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***Purposeful Conception:
Customary traditions and contemporary applications of Te
Whare Tangata in the creation of wellbeing***

A thesis

Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a

Master of Philosophy

In

Rehabilitation Studies

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ABSTRACT

Māori continue to feature significantly in New Zealand statistics for mental health. *Customary traditions and contemporary applications of te whare tangata in creating wellbeing* discusses the ways in which te whare tangata traditions were engaged to protect and nurture Māori women in their role as the architects of future generations and further ensure positive wellbeing. Framed inside qualitative research methods and guided by kaupapa Māori research theories provided a tikanga framework, thereby maintaining cultural responsiveness to the research using Mana wāhine theories and providing a safe space to discuss the historic struggle Māori women have endured as a result of colonisation. Six Māori women of kuia status from Te Taitokerau participated in semi-structured interviews, discussing their observations, experience and active roles of te whare tangata across their life span. Kuia narratives are organised into the three stages of creation - Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama - with each stage representing a significant developmental period in te whare tangata. The customary traditions of te whare tangata have their origins in Māori cosmology which provided Māori with the blueprint to survive in volatile environments, none more volatile than the migration of western cultures and colonisation, which took Māori to the brink of extinction. However, Kuia Participants share stories of resistance and resilience in their own journeys through life and of how the customary traditions of te whare tangata have been transformed and remain relevant. Kuia narratives consistently reflect upon relationship building and maintenance being at the core of Māori wellbeing. They spoke about relationships not only being across human cultures, but the ability to develop relationships with all that surround us.

GLOSSARY

ariki	chief or high ranking community leader
atua	deities
awhi	embrace, support
hākari	feast, usually following ritual to return from sacred state
hapū	pregnant, sub-tribe/collective of whānau
haputanga	pregnancy, and associated rituals and practices
Haumia-tiketike	God/Atua of Uncultivated Foods & Medicinal Plants
hine	girl/s
Hineteiwaiwa	God/Atua of Childbirth and Associated Knowledge
Iho	umbilical cord
ira tangata	human principle
iwi	tribe
karakia	prayer
kete	baskets, woven containers
kohanga reo	language nest, immersion school for preschool children
kuia	female elders
kura kaupapa	Māori language immersion school for primary children

mākutu	spiritual curse from another
mana	prestige, authority, spiritual power
manaaki	support, care for
mātauranga	knowledge, esp. Māori knowledge
maunga	mountain
mauri	life force
mirimiri	massage
mokopuna	grandchild/ren
noa	ordinary, free from restriction
oriori	lullaby
pā	fortified village
papakāinga	whānau lands
Papatuanuku	Earth Mother
pēpī/pēpe	baby
pito	navel
poutama	pattern of stairs, stairway to knowledge
pōwhiri	ritual welcome, processes of engagement
puku	stomach

pūrākau	stories, narratives
rangatira	chief, chiefly status
Ranginui	Sky Father
Rongo mā tāne	God/Atua of Cultivated Foods & Humility
rongoa	medicine, usually from plants and including karakia
Ruaumoko	God/Atua of Earth Movements
taitemariki	youth
Tangaroa	God/Atua of Oceans and Waters
tangata whenua	people of the land, indigenous people of Aotearoa.
taonga	treasure, precious
tapu	sacred, restrictions
taumau	betrothal, arranged marriages
taurekareka	slave/s
te reo Māori	Māori language
tikanga	protocols
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination
tohunga	ritual expert
tua rite	ritual cutting of the umbilical cord

Tumatauenga	God/Atua of War and Humanity
tupuna	ancestor/s
tutua	commoners
urupa	cemetery
utu	balance, payment
wahine	woman
wāhine	women
whaikōrero	ritual speechmaking
whakapapa	genealogy, history
whakaaro	thought, idea
whānau	extended family up to three or more generations
whanaunga	extended family still connected by whakapapa but not as closely as immediate family such as parents or children
whāngai	adopted, non-biological child
whare	house
whare kohanga	birthing house
whare ngaro	lost or extinct house – infertility

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Inspired by Waikura Edwards and Dayton Nolan

Dedicated to Cyrus Nicholas Tyrone Nolan-Gideon.

Ko Te Ahu Ahu te maunga

Ko Otemaiwa te maunga

Ko Hokianga te moana

Ko Whakanekeneke te awa

Ko Ngātoki mata whaorua te waka

Ko Mataatua te waka

Ko Ngāpuhi te iwi

Ko Ngāpuhi te iwi

Ko Te Uri Taniwha te hapū

Ko Ngati Hao te hapū

Ko Parawhenua te marae.

Ko Piki te aroha te marae.

Ko Raewyn Smith taku ingoa

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and motivation you will achieve anything that your heart desires; you have remarkable inner strength. Jayde your confidence shines, your diligence and attention to detail will continue to serve you well in your life; and Jordan, you're a beautiful bundle of joy with a determined attitude and a passion to enjoy life to the fullest. You have all provided me with my most joyful memories and have been my most inspirational teachers.

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Kuia Participants:

MH – Matilda Harris

MC – Mihiterina Cribb

RH – Ripeka Hita

GA – Glenda Anderson

MU – Moko Ututaonga

PE – Pearl Erstich

PREFACE – A JOURNEY INSPIRED

Te whare tangata - Beginnings:

This research was inspired by several experiences in my personal and professional life. Personally, two of my daughters became pregnant. I was overwhelmed with this news as both of my mokopuna (grandchild/ren) would be born a matter of months apart. I shared my news with many and mostly this was received in a congratulatory manner; however, some people also shared their concern that in some way my daughters' lives would be limited by their choice to have a baby in their early twenties. I wondered, if our Māori women are choosing to have children at what society perceives as a young age, then how are these messages influencing future parenting practices and choice to becoming a parent made by these women? And would this impact on their wellbeing and the concept of their role as te whare tangata (the creative potential of women).

I then began to think about my work in mental health and the implications that mental trauma or the experience of subtly negative comments may have on the wellbeing of te whare tangata. Are our pregnant mothers carrying a sense of shame or embarrassment about the choice to be a parent? I also wondered about the kinds of contemporary support and guidance many expectant mothers and fathers have, and how supports influence the wellbeing of te whare tangata in contemporary society. This idea further evolved into the wellbeing of whānau, the concepts of parenting, and the many lifestyle challenges that Māori face.

I learned about our history in that many Māori ancestors were master navigators, historians, environmentalists and trading in many parts of the world prior to European contact. I therefore considered the possibility that the answers to healing our people today would be found in the customary traditions and philosophies of Māori culture, although mindful of a statement shared by Durie (2001) - “for most Māori [are] caught up in the world as it exists and more often than not [are] unable to negotiate any return to the old ways” (p. 27). I realised that there would be no return to traditional times; however there are possibilities of learning and applying traditional knowledge and practises to assist in attaining wellbeing today.

My journey was to start with karakia (prayer) and my spiritual request for guidance. I then visited my whānau (family) urupa (cemetery) *Kura te Ra*, and there I shared my thoughts and ideas with my wāhine tupuna (female ancestors) in my quest for spiritual guidance. At this time I was planning to research te whare tangata but had little idea of what exactly I wanted to do. After this I spoke with my mother (Elizabeth Henry) and kaumātua (male elder) Te Rauna Williams; they both shared their knowledge and life stories about their childhood with me, and with the blessing from both, I felt ready to begin this journey.

Internally I needed to overcome my anxieties around failing; what helped was a maunga (mountain) in Whangarei called Parahaki. This is a maunga of many stairs, and climbing this maunga presented me with many mental and physical challenges. Although this was an extremely difficult challenge for me, with commitment and determination I was able to conquer it many times. I applied the same determination

and commitment in my research; I reminded myself in tough times “just one more step, keep going and push through it”. These reminders served me very well.

I was further inspired by the birth of my first two moko, Waikura Edwards and Dayton Nolan, who were born around three months apart to my two oldest daughters. The birth of these babies highlighted for me as a new grandmother the importance I now placed on whakapapa (genealogy) and my own bloodline; these babies are my future.

Pebble - Our spiritual gift:

A year later, around halfway through completing this thesis, myself and my whānau were told that my unborn mokopuna, “Pebble”, had a rare heart condition called Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS), in which the left ventricle of the heart is very under-developed. This congenital condition was very serious in that there was a risk that “Pebble” would not survive long after birth, and if he were to survive he would have to overcome several medical challenges and be a very sickly boy. Initially my daughter, I and our whānau were in shock when told this at the radiology centre. I couldn’t understand why this was happening as we had planned to have a family photo with our baby “Pebble” at the radiology centre; today was supposed to be a celebration of our next little baby.

After receiving this news no one felt much like having a photo taken, and all I could think about was how could I make this better or try and improve this situation. My first reaction was to have karakia and ask for help, guidance, support and understanding. The next day our worst fears were realised in that the diagnosis of HLHS was confirmed

by a specialist at the local hospital. I felt hope leaving me and the tears were unstoppable, even though I was supposed to be the strong one for my daughter and her family. I asked the specialist about how we could change or improve things for baby. The specialist said that there was nothing we could do to change this situation, and that this was not because of anything baby “Pebble’s” parents had or hadn’t done.

I thought about this further and decided that in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) there was plenty that we could do. I reflected on the stories of the Kuia Participants I had shared and the many readings I had completed, and realised that our pēpē (baby) was already alive and very much a part of our whānau, and therefore we would develop a loving and supportive relationship with him now.

This next journey would begin with karakia to request the help of atua (gods), and explicit ask for one to reveal itself as the guide for baby “Pebble”. I was hoping for Tumatauenga (God of War and Humanity) as he would represent fight and strength; however it was Haumia-tiketike (God of Uncultivated Foods & Medicinal Plants) that revealed himself. I was somewhat puzzled about this and a little disappointed, until the reason for his presence came to me in the following:

*Haumia-tiketike: the hidden one who remains in the embrace of his mother,
sustains life.*

*Purpose for this mokopuna: to provide shelter and warmth to your whānau. To
provide guidance in times when survival is necessary.*

We decided as a whānau that we would establish a beautiful bonded relationship with “Pebble” now; we would kōrero (talk), waiata (sing) and love him so that he knows he is, and always will be, very much a part of our whānau.

Cyrus Nicholas Tyrone Nolan-Gideon:

A beautiful baby born, you arrived on the beautiful morning sunrise. A warrior and a smile that brought so much love and light into our lives. I saw your potential, a glimmer of hope, and sent a prayer to Hineteiwaiwa (Goddess of Childbirth) - guide and give strength to our baby, our son, our mokopuna. Guide us in your strength and wisdom.

A beautiful life and a strong wee boy. Our love for you bursting from our hearts. A prayer to give you my heart, my wee boy. I remember to share our iwi histories, so I brush my hand against your cheek and share with you our whakapapa and ask all those that were before us to be strong with you. I sing an oriori (lullaby) for you as I hold you in my arms; it's the same one I sang yesterday and the same I will sing tomorrow.

I remember the last night I spent with you. The darkness and the howling wind; it's raining now, like the tears in my heart. I knew you were leaving. You had been so strong but now you tire; you wouldn't sleep and Poppa couldn't let you go. You were kind to us dear Cyrus; you waited until we slept and you drifted away on another beautiful sunrise.



*Figure 1: Cyrus Sunrise - taken 16th May 2014, from National Women's Hospital,
Auckland.*

"Always and forever - he mokopuna, he taonga"

16/05/2014 – 25/05/2014.

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