

Me Maumaharatanga Ngā Kōrero o Ngā Whānau, Family Recollections and Social Contributions to Māori Children's Learning

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Tia Neha is of Ngā Puhī, Ngāri Kahungunu, Te Whānau Ā Apanui and Ngāti Porou descent. She is a PhD candidate in the Department of Psychology at the University of Otago. Her studentship is linked to three main goals. They include Māori research with whānau and the research community, tikanga ethics and forging connections with a wider network of psychologists locally and internationally wide.

Tia has focused her developmental research on whether the role of whānau oral traditions, autobiographical memories link to Māori children's school readiness, specifically language, literacy, self-control and numeracy achievements.

In her spare time, Tia likes to attend Crossfit Group training sessions which helps to balance her research activities and mental gymnastics.

Tia was the recipient of the Karahipi Tumuaki- President's Scholarship in 2012.

Me Whakamoemiti

Tēnā ra koutou e ngā whānau whānui. This PhD is dedicated to my late father Koroni Neha Toki and my majestic Koka, mother Ihipera Morrell. I thank you both the most for your unequivocal support throughout, as always, for which my mere expression of thanks likewise does not suffice. A special mention of thanks goes to Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa for my being awarded the 2012 Karahipi Tumuaki scholarship. This assistance has in part enabled dissemination at world-wide conferences. I would like to thank my supervision team Elaine Reese, the late Tamar Murachver, Poia Rewi and Mele Taumoepeau and friends for their constant support, valuable insight, guidance and feedback on my thesis progress.

Te Tino Kaupapa

The main aims of this longitudinal study were to address the gap in the literature on what are some strengths that help to build Māori autobiographical memory? One description of autobiographical memory refers to cultural variation

on the retrieval of past events (Fivush & Nelson, 2004). We wanted to further identify whether or not there was a link between autobiographical memory and Māori children's school readiness competencies. Aside from space considerations that preclude the inclusion of the whole thesis, fuller details on autobiographical memory to children's school readiness prior and post school entry are best left to the thesis document. This sub-section of the study, however, is the first to address whether home based measures - dyadic book-reading and reminiscing are linked to Māori children's oral language growth.

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He kōrero whānau or elaboration strengths is one style of maternal reminiscing. It has been identified when talking about shared past events (Reese, Hayne, & MacDonald, 2008). Some mothers are highly elaborative, affording useful detail through

questions and statements. As the child follows with a memory answer, the adult confirms the child's response and follows-up with further open ended questions and statements. This particular style of narrative expression provides a major contribution to children's memory development (Fivush, Haden, & Reese, 2006). That is, child participation in parental-assisted conversations helps children learn about the form and function of talking about past events that map to their autobiographical memory.

Te Mahi

Investment in sustaining whakawhānaungatanga or relationships before, during and post thesis has been paramount for thesis progression. Without this vital component the thesis would not have been made possible. Emphasis was given to the integrity of tikanga, cultural practises, during all phases of the study.

Tikanga concepts cloaked in good faith, truth and pursuit of whānau goals for the greater good were applied between the whānau and the researcher - myself (Smith, 1999).

Adherence to protocols of transparency and research aims were discussed from the outset. Violation to tikanga might potentially result in whānau attrition, mistrust and discontinuation of the current and future research. Initial and dissemination hui whānau involved karakia, waiata, discussion around the project, kai and karakia. Further discussions with whānau were central to their children's learning and autobiographical memory.

This study is part of a bigger study that involves whether he kōrero whānau is linked to Māori children's school readiness. For the purposes of this study, however, does he kōrero whānau relate to whānau Māori and their children's oral language readiness?

Sixty whānau were recruited from two sites. Whānau filled out an adapted questionnaire that contained demographic information (Crengle, 2004; Senechal & LeFevre, 2001). Participants self-identified as 43% Māori:European, 32% Māori, 16% European:Māori and 9% Māori:Pacific Islander. Whānau came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. There were 32 (53%) girls and 28 (47%) boys. Children from both sites spent on average 12 months in preschool prior to Time 1 at M = 4.4 years. A follow-up visit took place at M = 4.11 years. 54 (90%) whānau primarily spoke in English. 6 (10%) whānau mainly spoke in Te Reo but could speak in English as well. Maternal

education was 4.2 years on average spent at the tertiary level.

Māori mothers who used higher-level talk in book-reading and he kōrero whānau had children with better oral language skills, which replicates prior research.

Fifty Māori mothers recorded a conversation about past events; including a birth story, and other shared past events. Mother also read a book to their children. All conversations were transcribed and coded for higher-level talk (predictions/ inferences and elaborations). Children's vocabulary (Reid & Hresko, 1980), story comprehension (Reese, 1995), story retell (Sparks & Reese, 2013) and letter sounds (Cummings, Kaminski, Good, & O'Neil, 2011) were assessed. Mother-child book reading was coded for lower-level (description) and higher-level talk (predictions/ inferences).

Ngā Whakaahua Putake

The findings demonstrated that the children were performing in the expected range on all oral language measures. Correlations were conducted between children's oral language competency to he kōrero whānau about books and past events (see Table 1). Children's language understanding, story comprehension and letter sounds were moderately correlated with he

kōrero whānau. We conducted further correlations with the shared reading activity. Children's language expression was moderately correlated with their mother's inferences and predictions during the activity. Importantly, these correlations remained significant after parent education and child's age were partialled out.

Kei Muri, Kei Mua

Māori mothers who used higher-level talk in book-reading and he kōrero whānau had children with better oral language skills, which replicates prior research. These results extend this line of work because they suggest that different contexts of maternal language input (e.g. book reading and he kōrero whānau) with their children provide different language outputs for Māori children. Therefore, he kōrero whānau during memory conversations and book-reading are both important contexts for Māori children's oral language growth.

Further work might address the role of storytelling between elders, significant others and the children as these enriched stories might help to also complement he kōrero whānau and their child's repertoire of language skills and memory.

Heoi ano, ngā mihi aroha ki ngā whānau ano. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Table 1: Partial Correlations between He Kōrero Whānau, Book Reading with Child Characteristics.

	Receptive vocabulary	Expressive vocabulary	Story comprehension	Phonological Awareness
Maternal book-reading (predictions/inferences)	.12	.39*	.20	.07
He Kōrero whānau, Maternal elaborations	.32*	.10	.46**	.47**

*p<.05, **p<.01, controlling for parent education and child age

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