

# Different Coloured Tears: Dual cultural identity and tangihanga

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**Abstract:** Although whānau/family that are configured by both Pākehā and Māori identities number significantly within New Zealand, there has been little or no attention paid to the ways in which these identities influence the bereavement processes that will inevitably impact upon the lives of these whānau/family. The present study explored the experiences of an individual, whose whānau/family included two life ways: Māori and Pākehā. Of specific focus was the ways in which these identities influenced his bereavement subsequent to the death of his beloved wife, who was of Māori descent. One elderly male Pākehā participant was interviewed, using an open ended narrative approach. The interview was semi-structured around five broad themes, but the focus was upon the participant's experiences and his preference in expressing these. The data analysis utilised a thematic process which allowed the participant's experiences to determine the emergent themes. The results depicted the diversity of issues that may be raised for dual cultural whānau/family within bereavement processes. Two central themes are discussed in relation to intercultural conflict and the eventual resolution that was created. Decision-making processes, cultural and language differences played significant roles within the conflict and exclusion experienced by the participant. Communication and compromise provided resolution to the prior conflicts experienced. This created positive and unexpected outcomes which resulted in increased understandings and the strengthening of links between the participant, his whānau/family and his wife's marae.

**Keywords:** bereavement; culture; identity; intercultural conflict; resolution

## Introduction

The objective of this research is to explore the bereavement experience of one individual whose family is configured by both Māori and Pākehā identities, constituting a single case study. The limitations of this methodology must be acknowledged, particularly as it inhibits generalisation. With this in mind, the rationale for our approach is to present in-depth exploration of the context within which meanings, relationships, symbols and processes are enacted and to provide a sense of some of the issues that may manifest in such bereavement experiences. In this introductory section we provide a general overview of the literature and area of interest, with a particular focus on Māori and Pākehā bereavement processes, serving to present a general context within which to consider the case that forms the foundation of this study.

Death is a universal experience that impacts upon all cultures. People all over the world are touched by the grief that accompanies the death of a significant loved one. The death of a loved friend, family member or significant other is a major, critical event which causes profound and lasting disruption for those left behind (Valentine, 2006). Although death is a universal experience, it cannot be assumed that it provokes responses and accompanying expressions that are shared across all cultures. It has been asserted within research that grief and its expression are vastly different, across both individuals and cultures (Laurie & Neimeyer, 2008; Peveto, 2001; Strobe, Gergen, Gergen, & Strobe, 1992). Considering bereavement and grief in this way acknowledges the myriad of ways in which it is experienced and expressed around the world.

Some research within this area has conceptualised grief as a social construction, the differences within which are relative to the differences across societies or cultures (Laurie & Neimeyer, 2008). Culture is a difficult concept to define; however, one definition describes culture as consisting of ideals, values and assumptions about life which are shared within a cultural group and serve as a guide for behaviour (Brislin, 1993). Accordingly, culture will exert considerable influence over the way in which death is responded to and the meaning that is assigned to this event (Peveto, 2001). Culture also informs what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate within grief expressions (Peveto, 2001). The interaction between death, grief and culture is an area that has begun to draw attention, yet there appears to be little research which specifically focuses on the diversity of cross-cultural grief expressions (Laurie & Neimeyer, 2008; Peveto, 2001).

Within the study of grief and culture, an influential study was conducted by Kalish and Reynolds (1981) in the USA. This study compared attitudes, beliefs and customs held by Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, White Americans and Black Americans. Within this research, several cross-cultural differences were noted. These included the role of religion, sources of support and open displays of emotion. However, some similarities were also noted, in the respect given to the deceased's last wishes and a preference for clergyman/funeral directors that belonged to the same ethnic group. Laurie and Neimeyer (2008) compared grief amongst African Americans and Caucasians. The results noted African Americans held stronger bonds with deceased loved ones and broad social networks played an important role within their bereavement. These broad networks also meant that death would have a profound effect on other members regardless of the kinship relationship. This was contrasted with that of Caucasian culture where less significance was assigned to a death of a member beyond the nuclear kinship group. These aspects were contextualised against the history of poverty, racism and oppression imposed upon African Americans which may influence the way in which they respond to death and experience grief.

In considering culture and grief within the context of New Zealand, two ethnic groups are of particular significance: Pākehā, and Māori – the indigenous peoples. The history of New Zealand is marked with the processes of assimilation and colonisation enacted upon Māori by Pākehā. Colonisation imposed Western systems and values which threatened that of Māori, resulting in the alienation of Māori to land, culture and language (Spoonley, 1993). Following WWII, large numbers of Māori moved to urban centres, leaving their traditional lands and communal-based societies (Durie, 1989). This shift provided opportunities for the two cultures to meet in ways not previously experienced (Durie, 2005). Inter-group tensions and conflicts arose, influenced by both cultural factors and wider contextual factors which afforded differing status, authority and opportunities to the respective cultures (King, 2003). Poverty, racism and oppression undoubtedly had a profound effect upon Māori. Although the impacts of colonisation cannot be underestimated, the influence of these processes upon Māori and Pākehā responses to death and grief is unclear and deserves some attention.

The focus of this paper requires some consideration of the unique, yet perhaps not so unfamiliar ways in which Māori and Pākehā respond to death. While each individual tangi and funeral will be unique and complex, stepping back from the detail of each account enables general patterns to form. Dansey (1995) picks up on these patterns really well and has described some of the distinct ways in which Māori and Pākehā respond to death and grief. The Māori world answers the rupturing of community and disruption to wellness caused by death through the process of tangi. Tangihanga is the traditional Māori process whereby whānau and community come together to grieve the death of a loved one. Tangi has been a persistent institution and one that has undoubtedly contributed to mourning processes in the Pākehā world. A priority within tangi proceedings is the provision of support for the whānau pani (Barrett-Aranui, 1999). The speeches, stories and waiata all serve to provide manaaki for the whānau pani within their grief (Barrett-Aranui, 1999). Furthermore tangi recognises the cycle of life from birth to the return of the spirits to the after world (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1982). In

considering Pākehā responses and experiences of grief and death, there appears to be little literature to draw from. However, Dansey's (1995) account describes Pākehā death rituals where the body is kept at a distance from the bereaved family, often within closed caskets which remain within funeral homes until the burial. Dansey contrasts this to tangi, where the tūpāpaku (body of the deceased) is constantly surrounded by whānau and friends who care for and honour the tūpāpaku.

Although differences between Māori and Pākehā can be discussed generally, for many individuals and families these are experienced on a more immediate and personal level. Inter-marriage between Māori and people of other ethnicities has been ongoing since the first vessels of exploration and trade encountered these isles in the 18th century (Harré, 1966). This contact was emphasised within Māori migration to urban centres which provided opportunities for Māori and Pākehā to live and work in close proximity, and in the case of New Zealand's military forces, fight alongside each other. It is difficult to ascertain how inter-marriage between Māori and Pākehā translates statistically. However, the New Zealand 2006 census noted that 42% (or approximately 237,438) of Māori also identify with European ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2007b). It is likely that more descendants of Māori and Pākehā relationships are noted elsewhere such as the recently included 'New Zealander' category (Statistics New Zealand, 2007a).

The progeny of Māori and Pākehā inter-marriage is a topic which has begun to attract some academic attention. Some research within this area has noted that for people who identify as being both Pākehā and Māori, their values, perceptions and processes are impacted by two cultural identities that for some, do not sit comfortably together (Moeke-Maxwell, 2003). However, there appears to be little or no research which examines the way in which bereavement is experienced by whānau/family that are configured by Pākehā and Māori identities. This is a glaring gap when the statistics indicate that a large number of whānau/family within New Zealand identify in this way. Accordingly, there may be little available to inform the needs and support required by such whānau/family within bereavement. Theoretically, whānau/family of dual cultural origin may enjoy the resources of two cultural communities which afford choices of rituals from two cultural worlds. However, the potential for conflict, tension and misunderstanding cannot be ignored. These families may be required to negotiate two sets of cultural values, beliefs and expressions within their bereavement. Inevitably, failure to negotiate these issues satisfactorily may have a huge impact upon bereaved families and the means by which they are supported within their grief.

The experiences of whānau/family that are configured by both Māori and Pākehā identities, and their engagement with tangi/funerals may increase our understandings around the ways in which such families respond to bereavement and grief and move forward in their lives. Of specific interest is how whānau/family conceptualise death, operationalise and ritualise mourning and memorialise the death of their loved one. This may afford opportunities to understand the points of contact, difference and commonality between Māori and Pākehā cultures. Central to this research is the reconstruction of identity (personal, social and cultural) without the immediate physical presence and day to day contact enjoyed prior to the death of a loved one. These experiences may provide knowledge about choices, processes and outcomes including the negotiation of conflict, perspective and practice. This article explores the experiences of one participant from a whānau/family that identifies as both Māori and Pākehā and how these identities influenced the bereavement processes following the death of a significant loved one.

## **Method**

### ***Aim***

The aim of the research was to explore the experiences of an individual who belonged to a whānau/family that was configured by both Pākehā and Māori cultures and how these identities influenced the grief process during a tangi/funeral. Of particular interest were the choices whānau/families make, the fusions created and the pathways established in the process of mourning, grieving and moving on with healthy futures.

### ***Participant***

One participant was interviewed within this research. This participant was a male, aged in his 60s, who identified culturally as Pākehā. The participant's wife was of Māori descent, she had died the year prior to the interview. The participant was recruited by means of self-referral. An article upon the Tangihanga Research Programme was published in a Hamilton-based newspaper. Subsequently, the participant, a member of the public, contacted Professor Ngahua Te Awekotuku (Principle Investigator, Tangihanga Research Programme) by telephone to indicate his interest in participating within the research. The rationale to focus on a single case study was determined by the explorative nature of the research and the limited scope of the project. Although the limitations of single case studies are acknowledged, this approach allowed an in-depth exploration of an individual's experience, which provided rich and detailed data. An advantage of a single case study approach is that it can afford 'truly emergent knowledge' to be discovered (Small, 2009). Accordingly, this methodology was considered the most appropriate means by which the topic of interest could be explored to gain some sense of the issues that may be encountered by a whānau/family in their bereavement processes.

### ***Data generation***

A case study research approach was utilised and the data was obtained through a semi-structured interview schedule that was developed for this research (Appendix A.1). The schedule was not used as an exacting guide, the participant was encouraged to share and express his experiences in the way he felt most comfortable doing so. The interview was conducted at the participant's home, with the researcher and research supervisor in attendance. The length of the interview was 1 hour and 48 minutes in total. Further information and clarification about some aspects of the interview was obtained through further telephone and email contact. The participant also provided several family photos as a means of illustrating some of the points discussed in the interview.

### ***Data analysis***

Discursive and narrative approaches can encourage participants to share their stories in the ways that have meaning to them. This may assist to reveal the diverse ways in which bereaved individuals manage and make sense of the critical event that is death (Valentine, 2006). In light of this recommendation, the data analysis prioritised the participant's narrative over any predetermined themes or models. The initial phase of data analysis began with the transcription of the interview conducted. Upon completion of this task, the summary report was compiled. The summary report was forwarded to the participant, to allow him the opportunity to review the report and make any amendments he deemed necessary. Minor changes were made in regard to the spelling of some names and locations. The final summary report was verified by the participant signing a summary report deposit form (Appendix A.4). A thematic data analysis was then conducted on the summary report, from which a diverse range of themes emerged. It was beyond the scope of the present study to conduct a detailed analysis across the entire range of themes. Thus, the focus of the analysis was narrowed to the two main themes that appeared integral to the participant's narrative. This process was conducted under the supervision of the research supervisor. The two themes highlighted were conflict and resolution. The transcript and summary report were reviewed in light of these themes and information relevant to each was coded and categorised accordingly. This process

was conducted approximately seven times to ensure that the analysis captured all the relevant information from the participant's narrative. The findings are presented in the following section.

## Results

This section presents a summary report of the single interview conducted and are organised around the following themes: The life of the person who died, prior funeral/tangi arrangements and understandings, the funeral/tangi event, looking back on what happened and looking forward and memorialising. The results presented are a condensed version of the original summary of the report compiled. Different terms of address are used intentionally to indicate the ethnicity of the kinship group. Jack's family of origin is referred to as 'family'; Areta's family of origin is termed 'whānau'. The conjoint term 'whānau/family' refers to the dual cultural kinship group that resulted from Areta and Jack's relationship. References to whānau/family within Jack's direct quotations remain as he described them.

### ***The life of the person who died***

Areta grew up on the East Coast region of New Zealand's North Island. Areta was initially a nurse within a maternity ward at a local hospital and then joined the army as a nurse. This is where she first met Jack. Jack identifies himself as a Pākehā who was 'born and bred' in a major North Island city. Jack described his family of origin as a 'military family', with many members serving in the New Zealand armed forces. Jack described his first encounter with Areta in the following passage:

*She was walking past the school of artillery, and it was winter and the nurses had a grey uniform, she had trousers and boots and was marching down and saluted an officer with a salute like I have never seen, perfect...and I said to my mate "Would you look at that, oh man, I'm going to have to find out who she is before the other circling sharks get in".*

Jack was quite comfortable in the company of Māori throughout his life, noting that the first friend he took home from boarding school was Māori. Jack compared the perception of Māori-Pākehā relationships within the Army to that of civilian life in the following passage:

*...it was virtually the done thing in the army, for Māori and Pākehā to be married, either a Māori man or a Pākehā man or vice versa, no one worried, yet out in civi' street..., we were coming up through a gorge, and we stopped for an ice-cream and a couple of little Māori kids said "See that Māori sheila, she's got a Pākehā husband!", that was in 1963 and it wasn't common but in the services it was quite common, because we worked together, we slept together, we fought together, we trained together we did everything together and it didn't matter who you were.*

Areta and Jack became engaged and then were married against the wishes of Jack's mother who tried, unsuccessfully, to break the relationship up. The wedding was held on Areta's marae. The wedding day was described by Jack in the following way:

*The day we got married, the wedding party, there was two navy guys on the outside, my best man was Army, I was Army, and these beautiful Māori girls in the middle, the guys were all Pākehā. The marae was right in a valley... they reckoned they had never seen so many brass buttons in their life, all the military people were all dressed in uniform, and it was really wonderful.*

Jack provided us with a striking photo of their wedding day. This photo showed the wedding party with the groom and groomsmen who were smart looking Pākehā men in their army uniforms. They contrasted alongside the bride and bridesmaids, beautiful Māori women in lovely pale gowns. A carved pole upon the marae can be seen in the background. The overall photo captured a very poignant image.

Jack noted the huge crowd that attended their wedding, describing the wharenuī as “packed”. An uncle of Jack’s (a major in the Royal Artillery) was seated at the wedding breakfast when he was joined at the table by a Māori man whose attire consisted of dirty clothes with a big skinning knife at his hip. Jack’s uncle struck up a conversation with the man, enquiring if he was part of the family. The man replied “No, I just came for a feed”. Jack mentioned that at this point in the relationship he lacked knowledge of Māori culture; he had not had much experience with Māori ways of life. Jack noted the following difference at the wedding breakfast:

*A Pākehā wedding breakfast is like a big thing with all laid on food, but there’s this bowl of green stuff and I said to Areta “What’s that?” and she said “Turnip tops” and I said “What?! At a wedding breakfast?!”*

Jack described the good relationship he enjoyed with Areta’s whānau, although differences sometimes created amusing situations. Jack bought Areta a gift whilst they were courting; a bottle opener with the words ‘tēnā koe’ inscribed upon it. Jack appeared to cringe as he retold how he had asked: “What’s this ‘tēnā koe’ mean?” in front of his soon to be mother- and father-in-law. Areta’s parents looked at Jack with a look that seemed to say “Oh what’s our daughter getting into?” In the first visit to meet Areta’s brother, Haki, the couple trekked through paddocks and over a river in a box rigged up to a cable. When they eventually arrived at the house Jack relayed the initial meeting where Jack remarked:

*“Bloody Māoris! Why don’t you put a bridge across instead of that thing!” and he [Haki] looked at me and said “what’s this?!” The next day he took me out pig hunting, and Hine said he’s never ever done that with a stranger before and especially not a Pākehā stranger.*

On one such pig hunting expedition, with Haki and several others, Jack chanced upon his first opportunity to kill a pig which resulted in the following story: “I heard the laughter and all these Māoris were lying on the ground laughing, they reckoned it was the funniest thing they had ever seen, a Pākehā having a knife fight with a pig!” However, Jack ‘clicked’ with Haki and on their first visit Haki instructed Areta to take Jack to a nearby waterfall. As they prepared to leave for the falls, Haki remarked: “Don’t forget it will rain”, yet as Jack looked around it was a crystal clear day with no trace of cloud or wind. However, by the time they returned that evening there was torrential rain. Areta explained to Jack that it always rains when a stranger visits the falls. Jack had a strong reaction to this: “I tell you what, I have heard some Māori myths and legends before but that shook me up a bit”. Jack described the relationship with Haki and his wife Hine as “tremendous”. Whenever they attended tangi or other such events, Haki would translate in English what was being said in Māori for Jack.

Jack’s career in the military saw him occupy various posts around New Zealand and two tours of duty to Vietnam. It was quite traumatic for Areta to have her husband leave to fight a war in a foreign country while she was left to bring up their children on her own. After this period, they lived overseas for a time as a whānau/family. Jack and Areta had a period of separation during their life together; however, they reconciled. During that period, Areta trained as a teacher through Teacher Training College, held various teaching positions in the Waikato region and eventually came to teach Māori at a single-sex college. When she passed away, students from her college and an affiliated college played an important role at the funeral home service, the subsequent unveiling ceremony at Areta’s marae.

### ***Prior funeral/tangi arrangements and understandings***

Although the whānau/family was aware of Areta's terminal prognosis, Jack was reluctant to talk to Areta about her final wishes. However, a discussion did take place, albeit briefly. Jack asked Areta if she would consider being buried in a nearby public cemetery to which she replied "*No, look I want to go home, I won't know anyone over here I will be so lonely*", to which Jack replied "*What do you think you will do? Get up and party all night!?*" Jack and one of their children in particular were unhappy with this decision, as it would restrict the times they would be able to visit Areta.

### ***The funeral/tangi***

Areta died about a year ago in hospital after being ill for some time. Jack and his whānau/family cared for Areta at home; however, after a sudden decline and admission to hospital, she died there. She was subsequently transferred to the funeral home where she was prepared and dressed by her children. This difficult task was performed with so much noise and laughter that the undertaker had to come and see what was the cause of the commotion. Jack fondly remarked that when his children are together "*You can hear them from here to the University!*" She was taken to her home where many friends, whānau/family and colleagues visited to pay their respects. Jack described how Areta's bed was moved out of her room and her coffin was placed upon the ground, similar to what is done upon marae. Areta's sister came up from the South Island and was deeply involved in the tangi processes which occurred in Jack and Areta's home. Areta's sister asked Jack to place bowl of water at the front door for the Māori people who are coming. This was an aspect that Jack had not thought of. A service was organised at the funeral home prior to departing for Areta's marae upon the East Coast. Areta spent the night at the marae and was interred the next day.

Jack and his children decided to have an open casket funeral, which on Jack's part was due to an aunt's funeral where she was within an open casket and looked "*beautiful*". Jack's children and the priest were all happy with this and many who attended the service commented that it "*made*" the service because "*there wasn't just a box sitting there*". Within the casket, whānau/family and friends placed many special articles. These included a bottle of wine, a wineglass, an article of needlework and a little frog (which Areta loved). One of the grandsons used to do crosswords which would have so many mistakes Areta would have to correct them. The grandson did a couple of crosswords for her and placed them in the casket with a rubber and pencil.

At the funeral home service, the college students' performed a haka and sung waiata which was very moving for everybody. The majority of the service was conducted in English and where Māori was spoken, translations were provided. There are aspects of the tangi that Jack, understandably, does not remember. Such details included people who attended the funeral that Jack had spoken to; details that he did not recall until later watching a DVD of the service. Many people attended the service; people had to park some distance away and walk to the funeral home. Due to the numbers attending, the funeral director suggested that Jack hire a large screen TV to enable more people to be able to see the service.

Jack told us how a friend noted that his favourite part of the service was the end of Jack's speech where "*I asked people to file past Areta's coffin and bend down and kiss her, touch her anything you like to do to this beautiful elegant lady, and I leant over and said 'what did you say? I'm not talking rubbish! Go back to sleep!'*".

Jack chose friends from golf and the army to carry the casket to and from the funeral home.

Although Jack remembers Areta's sister had been in touch with people from the marae to organise proceedings there, he does not recall being consulted about any of this. Jack is unsure whether any of this was discussed with his children either, although he has not

discussed this with them. However, Jack did state that he didn't really want to be involved in this process but thought that "...they would do the right thing by me". Jack also mentioned he was not able to remember parts of the tangi. There may have been a possibility that some discussions may have occurred which were later not recalled.

Following the service at the funeral home, the whānau/family took Areta home to her marae. The whānau/family travelled in a convoy, waiting for Areta's two brothers who drove up from their home to meet the group and lead the way. The group arrived in the afternoon at the East Coast marae. Areta's grandsons carried her onto the marae. Jack recounted the five church services (Apostolic) held within the 22 hours prior to the burial. The entire burial service was conducted in Māori which caught Jack by surprise: "*It was just I didn't realise the total service was going to be in Māori, it just hurt me*". This was obviously very upsetting for Jack and at least one of his children. Jack provided the reason for this: "... because she wanted to know what was being said about her mother and so did I". Jack does not speak Māori, and neither do his children. In reflecting back upon the service at the marae, Jack stated "*I wouldn't have a clue, whether it was a lovely service or not I don't know*", furthermore, "*They couldn't even say the Lord's Prayer in English for me*". However, after they were welcomed back onto the marae, a kaumātua known to Jack described in English for the whānau/family the whakapapa of whānau members who had died and whose photographs hung in the whareniui.

At the marae, Areta was placed at the front of the whareniui but was taken inside at night fall. Jack was appreciative of the respect he was given at the tangi, particularly the special places that were made for him to sleep and to sit during the service. Jack requested that the lid would not be placed upon the casket until the whole whānau/family was present. Jack noted that other requests he made at the tangi were respected. However, prior to the burial the whānau/family went up to the grave site that was being dug and Jack's grandsons decided they would like to help with this task. However, when one of the older grandsons expressed this wish he was looked at with disdain and was only given the shovel for a few minutes before it was taken off him. This upset the grandson, Jack and other whānau/family members. Jack described his overall experience of the tangi at the marae in the following way: "*I was bitterly disappointed over the whole affair and I just couldn't wait to get home*". Jack returned home the next afternoon, just short of 24 hours after arriving at the marae. Jack's experience at the tangi obviously had a profound impact upon him and prompted his interest in participating within this research project.

### ***Looking back on what happened***

Jack discussed one main aspect he would do differently, given the benefit of hindsight. Jack would have suggested to his children that they organised their own minister for the service at the tangi; particularly if the marae could not include English translations during the tangi. Jack attended where a Māori minister conducted the service in both English and Māori which he thought was lovely. Jack took his own minister down to the East Coast marae for the unveiling, a Māori minister who performed the service alternating between English and Māori. Jack's greatest wish for this research is to provide information that might help marae to consider making some concessions to include English within services, especially if it's a Māori/Pākehā relationship. Furthermore, Jack hopes that research such as this project might be able to provide some understandings of Pākehā needs within these occasions.

### ***Looking forward and memorialising***

Since Areta's passing, Jack and his whānau/family have returned to the urupā to visit Areta on many occasions, particularly in preparations for the unveiling. Given his experience at the tangi, Jack wanted to ensure some control over planning for the unveiling. In Jack's opinion, the unveiling ceremony conducted by the minister he organised satisfied the needs of both Māori and English speakers. This was a clear reflection of his planning efforts. The blessings and service were spoken in both Māori and English which had great significance for Jack.



However, there appeared to be some problems in the communication between Jack and the marae in organising the unveiling. Jack had emailed and sent letters regarding preparations for the unveiling. When the whānau/family arrived at the marae, Jack's daughter had to travel to the nearest town to purchase food supplies. Jack was under the impression that the marae would organise this prior to their arrival at the marae. Despite this, for Jack and his children the good points of the unveiling far outweighed any negative aspects.

In designing Areta's headstone, Jack decided against 'custom' to include a picture of himself (still a living person) and Areta on the headstone. Jack felt that a photo of them upon their wedding day was the right photo and he wanted people to see who Areta had married. Jack discussed this with his children who were happy with his choice. Feedback at the urupā suggests that no one was too upset about this; many commented it was something they had not seen before. Jack recalled at the tangi he had asked to hang a picture of Areta and himself on their wedding day in the wharenuī, but was told that the photos in the wharenuī are only of dead people. The headstone is in the shape of a double twist, which symbolises the joining together of two people from two cultures.

An important role within the service was played by what is referred to as the 'Vietnam chalice'. This chalice has been to almost every war fought by New Zealand armed forces. The chalice was used to hold the water for the blessings given by the minister. Jack had hoped to use water from his pool at home which reminded him of Areta and a frond from the ponga she used to sit under. However, Jack forgot these items and improvised by collecting water from the river beside the marae and picked a nearby Ponga frond to sprinkle the water. Jack found out later that the part of the river they collected the water from was considered a sacred place, where water is collected for ritual blessings. This coincidence was commented on by many people from the marae.

Jack and the minister went to the urupā just before the unveiling service was due to begin and it started to rain very heavily. Jack had been watching the weather all day; the clouds would lift off the hills only to come back down again. Jack and the minister stood in the urupā under umbrellas. Jack became upset that service would have to take place underneath umbrellas. However, after the first car arrived the rain lifted and stayed clear until ten minutes after they left to go back to the marae. The college students had written a song for Areta which Jack asked to be performed on the steps of the wharenuī, where Jack and Areta had been married. Following the song, the minister addressed the crowd and spoke of what a pleasing and peaceful end to the service it was.

Jack asked one of Areta's cousins and a friend to take photos of the headstone during the unveiling. However, as the cousin stood beside the headstone a Māori lady said to him "*e hoa, no photographs in here!*" However, when Jack spoke to another lady about this, she said that it would be okay as long as it was done with some discretion. Jack questioned why it was okay to take photographs standing outside of the urupā but not inside its boundary. Jack's argument was that he has nothing, those at the East Coast marae can visit Areta every day, whereas Jack cannot. Being able to have a photograph of the headstone was very important to Jack. (Jack also supplied a copy of a photo of the headstone which was beautiful.) After the marae had been cleaned up the family drove to the urupā to say goodbye to Areta. The sun was shining upon the headstone which Jack described as "*... almost like greenstone but with the sun shining on it you could almost see a red fleck through it, beautiful*".

Jack speaks very fondly and positively of his experience at Areta's unveiling. This experience obviously provided an important resolution to the dissatisfaction he experienced at the tangi. The most important factor for Jack appeared to be his ability to include a minister within the proceedings who spoke in both English and Māori. This meant that Jack, his children and the grandchildren all understood what was happening and importantly, what was being said about their much loved wife, mother and grandmother.

Jack still lives in the whānau/family home and now believes that Areta's final wish to return home, though initially upsetting, was the right decision. He now finds himself planning trips with his children and grandchildren back to the East Coast marae to visit Areta who is surrounded by her whānau. For Jack and the family, going to visit Areta at the marae urupā is like getting ready to go on holiday; Jack loves every minute of it. Jack contrasts this to public cemeteries and the experiences of friends who find visiting their loved ones in such places to be 'lonely' as he describes in the following quote: "...*Yes it's a lonely place; you can stand looking at someone's headstone and not know anyone around you*". Jack is comforted by the thought that at the marae urupā, Areta is surrounded by her whānau: "...*yes she has done the right thing because all around her, just one pace from her is Hine, all around her is family, so I said to the girls I'm more than happy now, I'm totally at peace with it*". Jack knows of others who have loved ones buried at a nearby public cemetery and have come to the point that they don't want to go there anymore, the visits becoming somewhat of a burden.

In comparison, Jack will only be able to visit Areta two or three times a year but each of these visits will have immense meaning for Jack and his family. On visits there, Jack and his children spend time planting plants and tidying the urupā. The whānau/family also met the 'caretaker' of the urupā, who shared memories of Areta at school. On another visit, one of Jack's children placed a solar lantern at the head of the grave so that "*Aunty Hine and Mum can find their way home at night because the pubs just across the way*". Jack also retold a story that a kaumātua from the marae had shared with him about the solar lights. One particular night there was very low cloud and when the solar lanterns began to glow, the light reflected off the sky resembling a 'pillar of light'. Some of the kuia began to wail, saying "*the angels have come to take our people away*". The kaumātua noted how eerie this 'pillar of light' from the urupā appeared.

In regards to his own final wishes, Jack has decided that he would also like to be interred at the marae urupā with Areta. A space has been incorporated into the grave for Jack's ashes to be placed into a panel. Jack's decision to be cremated is based on several reasons. Firstly, Jack did not want to disturb the grave and secondly, he did not want his children to have to organise a costly trip to transport him back to the East Coast. This also means that Jack's children will be able to visit both their parents at the one place. Importantly, Jack's children are happy with his decision. Jack described how he perceives his relationship he has with Areta after her death:

*...as far as I'm concerned we are still married as I said in the memoriam notice, death ends a life not a relationship as far as I'm concerned we are still married, her Mum and Dad gave her hand in marriage to me and I'm still responsible for her.*

Jack described the feeling he sometimes has of Areta being 'around' and he is happy with this feeling. Jack noted something that happened at the house where he affectionately thought "*...She's here annoying me!*"

## **Discussion**

This research aimed to explore the ways in which a whānau/family negotiated choices, cultural worlds, rituals and meaning within deciding, organising and enacting the funeral/tangi for a loved one. The case study presented illustrates some of the issues that may be raised for dual cultural whānau/families within their bereavement processes. We interviewed one participant, Jack and recorded his experiences and reflections upon the different cultural worlds he engaged in within his life; specifically within his bereavement following the death of his beloved wife. It is important to note that the basis of this report is a single case study which includes one person's experience, perspective and understandings of

a significant event. It is not appropriate or necessary to question the actions of any parties involved, nor do we make any claims upon others who feature within the narrative. The focus of this report is Jack, his story and his experiences which resulted in all sorts of meanings for him within this event.

### **Dual cultural relationships**

Intercultural relationships are generally believed to require more adjustments than same culture relationships (Gudykunst, 2004). One significant aspect of adjustment can be the reaction of others to the relationship (Gudykunst, 2004). Jack's mother tried unsuccessfully to break up the relationship following Jack and Areta's engagement. Family rejection was experienced by several participants within Harré's (1966) study of Māori and Pākehā intercultural relationships. However, Harré (1966) also noted that the stereotypes that underlie such rejection can be dismantled in contexts that create a close association between Māori and Pākehā. Within Jack's narrative, the New Zealand armed forces provided a platform from which the close association of Māori and Pākehā was facilitated. Jack highlighted this within his following statement:

*It was virtually the done thing in the army, for Māori and Pākehā to be married, either a Māori man or a Pākehā man or vice versa, no one worried, yet out in civil street...but in the services it was quite common, because we worked together, we slept together, we fought together, we trained together we did everything together and it didn't matter who you were.*

Māori and Pākehā fought alongside each other within the armed forces following the Korean War in the 1950s (Henderson, Green, & Cooke, 2008). It is estimated that half of the troops sent to Vietnam, where Jack served two tours, were Māori (Henderson et al., 2008). The relations between Māori and Pākehā within this war have been described as 'generally amicable' (Henderson et al., 2008). The military culture appeared to provide a unifying feature both within the life of Jack and Areta and the rituals associated with Areta's death. However, Jack and Areta's differing cultural backgrounds may have exerted a particular influence over their lives together. Jack described several cultural differences that he encountered within his relationship with Areta. Jack noted his lack of experience and knowledge of 'Māori ways' within the early stages of their relationship. These factors may also have been influential in Jack's experience and understandings of Areta's marae-based tangi.

### **Decision-making processes**

Processes of decision making occurred both prior and consequent to Areta's death. Jack and his children had some notice of Areta's terminal health prognosis. This allowed an opportunity to discuss Areta's final wishes. However, and understandably so, Jack was reluctant to have this difficult conversation. Eventually, a conversation did take place, albeit briefly. Jack was unhappy with Areta's final wish to be buried at her whānau urupā, and actively tried to dissuade her from this decision. Jack believed that Areta's decision would limit the family's ability to regularly visit Areta's grave. However, despite the bereaved family's initial disapproval, Areta's final wishes were respected and adhered to. Kalish and Reynolds's (1976) study noted that the majority of the participants would respect the final wishes of a loved one, even if the wishes were perceived as 'senseless' or 'inconvenient'.

Areta's entire tangi occurred within three distinct settings, the family home, the funeral home and finally, at Areta's marae. Jack and his children appeared to have a central role in organising the proceedings at the family home and funeral home. Jack recalled that whilst the events were occurring at the family home and funeral home, Areta's sister liaised with the marae to organise the final proceedings there. Jack did not recall being part of these planning processes. Geographic distance and time restrictions may have impacted upon the decisions that were made for the marae-based tangi. It is common for tangi proceedings to occur over

several days (Ngata, 2005), whereas Areta's marae-based tangi would be condensed into a 24-hour period. Jack was ill prepared for the way in which the tangi would be enacted at the marae; this had an obvious and profound impact upon him. The marae-based tangi provided the most significant point of conflict noted within Jack's story.

### **Points of difference and conflict**

Jack was not involved in organising the marae proceedings and as he noted, he did not want to be. Jack assumed that those who undertook this task would consider him and his needs within this event. This is evident within Jack's statement where he thought that "...they would do the right thing by me". However, the 'they' and 'me' referred to in this statement belonged to two distinct cultural groups, Māori and Pākehā. Earlier, we discussed culture as consisting of a set of ideals, values and assumptions that are shared by a particular group (Brislin, 1993). Furthermore, culture exerts influence upon the expectations and understandings of what is considered appropriate (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007). The role of culture within Jack's experience is underlined by his earlier statement; it appears that what was the 'right thing' was perceived differently by each cultural group. This example illustrates a site of intercultural conflict that occurred within the context of Jack's bereavement experiences.

Cross-cultural research has noted cultural variations within responses to death and grief (Kalish & Reynolds, 1981; Peveto, 2001). Such variations have also been noted between Māori and Pākehā responses to death and grief (Dansey, 1995). Intercultural conflict can occur when the values, expectations or processes of two distinct cultures are perceived to be incompatible (Samovar et al., 2007). Peveto (2001) also notes that cultural misunderstandings can occur when there is a lack of knowledge of the background, culture and needs of those concerned. Furthermore, Ting-Toomey (1988) asserts that conflict can be defined as a negotiation process within which the situated identities of the parties are threatened or called into question. Jack was hurt by aspects of the marae-based tangi, but he did not perceive this to be due to a lack of respect for him personally. Thus, it appears that the values, expectations and/or processes that occurred within the marae-based tangi were incompatible with those of Jack. Thus Jack's negative experience and conflict may have been the result of intercultural conflict or misunderstanding. The most significant point of conflict within Jack's story resulted from the language used within the marae-based tangi ceremonies.

### **Language**

Language forms an integral part of our ability to communicate our thoughts, feelings and intentions to others and is largely culturally determined (Samovar et al., 2007). Jack recalled several occasions where he was exposed to the language differences between Māori and Pākehā in his life with Areta. Jack had attended events, such as tangi, where the ceremonies were conducted in Māori. However, Haki would assume the role of translator, assisting Jack to mediate the differences in Māori and Pākehā languages. This was a gesture that Jack greatly appreciated. Language assumed a particular significance within Jack's experience at Areta's marae tangi.

Jack was surprised and hurt by the realisation that the entire tangi proceedings at the marae would be conducted in Māori. This in effect meant that Jack was unable to understand any of the ceremony but most importantly, what was said about his beloved wife. This was influential upon Jack's negative experience at the marae, as he described: "*I was bitterly disappointed over the whole affair and I just couldn't wait to get home*". This experience had a profound and lasting impact upon Jack and prevented his ability to reflect back upon a lovely service, as he simply did not understand it. This experience was a pivotal point of focus within Jack's narrative, and appeared to provide the impetus for Jack's involvement within this study.

The role that language played within Jack's story raises several issues. Language is central to communication. It can unify group members by reinforcing group identity or conversely,

exclude non-group members from communicating (Samovar et al., 2007). Language can create distinct boundaries between ethnic groups (Gudykunst, 2004). Within the marae context, Jack was thrust into the position of an outsider which excluded him from understanding and participating within the event. Although this was not a unique experience for Jack, Areta and Haki were no longer alive to translate for Jack. Consequently, this did not occur within the marae-based tangi. Jack and his children were alone within a situation where the language and means of communication were unfamiliar and disorientating. When exposed to situations such as these, a common reaction is to perceive ourselves as excluded, rejected subsequently threatening our very identity (Samovar et al., 2007).

Dual cultural relationships, such as Jack and Areta's, emphasise the importance of identity within inter-cultural situations. Identity influences and guides expectations of self and others, and provides guidelines for interactions with others (Samovar et al., 2007). We may have multiple identities that are called into play context dependant. Identity may be derived from personal aspects, the relationships we have with others and connections to communities such as ethnic, national or organisational (Samovar et al., 2007). Jack and Areta shared identities, as husband and wife, parents and their attachment to the armed services. Yet upon the marae, language drew a cultural boundary between Areta and Jack. It may be possible that Jack perceived this as a threat to his identity and that which he had shared with his beloved wife. The significance of Areta's tangi to Jack and his role within this event is undeniable. The respect and status that Jack was given upon the marae indicates that Jack's exclusion was unintentional; nonetheless it had a powerful impact upon Jack. Jack's reaction to this situation was a very common response (Samovar et al., 2007); he withdrew himself and left the marae as soon as possible, noting: "*I just couldn't wait to get home*".

### **Resolution**

An important question remains within the discussion of this narrative. Did a pathway to resolution exist despite the intercultural conflict that was encountered? Jack answers this question within his retelling of Areta's unveiling ceremony. Jack employed several processes which are considered key to negotiating intercultural conflict. These included collaboration, compromise and continued engagement with the 'other' culture (Samovar et al., 2007). Jack played a central role within the planning and organising of this event. However, Jack collaborated with both his children and representatives from Areta's marae within his planning. Jack appointed a Māori minister to conduct the unveiling who was proficient in performing ceremonies in both English and Māori. People with bicultural skills are commonly used to connect two different cultural groups (Yum, 1988). The facilitation of the unveiling ceremony by this particular minister created a compromise that made concessions for both cultural groups involved. Feedback from the unveiling suggested that the ceremony was conducted in a way that satisfied the needs of both Māori and Pākehā at the marae. Jack noted some aspects that did not occur as planned, but these did not detract from what was an overall positive experience.

Areta's unveiling ceremony provided an important resolution to the conflict Jack experienced previously. These also led to some quite unexpected outcomes. Jack initially disagreed with Areta's decision to be buried at the urupā. However, this created an important link between Jack, his whānau/family and the marae. It afforded Jack the opportunity to meet people from the marae and establish relationships there. Despite what Jack previously experienced and withdrew from at the marae-based tangi, he did not allow his experience to rest there. Jack had further engagement with Māori culture, through the marae, which assisted him to further some of his understandings (Samovar et al., 2007). Jack now believes that Areta's final wish was the right decision and in his own words, "*I'm totally at peace with it*". Jack now understands why Areta wanted to be buried with her whānau all around her and this brings him comfort. Jack contrasted this to public cemeteries which he described as: "*...it's a lonely place; you can stand looking at someone's headstone and not know anyone around you*". Jack was worried that the distance between his home and the marae would prevent regular

visits to Areta's grave. However, Jack knows of others who can freely visit the graves of loved ones, but the regularity has become somewhat of a burden. But for Jack, each visit to the marae urupā has great meaning. Jack looks forward to these visits and likens his excitement to the feeling of departing on a holiday. Somewhat unexpectedly, this has informed Jack's decisions around his own final wishes. Jack has decided to be cremated and his ashes placed within Areta's headstone. Within Jack's story, intercultural conflict was experienced but importantly, collaboration and compromise provided resolution and unexpected outcomes.

## Conclusion

Families with dual cultural identities can negotiate conflict and differences in perspective and practice within their lives together. Such processes are no less significant within bereavement following the death of whānau/family members. Jack's experiences provide knowledge about the potential that exists for both intercultural conflict and the creation of resolution. Communication and engagement create new pathways to participation, clarification and the development of understanding. These may also lead to eventual outcomes which are unexpected but welcomed nonetheless. There are aspects that are not accounted for within this study including the perspectives of others who were part of this story. A limitation of this study is its reliance upon a single case study, being one person's experience and perspective. Contributions from other whānau/family members may have increased the complexity of this story, alongside a broader understanding of the issues and processes that manifested. However, Jack's experience stands on its own merit and we are deeply honoured by his consent to share his very personal, intimate and emotive story. This study provides but one contribution to a topic which requires much further investigation and discussion.

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## Author notes

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