Article

Indigenous Innovations in Qualitative Research Method: Investigating the Private World of Family Life

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Abstract

The *researched* are rarely provided the opportunity to take a role in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data they themselves provide to researchers. This article describes a novel indigenous research method, for a project in progress, which was developed to explore the relationships between intra-whānau (family) communication and whānau ora (family well-being) within eight whānau over a three year period. The relationships are explored through self-reflexive praxis where research participants are encouraged to think reflexively about their whānau conversations. Conversations that take place in the private world of whānau are audio-recorded by family members, without the imposition of an intrusive researcher. Whānau decide the extent to which their private lives are exposed to the researchers via the recordings and assist the researchers with an interpretation of their everyday conversations. This method offers an opportunity for both whānau and researchers to contribute to insights and understandings of the complex ecologies and realities of life for Māori families. This research methodology involves culturally-centred ethical practice drawn from both Western- and Māori-centred perspectives. Sensitive issues arising from the ways in which individuals perceived their role as active agents of research and the effects of self-reflection on the method are explored.

Keywords: Indigenous, Māori, self-reflexive praxis, sensitive research, qualitative methods, family communication, whānau ora (family well-being)

Background

Māori whānau are complex and diverse constructs where individuals and collectives identify themselves with various groupings that are simultaneously interchangeable, such as whakapapa whānau (kinship-based family) or kaupapa whānau (activity-based family). Whakapapa whānau are family units based on kinship whereas kaupapa whānau are pseudo-familial groups, but not necessarily kin. These latter groupings are formed either for short term goals, disbanding as soon as these are achieved, or are groups that serve multiple functions and aim to endure (Metge, 1995).

Traditionally, whānau embodied important values of close kinship ties and collective unity for mutual benefits (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2005), and consisted of several generations led by the elders who were the repositories of knowledge. Kaumātua (elders) were the family mentors, the health practitioners, the economic guides, and the primary caregivers of the young, and they were responsible for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. In Māori society in the past this was largely dependent on oral traditions where various forms of communication were utilised to interact with other members of the whānau and wider communities of hapū (extended family or sub-tribe). These forms of communication included variations of waiata (song), pūrākau (stories), and kōrero (talk). In this way, important knowledge such as whakapapa (genealogy) and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) were transmitted through the generations (Ngata, 1980; Reedy, 2009). Such forms of communication continue to have relevance within contemporary whānau, and can positively contribute to whānau ora (Reedy, 2009; Tomlins-Jahnke & Durie, 2008). The concept of whānau ora refers to all aspects of the health and wellbeing of the family, which includes physical, psycho-social, cultural, health, and spiritual needs. This is important in understanding such things as the happiness, welfare, and safety of the family.

However, there remains a gap in the literature because little is known about the dynamics of family conversation generally, and among Māori whānau in particular. Through films such as *Once Were Warriors* (Duff, 1995) and the high profile media reporting of child abuse among Māori (Quilliam, 2008), a powerful stereotype has emerged of Māori whānau as violent and abusive. While for some families such shocking profiles may be true, for the great majority of Māori whānau, these representations are far from the reality. Hence, there is an imbalance in terms of public perceptions about Māori whānau.

This article sets out to explain the issues associated with an innovative research approach that investigates the links between communication and family well-being within the intimacy of everyday life. Questions include: What expressions of family well-being are present in daily conversations? How do the tensions in the way families communicate with each other impact on whānau ora? That is, how are the dynamics of power, conflict, or solidarity manifested and played out within whānau conversations? What are the messages within conversations that contribute to or undermine whānau ora? And how are whānau values, mores, and norms transferred inter-generationally through family talk? In this sense, family well-being is important because there is evidence that strong whānau ties are more likely to lead to cohesive relationships, good communication, and positive identities as whānau and Māori (Cunningham, Stevenson, & Tassell, 2005; Livingstone, 2001; Metge, 1995; Te Hoe Nuku Roa Research Team, 1999).

To assist in seeking answers to these questions, this study applies an innovative, qualitative, and participant directed method of data collection, a research strategy trialled previously by Tomlins-Jahnke and Durie (2008) in their study of family talk. An important aspect of this method is that whānau participants control the data collection process, the aim of which is to minimise researcher intrusion.

Aims of the Project

The study that this article relates to was aimed at understanding the importance of communication to whānau ora by examining the conversational interactions of two whānau groupings: four whakapapa whānau and four kaupapa whānau. Furthermore, aspects of the study included investigating the tensions that permeate communication within whānau that are considered to be at risk; that is, of lower economic status and less likely to be able to access or communicate health needs, as well as those whānau who appear to enjoy a high standard of living. Researching and comparing communication behaviours within the two whānau groupings will result in a more comprehensive understanding of whānau life (Turner & West, 1998), as well as a better understanding of the factors that contribute to, or undermine, whānau ora, such as whānau connections to alternative social groupings.

In our study, the whakapapa whānau grouping may be considered more at risk because most of the adult members fall into the social category of unemployed, low, and semi-skilled labourers (Ringold, 2005). This contrasts with the families of the kaupapa whānau, whose adult members are predominantly well educated and well paid professionals (Courtney, 2008). However, several members of the whakapapa whānau are in fact university educated despite having strong affiliations to other groupings such as gangs. The values, beliefs, and activities of gangs most often lie outside of what is socially accepted by mainstream society. Such diversity within whanau thus spans the entire spectrum of society (Durie, 1995). It is also likely that members of the kaupapa whānau have links to other social groupings considered to be at risk, including gangs.

Ethicality of the Research

As with any study involving human participants, the ethicality of the research is a central concern. Thus, Māori language, values, and traditions associated with the ethical research with Māori and their communities have been incorporated into the design of the research methodology using a number of key principles that are commonly applied in Māori-centred research (Mead, 1996; Tomlins-Jahnke, 2005; Tomlins-Jahnke, Gillies, & Kingi, 2009). These principles include whakapapa (genealogy), te reo me ōna tikanga Māori (Māori language and customs), whanaungatanga (building relationships), manaakitanga (exemplary host), koha (gifting), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship and care).

The Principle of Whakapapa

Mead (2003) describes whakapapa as ". . . a fundamental attribute and gift of birth. It is the social component of the 'ira,' the genes. A child is born into a kinship system that is already in place and has been for many generations" (p. 42). As a principle, whakapapa recognises descent from common ancestors and kinship as a significant criterion that provides individuals and whānau with an embedded birth right, sense of belonging, and obligation to each other and to larger connected groups, such as hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe).

In our study, the principle of whakapapa operates on a number of levels, all of which have important implications for understanding how to work with kin-based groups in Māori society and the role of researchers in that process (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2005). For example, access to whānau for recruitment and selection of participants was accomplished through whakapapa-links to the researchers, all of whom are Maori and affiliated to the tribal areas to which the participants belong. In this instance, it was a key factor in gaining access to the whakapapa whānau and lending credibility to the research project as far as the participants and their families

were concerned. Underpinning this perspective is the notion that whānau are more likely to hold their own family members to account rather than outsiders, where the research is often perceived as exploitative, sensitive, or harmful to whānau. Rather than seeing aspects of the principle of whakapapa as a potential conflict of interest—as would be the case in a Western view of what is ethical—kinship remains a powerful determinant of accountability of researchers as far as the researched are concerned.

The Principle of Māori Language and Customs: Te reo me ōna tikanga Māori

Understanding tikanga Māori, as Mead (2003) argues, "is informed and mediated by the language of communication" (p. 2), suggesting that how an individual understands through the medium of Māori language ". . . is different from one obtained through the English language. Te reo Māori participants usually have the advantage of prior knowledge and prior experience" (Mead, 2003, p. 2). Knowledge of Māori language is inextricably linked, compatible, and complementary to knowledge of Māori customs. Colonial policies of the past, however, negated Māori language and cultural developments so that in contemporary society such knowledge of Maori language and culture may not always be the case. For younger generations, the revitalisation of Māori language does not bring with it experience or depth of understanding, but in many instances, it is nevertheless one medium of communication in the home. In our study, Māori language is significant because some of the participants communicate with their children entirely through the medium of Māori language, while some use both Māori and English, and other participants communicate in English only. Therefore, speakers of te reo Māori were included in the research team in order to avoid compromising the research process by not accounting for Māori language as a medium of whānau interaction.

The Principle of Relationships: Whanaungatanga

The principle of whanaungatanga encapsulates processes such as engagement, connectedness, and involvement of family members with each other and extended family. It has application in both a familial and non-familial sense. The practice of actively building and maintaining relationships emanates from and embraces whakapapa or genealogy. Whanaungatanga is a fundamental principle that encompasses both an obligation to support whānau and individuals and an expectation that whānau and individuals will be supported. Whanaungatanga recognizes that relationships are important because "[they] . . . are fragile and need to be nurtured" (Mead, 2003, p. 28). In this research, the principle of whānaungatanga is integral in various ways. For example, building a relationship with each whānau involved kanohi kitea (face-to-face) meetings where opportunities for whānau to make connections with researchers and become informed about the purpose of the research were facilitated.

However, whānau participation in the research could not occur until whānau understood, were comfortable with, and were in agreement with what the research involved. These were all matters that had to be clarified before informed consent could be provided. Clarity also had to be provided as to how, or in what ways, both the researchers and whānau were to contribute throughout the process. The ultimate aim was to include whānau as participants and active-agents of the research involved in data collection, collation, analysis, and interpretation, and as integral to both the method and methodology.

The Principle of Exemplary Host: Manaakitanga

Closely linked to whanaungatanga or the practice of relationships is the principle of manaakitanga that underpins tikanga Māori or Māori ethicality. As a principle it also implies

reciprocal behaviours and expectations that impact on whānau honour and dishonour, depending on how manaakitanga is manifest by whānau. Koia (2010) suggests that manaakitanga is multipurpose and aligns with whanaungatanga. Often, demonstrations of manaakitanga are judged on the quality and level of hospitality, care, nurturing, and respect that individuals and groups share with others, regardless of the situation. In research, both researchers and participants often express the principle of manaakitanga when aspects of tikanga Māori or protocols are encouraged and upheld throughout the process. These include formal and informal cultural rituals such as powhiri (welcome), karanga (call of welcome), whaikōrero (speech making), mihimihi (introductions), whakatau (putting at ease), karakia (prayer), kai (food), and koha (gifting). In this research, manaakitanga therefore assumes that hospitality, caring, and support are also integral to the methodology. In practice, whānau participants are guided and supported through the research process by a member of their own family, who has been trained by the researchers. Whānau members have also been encouraged to participate through collaboration with the researchers, thus assuring shared ownership of the research.

The Principle of Reciprocity: Koha

Koha is the customary practice of contribution or gift made by visitors to the hosts, as a token of respect and to acknowledge the manaaki (hospitality) shown by the host (Paora, 1995). As Douglas explains, a Western approximation of the concept of koha is that of "gift giving" or "gift exchange," a process that not only has an "obligatory cycle of return" (as cited in Waa & Love, 1997), but originates from the earliest times of human civilization. There is an expectation that at some time in the future (perhaps another generation), the koha will be reciprocated, setting in place an unstated but acknowledged obligation that rests with the receiver (Waa & Love, 1997). Douglas suggests that these cycles of exchange within and between generations are perpetual, implicating whole communities (as cited in Waa & Love, 1997). Mauss (1950) maintains that in gift exchange societies, three sets of obligations arise—the obligation to give, the obligation to receive, and the obligation to reciprocate—and that these were and continue to be an integral part of social etiquette. Even in modern society, refusing to give, to share, or to accept generosity or hospitality can be considered a huge insult, and in some societies tantamount to a cause of war. Similarly, refusing a gift is considered ill mannered, indicating an unwillingness or inability to engage in a reciprocal relationship. In Māori society a koha given is a show of generosity or hospitality that increases the mana (repute or standing) of both the giver and receiver, and induces an obligation to reciprocate depending on the type of event. Furthermore, a koha must be accepted if insult is to be avoided (Waa &Love, 1997).

While giving a koha of money is common practice, the protocols and thinking behind the practice reinforces Māori cultural values, such as those of manaaki (hospitality), aroha (care and love), tautoko (support), and awhi (help and assistance). Smith (1999) advocates the practice of taking food to share with participants as an essential part of the process in kaupapa Māori research or, in fact, of any research involving Māori. In this research, the principle of koha is related to manaakitanga where, in their engagement with the research, the whānau are supported with donations of food during the consultation meetings and during the data collection and interpretation stages.

In terms of reciprocity, it is important that the researchers are not just "taking" from whānau as participants in research generated from outside. Therefore, a whānau member for each of the two whānau groupings was assigned as a research assistant to the project, thereby contributing to whānau development and capacity building. This counteracts the possibility that all the research skill sets will remain with the lead researchers, each of whom are institutionally located. It also demonstrates a long-term koha for those individuals and their whānau.

The Principle of Guardianship and Care: Kaitiakitanga

Marsden (as cited in Royal, 2003) considers all life, people, knowledge, and natural resources to be the responsibility of humankind, and as such requires care, guardianship, conservation, preservation, fostering, sheltering, and protection. Kamira (2006) suggests that "Data—anonymous or not—has enormous spiritual and cultural significance for Māori" (p. 4), and therefore requires greater levels of attention and protection. Thus, Kamira (2006) recognizes the ". . . historical, cultural and social complexities in which kaitiakitanga perspectives are grounded" (p. 4). In our research, kaitiakitanga refers to the care, guardianship, and protection of knowledge, whereby whānau have control over the material that they wish to share with the researchers and potentially make known to the public. Collected conversations from whānau become the raw data for the researchers, and there is an understanding that the researchers take on a kaitiaki role with the data. Videos of whānau during their analysis and interpretations of the data are only shared among the researchers and discussed with whānau. The data will be returned to individual families on the completion of the project.

Research Phases

Whānau are invited to record "the talk that goes on in the private world of families" and thus "minimize the effect of intrusive researchers imposing upon family life" (Tannen, 2004, as cited in Jahnke & Durie, 2008, p. 5). Within the context of this study, communication is defined as "the process of meaning-making" (Turner & West, 2002, p. 15), where people interact in a transactional process as both sender and receiver of messages. In a transaction, one person's response is the stimulus for another's action in an ever evolving, rather than linear, process. As a process, therefore, the nature of this type of communication ". . . allows us to view it as dynamic, complex and continually changing" (Turner & West, 2002, p. 15). Guidelines for this dimension of the research were developed by the researchers to ensure consistency across each video-taped interview.

There were at least four distinct phases to the research method. In the first phase, each whānau nominated a recorder (a trusted member) to log and record their interactions. Two members were trained as whānau researchers, representing each of the whānau groupings in the research methods process. The training included the use of audio and video equipment, safe storage of data, transcription, coding, and the use of qualitative data analysis software. The role of the whānau researchers was to train the nominated whānau members to use the audio equipment as recorders, to collect the data during specific and agreed upon situations/events (e.g., during mealtime, after work, before school, while texting, using the computer, watching television, etc.), and to keep a detailed log of each recorded situation/event. Thus it was hoped that the interactions that were recorded occurred in a wide range of settings that fully represent the experiences of whānau in this study.

The study followed four whānau from each grouping over a three year period: eight whānau in total. They participated in recording conversations during discrete situations/events for a period of one week, three times during the first two years of the project. This 3 x 2 strategy allowed the researchers and whānau time to identify, reflect, and comment on whānau recordings at least twice during the research. This provided an opportunity to reflect and discuss any changes in communication styles, conversations, and interactions over time that may have occurred as a result of their interpretations of whānau ora or family wellbeing in the context of whānau talk. The resultant dataset is unique because the audio recordings span a more extended period of time than previous studies (Blum-Kulka, 1997) and are relatively uncensored because there were no researchers present.

The whānau researchers liaise with the whānau participants to ensure that they are supported throughout the duration of the data collection process. At the end of each data collection period, the whānau researcher collects the digital recorders, downloads the data for secure storage, and begins transcribing the data verbatim in readiness for assisting with coding and selecting excerpts for interpretation and analysis during video interviews. Thus, the recording and data collection process is the responsibility of the whānau and the nominated recorder. Censorship (i.e., editing and deleting of material) is at the discretion of the whānau. There is no "participant observation" during data collection because the presence of outsiders changes the way in which participants interact with each other. Therefore, the presence of an observer would likely be overtly intrusive and have the potential to disrupt the talk within whānau. Tomlins-Jahnke and Durie (2008) highlight the limitations of this approach compared to researchers using participant observation who are able to make notes, ask questions, and probe for further discussion. However, rather than risk or compromise whānau participation and inclusion in this research by having an outsider present, we believe that having willing whānau responsible for, and in control of, the data collection is paramount.

Phase 2 of the research extended the methodology employed by Tomlins-Jahnke and Durie (2008) with the aim to video tape interviews with adult whānau members as they listened to excerpts of their previously taped conversations. The researchers then collaborated with the whānau members in the interpretation of selected interactions, as if the researchers were present in the conversations. This occurred at the end of each data collection cycle (i.e., three times) as described in Phase 1. Video recordings captured concrete reactions and deliberations by whānau around samples of their recorded talk. The objective was to contribute to the development of a self-reflective praxis within the whānau to their verbal interactions. An important aspect of involving whānau in the video-taped interviews was seeking their views about what was going on in the taped conversations, and what such interactions might mean to them. This provided a deeper understanding of the recorded exchanges and ensured that the researchers' own judgements were not the only interpretations projected onto the analysis. Much like Grundy, Pollon, and McGinn's (2003) participant-as-transcriptionist method, this study incorporated a sense of collaboration in the participant-researcher relationship and reduced power differences between researchers and participants. The following figure illustrates the relationships between researchers (whānau & primary), recorders, and whānau groupings.

Figure 1. Relationships and Roles in the Research Method
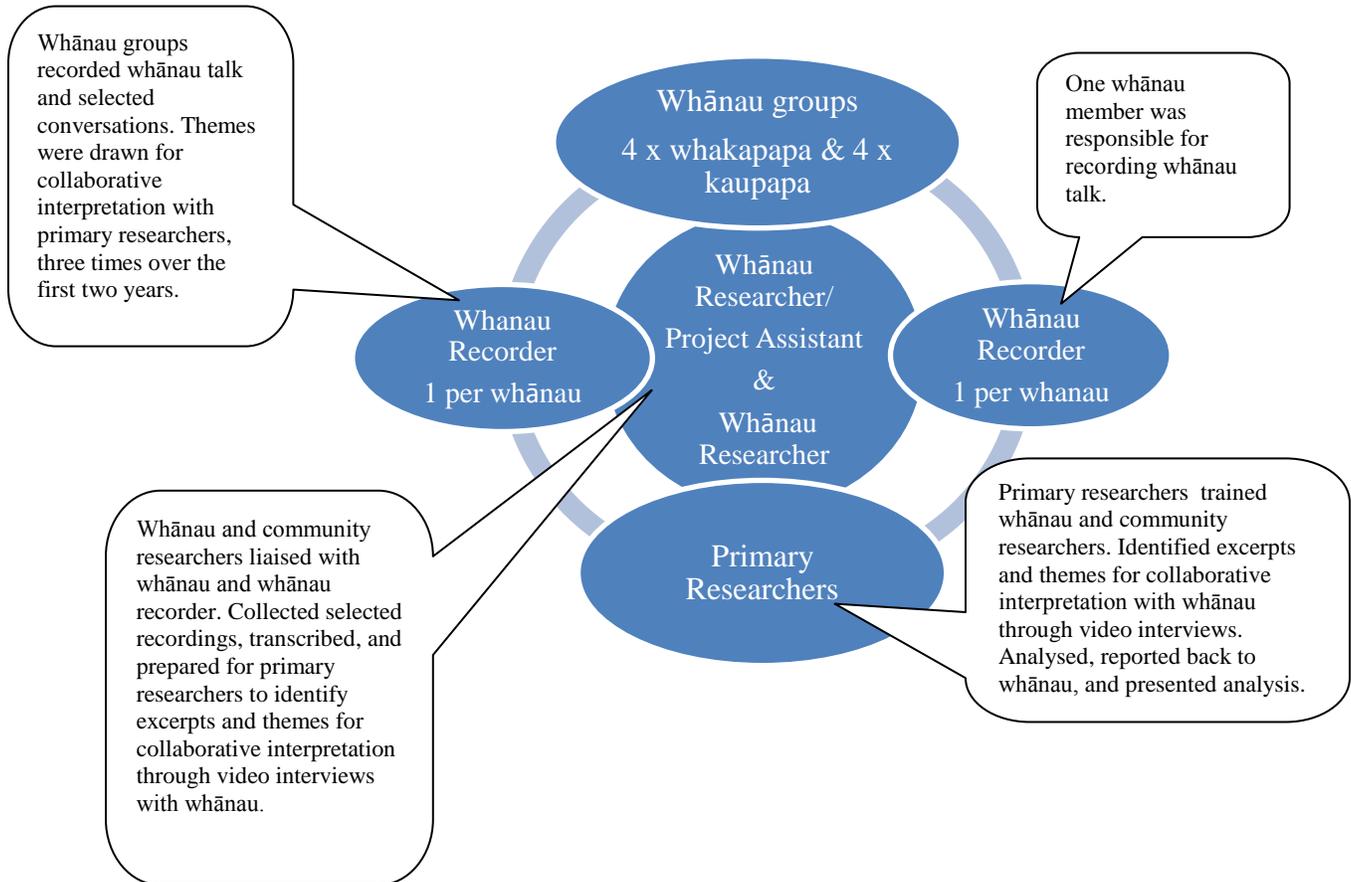
Phase 3 was devoted to coding and analysing the data, based on Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication's Speaking Model, as outlined by Saville-Troike (2003). This model allowed the researchers to organise the data for analysis in a theoretical frame, to map a substantial whānau communication landscape as a whole, and to determine patterns of whānau ora in more detail. The intention was to extend Hymes' model to incorporate those elements of intra-whānau communication that link to patterns of whānau ora or family well-being.

Phase 4 was concerned with the on-going evaluation by the primary researchers, preliminary and final analyses of data, and the development of a whānau ora communication model.

Analysis

The method drew on the interpretations of both audio and visual recordings through collaboration between whānau and the researchers, rather than relying on the interpretations of observers in the field. As previously mentioned, the analysis was informed by the application of Saville-Troike's

(2003) components of communication, underpinned by Hymes' (1967, 1972) theoretical Speaking Model. This model offers a relevant method to organise the data for analysis, and it extends Hymes' model to incorporate elements of inter-whānau communication that link to patterns of whānau ora. This includes, for instance, the type of event, the referential focus or topic, and the function of the interactions recorded. Interpretation, for example, may rely on ". . . the common knowledge and relevant presuppositions, shared understandings, which allow particular inferences to be drawn about what is to be taken literally, what is discounted etc." (Saville-Troike, 2003, pp. 110-111).

Sensitive Research

As scholars we have taken the view of Liamputtong (2007) that this project is sensitive research because we consider it to be closely connected with potentially vulnerable and marginalized people, and as such it may be argued to be both socially and politically charged. Conducting this type of research is considered a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved, including both researchers and research participants (Jones & Tannock 2000; Mitchell & Irvine, 2008; Robertson 2000). Māori participants in research are considered vulnerable by virtue of being a minority and indigenous group, and have proportionally negative social indicators in such areas as education, health, and social justice. These factors suggest that Māori also occupy a level of marginalization disproportionate to the non-Māori majority. Our research may be deemed sensitive ". . . if it requires disclosure of behaviours or attitudes which would normally be kept private and personal, which might result in offence or lead to social censure or disapproval, and/or which might cause the respondent discomfort to express" (Wellings, Branigan, & Mitchell, 2000, p. 256). We argue that despite working within a kaupapa Māori research framework aimed at reducing such sensitivies from a cultural perspective, this does not remove the fact that the participants remain members of a colonized minority and therefore are vulnerable to exploitation.

Intruding the Private World: The "f" Word Considered

During the recruitment of participants and consultation stages, whānau questioned the researchers about the data likely to be collected. They made it clear that "what you see is what you get" indicating that there would be no holding back. In the same conversation though, whānau asked if they would need to delete any swear words. For one whānau grouping, disclosure of behaviours and attitudes associated with what they judged to be inappropriate language to researchers outside of the family context caused a high level of discomfort. The use of profanity such as "fuck(ing)" was a case where, during the first round of data collection, participants removed all instances of swearing, which resulted in most of the recorded conversations being erased. We suspect they saw this, as Raymond Lee has described, as an "intrusive threat" (Lee, 1993), where research that intrudes into private lives creates stress (Liamputtong, 2007). In terms of the research, this self-censorship had implications for the collection of data. But this event did not come without a precursory indication. During the recruitment phase of the project, a lengthy discussion ensued as a result of potential participants raising their concerns about outsiders being privy to their everyday language and the high use of swearing among some whānau. Their concerns raised some difficult questions: What would be heard? Who would hear? What would be disclosed either overtly and/or covertly?

The discussion centred on the use of the "f" word, its derivation and the contexts in which the word is used in contemporary society. For example, the use of the "f" word and other words considered vulgar and insulting in different contexts is often used in visual and audio media, such as television, movies, theatre, books, magazines, and modern music. Some participants described the everyday use of the "f" word in some whānau and the different contexts in which it is used.

For instance, one potential participant described its use as a way of admonishing their children or to prevent the children from getting into harm's way. The tone and timing of the use of the "f" word often denotes the user's intent, either positive or negative. For the whakapapa whānau the "f" word has become normalized in their daily interactions and communication with one another. While profanity is more commonplace and acceptable among certain groups in society (Beard, 2002), such as among the whakapapa whānau members in this study, they were also aware that many outsiders might interpret any form of swearing as antisocial and obscene. They placed the researchers in this "outsider" category and therefore preferred to delete the swearwords, and by implication complied with what they judged as appropriate societal mores rather than those subscribed to by their group in the private spaces of their everyday lives.

Perceived Threats to Private Spaces

According to Liamputtong ". . . private space is where personal activities take place and only insiders participate. To a researcher this private space renders the need to be sensitive to the confidences and intimacies of others . . . One who intrudes into private space may pose a threat or risk to actors who fear exposure and sanctions" (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 2). While the method employed in this study was developed in order to mitigate or diminish threats of intrusion, there was still an element of threat and this highlighted the delicate and diverse nature of insider/outsider relationships. In one respect, we are considered insiders as kin, the basis upon which access to the participants was privileged, but at the same time we are outsiders to the "private/intimate spaces" of individuals.

Potential consequences and implications can arise either ". . . directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research" (Sieber & Stanley, 1988, p. 49). In our study, the consequences resulting from disclosure of illegal behaviour was obviated by the whānau concerned. They were not prepared to risk compromising their loyalties to each other by having their illegal activities recorded, and thereby placing the researchers in the position of disclosing such activities to the authorities. The whakapapa whānau then made the decision to withdraw from the study. Issues raised were diverse and in one instance whānau saw the recordings as intrusive because excerpts or sporadic recordings of conversations were incomplete. Whānau felt these would need explanation in order for researchers to understand the context of what was happening at the time of the recordings. Whānau members also did not want the researchers to perceive them in what they considered might be a "bad light."

Protecting Self-Image

One participant offered to write a history of their life and upbringing to ensure the researchers had some insight into key aspects of their parenting skills. For example, the participant ensures that their children have a packed lunch for school, wear the correct uniform, and have enough money for the bus to get to and from school. These are what the participant considers measures of "successful parenting" and quite the opposite to what they had experienced as a child. The participant's reflections of their life history raised concerns about what constitutes a "good mother." In the process the participant questioned their experiences growing up with their own mother, which when discussed with other whānau members served to raise tensions among the group.

Recording of conversations and listening to the recordings brought back childhood memories, which in itself challenged the autonomy or mana of some individual whānau members. These participants felt the need to justify certain behaviours and attitudes that were recorded on tape, and which they deemed might lead to the researchers forming the "wrong idea" and either

misinterpreting or not understanding them and how they lived their lives. In another incident the researchers were informed that in the process of recording some conversations, there was the potential for illegal activities to be recorded inadvertently that could have presented a threat to both the researchers and the participants. In discussions with the researchers, participants felt that their activities were justified on the grounds that they were providing protection and, in their view, manaakitanga (love and support) to individuals. It was considered to be unsafe for the researchers to know about any illegal activities, thereby compromising the project.

There was evidence at the early stage of the research that whānau were undertaking their own level of analysis and self-reflection on the range of issues, choices, and repercussions that occurred through active participation in this research, and particularly through the recordings. As researchers we, too, had to consider our obligation to the participants in maintaining confidentiality and privacy, and for the prevention of potential harm that might arise through the research process, such as dealing with the implications of remembering suppressed, ignored, or forgotten memories.

Family solidarity and protection (kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga) was evident in the whakapapa whānau from the outset. There was some anxiety expressed by younger siblings about their older sibling(s) having access to their information, but there was an agreement between us and whānau participants that access to each others' information would not transpire. Overall, whānau participants displayed diverse and varying degrees of care and protection towards extended whānau and friends.

Conclusion

Through the application of this novel research approach, we believe cues might emerge that serve to signal in what ways and how whānau members are attuned to whānau values, practices, norms, and aspirations that support healthy whānau interaction. Conversely, it will be possible to find cues in conversations that orient family members away from the whānau and that, perhaps, support dysfunctional relationships. The contribution the study attempts to make is through ensuring that organizing principles and norms of interpretation will be framed within Māori cultural values and customs. Simply, the study will be understood from a Māori perspective, because both whānau participants and researchers in the study identify as Māori. As indigenous researchers, we have the advantage of being able to judge the conversations in light of our own whānau experiences. Although the whānau groupings for this study have been described as two discrete groupings—whakapapa whānau and kaupapa whānau—the reality is that both groupings reflect a primary characteristic of holding simultaneous membership of both whakapapa (related kin) and kaupapa whānau (e.g., members of a performing arts group or sports team). While this article reports a work in progress, the methodology has already succeeded in promoting the building and enhancement of whānau capacity for research and self-development. In particular, the research acknowledges fundamental Māori cultural principles, concepts, and values with an emphasis on whakapapa, te reo Māori, whanaungatanga, koha, kaitiakitanga, and manaakitanga. In this sense we have embarked on a collaborative journey that taps into essential characteristics of Māori family life and provides opportunities for learning among all participants. Without prompting from the primary researchers, whānau participants have taken the opportunity to self-reflect and analyse their interactions and communication with others at different stages of the project. This implies that with further analysis within a Māori cultural frame, an outcome of the research will be an increase in positive communication techniques and increased awareness of the impact of verbal communication on family well-being. One other outcome is that this research will have much wider implications, including the potential for researchers engaging with other indigenous groups around the world.

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