau. Her daughter had met her birth mother who did not want anything to do with her. She had also spoken to her mother's sister.

> Valerie: Ok, does she have contact with other members?
>
> …yes.
>
> Valerie: Of her birth father's?
>
> …yes, she's quite friendly with them and they're all in ... but um
>
> Valerie: Not with her birth mother?
>
> …no
>
> Valerie: Ok. So how was it for you? You know.
>
> … no it didn't worry me you know
>
> Valerie: Didn't worry you?
>
> … no no mmm (Kura, 96).

Kura commented that her daughter has no contact with her birth mother but she does have contact with her birth father's whānau. When asked how it was for her Kura asserted that it did not worry her at all.

> …but we did meet her um, her aunties and uncles and that over in ... and um, all the different one's children who were ... but we went for New Year's Day but they didn't have their...
>
> Valerie: Yes.
>
> …and they treated us as if we were royalty.
>
> Valerie: Oh isn't that lovely?
>
> …and when we drove away they lined up to see us go… yes so um, but, however. I've met them and they're very nice people (Kura, 118).

Kura describes their meeting with her daughter's father's whānau and explains that they were treated as if they were 'royalty' which led to her feeling that they were 'very nice people'. Marama's son on the other hand did not reunite with his birth mother and is adamant that he does not want to.

> …do you want to meet your mum and dad? And he said "No, no I don't want to Mum". He said "You're my Mum, you're my Dad and um"... and he said "I don't need anybody" he says "I got you and Dad and [sister] and Uncle ... and Aunty" ... and started all the whānau, and saying all their names and things and he says... he says "I'm happy Mum, I don't need anyone". So when the situation came up with his whānau member approaching us I thought, how do I handle this, what do I do? So I says, so [husband] and I sat down and we thought about it and talked about it over and over and sort of mulled it around and then I said to... and then we decided it's only fair enough to tell, we need to tell him he's got whānau close by and

maybe um he would like to make that connection. And also his uncle did say to me, he said "You know he's a first grandchild in the whānau". And of course that just sent the heartstrings and everything going again and I said to [husband] "You know... he's the oldest, he's the oldest grandchild". And I said "What are, you know, what are we denying them and what are we... does he under.... [son] understand the full implications of that"? (Marama, 265).

The fact that Marama's son does not want to reunite with his birth whānau makes it a non-reunion story. Marama very much wants him to reunite but he is just as determined that he will not. Marama did not know what to do. 'How do I handle this, what do I do'? When his uncle said that he was the first grandchild of the whānau Marama was even more emotional and this information really 'sent her heartstrings... going'. Her aroha and pōuri for her son was very strong and painful for her.

Reunion experiences are very emotional times. When adoptive mothers are involved in the reunions it is usually because they believe that the reunion will be in the best interests of the child. Sometimes adoptees do not want their adoptive mothers to know about their reunion and sometimes reunions can make adoptive mothers vulnerable and expose them to criticism.

Conclusion

This analysis chapter has investigated how the Māori adoptive mothers in this research experienced their journey through 'closed stranger' adoption, from mothering their adopted children to the experience of their children reuniting or not with their birth mother / parents and the influence this has had on their being in the world. The next and concluding chapter presents the findings from the research, thoughts for future research and offers a number of perceptions and comprehensions that have surfaced from the study. As well I consider how the women were influenced by the interview process and articulate my reflections of my thesis journey.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis has investigated the unique experiences of six Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. The purpose for telling their stories was to add to an understanding of the effect of legal adoption in this period on Māori adoptive mothers and to emphasize a voiceless and underrated group in our society. This chapter revisits and addresses the research question with the aid of the analysis and the literature. Next it outlines the key aspects and highlights of the study, and the significance and implications of the research findings. The limitations of the study are debated and thoughts for future research are offered. I reflect on the process of writing this thesis and my learning along the way.

'Closed stranger' adoption and whāngai

The differences between 'closed stranger' adoption and whāngai are considerable. 'Closed stranger' adoption was an assimilationist practice with laws designed to enforce it and to outlaw the practice of whāngai, supposedly for the betterment of Māori. 'Closed stranger' adoption was a secret arrangement, whereas whāngai was an open arrangement with all parties to the adoption knowing the others. The former was based on the nuclear family, while whāngai on the other hand, existed within the whānau; the very important extended family unit. 'Closed stranger' adoption was a 'not blood' relationship, but tamaiti whangai in contrast, were usually related to their mātua whāngai and had access to their whakapapa whānau. One was a legal contract whereas the other was an informal relationship with no need for legality.

While there is still stigma attached to adopted families, whāngai was regarded as a positive relationship. The relinquishing parents were considered generous in the gifting of their child and the mātua whāngai were not regarded negatively. 'Closed stranger' adoption was a permanent arrangement. Whāngai however, is an informal, flexible and fluid arrangement

where the child may return to their parents if for example their situation had improved so that they were able to raise their child. 'Closed stranger' adoption was the antithesis of whāngai which had worked really well for Māori yet they were expected to give up this traditional practice and embrace Pākehā ways. This caused great harm to whānau, hapū and iwi.

Research question

This research set out to answer the question "What are the unique experiences of Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption system?" Many of the experiences that participants spoke about were commonly reported in the literature on adoption and motherhood. However, there were experiences that were unique to them as Māori and these were grouped in the analysis under the superordinate theme of whānau business and the subordinate themes of 'not blood', land succession, naming, and caring for whānau.

Whānau business

Whānau business is the kete holding these subordinate themes. The name whānau business was chosen because these themes are all related to the whānau, which is the basic unit of te ao Māori. The analysis tells me that the stigma of adoption hinges on 'not blood' or the lack of a biological or blood tie. All stigma associated with adoption radiates out from that. For example, the stigma of infertility is about 'not blood' because infertile women / men are not able to have a biological child. Because of this 'not blood' status, the adoptive family is regarded as essentially inferior to the biological family. In addition, parents seeking the familial security of legal adoption are often accused of wanting ownership as if their children were chattels. This suggests a lesser entitlement of adoptive parents based on 'not blood'.

The analysis supports the work of authors who have emphasized the stigma of adoption such that the biological connection is held up as being necessary for an authentic and therefore superior family for example (J. Bradley, 1997; Griffith, 1997c; Kirk, 1964, 1981; Mann, 1997; Miall, 1987, 1996; Mikaere, 2003; Wegar, 1995, 2000). The lack of a blood tie is particularly problematic for Māori because of the importance of whakapapa which is considered one of the most tangible taonga we have in that it is inextricably linked to our spiritual and physical homelands and therefore ancestral inheritance, which includes land

entitlement and succession (Durie, 1998; Metge, 1995; Rangihau, 1987; Shirres, 1997; R. Walker, 1990).

Land succession was identified as a very important, complex and confusing issue as land and therefore whakapapa are the connections to our indigenous identity. In response to questions regarding succession, participants reflected the confusion associated with this very important issue that nevertheless would not arise with 'blood' children. I was left with the impression that some participants had still to deal with the whānau business, that is, what was to happen to their land after their death. When these participants were adopting, they were simply adopting babies, beautiful bouncing babies who had needs. They were not thinking about the future and the decisions they would need to make about land succession. Now that these women are older and given that the needs of Maori are manifold, here and now needs must be addressed and this may be preventing them from fully considering the question of land succession. Whatever their decision, it seemed to cause some much heartache and one found it very difficult to tell her child that he would not succeed to her Māori land. As noted in the response of a whānau member of one participant, though the child would always be loved, ultimately he was not whānau. It is a 'not blood' philosophy that is powerful in shaping the lives of adoptees and their whānau.

Naming, another subordinate theme from whānau business, highlighted an important issue for Māori and again, this is connected to whakapapa. For example, one participant experienced stigma when she and her husband attempted to name their adopted child after a tupuna, but were denied the privilege because of the stigma of adoption. The effect that this had on them was very well articulated and reinforced the fact that adoption is indeed regarded as secondary to a biological tie not only in the wider society, but also in Māoridom. The issue of naming is important and sets the child's relationship with the world for the rest of their lives. This in turn affects their adoptive mothers as the lesser legitimacy of their child seems to reflect on their own legitimacy, reinforcing thoughts of inadequacy because of their infertility, for example.

The 'not blood' status of adoptive children does not preclude their caring for the whānau they have become part of. This caring particularly applied to tamariki and kaumātua the more vulnerable members of the whānau. In the situation described by Irahapeti, both mother and adopted daughter displayed aroha, kawenga, herenga and mahi-a-ngākau when caring for their

sick grandmother. Nevertheless, stigma was encountered again in this situation when the grandmother commented that her 'own' children that is, her biological mokopuna, had not come to look after her. This attitude was held even though the grandmother appeared to love her adopted mokopuna.

There was very little evidence from this study to support women's feelings of grief, inadequacy, fear, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, sadness, rage and guilt concerning the issue of infertility which has formed a large part of the literature on the adoptive family (Gillard-Glass & England, 2002; Holditch-Davis, et al., 1998; Howell, 2006; Ludbrook, 2003a; Miall, 1987, 1996; Wegar, 2000). Only two participants mentioned infertility with other participants simply stating that they had not had a baby. One participant only was examined medically to determine infertility.

The stigma of adoption runs throughout this thesis. Miall (1987) found that her respondents were of the opinion that the wider society believed that a biological connection was necessary for a loving relationship with a child and that this connection was all that was needed to be a parent. This research refutes that statement as it was obvious that these Māori adoptive mothers loved their children. Although most of the participants stated initially that they had not experienced the stigma of adoption, it was apparent from their data that they had and that this stigma is still very much present in adoption.

Psychology – pathology

Psychology has tended to pathologise adoption by studying problems in adoptive families through concentrating on the adoptive child and often blaming the adoptive parents in particular, the adoptive mother for the problems. Research did not often concentrate on the social context of the stigma of infertility and how that affected the adoptive family. The psychopathological model has likely affected researchers' opinions of the adoptive family and adoptive mothers whereas if they had taken the social context of stigma into account, they may not have concluded that adoptive families and adoptive mothers were deviant, damaged and pathogenic (Wegar, 2000). If there had not been this psychological emphasis on the pathology of adoption and adoptive mothers' responsibility for it the Māori adoptive mothers in this research may not have encountered the stigma and discrimination they did. There are

many stories from these women of the joys of mothering adopted children just as there are also stories of the difficulties they faced. Wegar argued that this stress on the adoptees' difficulties is an important theoretical impediment which must be dealt with to ensure that post-adoption services are helpful.

There were two aspects of adoption literature that were supported by this study: namely overprotectiveness by adoptive mothers (Mann, 1997; Miall, 1996; Petta & Steed, 2005; Sorosky, et al., 1984) and the practice of 'matching' parents to children that was common during the 'closed stranger' adoption period. Overprotectiveness concerned observations that adoptive parents in particular adoptive mothers, felt a strong need to defend and shield their adopted children. Participants talked about protectiveness which was related to a feeling of responsibility and was sometimes referred to by participants as 'spoiling' the child.

'Matching' babies to adoptive parents was a practice carried out by social workers in the 'closed stranger' adoption system, where the majority of babies available for adoption in Aotearoa / New Zealand were of Māori or Pacific Island descent and most prospective adoptive parents were Pākehā (C. Bradley & Hawkins-Leon, 2002; Else, 1991; Wegar, 1995, 2000). Because of 'matching', some of the Māori adoptive mothers in this research were offered Māori babies before they had considered adoption. Likewise, because I am Māori my husband and I did not have to wait long for our adopted son who is also Māori, even though we already had two biological children. Therefore, the analysis and my own experience supported the literature on 'matching'.

Future research and recommendations

It would be interesting to conduct further research on Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption system in order to compare the results with this study and / or investigate different aspects of the situation. Although it would be extremely interesting to do it is a difficult topic for women to discuss and the age of women who adopted in this period is also a factor that needs to be taken into account. It may be more practical to conduct research into the relevance of culture and adoption in Aotearoa / New Zealand as relationships and culture are important to whānau. This research could be important for adoption policy and practice as whānau need to be recognized and accorded a voice in adoption matters. Further research on

adoptive mothers in New Zealand would be useful to determine why they are the forgotten members of the adoption triad. Why is their role in adoption not valued?

Reflections

Māori centred research was used in this research and has as one of its aims the enhancement of the health of participants. One Māori adoptive mother in particular shared how being asked to participate in this research had brought back all the feelings associated with the experience of adopting in the 'secret' adoption system. She expressed much aroha and regret for her adopted son who had so far chosen not to contact his birth family. She also thanked me for the opportunity to participate. This example shows how the intention to improve health, an important aspect of Māori centred research was realized for this Māori mother.

I disclosed my insider status in the information sheet sent to prospective participants and for the most part, I found them to be appreciative of the fact that I would have an understanding of their situation. In one or two cases however, I felt that I was regarded as not quite the same, because I had biological children as well as an adopted child. As an insider, some adoptive mother's experiences have been so taken-for-granted by me that I was unaware that they were unusual and new to others. For instance, I had taken for granted that others would be aware of the shock / suddenness aspect of adoption only to find that those who had not had experience of adoption had not considered it and were very surprised.

As Toby Alice Volkman (2005) points out, when adoptive mothers as insiders write about adoption methodological issues surface. As an adoptive mother living every day with adoption and its effects can I be unbiased? Locating my study and writing has been difficult to determine because I have needed to be analytical and sensitive at the same time, aware of my emotions concerning adoption and it has been necessary to examine the cultural and political environment wherein adoption is situated. Can my research still be rigorous? The voices of adoptees and birth mothers are absent therefore how can I write on the adoption triangle? (Volkman, 2005) However, outsiders writing on the subject of adoption also experience difficulties because they do not have the same understanding of adoption and this can lead to some trepidation on their part and possibly misunderstanding of some aspects of adoption for Māori adoptive mothers in the 'closed stranger' adoption system.

I endeavoured to demonstrate reflexivity meaning that I sought ways of representing to my participants and readers my historical and geographic location, my personal investments in the study, different prejudices I bring to the investigation and my "awareness" and "learning" in the course of the research project (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). In this way I hoped to respect these Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption system.

A conversation on adoption will almost always focus on the adoptee and then the birth mother but the adoptive mother is rarely considered. I have found this denial of adoptive motherhood throughout this study from reading the literature, to recruiting participants, when it was difficult for people to realize that it was adoptive mothers whom I was seeking as participants. Remarks such as "Oh yes I know a Māori woman who is adopted" or "I know a Māori woman who adopted her baby out" were very common. After attempting to help recruit participants for my research my sister was surprised to find that her experience paralleled my own in this respect. Whilst writing this thesis even I sometimes found my attention straying to the adoptees' stories rather than the adoptive mothers' stories that my participants discussed and I had to refocus myself especially when analyzing reunions.

Significance

Although there has been much research conducted on the practice of whāngai, this research is significant because these Māori adoptive mothers have been given the opportunity to voice their experiences of legally adopting in the 'closed stranger' adoption system for the first time. However, reflecting on the research overall, it is the rollercoaster of emotion experienced by these participants as well as the whānau business themes that is the most important aspect to take into account.

An important learning that I had during this thesis was the significance of whakawhanaungatanga and connectivity. I was aware of this concept and indeed spoke of it in my thesis but it was only when one of the participants contacted my auntie to see who I was after I sent her my pepeha that I realised it on a practical level. I had not included my pepeha on my information sheet. If I had this woman would have known from the start who I was and where I was from and it may have made a difference to the way she participated in the research.

Aroha / Pōuri / Mamae (Love / Sorrow / Hurt)

Throughout the interviews it was apparent that adoption had been a rollercoaster of emotion for these Māori adoptive mothers. Some of these emotions were anger, anxiety, gratitude, happiness, joy, love, pain, pressure, hurt, sorrow, shame, sympathy, pity, tension, and heartache. To encompass all the emotions experienced by the participants in this study I have called this final section Aroha / Pōuri / Mamae (Love, Sorrow, Hurt).

One participant in particular expressed and articulated aroha / pōuri / mamae very clearly. This was the only mother whose child did not reunite with his birth whānau and she felt pōuri because he would not. She felt this way because he was missing out on knowing his whānau and having them know him. This adoptive mother felt powerless over her son's decisions and his happiness and like most mothers wanted her child to be happy. Another participant also expressed aroha / pōuri / mamae from the joy she felt with the arrival of her children to the pain she felt when a birth mother changed her mind and took her baby back, ("floods of tears) and the sorrow she felt when her adopted daughter's birth mother would not divulge who her Māori birth father was therefore denying her daughter knowledge of her roots, her whakapapa. All of the Māori adoptive mothers in this study expressed aroha / pōuri / mamae.

The rollercoaster of emotion shared by participants began with the pain of not having a child, followed by the joy of receiving a child, along with the shock / suddenness of that, and the joys and trials of mothering, stigma, dealing with the question of land succession and then the painful and anxious experience of the child reuniting with his / her birth mother. There was diversity of experience and diversity in the effect of adoption on the mothers. Being a Māori adoptive mother was not always an easy experience.

After reading and rereading the data it became evident that the existence of these women had been emotionally and permanently influenced because they had adopted a child. Although there were similarities in the experiences of these Māori adoptive mothers there was also

diversity in the ways that they experienced and were affected by adoptive mothering in the 'closed stranger' adoption system.

Some critical concepts have been addressed in this thesis. The research not only addressed social influences but cultural influences as well when considering the issues of adoption. The nature versus nurture concept has been addressed as genetic determinism and environmentalism. The biological or whakapapa status versus the adoptive status has also been dealt with. The attitudes of communities towards adoptive families and psychological research that pathologises adoption are social and cultural practices that perpetuate the stigma of adoption and have been included. The importance of the specificity of family / whānau has been investigated. The whakapapa whānau was and still is an essential element of being Māori although the urbanization of Māori in the 1950s meant that Māori had to reinvent the whānau to some extent and now there are kaupapa whānau as well as whakapapa whānau. These give that connection and whakawhanaungatanga to urban Māori. The relationships between members of the adoptive family are as important as those of whakapapa whānau. Roles are important in the whānau and it is said that as long as people know their role the whānau runs smoothly. Māori adoptive mothers were at the forefront of change and pushing boundaries in the manner in which they formed new whānau just as Māori who moved from the pā to the town had to adapt and change their ways and also create new whānau.

Pauline Turner Strong (2002, p. 471) expressed the paradoxes of; "love and violence, rupture and incorporation", and Robert Ludbrook (1995, p. (i)); "fertility and infertility, love and hate, acceptance and rejection" when writing about adoption. These paradoxes will always be found in adoption to varying degrees not only in our lives but also in our writing (Volkman, 2005). This thesis, therefore, is offered as my interpretation of the understandings of six Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption system.

I would like to finish with the words of two Māori adoptive mothers:

> ...and a lot of people say, "Oh aren't they lucky children" but uh but my husband and I have always said "No, we've been the lucky ones you know. We really were the lucky ones because we couldn't have any... (Irahapeti, 216).

…as an adoptive parent I've just, it's just so, it's an emotional roller coaster and I have this strong sort of you know, he pulls at my heartstrings all the time and I always wonder what's going to happen to him in the future. Will he make that contact?... with his whānau you know, will he be ready to make that contact with his whānau and um... also how they'll receive him too after all this time and I sometimes put, think how does his mum feel? Does she still, still feel that um... she's still got a connection there? (Marama, 429).

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET

The Unique Experiences of Māori Women who Legally Adopted Children During the 'Closed Stranger' Adoption Period

Kia ora ki a koe,

My name is Valerie Maruru Perkins and this research is being undertaken as part of my Masters degree at Massey University, Palmerston North. I am interested in this topic because I am myself a Māori woman who adopted a child in this period when adoption was 'secret'. I am being supervised by Associate Professor Mandy Morgan, Head of the School of Psychology at Massey University. Please feel free to contact either Mandy or myself if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research.

Researcher:
Valerie Perkins
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 11-222
Palmerston North.
Phone: (06) 354 3161
Email: valerieperk@gmail.com

Supervisor:
Associate Professor Mandy Morgan
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 11-222
Palmerston North
Phone: (06) 350 5799 ext 2063
Email: C.A.Morgan@massey.ac.nz

What is this research about?

The aim of this study is to draw attention to and explore the experiences of Māori women who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period from 1940-1990. These years cover and overlap the period between the 1955 Adoption Act and the inception of the 1987 Adult Information Act. My intention is to understand the implications that these experiences have had on the lives of these women.

Who can participate in this research?

If you are a Māori woman who legally adopted a child whilst knowing very little about his / her background, between the years of 1940 and 1990 I would love you to participate in my research.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate you would need to be available for an interview to share your experiences of legally adopting in the 'closed stranger' adoption period. The intention of the interview is for you to talk about the experience from your point of view and it is anticipated that the interview will take about one hour. There will be one or two questions regarding Māori land and succession included in the interview.

If you agree the interviews will be video-taped by me or a third person operating the camera. This is because I am hearing-impaired and need to lipread in order to transcribe the tapes. Pseudonyms will be used so that no identifying information will be linked to you. If another person operates the camera they will have signed a confidentiality agreement. Alternatively, with your permission the interview may be audio taped. A transcript of the interview will be sent to you and if you wish to make changes to your kōrero we can discuss that. At the completion of the research you will be sent a summary of the research findings. Extracts from the data that do not include identifying information may be used in publications and presentations.

Video-tapes will be destroyed after being held in locked storage for five years.

If you choose to take part in the research, you have the right to:
• Withdraw from the study up to two months after you release your transcript;
• Decline to answer any particular question;
• Ask for the video-tape to be turned off at any time during the interview;
• Ask questions about the study at any time during participation;
• Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
• Be given a summary of the findings of the study after completion.

If you are interested in taking part in this research project then please contact me as above and I will answer any questions that you may have.

Nāku noa,
Nā, Valerie Maruru Perkins.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The Unique Experiences of Māori Women who Legally Adopted Children During the 'Closed Stranger' Adoption Period

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being video taped.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet, that is:

- I am free to withdraw from the study up until two months after I release my transcript;
- I may refuse to answer any particular questions;
- I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than this research;
- I have the right to ask for the tape to be turned off at any time during the interview;

After transcription the videotape must be held in a locked cabinet for five (5) years. I agree that the videotape then be destroyed. I do / do not (delete one) request a copy of my transcript for alterations and/or comments.

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name - printed

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

The Unique Experiences of Māori Women who Legally Adopted Children During the 'Closed Stranger' Adoption Period

I .... (Full Name - printed)

agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project "The Unique Experiences of Māori Women Who Legally Adopted Children During the 'Closed Stranger' Adoption Period"

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project.

Signature: ....   **Date:** ....

APPENDIX D: AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

The Unique Experiences of Māori Women who Legally Adopted Children During the 'Closed Stranger' Adoption Period

This form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used by the researcher, Valerie Perkins, in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

The Unique Experiences of Māori Women who Legally Adopted Children During the 'Closed Stranger' Adoption Period

The interviews will be unstructured with questions used as prompts.

1. What were your experiences as a Māori women legally adopting a child / children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period?

2. What were your motivations for adopting?

3. If your child reunited with their birth mother / parents how was that experience for you?

4. How did you feel about your role of adoptive mother?

5. How do you think the experience was different for you as a Māori woman?

6. If you have succeeded to Māori land, how do you feel about your adopted child / children succeeding to it?

7. How do your whānau feel about this issue?

APPENDIX F: RESEARCH LETTER

The Unique Experiences of Māori Women who Legally Adopted Children During the 'Closed Stranger' Adoption Period

Kia ora koutou,

My name is Valerie Maruru Perkins and I am researching Māori adoptive mothers who legally adopted children in the 'closed stranger' adoption period from 1940-1990. The aim of this research is to investigate the experiences of these women, to contribute to an appreciation of how secret adoption has impacted on them and to accentuate this silent and undervalued population in our society. There has been much written about the effects of secret adoption on adoptees and birth mothers and rightly so. There has however, been less on adoptive families, parents and mothers and so far I have not found any literature on Māori adoptive mothers.

The issues I will investigate are: What motivated these women to adopt and why not whāngai; if their child reunited with their birth mother / whānau how was that experience; are these women, like some others of the closed adoption period, overcome with shame in their roles as adoptive mothers because of stigma; if they have interests in Māori land, how do they and their whānau feel about their adopted child succeeding to that land; and to what extent does this experience compromise a person's cultural identity? My interest in this topic stems from my own experience as a Māori adoptive mother in the 'closed stranger adoption' system.

My research also looks at whāngai or traditional Māori adoption where children were given to other members of the whānau to bring up for various reasons, and there was no necessity for this action to be legalized. It was common for instance that grandparents would whāngai their oldest grandchild. Today's practice of open adoption is more in line with the practice of whāngai in that there is no secrecy involved.

If you know of any Māori women who adopted in the 'closed stranger' adoption period, please contact me for an information sheet at:

06 3543161
0211127544
valerieperk@gmail.com

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 08/06. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.

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