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RECLAIMING THE LAST RITES (RIGHTS)

WOMEN AND AFTER-DEATH POLICY, PRACTICES AND BELIEFS IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Massey University

Jean Hera

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the women who have respectfully, and with love, laid out the dead at home and in their communities for no or modest payment. Especially I want to pay a loving tribute to my own great grandmother Annie Lizzie Glover (nee Bevan) who laid out her son, my grandfather, at home when he died in London in 1946.

ABSTRACT

This thesis develops an ecofeminist analysis of women's roles in after-death work and ritual in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The thesis describes and analyses the male takeover, and accompanying professionalization of death which has removed death out of the hands of the lay women in the family and community who previously held this role, and which has removed dying, death and after-death practices and ritual out of the home and into the institution.

A bicultural emphasis has been adopted for this research into death which involves Maori, the first nation tribal peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Pakeha, people of European (particularly British) descent who have colonized Aotearoa. The thesis examines both the differing and related experiences of Maori and Pakeha in relation to changing and evolving after-death policy, practices and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It also considers the value of after-death experiences in the home and in the community and the choices and restrictions of today that relate to this. A triangulation of research methods is used: public records research to produce an historical social policy analysis of death, the action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group which is an initiative to demystify and reclaim after-death knowledge and choices, and eighteen in-depth interviews which provide women's stories of their after-death experiences. The research aims to contribute to a process which seeks to demystify death and assist women and the wider community to reclaim control over the last rites (rights).

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Firstly I want to acknowledge Aotearoa/New Zealand, the beautiful (and nuclear free) Pacific country of my birth that has so much to do with the person that I am. Especially I want to pay tribute to the mountain Taranaki that I was born under, and whose awesome presence continues with me in my mind's eye. I also want to recognize all the people who have contributed to my life's journey, the living and the dead, and say that as a Pakeha woman of Aotearoa/New Zealand I have discovered that I have a rich cultural heritage to learn and draw from.

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your death has taught me so much. This thesis and all these years of study is a tribute to your memory.

Arohanui, Jean

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INTRODUCTION

I am La Loba the Wolf Woman
She who collects the bones of lost valuables
And sings them back to life.
(an adaptation from the storytelling of Estes, 1993:27-38)

This thesis records, examines and reclaims women's traditional family and community, work and ritual roles, of laying-out and caring for the dead. As part of my work I have sifted through historical, anthropological and other public record "remains" relating to death as women's work and women's ritual, particularly in relation to our predominantly Maori and British heritage in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As a Pakeha, I consider this to be a lost (or neglected) treasure, to be sung, wailed and gently crooned back to life in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand. Through colonization this has also become an issue for Maori women (and men), who although they have continued many of their traditional after-death practices and beliefs in contemporary society, these have been encroached upon by Pakeha laws, institutions, attitudes and values.

I advocate that this after-death caring and ritual work, performed predominantly by women in the home and community, is important herstory/history and old knowledge, not only to document, but also to reclaim and learn from, as we participate in, and influence, the after-death practices of today. This thesis explores how this "lost valuable" of women's and popular community culture for Pakeha society, has been colonized by the Pakeha male dominated (initially Pakeha male exclusive) professions and institutions, hidden in history, and discredited. This thesis also explores the affect that colonization has had on Maori after-death practices and beliefs (with specific attention to Maori women's roles), and their changes and continuation. It recognizes not only that Maori after-death practices and beliefs have been influenced by Pakeha, but also that Pakeha after-death practices and beliefs have been, and are being, influenced by Maori.

I have deliberately chosen a bicultural emphasis. I see this as appropriate at this stage of our development as an Aotearoa/New Zealand society working to come to terms with its first nation Maori and British colonial past, and present. The founding document in this country, Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi of 1840 articulated an intention of partnership between, and autonomy for, the two main cultural groupings — the Maori tribes (nations) of Aotearoa and the more recent Tauwiwi (mainly British) arrivals. This Treaty was not

honoured by Tauīwi. Subsequent history has followed the usual colonial pattern which has seen white colonizers dominating, exploiting and subordinating first nation peoples of colour. This is an oppressive colonial past, that Maori continue to seek to have redressed — with increasing success. It is a past that a growing number of Pakeha now also want to acknowledge and seek solutions to, in partnership, and/or in a parallel relationship, with Maori.

As a Pakeha researching Maori after-death practices and beliefs, and traditional and contemporary Maori theory and literature, I need to acknowledge that I risk being yet another Pakeha encroaching on Maori cultural beliefs and practices. This is not my intention. I have sincerely attempted (and I hope succeeded) in carrying out and recording my research appropriately, with respect, and with benefits/returns for Maori¹.

In summary, the central focus of this thesis, is to seek to understand and influence after-death policy, practices and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and women's changing roles in relation to this. In this introduction I will begin with a brief outline of why I think it is important to research after-death practices and beliefs, and my general approach to this task. This is followed by a discussion about my personal background, the path of discovery that led me to ecofeminism, and my subsequent development of an ecofeminist theory and research approach in this thesis. Next I discuss the purpose of this research project, at whom this research has been aimed and to whom it is significant. The introduction then concludes by "laying-out" the structure of the thesis.

Why Study After-death Practices and Beliefs?

As a community worker in the women's health movement, I am interested and active in demystifying the health information and advice that is given to us by medical professionals, while at the same time developing and sharing self-help information which validates our own knowledge, experience and needs as women. I advocate that this approach to health, can give women the ability and confidence to consider the choices available and then make informed decisions that meet our own health needs. I have applied this same analysis to death. After experiencing my father's death I realized on a very feeling level how little I knew about death. This in turn led to my "need to know" about death so that I could change

¹ Extended discussion regarding the risks and ethics involved when a Pakeha researches Maori matters occurs in Chapter 4 and to a lesser extent in Chapters 1 and 3.

my experience of death in the future. I also realized that this was an important health area to research and demystify for others as well as myself².

Death is a highly mystified area of our lives, something that is handed over to not only medical people, but also to funeral directors and priests. During much of this century death became a taboo subject for Pakeha, something to be hidden from sight and not talked about. Death is now coming out of "the closet" and society in general is becoming more aware of the grief processes relating to death. Most people however are still ignorant of the choices available to us when caring for our dead before burial/cremation and when planning a funeral. Although Maori have continued many of their traditional after-death practices in the home and on the marae, misinformation is still an issue. For example, I have spoken in some depth to several "prominent" Maori (including a Maori reporter and Maori educationalists), who had thought that a dead body had to be embalmed, and I suspect that this misunderstanding is a widespread occurrence (Rolleston, 1988-1989:37).

The General Approach to this Study

My approach has been to apply a feminist analysis to death with the view of reclaiming the herstory of death as women's work and women's ritual, discovering the story/history of how death has been taken out of women's hands, exploring the requirements and choices that are available today and also exploring the experiences and ideas that women have in relation to death. In terms of social policy, I have worked to discover what laws, regulations, beliefs and practices exist today to shape our experience of death, how these have changed over time and what forces have caused this change. That is, how has our society in Aotearoa/New Zealand both shaped and been shaped by its social policy of death? There are many questions which need to be considered. For example, how as a colony of Britain have we been influenced by British law and British ideology? What part have the medical profession, undertakers, priests and legislators had in this story? What have been women's roles in relation to after-death practices in the past and how have these changed? What influence have Maori had in continuing their after-death practices and in shaping contemporary after-death culture in our broader society?

² An extended discussion on why I chose this research topic for my doctoral studies occurs at the beginning of Chapter 4 of this thesis.

In terms of after-death choices and requirements, I have been involved with action research regarding the options available today and how to implement these. My specific interest is in home and community based after-death options, and the practicalities involved in implementing and extending these. I have also placed a lot of importance on listening to people's stories about their after-death experiences and the "needs and wants" that they express in relation to this. The inclusion and analysis of women's stories about their after-death experiences is a major component of this thesis.

Finding My Way: The Path to an Ecofeminist Theory and Methodology

As I began to research feminist theory I realized that it was important to define the term "theory". This realization was a direct response to the argument that there is an anti-theoretical tendency within the Women's Liberation Movement of rejecting all theory as patriarchal and oppressive (Weedon, 1987:8). Weedon states that many feminists maintain an active hostility to theory because they see it as a way of denying the centrality of women's experience, a way of removing the control of the meaning of our lives and telling us what we should think (Weedon, 1987:6). My interpretation is different.

I argue that theory goes hand in hand with all feminism. I consider theory to be a set of principles for explaining what is, what has been and also what will be. Theory can also work to modify what exists. It may be simple and precise, or in the form of a complicated set of intermeshed principles and theories. Theory however, no matter how simple or complex, never stands alone, but always interrelates with other theories. I find it helpful to describe theory as a tool, something which helps us to examine and structure our beliefs and understanding, a way to explain and make sense of our experience as women. We all use theory every day.

When I discovered feminism in the early 1980s (as a young mother at home with young children and before attending university), I was immediately finding "the tools" (that is theory) to make sense of my world. Feminist writing and discussion enabled me to explain and make sense of my own experience in a new and meaningful way. This was feminist theory in action. I argue that feminism is personal and political, a spiritual and body experience of mind and heart, thought and feeling and a finding of our own words and voice to express this. It is an all embracing personal experience, a whole, and something I want to

share with others. Feminism is about theory and symbols, emotions and action — a way of life (but one with much diversity). It is true that many feminists are suspicious of, and reject established bodies of theory as being man made and little to do with women³. It is feminist theories however that inform this decision, one of which is, that women need to weave and work their own patterns of explaining their experience, their feelings and their knowing, and that to do this we need our own words and theories, and our own symbols. My theoretical approach has been to focus and build on specific bodies of theory developed by feminist women, but in doing so I have also drawn from and adapted theories developed by men.

I argue that the majority of experiences and beliefs concerning theory represent it as something academic and above the heads of most people, something we are not part of. Those who make theory tend to be seen as experts who build their theory up over time with much testing and rational objective work. This has led to theory-making being inaccessible and elitist. It is important to recognize that dominant theory is often not recognized as theory, but instead becomes seen as normal and natural, as merely "facts of life". We need constantly to be alert to this.

It is who I am, my own experience, my European ancestral heritage, the land that I was birthed in, have lived in all my life and the Maori and Tauwiwi cultures of this land that has shaped me. My experience of what is Maori has helped me develop my own sense of ancestry, whakapapa (genealogy), culture, spirituality and oneness with nature. Maori death practices and beliefs have called to my deep self and helped prompt me to seek and discover what my own death culture is. Literature written by Maori women and Maori men and the development of Mana Wahine/Maori feminist theory by Maori women is also significant. In terms of my feminist experiential development it has been the women of the women's groups I have belonged to, and the sharing, support and action which I have experienced and been part of in these groups, that has inspired and taught me.

My experience of community groups and community work has led to a growing awareness of different structures and different ways of working in a holistic and nonhierarchical way. Feminist collectives use the structure of the circle, and processes which are about sharing experience, knowledge and power, and responding to the needs of women as women, not superior experts. An interest in knowledge gained through women's shared experience has led to the research method of collecting women's stories of their after-death experiences. It

³ Similarly Maori also often reject "white" or "Pakeha" perspectives as not representing their experiences and views.

is also an important aspect of the action research process of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group.

As a researcher I try to see the "whole" picture and be aware of the interconnected weave of strands that make up the whole picture (although there is always a bigger whole). I experience an irrepressible urge to stray across many different academic fields (social policy and social and community work, women's studies, sociology, history, anthropology, Maori studies, religious studies and nursing studies to name a few) as I soar off on my research paths. This straying across the disciplinary boundaries of academic compartmentalized thought is something that has been encouraged within Women's Studies (Klein, 1991:126). I am conscious however as a "patternner", as someone who seeks a broad picture, of the need to be careful not to make assumptions or sweeping statements about other women's experiences and "realities" based on my own, and the need to be aware of the diversity of experience, knowledge and "truth" for different groups of women and for individual women.

I am also a woman of action as well as ideas and this means that I am not content to be a spectator on the sideline of history merely criticising and critiquing what exists. I want to be "midwife to new stories" (Goodnow and Pateman, 1986:29). My most preferred way of doing this is by working alongside other women to shift and shape society — personally banishing what is unhelpful to us and envisioning and creating feminist alternatives in practical and achievable ways (and perhaps occasionally achieving the "impossible"). This is crucial to my theory and research methods, as well as my community work. It is an approach that is evident in the action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group.

I had completed a lot of work on my theoretical position before I developed an understanding of the ecofeminist theoretical framework. This was an important discovery, as I was struggling to establish a feminist theoretical framework that made room for all my important pieces. These important pieces included being able to redress the dualistic splits in Euro-Western thinking, particularly in my case the death/bad and life/good dualism which has worked to separate death from life; allowing for the importance of the inner and the outer by bridging the split between structural and poststructural theories; valuing diversity without undermining the importance of connection (and vice versa); acknowledging the importance of the spiritual realm and the impact of religion and cultural influences in the historical analysis of how after-death practices have changed; and a need for a theory and methodology

of action as well as analysis. All these pieces were not really fitting into the existing bodies of theory I was aware of. I was seeking a framework that allowed for all the interconnections and complexities I was faced with. I was also looking for a body of theory that I could personally relate to and which was not overly complex in content or language. Ecofeminism has provided me with this, and inspired the ecofeminist perspective and research process developed for this research project.

A number of publications have marked the journey of my after-death research. Hera (1991) is a paper I prepared as an undergraduate student about death as traditionally an area of women's work, the male takeover of this work that occurred, and the need to reclaim death as women's work. I was encouraged by my tutor to present this as a workshop paper at the Fourth International Congress on Women's Health Issues held in Palmerston North in 1990, before I knew of my impending doctoral studies which began the following year. Hera (1992) is a write up of the workshop I gave at the "Women & Work" Conference held in Palmerston North in 1991. In preparing for this workshop I came to the realization that "homedeath as a feminist issue" is as much about reclaiming women's ritual as it is about reclaiming women's work. In the workshop I gave an overview of the material I had gathered on death as women's work and women's ritual and how this had been taken out of women's hands. I also discussed the recent establishment of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group and the community work that we had begun. The women attending the workshop shared some of their after-death experiences which also became to an extent a comparison of Maori and Pakeha after-death practices. The chapter I wrote for *Superwoman Where Are You? Social Policy and Women's Experience* (Hera, 1992b), was a major milestone being my first contribution to a book. This extended and summarized the historical/herstorical material I had already researched, and integrated much of the Maori research findings completed for my doctoral studies. The Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group's self-help booklet, *Homedeath Caring For Our Dead Before Burial/Cremation*, published in 1993 (and updated and extended in 1995), provides a summary of the findings of the homedeath group regarding the requirements, choices and practicalities involved in caring for our dead and making funerary arrangements.

The Purpose of the Research, at Whom it is Aimed and to Whom it is Significant

The purpose of this research has been to develop an understanding of how and why death was taken out of women's hands, the home and community, and to contribute to a process which reverses this trend. The after-death realm is an area which has not received much attention from feminists. I have worked to contribute to, and promote this after-death field as an important area for feminist research and action. The after-death realm is also a neglected area of historical research and social policy analysis. This research project aims to address these gaps. The research has also been motivated by a desire to explore and critique developments in institutional after-death practices and the market model of after-death services, and to consider ways to both reform and develop alternatives to this in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand. As my work progressed I developed a growing awareness that I wanted this research project to bring benefits to nonhuman as well as human nature. I now recognize this as part of the purpose of the research.

This research has been particularly aimed at, and is significant to, women, especially feminist women who are, or may find that they are interested in the after-death realm as an area of women's work and women's ritual practice. It is also aimed at all people in Aotearoa/New Zealand (although the emphasis has been on women) who are interested in contemporary after-death choices and how to implement these, especially in relation to home and community based options. It is my hope that this research proves useful to Maori as well as Pakeha and Tauwi in general, although I suggest that it is Pakeha (who have kept death at a distance), who have the greatest need to learn about after-death options and how to implement these. I feel confident, however, that a growing Pakeha ease with death and home and community based after-death practices, will in turn bring more understanding and action which works to assist parallel Maori requirements and initiatives for change. I also hope that this thesis has some international as well as local significance, in regard both to after-death research and to the development of ecofeminist and ecological approaches to theory, research and action.

The "Lay-out" of this Thesis

There are six parts to this thesis. The initial focus is on the theory developed for this thesis (Part One). Attention is then given to the research process (Part Two) and from here moves

on to the specific research projects — the public records findings pertaining to after-death history, policy, practices and beliefs (Part Three); the after-death action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group (Part Four); and the findings of the eighteen in-depth women's stories about their after-death experiences (Part Five). The last part of the thesis (Part Six) analyses the research findings and makes links between this and the theoretical perspectives and the research approaches involved. This part of the thesis also looks at the implications that I have drawn from the research findings.

Part One of the thesis outlines the theoretical frameworks. Chapter 1 provides a discussion of ecofeminism and develops the ecofeminist framework that has informed this thesis. Chapter 2 develops an ecofeminist theoretical critique of patriarchal dualistic thinking and then applies this to my research topic. The last chapter in this section, Chapter 3, outlines the development of theories of colonization, and in particular, those that address the oppressive aims and consequences of colonization processes. This culminates with my development of an ecofeminist theory of colonization and decolonization.

Two chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) are contained in Part Two of the thesis. Chapter 4 discusses the broad approach behind the research. It combines discussion about the general bodies of methodology that I have drawn from with an outline of the specific ecofeminist methods and research format that I developed during my doctoral studies. Chapter 5 discusses the three specific research methods I have used and then concludes with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses apparent in the use of these methods.

Chapter 6 in Part Three of the thesis concentrates on the findings of the public records research in relation to Maori after-death beliefs, practices and policies and the specific roles of Maori women. Also included in this chapter is discussion about Maori after-death practices and their changes and continuation that has been drawn from the stories contributed by some of the Maori women research participants. The chapter then concludes with a comparison of contemporary Maori and Pakeha after-death practices. Chapter 7, documents the findings of the public records research in relation to Pakeha after-death practices, policies and beliefs, their British historical origins, and the changes that have occurred in relation to women's after-death roles.

Chapter 8 in Part Four documents, analyses and evaluates the action research project, the community work of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group. The findings of the qualitative research into eighteen women's stories of their after-death

experiences makes up Part Five of the thesis. This involves two chapters which explore ten themes concerning what the women identified as important to positive after-death experiences. Chapter 9 focuses on the personal aspects of these themes while Chapter 10 focuses on the public aspects. This part of the thesis concludes with a summary of the explicit and implicit recommendations evident in the women's stories.

Part Six, the final part of the thesis, marks the final transition. In Chapter 11 I draw together the theory, method, and research findings into a final analysis. Chapter 12, the concluding chapter, then draws on the research findings to provide discussion and recommendations concerning contemporary after-death policy and practices, and also further research in this field.

PART ONE

**A Feminist Theory For
Reclaiming The Last Rites (Rights)**

This section consists of three chapters outlining the theoretical frameworks. The first chapter in this section, 'An Ecofeminist Framework', outlines the ecofeminist theoretical stance that I have adopted. To structure this framework I have identified and developed seven ecofeminist principles. I have also illustrated how these principles apply to my own research process.

The next chapter, 'An Ecofeminist Challenge to Patriarchal Dualism', further develops this ecofeminist framework through a discussion and development of an ecofeminist theory of patriarchy and patriarchal dualistic thinking, and by making connections with my own research on death. Included in this is the development of a theory of death which regards death as the partner to life, as part of life, and as sustaining life in the cycles of human and nonhuman nature.

The last chapter in this section 'Colonization Theory as a Central Theoretical Theme' outlines and discusses the colonization and decolonization theory which I have researched and developed into a framework through which to understand and explain the traditions, changes and developments of after-death practices and beliefs for Maori, Pakeha and other Tauwi in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This chapter concludes with the ecofeminist approach to colonization/decolonization theory that has culminated from my research, and its application to this thesis.

CHAPTER 1

AN ECOFEMINIST FRAMEWORK

Ecological feminism has its roots in a variety of different feminist practices and philosophies. This is to be expected. Just as there is not one feminism, there is not one ecofeminism. For some, ecofeminism is a movement involved in developing nonpatriarchal, earth and woman-based spiritualities. For some, ecofeminism is a movement involved in understanding historical, social, and philosophical connections between the dominations of women and nature. For some ecofeminism is a grass roots political movement that weds the peace, environmental, and women's movements. And ecofeminism is all of these for some ecofeminists! Despite differences among ecofeminists, what is distinctive of ecofeminism is its commitment to making visible the various ways in which the dominations of women and nonhuman nature are sanctioned and perpetuated under patriarchy, and to engaging in practices and develop(ing) analyses aimed at ending these twin exploitations (Warren,1991:64).

An ecofeminist perspective propounds the need for a new cosmology and a new anthropology which recognises that life in nature (which includes human beings) is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love. Only in this way can we be enabled to respect and preserve the diversity of all life forms, including their cultural expressions, as true sources of our well-being and happiness. To this end ecofeminists use metaphors like "reweaving the world", "healing the wounds", and re-connecting and interconnecting the "web" (Mies and Shiva, 1993:6).

An ecofeminist framework integrates ecological and feminist perspectives, visions and politics (Kelly, 1989:xi; Mies and Shiva, 1993:13). It is a feminism which bridges the separate and often opposing feminist positions of radical (cultural) feminism and socialist feminism. Ecology is the study of "the interdependence and interconnectedness of all living systems" and within this social ecology "seeks to harmonise human and nonhuman nature" (Plant, 1990:155). The deep ecologist position challenges the world view which perceives humans as the centre or apex of the natural world, while the ecofeminist position brings to this a further challenge, that of an analysis of the androcentric world view, the world view which rationalizes and upholds male privilege (Doubiago, 1989:40-44; Kheel, 1990:128; King, 1989:24; Norwood, 1993:269; Spretnak, 1990:11). Ecofeminism works then to feminize the consciousness of the ecological/environmental movement and to ecologize the feminist movement (Norwood, 1993:262; Salleh, 1992:211).

Ecofeminism theorizes patriarchal society in terms of control over women, other peoples who are disadvantaged and nature (Adams, 1993b:1-2; McFague, 1993:85; Plant, 1989:180;

Plant, 1990:157-158; Salleh, 1992:204-206; Salleh, 1993:225-233,240). Alongside this ecofeminism seeks an all embracing philosophy of liberation which does not subordinate human or nonhuman nature (Adams, 1993b:8; King, 1989:27; Warren, 1993b:122-125). Ecofeminism pushes us into the realization that there is little point in liberating women, or any other oppressed peoples, if the planet cannot sustain their liberated lives (King, 1990:121; Riley, 1993:194). At the same time ecofeminists challenge those "Earth First" positionists who work to save the planet by allying themselves with nature and disregard human needs, by for example telling us that the AIDS virus may be Gaia's answer to overpopulation (Dinnerstein, 1989:192-195; King, 1990:121; Merchant, 1992:104-105; Starhawk, 1989:178-179). Ecofeminists reject the either-or approach of working to empower and liberate human beings or working to stop environmental abuse (Adams, 1993b:4). Ecofeminism is a new term for an ancient wisdom which finds hope and power in our bonds with each other and the Earth (Diamond and Orenstein, 1990:xv; Mies and Shiva, 1993:13). Ecofeminists are seeking to place this new/old ethical concept — "the interdependence of all life" into the sacred centre position of new and powerful emerging political theories and activism (Mies, 1993f:321).

Key Ecofeminist Principles

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter identifies seven key ecofeminist principles. It is important to acknowledge, however, that these principles do not stand alone but interrelate with each other and lead to each other which in itself is quite fitting with the ecofeminist approach. The first principle identified is 'a combining of existing feminisms' as ecofeminism draws from many strands of feminism. This is followed by the principles of 'giving recognition to the domination of nature', as nature as well as women is a central category of analysis; 'making indigenous and ancient consciousnesses influential' which explores the ecofeminist emphasis on the relevance of indigenous and ancient teachings; 'attending to the "nonrational"' which discusses the ecofeminist recognition given to the "nonrational" as well as to what is considered rational; and the 'focusing on both inner and outer dimensions' which discusses the ecofeminist approach of combining a structural analysis with understandings of the inner, individual, psychological and cultural aspects of oppression and liberation. The next ecofeminist principle that is discussed is that of 'valuing both diversity and connection'. This is in contrast to dualistic notions which see diversity and connection as in opposition and instead recognizes the interrelatedness of diversity and connection in both the human and nonhuman context. Lastly the principle of 'combining an

historical critique with activism' is outlined. Ecofeminism develops a powerful and critical perspective with which to understand and transform history.

These seven principles are central to my understanding and development of ecofeminist theory. In my discussion of each of these theoretical principles I also indicate how they interrelate with my research.

A Combining of Existing Feminisms

Ecofeminist theory has both incorporated and challenged existing feminisms in search of a genuinely nonhierarchical, anti-dualistic, dialectical feminist theory and practice. Ecofeminism incorporates an ecological awareness with theory and practice from radical, socialist and liberal feminisms. Also evident within ecofeminism are some of the theoretical themes that have been raised within postmodern/poststructural theorizing such as emphasis on overcoming the dualistic splits (false dichotomies) in our thinking and an awareness of the importance of respecting and including issues of diversity, complexity and multiple truths.

The contributions of liberal, radical and socialist strands of feminism to ecofeminism are noted by Merchant (1990:100-105; 1992:184-200). Merchant asserts that radical feminism has explored the woman/nature connection in more depth but that socialist feminism has the greater potential for a thorough critique of the domination issue. She also acknowledges that there is a place for the liberal objectives of reform in ecofeminism. As Merchant reminds us, liberal feminism characterised feminism until the 1960s. It provided the groundwork that has helped women to share in the educational and economic opportunities in all spheres of human life (Merchant, 1990:100). The more recent radical and socialist feminisms grew in part out of liberal feminism. The long and hard struggles of liberal feminists (and many may have been inwardly more radical and socialist than could outwardly be shown) opened the door for other feminisms.

Spretnak (1990:5-6) asserts that Euro-Western ecofeminist theory first grew out of radical or cultural circles of feminism rather than liberal or socialist feminism. She says that these radical feminist circles had not yet "discovered" early environmental leaders such as Rachel Carson (although she and other such environmental leaders are now recognized) but were introduced to ecological perspectives through "our own experiential explorations". Radical

feminists rejected the Marxist assertion that domination is based solely on wealth and class and concentrated on the domination of women. This involved an experiencing and a naming of the inadequacies of classical dominance theories which ignored nature as well as women. The radical (cultural) feminist search for alternative understandings and theory led to theoretical and historical developments from cultural historians who were exploring the roots of patriarchy (Spretnak, 1990:5; Merchant, 1990:101). The mid-1970s onwards saw many radical (cultural) feminists discovering through historic, anthropological and archaeological sources, old religions/cultures that honoured the female and nature. Spretnak (1990:5) says "we were drawn to it like a magnet". This was the beginning of a women's spirituality movement and a growing sense of the sacredness of the earth, of nature, of women and of all peoples. It was a revival of Goddess/Earth spirituality that promoted and celebrated women's biology and nature as sources of female power (Merchant, 1990:101). It was/is a spirituality "infused with ecological wisdom and wholeness" (Spretnak, 1990:6) but one which also fired women into community actions such as Greenham Common (Merchant, 1990:101). The more recent development of ecofeminism has seen connections being made between academic and lay women, radical (cultural) and socialist feminists, women from the women's spirituality movement, women (and some men) from the wider ecology movement and its activists in Green politics (Norwood, 1993:262,269-270; Spretnak, 1990:6).

An important contribution by socialist feminism must also be acknowledged within ecofeminism with a growing number of ecofeminists addressing capitalist patriarchy as an oppressive system of global power relations (Salleh, 1993:225-226). Emerging socialist ecofeminist theoretical contributions from for example the work of Merchant (1980; 1990; 1992) and Mies and Shiva (1993) are prominent in the overall evolution of theory, research and action directions within ecofeminism.

Ecofeminist theoretical developments have been significantly influenced by both radical/cultural feminism and socialist feminism and an awareness of strengths and weaknesses in both these theoretical positions (King, 1990). Although all radical feminists think that patriarchy has preceded and laid the foundation for all other forms of human oppression, radical feminist theory can be divided into radical rationalist feminists and radical cultural feminists who take on very different and in fact at times opposing positions. Radical rationalist feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir have argued that anything that reinforces gender differences or makes any kind of special claim for women is problematic and they oppose the women and nature connection (King, 1990:110). On the other hand radical cultural feminists have celebrated what is distinct about women, they have attempted to

articulate women's culture and have challenged "male culture" rather than strategising to become part of it. They have promoted the women and nature connection (King, 1990:110-111).

Leading radical (cultural) feminist theorists who have influenced ecofeminism, such as Susan Griffin, Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich, have been misrepresented and dismissed by critics in the past as asserting that men and rationality are inherently evil and women, nature and irrationality are good and superior, that is, a feminist form of biological determinism (King, 1990:115). In fact their position has been to assert that this is not inherent, that in general man has *chosen* to position himself as apart from and superior to women and nature, and to challenge this choice (Christ, 1990:60). However as Merchant (1990:102) points out:

...in emphasising the female, body and nature components of the dualities male/female, mind/body and culture/nature, radical ecofeminism runs the risk of perpetuating the very hierarchies it seeks to overthrow.

It is true that radical/cultural feminism as a movement has at times generalized men's culture as bad and has romanticised women and nature as superior (Dann, 1992:351-352; Merchant, 1992:194; Mies and Shiva, 1993:5; Norwood, 1993:265; Warren, 1993:255) as women have worked to feel strong and proud as women – of our bodies and of how we look (our different shapes and sizes, hairy legs and all), of our feelings, our thoughts and of our lives, all of which have been devalued in patriarchal societies. This is a weakness that ecofeminists need to address, as we work to oppose all dualistic world views (Caputi, 1992:434). Attention to "biological destiny" does however also have a place in ecofeminist theorizing. Placing positive valuations on the capacity to give birth, menstruation, menopause, aging and death "is a profoundly revolutionary act in a woman/body/earth hating society, dedicated to denying these bodies/destinies" (Caputi, 1992:434).

Cultural feminists had not addressed the real diversity of women's lives and histories across race, class and culture (King, 1990:111). However from cultural feminism has risen the women's spirituality movement and I tend to agree with King when she asserts that this movement has included a greater racial/cultural diversity than any other form of feminism (King, 1990:112). This movement is a major contributor to ecofeminist theory and practice.

Socialist feminism has sought to join rationalist feminism and the historical materialism of the Marxist tradition. Like liberal feminism, socialist feminism has the analysis that we must show that women are more like men than different and has a bias towards depicting the

world in exchange terms of production or reproduction (King, 1990:114). The driving force underlying socialist feminism is a concern with the material and not the spiritual (Merchant, 1990:103). It has been argued that socialist feminism has failed to address the issue that revolutions in our human history have only succeeded when associated with a strong cultural foundation and utopian vision. This "shortsightedness" is grounded in the Marxist position of primacy given to the base of economics and production, over the superstructure of culture and reproduction (King, 1990:115). Ecofeminists challenge this socialist dualism that gives primacy to the base over the superstructure. This dualism also has to be overcome before we can have a genuinely anti-dualistic dialectical and genuinely ecological feminism. Ecofeminists seek to integrate a material structural analysis with that which is nonstructural or poststructural, such as personal, psychological, spiritual and "nonrational" forms of knowing. Ecofeminists reject the Marxist claim that domination and exploitation is primarily an issue of ownership of the means of production in capitalist societies and are drawing on the analysis of various historical forms of patriarchy which go beyond the development of capitalism. Alongside this, ecofeminists are seeking insights into possible prepatriarchal or nonpatriarchal egalitarian societies/cultures. The popular revival of the teachings of nature-based religions/cultures is part of this process (Spretnak, 1990:5-6).

Ecofeminism calls for a combining of radical cultural feminism with socialist feminism (King, 1990). In opposition they continue the dualism of mind and nature while

...together they make possible a new ecological relationship between nature and culture in which mind and nature, heart and reason join forces to transform the systems of domination, internal and external, that threaten the existence of life on Earth (King, 1990:117-118).

Merchant (1990:103) argues that the potential does exist for a socialist ecofeminism that works for an ecological, economic and social revolution that simultaneously liberates women, working-class people and nature. My ecological feminist position perceives a fully ecological, economic and social liberation as one that theorizes and acts to create and support initiatives that work toward the liberation of all disadvantaged and oppressed groups in society, including indigenous peoples, peoples of colour, people with disabilities, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, children, youth and the elderly as well as women, working-class people and nonhuman nature.

As I set about my doctoral studies I struggled with the knowledge that my feminism did not fit neatly within radical or socialist feminism or poststructural feminist discourse. I also had

no academic feminist body of theory to refer to that addressed my chosen topic of giving attention to after-death practices as women's work and ritual, and the reclaiming of this as an important feminist concern. My valuing and reclaiming of women's culture (along with the related old popular culture) concerning after-death practices and beliefs and the significance of this to women of today is clearly consistent with a radical (cultural) feminist approach. Socialist feminist theory is also evident in my analysis, for example, of the male takeover and professionalization of death with the rise of capitalism, and of the dead human body itself becoming a commodity with the buying and selling of dead corpses and their body parts in the grave-robbing era of early capitalism. Poststructural influences within feminist theory have acted to increase my attention to issues of diversity, complexity and multiple truths. I also recognize the need for reform (a liberal approach) as well as nonviolent revolution (a radical and socialist approach). Ecofeminism has provided a framework which supports the drawing on all these feminisms as well as seeking to challenge weaknesses evident in them.

The women's health movement was one of the earliest examples of combining socialist and cultural feminism, of combining a socialist analysis of health with reverence and learning from nature and the old healing practices of the women lay healers from our past (King, 1990:118-120). My many years of involvement in the women's health movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand means that this feminist approach has had a great influence on my work. Most of the members of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group are either current or past members of the Palmerston North Women's Health Collective. This greatly influenced the philosophy, analysis and action of the group.

In many ways the women's health movement has travelled the path of ecological feminism but it has not as yet however fully developed an ecological perspective because it has not actively challenged the systematic poisoning of our environment (King, 1990:119-120). This is something that needs to be incorporated. From my own experience in the women's health movement of Aotearoa/New Zealand, I feel this is a very important challenge to take on and to which we are only just beginning to respond. What has been lacking is an active challenging of the poisoning of the environment which is crucial to health, and the important related need of networking with environmental groups. This challenge is one that has been recognized, and has begun to be addressed, in the action research process of the homedead group.

King (1989:24) states that ecofeminism draws on feminist theory which proposes that the domination of women was the original domination in human societies and that it is from this original domination that all other hierarchies of oppression flow. I feel, however, that this position is not consistent with anti-dualistic, nonhierarchical ecological perspectives which are influenced by an awareness of the complexity of the interconnections in life systems. I argue that we must therefore vigilantly question both the radical feminist position that the oppression of women was the first oppression as well as the socialist feminist primacy given to class. It is very clear to me that oppression predates capitalism but as to whether the domination of women, people of another colour/culture/way of being or nonhuman nature was the first oppression is not clear. We are now more aware that different regions of the world have experienced and perceive oppression in differing ways. Perhaps then, we should see the origins of power-over/domination in terms of differing as well as interrelated oppressions.

The key task facing ecological feminism (ecofeminism) is that of merging a genuinely antidualistic or dialectical theory and practice, something no previous feminism has addressed adequately (King, 1990:116). A genuinely antidualistic position needs to challenge all the dualistic hierarchies of rational thought including the nature/culture dualism, and so overcome the separations between humanity and nature (Kelly, 1989:x; King, 1989:20,23; King, 1990:116). King proposes that it is dualism that lies at the root of Euro-Western civilisation and its values and concepts (King, 1990:106-107). I tend to go along with this view and would add that if this is the case the shift away from dualistic thought processes/theory is one of the key paradigm shifts currently being experienced in Euro-Western societies.

Giving Recognition to the Domination of Nature

An ecofeminist analysis of domination and oppression includes an understanding of the domination of nature. Nature is a central category of analysis. Close attention is also given to the connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature in Euro-Western culture, and the need to end these twin oppressions (Adams, 1993b:1-2,281; Keller, 1993:41; Mies and Shiva, 1993:3; Norwood, 1993:261,284; Ruether, 1993; Spretnak, 1993:261; Warren, 1993b:130). Ecofeminism has responded to feminist and other challenges to the dualistic notions which have become part of our normal thought processes. These notions have taught us for example that "man" is superior to "nature" but

now instead in growing numbers we are saying "we are nature" (Christ, 1990:60; Griffin, 1978; Sanchez, 1993:211,213; Starhawk, 1989:174). An ecofeminist perspective emphasises that people are part of nature. It rejects the humanocentric Euro-Western belief and commonly held view that humans are superior to nature and that nature is there for our use (Christ, 1990:58,63; King, 1990:107-109; Sanchez, 1993:211; Spretnak, 1993:261). Instead it promotes a relationship between human and nonhuman nature, and among humans, which is based on a responsibility to create communities in which people feel connected to the Earth, and take action to protect, heal and live in harmony with the Earth, including all the animals and plants who are part of this living whole we call Earth (Adams, 1993b:4-8; Kaza, 1993:59-64; King, 1990:120; Merchant, 1992:74-80; Sanchez, 1993:210-211; Starhawk, 1990:74).

Prior to the industrialization and mechanization of our world, the metaphor that explained nature, self, society and the cosmos was the image of the organism and the cycle of life. This organic metaphor evident in the European Renaissance world view of nature was replaced by mechanical images so that by the 17th century these societies had rationalized the separation of human civilization from nature, nature became "dead" and exploitation of nature became merely a mechanical function (McFague, 1993:95; Merchant, 1980; Merchant, 1992:11,41-44; Merchant, 1993; Plant, 1990:157; Ruether, 1993:20; Shiva, 1993:23-25). The desacralizing of nature and the move to a mechanistic view of life came, however, before the scientific revolution. The belief that natural resources were there to be exploited for human needs was part of the utilitarian dualistic and hierarchical Judaeo-Christian traditions which ascended over old earth-based religion/culture with its multiplicity and diversity of Goddesses and Gods and animalistic belief systems, and this attitude continued with the rise of scientific "rational" thought (Jackson, 1993:71; King, 1989:20-21; Merchant, 1992:66; Merchant, 1993; Norwood, 1993:262-263; Primavesi, 1991; Spretnak, 1990:11; Starhawk, 1982:6-7; Walker, 1983:849; Williams, 1993:27-28).

This dualistic theory that proclaims that man is superior to nature and women, has been traced back to the influential Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle (Goodison, 1990:175,183; Merchant, 1993:277; Primavesi, 1991:31,80). The earliest sources of desacralized nature (along with early origins of racist and sexist attitudes), however, can in fact be traced back even further to the Indo-European (Kurgan) invasions of about seven thousand years ago, beginning 4500 B.C., by nomadic tribes from the Eurasian steppes who displaced Goddess inclusive nature-based spirituality/cultures in Europe, the East and India

with their war-like male Sky-God (Spretnak, 1990:11; Eisler, 1990:28-29; Eisler, 1990b:43-58; Stone, 1978:60-125).

We have inherited this dualistic and hierarchical philosophy via Neoplatonism, Christianity and Descartes' rational and mechanistic world view which developed with the rise of science and with, and in support of, early capitalism (Merchant, 1980; Merchant, 1992:11,44-45; Merchant, 1993; Goodison, 1990:231-232,406; Ruether, 1993; Steinem, 1992:349). In fact, all the founding fathers of science and social science, including Galileo, Bacon, Newton, Descartes and Marx shared the same theory of nature which saw no harm in the exploitation of nonhuman nature (D'Souza, 1989:31-32; Kheel, 1989:98-101; King, 1989:31; Merchant, 1992:46-59; Merchant, 1993; Mies and Shiva, 1993:16-18; Primavesi, 1991:78-79). All Euro-Western philosophies of liberation before ecological feminism and deep ecology, with perhaps the exception of some social anarchism, have accepted the notion that humanity should dominate nature (King, 1990:109). Alongside this acceptance and promotion of human superiority to, and dominance over, the rest of nature was/is the acceptance and promotion of men's domination of women and the perception of women as being inferior, closer to (an inferior) nature (Goodison, 1990:231; King, 1989:19-23; Mies, 1986:75; Plant, 1990:156; Primavesi, 1991:23-29). Similarly peoples of colour, indigenous peoples from cultures with earth-based spiritualities and a multiplicity of Gods and Goddesses and/or nature totems were and are still also seen as pagan devil worshippers, inferior beings who are closer to (inferior) nature than intelligent white, Christian and/or rational human beings (Riley, 1993:193-196; Williams, 1993).

Traditional Maori world views do not accept the mechanistic world view of the universe (Henare, 1988:16; Marsden, 1975:160). Maori instead have cultural beliefs and practices that interconnect them with the natural environment and with each other through whanau (extended family), iwi (tribe) and hapu (subtribe) bonds (Henare, 1988; Jackson, 1993:71; Rangihau, 1975). All parts of the environment whether animate or inanimate are believed to possess mauri, a life force that relates to, and interacts with, the earth's forces. The concept of mauri includes a spiritual dimension that engenders respect for all life and for that which is inanimate (Barlow, 1991:83; Henare, 1988:23,29; Pere, 1979:25; Pere, 1987:62; Rangihau, 1975:227-228; Salmond, 1991:41). Traditional Maori beliefs include the understanding that each generation has a stewardship relationship with the land and with nature, and that this has been entrusted to them by their ancestors with the expectation that it will be protected for future generations (Henare, 1988:29; Jackson, 1993:78). Similarly the traditional whanau, hapu and iwi concept can be understood in terms of an organism. When one member of the

whanau, hapu or iwi suffers, then all are seen to suffer (Henare, 1988:13-14,16-17; Kupenga, Rata and Nepe, 1990:191).

Ecofeminism's reflection on patterns of domination and exploitation, and opposition to these, has led to an analysis of nonhuman as well as human oppression. Ecofeminism's developing bodies of knowledge and theory are also fostering an understanding that all these nonhuman and human dominations are interrelated, part of the chain of the "ism brothers", the "isms" of social domination (such as racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ageism, naturism (the oppression of the rest of nature) and speciesism) which undermine a sustainable and healthy future for our planet (Adams, 1993b:1; Salleh, 1993:240; King, 1990:117; Plant, 1990:156-158; Salleh, 1992:204-206; Starhawk, 1990b:318-322; Warren, 1993:326,332; Warren, 1993b:122-123). Ecofeminists are working then to weave another key understanding into our feminist knowing that the personal is political — the understanding that struggles for equality are closely linked to struggles for sustainability (Salleh, 1993:239; Salleh, 1993b:318). Ecofeminism recognizes that social domination enables environmental abuse (Adams, 1993b:4).

In my work on death I have looked to nature and nature's cycles as a teacher. I have come to see cycles of death and life as a whole, one in nature. Death is crucial to the continuance of life. I have learnt then that death is not the enemy, nor the distasteful failure of life that I was socialized to believe. These values and this theory is consistent with the principle of giving recognition to the domination of nature and seeking to redress this. Understandings of the historical implications relating to the domination of nature have helped me in turn to understand some of the origins of Euro-Western notions of death as disgusting, as failure, and as enemy, something to be hidden from our sight and euphemised. This understanding is developed further in the next chapter under the heading 'death as partner to life: bridging the dualistic split'.

The process of encouraging the women research participants (and all those I talked to about after-death experience) to talk about death as honestly and explicitly as they wanted to, is in itself a bridging of the life/death dualism. If you talk honestly about death it becomes seen as a natural part of life and less of a feared or hated failure of life. The homedeath group's aim to "care for our dead at home" and share the knowledge and skills relating to this, challenges the life/death dualism. Death becomes a part of life, of family and community rather than separate and hidden away. This is consistent with ecofeminist theory which rejects dualistic thinking and is particularly important to the ecofeminist assertion that people are part of

nature and that we need to recognize this. Recognizing that we are part of nature and that it is important to live harmoniously within nature's cycles involves feeling at ease with natural death and what this involves.

Making Indigenous and Ancient Consciousnesses Influential

Ecofeminism is very much influenced by indigenous consciousnesses and ancient teachings which have a spirituality/culture/ideology in which the sacred is immanent, is earth-based/nature-based and something we are part of (Eisler, 1990:31; Merchant, 1992:41; Spretnak, 1991:10-12; Starhawk, 1982:10; Starhawk, 1982b:179; Starhawk, 1989:174; Steinem, 1992:347-349; Swimme, 1990:22; Todd, 1982). Starhawk (1982:10), for example, identifies that the cultures/spiritualities of old pagan Europe and the traditional cultures of the tribal peoples of Native America, Africa, Asia and Polynesia are based on this consciousness of immanence. In these teachings nature is thought of in spiritual terms and the underlying spiritual/cultural metaphor is the cycle of life which teaches us that we are one with nature and that every being carries inherent value (Starhawk, 1989:174).

Perhaps the most frequently cited indigenous expression of this concept of immanence and the human and nature connection is Chief Seattle's indigenous American appeal to President Pierce in 1854.

...The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices of the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and the people — all belong to the same family...(T)he white man...treats his mother, the earth, and his brother the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold...His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert (Chief Seattle in Steinem, 1992:348).

Closely connected to this central indigenous concept of connectedness to nature is the connectedness of individual and collective well-being. The good of the individual is dependent on, and cannot be separated from, the good of the whole community/society (Henare, 1988:13-14,16-17; Irwin, 1994:77; Kupenga, Rata and Nepe, 1990:191). The individual cannot be separated from the context, the web of existence (Allen, 1991:xiv; Sanchez, 1993:210-214; Wilshire, 1994:272).

This growing awareness of, and influence by, indigenous consciousnesses is largely an ecofeminist response to the central ecofeminist understanding that the dominant Euro-

Western world view has ordained and encouraged the degradation of nature (Adams, 1993b:2). Alongside this is also the knowledge that there is a definite connection between the oppression and destruction of indigenous cultures and the oppression and destruction of European pre-Christian cultures/spiritualities, including the persecution of women healers as witches that was part of this crusade (Adams, 1993b:3; Starhawk, 1990b:310).

Within ecofeminist literature there is a developing base of practical, theoretical and spiritual understandings about the philosophies, beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples. There is a growing body of research and writing by "ecofeminist" women from and about many different cultures (and we need to remember that there has been the practice of ecofeminism long before this term was coined (Plant, 1989:49-50)). This includes research by white Western feminists aware of the old culture, spirituality and history of their own cultural backgrounds as well as others they have researched and experienced (King, 1990:113). Contributors to ecofeminism include for example native American writer Paula Gunn Allen who shares her experience and expertise in indigenous American teachings (Allen, 1986; Allen, 1990; Allen, 1991; Swimme, 1990:22); African-American Associate Professor of Theology in New York, Delores Williams (Williams, 1993); Indian theoretical physicist, writer and activist of the women's and ecology movements Vandana Shiva (1989; 1990; 1993); Maria Mies (1993), a German feminist and social scientist who is active in the women's and ecology movements; Radha Bhatt (1989) a social and environmental activist from the middle Himalayas; Gwaganad (1989) community health worker of Haada Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands); French feminist Francois D'Eaubonne who first coined the term ecofeminism (ecofeminisme) in the early 1970s to represent women's potential for revolution to ensure the survival of our planet (Marks and de Courtivron, 1986:25; Merchant, 1990:100; Merchant, 1992:184; Mies and Shiva, 1993:13); and Starhawk (1982, 1982b, 1989, 1989b, 1990, 1990b, 1994), a white American, witch, peace activist and leader in the women's spirituality movement who draws from old pagan European traditions and knowledge, her Jewish heritage, her background in psychology and political activism along with her own experience and lessons from a number of cultures including native American and Afro-Cuban.

Ecofeminists point out that learning from these indigenous and first nation cultures, and "old" oriental cultures, must not become a depoliticized or romanticized "borrowing" from, or exploitation of, the cultures and spiritualities of these peoples (Adams, 1993b:3; Mies and Shiva, 1993:19; Orenstein, 1993:184; Sanchez, 1993:214; Smith, 1993). There needs to be a vigilant awareness so as not to overstep the position of learning from, to that of

appropriating from. This is particularly significant to my research which includes a large component of research into Maori after-death practices and Maori women as research participants (refer to the discussion on ethics in Chapter 4).

It is also important for white women to look to their many pre-Christian European cultures for sources of strength and inspiration. These are also earth based and contain many of the symbols and messages that white women find attractive in tribal cultures such as those of the Native-Americans (Smith, 1993:169). This is an important aspect of my approach. As a Pakeha (white) woman of Aotearoa/New Zealand, it is the first peoples of this land, the Maori tribes and their culture, beliefs and practices that have greatly influenced my research on death. It was an awareness of Maori death culture and the affinity I felt to this that initially prompted me to search out personally meaningful death culture from my own European — English, Irish, Welsh, Romany (Gypsy), French and Celtic heritage. I began to consciously search for death culture of my own, old culture that had become lost to me which paralleled the Maori practices and beliefs that felt so right.

Traditional Maori world views interconnect people and nature. This is through a highly complex and interrelated mythology, ideology, spirituality and culture which embraces that which is physical, mental, emotional and spiritual and is in terms of the individual, the whanau (family), the tribe (iwi) and subtribe (hapu) (Henare, 1988; Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991; Marsden, 1975; Pere, 1979; Rangihau, 1975). Maori people are tangata whenua of their particular tribal regions of Aotearoa. Tangata whenua means people of the land. The people are of the land, not over the land (Jackson, 1993:71). This tangata whenua concept involves a covenant between land and people. The people are not only of the land: they belong to the land, they are the land. The land and natural environment is perceived as possessing the people as well as vice versa. Part of this perspective is the deep knowledge that the ancestors have for many generations been guardians of the land and that the land is the link to future generations (Henare, 1988:8,28). The closeness between land and people is also reflected in the word whenua which means both land and placenta (Batten, 1995:188; Edwards, 1990:14; Henare, 1988:8-9; Pere, 1979:25; Jackson, 1993:71).

The interconnection between Maori and the environment is also reflected within tribal myth which personifies nature (Henare, 1988:28; Hiroa [Buck], 1987:435-453; Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991; Pere, 1979:25; Walker, 1987:57-58; Walker, 1990:11-23). One example of this personification of nature is Papatuanuku, Earth mother and Goddess, from whom we all come when we are born and to whom we return when we die (Batten, 1995:188; Ihimaera,

1989:206). Maori identity was and is discussed in terms of a person's place of origin, their marae (their tribal meeting house and its courtyard) and its concepts and stories which are deeply linked to the land and the specific geographic features of this land. A traditional Maori introduction speaks not only of a person's tribal origins and genealogy but also of the sacred landmarks such as their sacred river or lake and their sacred mountain and this illustrates the deep connection between a person and the land they are from (Batten, 1995:15; Henare, 1988:28,31; Pere, 1979:25).

As part of my research I have worked to understand in depth the after-death practices and beliefs of the Maori tribal peoples of Aotearoa and the historical influences relating to death that have influenced both Maori and Tau'iwi in Aotearoa/New Zealand (see Chapters 6 and 7 of the thesis). Including a significant number of Maori women's stories about their after-death experiences was a deliberate decision when developing the methodology involved with the women's stories research. Maori people are indigenous to the Pacific, and have been first nation peoples of Aotearoa for many hundreds of years. The emphasis I have given to Maori after-death beliefs, practices and experience is consistent with the ecofeminist principle of respecting and learning from indigenous and ancient teachings.

A holistic approach to life and death is old as well as new wisdom, central to indigenous and many ancient teachings. The women of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group have been influenced by Maori death beliefs and practices although we are a predominantly Pakeha group. An awareness and respect for Maori death culture has made it easier for us to see the need for this work as well as have the ability to do it. This may not be the case for other feminists in European and Euro-Western dominated countries who do not have indigenous or first nation people's death culture prominent in their midst. The philosophy of the homedead group embraces the concept of reclaiming the knowledge and skills of our foremothers who laid out and cared for the dead at home. This shows an awareness, respect and learning from old death practices. This also links in with the ecofeminist principle of learning from indigenous cultures and ancient teachings. Death experienced as part of life in the community (rather than in an institution) is central to "old" cultures.

The principle of making indigenous and ancient consciousnesses influential has been central to my research process and results. Maori death culture has influenced me personally at a deep level and has consequently influenced the research approaches I have followed. This has also been supported by my growing awareness of the many indigenous and older

cultural perspectives that see and ritualize death as part of life and not separate from or inferior to life (Badone, 1989; De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:43-44; Estes, 1993:135-136, 139; Teish, 1989:87) including those from my own European cultural heritage.

Attending to the "Nonrational"

Ecofeminist theory gives attention to the "nonrational". There is an understanding that Euro-Western thinking has produced an overly rationalized world. Ecofeminism challenges academia to draw on "nonrational" as well as rational forms of knowledge. Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor for example, challenge the undermining of the "nonrational" within the patriarchal and hierarchical dualism of Euro-Western thought when they point to the separation of production from spiritual experience, science from magic, medicine from herbal knowledge, sexuality from the sacred, art from craft, astronomy from astrology and language from poetry (Sjoo and Mor, 1987:16). Similarly King (1990:120) asserts that we need to "fuse a new way of being human on this planet with a sense of the sacred, informed by all ways of knowing – intuitive and scientific, mystical and rational". Even in the scientific world we are beginning to see room for the "nonrational" as we witness the frontiers of science stretching and growing and in a sense coming full circle into the realms of the mystic and metaphysical with, for example, quantum physics, chaos theory, the Gaia hypothesis and deep ecology (Merchant, 1992:93-100; Passmore, 1982; Swimme, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990).

I have always been drawn to the "nonrational" realms of the spiritual, the mystical and the magical — that which cannot be explained by science. I decided to value this within my study even though mainstream research carried out in academic institutions does not. I have integrated the "nonrational" into my work, including feelings, dreams, myth, intuition and spiritual beliefs. Death is a very emotional subject. My choosing to research this topic because of my own experience and my feelings illustrates my own valuing of the "nonrational", of feelings and spirituality. A research topic of death experience is one that cannot easily escape the realms of feeling. I did not seek to avoid this, or minimize this, but instead worked for an interview process that encouraged this sharing of feelings. This was considered important to the research findings. I agree with Kaza (1993:59) that powerful feeling can be a sign of resistance to unsatisfactory social and environmental relationships and a powerful antidote to widespread despair and depression.

Placing importance on what happens to a dead body is itself seen as "nonrational" to a lot of mainstream thinking. A dead body is often considered to no longer be that person, to be a shell, something to be disposed of rather than honoured. I am also aware, however, that a lot of people are afraid of seeing a dead body and that is hardly rational thinking either!

"Nonrational" beliefs are central to Maori beliefs and practices. This is evident for example in the importance of myth and in the Maori belief that supernatural forces influence human interaction. It is also evident within traditional Maori views that link people and the environment (Henare, 1988; Jackson, 1993:71; Marsden, 1975; Rangihau, 1975).

Spirituality is an important realm within "nonrational" understandings. Cameron (1989:58), for example, clearly challenges feminists to include this spiritual dimension in our thought and action. She tells us that the spiritual is interconnected with both the personal and the political and that it "is not something you do for a hour on Sunday...you live your belief or you demonstrate you do not have a belief". Similarly Mies and Shiva (1993:17,20) describe the spirituality within ecofeminism as in every day life, "a rediscovery of the sacredness of life" that "should not be confused with other-world spirituality that wants food without sweat and not caring where it comes from and whose sweat it involves". As Shiva (1993c:100-105; 1993d:169-170) points out, indigenous understandings of the sacredness of the soil, the rivers and the seed becomes an ethic of conservation and subsistence that compels us to protect the inherent value of the diverse yet interconnected life forms of the earth. The earth becomes then a sacralized home rather than private property that can be bought or sold, as "in a sacred space, one can only be a guest", part of a larger whole in nature, "one cannot own it " (Shiva, 1993c:105; Starhawk, 1994:18).

Spiritualities have played a key role in the emergence of ecofeminism as a political and theoretical movement (Warren, 1993b:120). Spiritualities informing ecofeminist writing and activism are diverse yet also connected. They include Buddhism, Christianity, Goddess spirituality/women's spirituality, Hinduism, Judaism, paganism and tribal spiritual traditions (Adams, 1993b:4). The Chipko tree hugging movement for example has grown out of Gandhian spiritual traditions; Women of All Red Nations (WARN) is influenced by the tribal spiritual traditions of these nations (Warren, 1993b:120) and the English Greenham common protesters both drew from and influenced the women's spirituality movement. Ecofeminist spiritualities share a commonality in that they are earth-based or incorporate a connection to nature into existing religion, and all recognize that under patriarchal spiritual/theological approaches the domination of women (and other disadvantaged groups) and the domination

of nature are closely intertwined (Adams, 1993b:1-2; Warren, 1993b:131). Ecofeminism is a movement with an implicit and sometimes explicit earth-centred, nature-based spirituality. Ecofeminists, however are not all followers of earth-based religions nor expected to be (Starhawk, 1989:174).

Spirituality is an integral part of traditional Maori beliefs and practices (Benland, 1988:454; Durie, 1994:69-77; Henare, 1988; Marsden, 1975; Pere, 1979). The physical realm is seen as immersed in and integrated with that which is spiritual (Benland, 1988:454; Henare, 1988:15; Marsden, 1975:160). These beliefs have continued despite much incorporation of Christianity into Maori beliefs (Henare, 1988:33; Jackson, 1993:77).

Spirituality/religion has been a major area of emphasis in my historical and social policy research. I have also identified spirituality as a key site within a theory of patriarchy (and this is discussed in the next chapter). One of the paths to the ecofeminist position (and the one I followed) has been through exposure to nature-based religion/culture (usually that of the Goddess) within the women's spirituality movement (Spretnak, 1990:5). The Gaia hypothesis of the environmentalists is essentially a modern version of the Goddess-honouring societies in which spirituality and nature were one (Eisler, 1990:26,30).

Focusing on Both the Inner and the Outer

Ecofeminism focuses on the inner as well as the outer. It bridges these usually singular theoretical positions. Ecofeminism calls for inward transformation to create outward change (Kheel, 1990:128). Petra Kelly (1989:x) voices this ecofeminist principle as "radical and nonviolent change outside – and inside us". Important to this is the rejecting and abolishing of power over practices of domination and replacing these with power sharing through concepts and practices of power-from-within and power-with, power that comes from living in harmony instead of in hierarchy (Adair and Howell, 1989:220; Kelly, 1989:x; Norwood, 1993:273; Primavesi, 1991:220-221; Riley, 1993:202; Starhawk, 1982; Starhawk, 1990b; Warren, 1993b:122-123).

Recent work by prominent American feminist Gloria Steinem (1992) in her book *Revolution From Within* emphasises the principle of placing importance on recognizing inner barriers as well as outer ones. Steinem (1992:9) states that through her own experience of many years

of active work on the external barriers to women's equality she became aware that there were internal ones too.

Wherever I traveled, I saw women who were smart, courageous, and valuable, who didn't think they were smart, courageous, or valuable — and this was true not only for women who were poor or otherwise doubly discriminated against, but for supposedly privileged and powerful women too. It was as if the female spirit were a garden that had grown beneath the shadows of barriers for so long that it kept growing in the same pattern, even after some of the barriers were gone (Steinem, 1992:9).

This significance of inner as well as outer barriers has also been identified by activists working to oppose racism.

Of all the injuries inflicted by racism on people of color, the most corrosive is the wound within, the internalized racism that leads some victims, at unspeakable cost to their own sense of self to embrace the values of their oppressors (H. Jack Geiger, Civil Rights Worker in Steinem, 1992:138).

There are many parallels that can be made in regard to the deep inner effects of oppression not only in relation to race and sex but also other disadvantaged groups (Steinem, 1992:138-153, 213-216).

The domination of women, other disadvantaged groups of peoples, and nature takes place not only through economic and other structural means but also through psychological, spiritual and cultural forces (King, 1989:22). This has been an important realization and an important part of my theory as I have looked at the forces of colonization/domination and how these have changed our after-death practices and beliefs for women, and for Maori and Pakeha in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This focus on the importance of both inner forces and outer structural forces is developed within my theory chapter on colonization and decolonization (Chapter 3) and in my chapters documenting the historical forces and social policy in relation to our changing death practices and beliefs (Chapters 6 and 7).

Valuing Both Diversity and Connection

Ecofeminism values both the diversity and the connection of human and nature relationships. This means recognizing both our uniqueness and our connection with each other and nonhuman nature.

The women's liberation movement has in the past promoted women's connection and undermined issues of diversity (King, 1990:111). The expression of women's oppression was usually that of heterosexual able-bodied middle class white women's oppression and this alienated and oppressed other groups such as women of colour, lesbians and women with disabilities. Over-emphasis on women's diversity similarly can work to undermine women's connection with each other, with men and with nonhuman nature. It can become yet another source for the promotion of individualism, something that is already so dominant in Euro-Western societies, something that is damaging to both human and nonhuman nature as survival of the fittest mentality translates into power over by those with the most wealth and authority (particularly big business interests).

It can be argued that many postmodernist theorists have emphasised that the "'narrative' of experiencing oneness is politically incorrect because it totalizes or colonizes multiplicity, or 'difference'" (Spretnak, 1993:266). This position risks becoming locked into the very framework of dualism that postmodernists are seeking to break down. I share the ecofeminist position that supports postmodern views that move us toward increased subjectivity and complexity but only alongside an equal emphasis on increased communion as well (Spretnak, 1993:266). A key ecofeminist precept is diversity amidst relationship (Adams, 1993b:4-5,8). Ecofeminists also recognize that relationship needs to be stressed because it is a more viable ethical framework to transform structures that are destructive to the environment (Adams, 1993b:5) and to people.

Like other Euro-Western traditions, Euro-Western feminism has tended to be most concerned about the individual (Irwin, 1994:77). For indigenous and tribal people such as Maori the emphasis is on the group. This difference is even evident in the way language is structured — English language places things in categories, while Maori relates everything to everything else (Lander, 1994:174-175). For Maori the well-being of the individual cannot be separated from the well-being of the wider whanau, hapu and iwi (Irwin, 1994:77; Kupenga, Rata and Nepe, 1990:191). Ecofeminist concepts which recognize the importance of diversity in the midst of relationship move away from an individualistic focus to recognize the importance of this well-being of the whole — for people and nonhuman nature.

Ecofeminist perspectives encompass a belief in valuing, protecting and celebrating diversity in terms of both human and nonhuman nature. Within ecofeminism there is also the awareness that this diversity is being undermined (King, 1989:20; King, 1990:109; Plant, 1989:187). As Shiva (1993d:164) tells us "loss of diversity is the price paid in the

patriarchal model of progress which pushes inexorably toward monocultures, uniformity, homogeneity ". The ethics of immanence and inherent worth within ecofeminism works instead to protect and encourage diversity rather than sameness in both the human context and within the wider biological community (Starhawk, 1982:38). Ecofeminism does not see the human order as the natural order but instead sees a diversity of people as part of an interconnected and complex order in nature with other animal, plant and mineral life forms.

In my own research I was aware that the death experiences of Maori and Pakeha women were likely to differ and this prompted me to conduct my research in a way that worked to allow these different voices and sets of voices to emerge. I structured the interviews with women in a way that allowed women to take the lead in deciding what they wanted to talk about regarding their death experiences (see the research techniques, Chapter 5). In-depth qualitative research methods such as those I have adopted for the women's stories usually involve small numbers of research participants. This may restrict the capacity for diversity. The group of women who participated in the women's stories are in some ways a diverse group and in other ways they are not. There are similarities as well as differences. The women's stories involved a bicultural focus between the Maori and Pakeha women. This begins to address diversity in terms of culture in Aotearoa/New Zealand. All except one woman are mothers yet there was quite a mix of unmarried, married, separated/divorced women and a broad age range. Several of the women are lesbian or bisexual. Some of the women come from middle class backgrounds and others are from the working class. Most of the women had received tertiary education yet a few had not. A lot of the women could be described as attaining higher education as "mature" students and a lot can be described as community workers or active in developments in their communities. Half of the women turned out to have been brought up as Catholics although some had left the church while others remained.

In ecofeminism, part of the ethic of valuing diversity is a perspective of interconnectedness (Forsey, 1989:234; Plant, 1989:187; Plant, 1990:156; Starhawk, 1989:178-179). Ecofeminists perceive human/nature relationships as web-like — part of a symbiotic dance of life which is interdependent and interrelated, not hierarchical (Gray, 1991:21; King, 1989:19; Merchant, 1990:101; Plant, 1989:187; Plant, 1990:155-156; Sanchez, 1993:210-211). The ecological position asserts that ultimately all ecosystems of our planet interconnect in the living whole we know as Earth, and that we must act on and share our awareness of this (Primavesi, 1991:7). As we come to understand that everything is interconnected, bonded, we are also motivated to feel reverence and awe, compassion, empathy and

solidarity with all living beings on the Earth, and even to that which is inanimate such as rocks and stones, rain and wind (Adams, 1993b:8; Allen, 1990:55; Salleh, 1992:206). This compassion/empathy can motivate and assist us to understand issues in their true complexity (Kaza, 1993:57-58; Starhawk, 1989:180; Starhawk, 1990:74) and to seek to live respectfully, responsibly and sensitively within this web of life. This reclaiming of "our natural right to care for each other and the place in which we live is the fundamental building block of ecofeminist community" (Plant, 1989:187). Ecofeminists place a high priority on the work of caring and nurturing life and seek to reclaim and reweave this restricted and repressed nurturing side of ourselves and our cultures (which is usually associated with women), into all of our social institutions and practices (Plant, 1989:255; Salleh, 1992:203).

Combining an Historical Critique with Activism

Ecofeminism uses a powerful and critical perspective with which to understand and transform history. Lerner (1986:229) provides an important insight when she says that women's history is an essential tool in creating a feminist consciousness in women, a way to provide a body of experience against which new theory can be tested, and as the ground on which women of vision can stand. The development of theory from which to understand history is crucial to ecofeminism and this importance of historical understanding is one that goes beyond the industrial and scientific revolutions (Eisler, 1990; Spretnak, 1990:111; King, 1989:20-21; King, 1990:115).

Ecofeminism supports the socialist feminist view that women (and nature) have been historically and socially positioned (King, 1990:116-117; Norwood, 1993:266). Socialist feminists have promoted the importance of an understanding and theory of history in order to influence the future (King, 1990:115) but have usually not gone beyond the industrial revolution and capitalism in this analysis. Ecofeminism brings with it a broader view of history, from differing cultural experiences and with the inclusion of an analysis of the relationship between people and nonhuman nature. This broad base used to chart and analyse history includes archaeological, anthropological, indigenous, sociological, political, philosophical, theological and psychological understandings. This ecofeminist position is evident in my own work. Central to my research approach and findings is an in-depth historical analysis and critique that goes back and beyond the British colonization of Aotearoa and the beginnings of capitalism in Britain, and an analysis of the relevance of this to after-death policy developments in Aotearoa/New Zealand today.

Ecofeminism is not however just an intellectual philosophy. Ecofeminism carries with it a political responsibility — an expectation of taking action, of influencing history (Norwood, 1993:273). It calls for a commitment to the elimination of all practices and analyses that are oppressive to human and nonhuman nature. This ecofeminist commitment to ending all oppressions is realist as well idealist. It carries with it the understanding that it is not possible to fully accomplish an end to all oppressions in the current context of contemporary societies. Instead it calls for commitment and action towards achieving this goal (Warren, 1993b:124). Ecofeminism draws from a politics and spirituality of compassionate solidarity with the oppressed in terms of both human and nonhuman nature. This solidarity is not a rigid expectation of a complete understanding of those who are victimized by social domination but rather a respect and a willingness to "assess one's own role in perpetrating oppression and, upon discovering what that role is, changing it" (Adams, 1993b:8). The combination of theory and practice is crucial. There is an underlying spiritual/political base which embodies concepts of immanence, interconnection and community, feelings of political/spiritual passion and love that calls on us to live with integrity, to act on what we believe (Kelly, 1989:x; King, 1990:117; Starhawk, 1990:73-74; Warren, 1993:330).

The earth-based spiritualities within ecofeminism work to provide an energy and passion which fires and sustains feminist political, social, economic, environmental and spiritual action/activism (Adams, 1993b:1-8; Alice, 1992:150; Spretnak, 1991:16; Starhawk, 1989:177; Warren, 1993b). Within ecofeminism there is an understanding that political issues are not separable and this brings to ecological concerns the awareness of the interconnections with many other movements and issues, the interrelatedness of human systems of oppression and the oppression of the earth (Salleh, 1992:204-206; Salleh, 1993:240; Starhawk, 1989:180). Ecofeminism is about social change — nonviolent ecological and feminist transformations of societal structures, practices and beliefs (Adams, 1993b:8; Kelly, 1989:x). It has very much been inspired by, and grown from, public political protest – antinuclear campaigns such as at Greenham Common in Britain and other environmental protection activism such as the Chipko (tree hugging) Movement of India and the Greenbelt Movement of Kenya (Bhatt, 1989; Dann, 1992:339; Kelly, 1989:ix; King, 1990:112,118; Macy, 1989:201; Mies and Shiva, 1993:3,12; Philipose, 1989; Salleh, 1993b:311; Shiva, 1993f:246-250).

The women's stories are structured in a way that encouraged the participants to describe and reflect on their after-death experience critically, and to some extent historically, as women often overviewed their life experience of after-death practices and on occasion family stories

from before they were born. In their stories the women considered what they thought and felt was helpful and beneficial in after-death experience and what they did not. Through this process they frequently reflected on the experiences of others as well as their own. Action for change that the women had taken, or planned to take in the future, became part of their stories. The women participants have also all received the self-help booklet published by the homedeath group which provides information concerning after-death choices. The information included in this booklet can work to facilitate change through raising awareness about after-death options.

Action research which seeks changes which are beneficial to human and nonhuman nature is a very fitting ecofeminist methodology. The action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Group does exactly this. Although the focus is on human nature and the need to change societal attitudes which socialize us into fearing death and handing it over to the male dominated professions of doctors, funeral directors and the clergy, homedeath also means moving away from the "high tech" death of chemical embalming and the paraphernalia of the death industry to simple yet caring self-help methods for caring for our dead before burial/cremation. Theory and action that recognizes death as part of the cycle of life, and also provides information about alternatives to the use of chemicals to delay the decomposition of a dead body, must also benefit nonhuman nature.

CHAPTER 2

AN ECOFEMINIST CHALLENGE TO PATRIARCHAL DUALISM

Ecofeminist Theory and Patriarchy

Patriarchy literally means "rule of the fathers". Feminist concepts of patriarchy extend this meaning to include an understanding of a "male rule" which affects all aspects of women's lives. Patriarchy has meant a male dominance over women and children in the family and in society in general. Patriarchy is "a system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women" (Walby, 1986:51).

Adrienne Rich's (1977) definition of patriarchy begins to illustrate how all encompassing the effects of this can be when she says:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men — by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male...The power of the fathers has been difficult to grasp because it permeates everything, even the language in which we try to describe it (Rich, 1977:57-58).

Hartmann (1981) emphasises the material basis of this when she defines patriarchy as:

...a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women. The material base is men's control over women's labor power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do housework or rear children, in having access to women's bodies for sex, and in feeling powerful and being powerful. The crucial elements of patriarchy as we currently experience them are: heterosexual marriage (and consequently homophobia), female child rearing and housework, women's economic dependence on men (enforced by arrangements in the labor market), the state, and the numerous institutions based on social relations among men - clubs, sports, unions, professions, universities, churches, corporations, and armies (Hartmann, 1981:19).

Under Euro-Western patriarchy men who have "power over" have not only worked to determine what part women shall or shall not play however, they have also sought to determine what part children, the elderly, indigenous people, people of colour, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, people with disabilities, people with different religions/spiritualities...and nature shall or shall not play. Under patriarchy, as women, we are faced with male structures, beliefs, symbols, norms and patterns of language and behaviour that undermine our ability to hear and formulate our own questions to meet our own experiences (Daly, 1973:12-14). The stories celebrated in patriarchal culture have been shaped by men (particularly those in elitist positions). These men have thus actively shaped their experiences of self and the world — and ours too. Women have not usually told their own stories, have not actively shaped their experiences of self and the world and have subsequently not been able to name what Christ (1986:4) terms the "great powers" from their own perspective. Daly points out that the male God has been used to legitimate the existing patriarchal social, economic and political patterns and that God's plans have been used as a front for men's plans (Daly, 1973:19,30).

Patriarchal relations existed long before capitalism (Eisenstein,1979:5; Lerner, 1986:6; Walby, 1990:182-183). Walby asserts that the rise of capitalism led to a new form of patriarchy but not to an alteration in its basic structures (Walby, 1990:182-183). Lerner tells us that patriarchy as a system is historical not natural — it has a beginning in history and since it has a beginning in history it can also be ended by historical process (Lerner, 1986:6). Other feminists such as Eisenstein have emphasised that it is the present relationship between patriarchy and capitalism that needs to be understood in order to change oppressive patriarchal structures (Eisenstein, 1979:50). I argue that it is crucial to delve into the capitalist, postcapitalist and precapitalist past in connection with the present to understand and challenge the effects, developments, myths, structures and processes of patriarchy. In my research into death and what I term in brief as "the male takeover of death" along with the associated professionalization of death, I have concentrated on the historical forces of precapitalism and capitalism that have worked to influence our past, present and future in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

I have found Walby's (1990) analysis of patriarchy a useful starting point. She states that a concept and theory of patriarchy is essential to capturing the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of women's subordination. This she says can (and should) be developed to take account of the different forms of gender inequality over time, class and ethnic group (Walby, 1990:1). Different individual women, different groups of women and different

communities and societies both past and present have differing experiences and understandings of patriarchy. There are however also connections between these differing experiences. Being aware of these differences and connections is an important part of an ecofeminist analysis of patriarchy. An ecofeminist theory of patriarchy also seeks to make the links between the oppression of women and the oppression of other disadvantaged groups in society due for example to their class status, their colour, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability or religious/spiritual beliefs. It also involves making the links between the patriarchal domination of nonhuman as well as human nature.

Walby theorizes that there are six main structures which make up a system of patriarchy: paid work; housework; sexuality; culture; violence; and the state. The interrelationships between these she argues, create different forms of patriarchy (Walby, 1990:16). In my research I see an extra dimension to work not included in Walby's work structures. Women's healing and caring work, which has included laying-out the dead, was (and still is) often unpaid work yet not housework either. It may be work within the family or alternatively may be work within the wider community. I have required then, a broadened analysis of women's paid and unpaid work under systems of patriarchy from that included by Walby, one which includes women's unpaid and paid healing and caring work in the home and community.

I have also identified spirituality/religion as another key structure that should also be included in an analysis of patriarchy. Religion/spirituality could perhaps be seen as a key part within an analysis of culture, however as this has not been addressed within Walby's analysis of culture as a patriarchal structure, I have decided to identify it as a site in its own right. Spirituality/religion as a key structure of patriarchy has been ignored and/or undermined by many feminists. As Benland (1990:239) argues in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context of the 1970s and 1980s, the emergence of feminist spiritualities and the importance of spirituality/religion to feminist studies was ignored, trivialized and/or met with hostile reaction from women's studies courses and feminist literature including the most prominent feminist magazine *Broadsheet*. This however was beginning to change by the late 1980s through into the 1990s with a sparse yet increasing emphasis on the area of feminist spiritualities and critique of patriarchal religion (Alice, 1992:144-150). The importance of spirituality/religion to the oppression and liberation of women, other oppressed peoples and nature is very clear to me. Evidence of this can be seen for example in the creation myths of many religions; the male Christian persecution and colonization of the wisewomen/witches/women elders and the appropriation of their roles as spiritual leaders,

healers and teachers in rural European communities; and in the religious writings and practices that proclaim women as unclean/evil/inferior to men and tell us that man has dominion over inferior nature. The patriarchal structuring of spirituality is a key theme throughout my research. Evidence of this has been included in the previous chapter and is extended further in Chapters 6 and 7 on the historical and social policy developments that have influenced our death practices and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Patriarchal relations of production in the household pre-date capitalism (Walby, 1990:179). Walby (1990:179) argues that there has been a move from a private to a public patriarchy in more recent history. I differ from Walby however on this point as my research makes me very aware of a very public form of patriarchy at work in the era of European witch persecution (precapitalism and early capitalism) as well as throughout the period which saw a colonization of women's healing work led by church leaders, physicians, legislators and the other male professional elite.

An ecofeminist analysis of patriarchy must also explore the desacralizing, exploitation and destruction of nonhuman as well as human nature and recognize the links between all human and nonhuman dominations as well as the differences. This extends the analysis of patriarchy which is developed in Walby's (1990) work. For ecofeminists nonhuman nature is another key structure (or structures) within an analysis of patriarchy. My research, theory and action which reframes death as part of life and nature, is a conscious ecofeminist challenge to existing patriarchal (and dualistic Euro-Western) thinking and practice which has seen death become the enemy, medicalized, mystified, removed from the home and community and dislocated from our experience and understanding of what is natural and nature.

Challenging Patriarchal Dualism

Many feminist theorists have contributed to a developing critique of, and challenge to, patriarchal dualistic thought and symbolism. I will draw from a few that I have found particularly significant. Christ (1986) articulates well this challenge to patriarchal dualistic thought when she states:

Men have organized dualisms hierarchically and have associated themselves with the positive sides of the dualisms — spirit, freedom, reason and soul — while relegating women to the negative sides of the dualisms — nature, emotion,

irrationality, and the body. Moreover, philosophers have traditionally perceived these dualisms as oppositions in which the inferior continually threatens to overwhelm the superior. Hence the name war is given to the relations between the spirit and the flesh, freedom and nature, man and woman, reason and emotion, and "man" is warned to remain perpetually ready to do "battle" with flesh, nature, woman, and the emotional realm. As women begin to question their historic subordination, they also challenge the adequacy of the dualistic, hierarchical, and oppositional ways of viewing the world. If women are different from but not inferior to men, then perhaps nature is different from but not inferior to spirit. Indeed, what has been called irrational — emotion, intuition and sometimes even poetry — may not be inferior to the modes of thinking that have been called rational. And the so-called wars between the opposing sides of the dualisms may be a result of an attempt to subordinate some aspects of reality to others that is not inherent in the structure of reality itself (Christ, 1986:25-26).

A revaluing of the so-called negative sides of the classic dualisms and a transformation of the hierarchical mentality of patriarchal dualistic thought is essential in overcoming the oppositions between body and soul, nature and spirit, rationality and emotion. This is also crucial to women's social and spiritual quest for wholeness (Christ, 1986:26). Ecofeminists are seeking transformed consciousnesses that eliminate Euro-Western patriarchal (and other) false dualisms of dominance and subordination (Adams, 1993b:2).

The image of woman herself has also been split into dualistic good/bad stereotypes which have been built into Euro-Western and other cultures. The image of "woman" is dualized into righteous women (god's police)/damned whores; Virgin Mary/Eve; nurturing mother/destroying deadly mother or witch; good little woman, family woman/scarlet woman or sex fiend; gentle companion/intolerable feminist; and as pure/polluted (Daly, 1973:60-65; Daly, 1984:81; Gupta, 1993:106-107; Sjo and Mor, 1987:192; Summers, 1975:21,150-156). The dynamics of this good/bad split is also evident in the image and reality of the crone as the destroyer aspect of the Goddess, and as the wise elder woman/witch, which has not only been denigrated in Euro-Western society but also hidden and eradicated (Caputi, 1993:246; Walker, 1985). Although the law does not persecute witches any more, society eliminates elder women by making them invisible in the media and movie screens and through a youth culture which promotes the attainment of an illusion of youth (particularly for women) out of bottles and via surgery (Macdonald and Rich, 1984:90-100; Walker, 1985:31,33). Euro-Western death denial and its "youth culture" could not have been established without the denial of the crone's/Goddess's death dealing aspect (Caputi, 1993:246; Walker, 1985:33-34).

All communication relies on the use of symbols. Symbolism underlies all human activities, expression and culture (Goodison, 1990:14) and it is the dominant group(s) in society that tend to control the means of communication and symbol systems (Goodison, 1990:49). The dualisms such as male/female, good/bad, white/black, superior/inferior, mind/body, spirit/matter are a symbol system in society which shapes the way we think and imagine. One side of the equation is intelligent, light, high, pure and white while the other is dark, low and dirty (Goodison, 1990:1-2). Goodison challenges the ideas of Freud, Jung and Lacan who trace symbolic dream language to a primordial instinctual and universal base (Goodison, 1990:3,20-21). Instead she presents research to support her knowing that symbols are not universal or inevitable but are a product of society in a specific time and place. Goodison uses research into the symbolism of ancient Crete and how this changed, to illustrate this. For example the symbol of the snake of the earth-centred Goddess religions was thoroughly discredited in later Crete (Goodison, 1990:158-160). Similarly the snake was also denigrated as a symbol of evil along with Eve in the Christian creation myths.

Symbols if not consciously questioned blinker our vision. Patriarchal symbols are being challenged by feminism. Feminist writers such as Dale Spender and Mary Daly have questioned, deconstructed and recreated the symbol systems of language, women artists such as Monica Sjoo and Robyn Kahukiwa are challenging male stereotypes and fantasies in their work and feminists in the women's spirituality movement are using ritual (such as celebration of menstruation) to confront male taboos (Goodison, 1990:54-56). Patriarchal symbolism is also being challenged by the feminist claiming and reclaiming of women's symbols such as the venus symbol, the yoni symbol, the web, the moon, the egg, the witch, the Goddess (Goodison, 1990:60) and the snake.

Although traditional religion has been eroded by science the underlying symbolic splits have not changed substantially as pure white rationalism continues to battle the forces of the "irrational" or the "animal" in human nature. Theory on duality is a useful tool then to analyse the dynamics and development of our divided society and divided selves (Goodison, 1990:233). These symbolic splits in the Euro-Western world help to sustain a series of splits in our society such as those between rich and poor, people of colour and white people, the differing social roles of men and women and so on. Movements for social change suffer the same divisions. There is a dominant mindset that divides spirituality and politics which needs to be redressed (Adams, 1993b:2; Plaskow, 1993:71; Shields, 1991:xvi; Warren, 1993b:132). For example socialism and Marxist materialism suffers from a lack of, and opposition to, spirituality (Mies and Shiva, 1993:16; Goodison, 1990:413). As Goodison

(1990:434) points out, socialists know the importance of connection as the success of socialist initiatives depends on the coming together of large groups of people; labour history is full of examples of this solidarity and collective action. However, as Goodison states in her challenge to socialists and to all political activists on the "left" of the continuum (I could not think of another term - please excuse the dualism), political and community activists often shun spirituality altogether and neglect those energies which can so powerfully link person to person in an alienated and divided left. Also this connection missing on the left is not only missing between person and person but also between people and the environment (Goodison, 1990:434-435). Connections linking person to person and person to nature however are beginning to be made (Shields, 1991:xiii-xvi). Evidence of this can be seen not only within ecological feminism but also in Red/Green environmental/socialist/first nation alliances such as those included within the political coalition in Aotearoa/New Zealand of Mana Motuhake, the NewLabour Party, the Greens, the Democrats and the Liberals to form the Alliance.

If the divine is not above but in everything then spirituality cannot be hierarchical and it cannot elevate one sex, race or class. Such values can inform our daily life, our politics and whatever activity we are involved in. One of the most persistent ideas of the Christian religion which has survived into the "New Age" is that there is something "up there" which is more important than what is "down here" (Goodison, 1990:420-421). By reclaiming the notion of an immanent spirituality we can relocate authority at the grass roots (and flax roots) and highlight our connection with each other while at the same time reconnecting with the natural world (Goodison, 1990:461).

One night near the beginning of my first year of doctoral studies I dreamt I had the realization that I was a bridge between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Over the months that followed this dream stayed with me and I discovered that the bridge is a significant Aquarian symbol (and I am an Aquarian). The water poured by the water carrier flows from the water jar to create a bridge between the cosmos and the earth. I also discovered Goodison's use of the bridge symbol in her theory on dualism (Goodison, 1990:4). As Goodison pointed out to me, we need bridges to heal the splits constructed through dualistic thinking. And yes I have realized I am a bridge as I work to reconnect the split separating death from life. This is now one of my conscious symbols and part of the theory which guides my work.

Death as the Partner of Life: Bridging the Dualistic Split

The dualistic split between life and death in Euro-Western thought teaches us that life is good and that death is bad (except perhaps if death is about the glory of winning wars (Macdonald and Rich, 1984:110)). Death has become the enemy, something scary and/or disgusting, something to be hidden, out of sight and from our minds unless it is in the riveting tales of someone else's violent death in films, television, books and news items (De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:24-25). Death is no longer accepted as a natural part of life. Our language of death when we do allow ourselves to talk about it is often a language of euphemism to mask the feared realities (De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:17-18; Mitford, 1980:77-78). Clinical detachment keeps death at a sanitized distance. Doctors (with their medical weaponry) battle death on our behalf, they extend life and also prolong death which is now so often their technological event/failure rather than our own experience (Howell, Allen and Doress, 1987:398; Illich, 1976:176, 200, 206-208). The scientific "advances" of transplants and cryonics hint at a promise of immortality for the future while ironically at the same time nuclear weapons have now made possible the global destruction of all peoples and other life forms on earth. Illich (1976:202) goes as far as to assert that "death became the enemy to be defeated precisely the moment at which megadeath came upon the scene". Caputi (1993) also provides evidence of this connection between Euro-Western death denial and nuclear megadeath. She analyses patriarchal images and actions to attain mastery over women and death which include nuclear pornography and the invention of the machinery for the nuclear destruction of the planet. This position held by Illich and Caputi also brings to mind some lines written and sung by well known performers of Aotearoa/New Zealand, 'the Topp Twins':

To stop this war of nuclear arms we are prepared to die. But from old age and natural death not from fire from the sky (from 'The Weather' by the Topp Twins).

My position is that we need to undo this construct of "death the enemy" and embrace the enemy within (see Starhawk, 1990b:317-318 on "undoing the construct of enemy"). This involves going deep within ourselves and making peace with death, accepting death as an ally, and so unravelling and reweaving that which has been portrayed to us and internalized by us as enemy, as bad, as monster. I argue that our fear and hatred of death, our view of death as inferior to life is an ideological construct just as the ideologies that lead to sexism, racism and homophobia have been constructed in our heads and in our hearts. Oppression, colonization, war, prejudice, hatred and alienation are all products of this "enemy" mentality.

Crucial to my work on death has been the understanding that life is part of death and death part of life. I have come to see life and death not as opposites but rather as part of a cycle, a whole.

Each principle contains the other: Life breeds death, feeds on death; death sustains life, makes possible evolution and new creation. They are part of a cycle dependent on the other.

Existence is sustained by the on-off pulse, the alternating current of the two forces in perfect balance. Unchecked, the life force is cancer; unbridled, the death force is war and genocide. Together they hold each other in the harmony that sustains life, in the perfect orbit that can be seen in the changing cycle of the seasons, in the ecological balance of the natural world, in the progression of human life from birth through fulfilment to decline and death — and then to rebirth (Starhawk, 1989b:41).

This concept of the symbiotic dance of life and death can be expressed even more simply as: "Now I eat you. Now you eat me" (Weed, 1989:23). Humans are part of nature's cycles. As we feed on nature to survive and grow we also excrete and we die and this feeds nature in turn. We are part of the compost heap of life whereby life is renewed through death (Estes, 1993:135).

The Maori view of death also sees life and death not as opposites but as both a part of life and living, "two sides of the same coin" (Dansey, 1975:129-130; Hoskings, 1985:39; Metge, 1976:56; Ngata, 1989:6; Voykovic, 1981:9,21,24-25,116). For Maori their dead are very close to them, they are remembered at all hui in the karanga, speeches and waiata. When someone dies the traditional Maori way is to want to see the death and be with their dying and their dead. The tupapaku (dead body) is in the home and on the marae where he or she is constantly kept company until burial — slept with, talked to and sung to (Karetu, 1975:38; Ngata, 1989:5; Salmond, 1975:137,140,182-185). My growing awareness of death across different cultures has also led me to understand that a great many cultures, past and present, also similarly share this nondualistic view of life and death (Badone, 1989; De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:43-44,48-49; Estes, 1993:135-136,139; Howell, Allen and Doress, 1987:398; Teish, 1989:87).

CHAPTER 3

COLONIZATION THEORY AS A CENTRAL THEORETICAL THEME

(W)hat was done to the Witches was done to the earth peoples of Africa, the Americas, Asia, Polynesia, Australia. Their old ways were called evil, their peoples enslaved, their lands stolen, their sacred spaces defiled (Starhawk, 1990b:310).

I have found colonization theory to be a very useful body of theory through which to examine and explain the changes and developments in our after-death beliefs and practices in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is not only the case for Maori, who have experienced colonization at the hands of the British colonizers, but also for Pakeha (European) people of Aotearoa/New Zealand who have their own heritage of forced disruption to old beliefs and practices, including those concerning communally worked and "owned" land (the commons). The medicalization of death and the removal of death from the home and community setting to that of an institution is linked to European colonization processes that include the industrialism and capitalism which has seen women's healing work colonized by male professions for power and profit. Alongside the male takeover and professionalization of death was a much wider undermining and destruction of popular beliefs, knowledge and practices. Evidence of this (in relation to death) is documented in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis.

It has been necessary to achieve an in-depth understanding of existing colonization theory to develop my own theory of colonization and its application to my after-death research findings. Parallel to this has been my development of a theory of decolonization and my use of this to inform both the theory and action components of my work. The following sections articulate this work on colonization and decolonization theory.

Existing Bodies of Colonization Theory

Colonization involves a meeting between two social formations, the indigenous group(s) or class(es) within a society, and the colonial power or elitist power group within a society. The colonized group is not a passive object of imposition (Etienne and Leacock, 1980:17;

Haggis,1990:72). The colonized society actively participates in the colonizing process both in terms of resisting and assisting the shape and aims of the colonizing group.

Colonization as Liberating

In the past colonization has been justified in terms of progress and the grand and "noble" notion that we must lead the "natives" on to Christianity and/or civilisation (and this is still the dominant notion for many today). The Euro-Western "civilised" way of being was deemed superior and better for all and even champions of personal liberty such as John Stuart Mill promoted this (Mulgan, 1989:37-39). Neutral terms such as "culture change" within academic and other writing acted as a mask, concealing the oppressive political realities of colonization (Etienne and Leacock, 1980:50).

Colonization as Oppressive

The dominant theoretical position of colonization as liberating remained secure (despite resistance from indigenous peoples to colonization processes) until a challenge appeared in academic circles from Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire and others in the 1960s. They brought academic attention to the injustices and the oppression experienced by peoples who had been colonized by Western Christian nations. They developed theories to explain the effects of colonization, for achieving a decolonization process through personal as well as wider political revolution, and for working with oppressed/colonized peoples.

Fanon's theory examines the colonization sites of custom, tradition, myth and history, with history being not the history of the country or of the colonized peoples, but one the colonizer wanted to record (Fanon, 1963:41). He described how resisters of colonization have been tortured and held prisoner and how the displaced anger of the colonized manifests as aggression against their own peoples (Fanon, 1963:52,206-211,228). Fanon asserts that colonized people have an inferiority complex created in their soul by the destruction of their cultural beliefs which are displaced by the colonizer's presumed superior ways. He states that this has led to self hate and hate for other people of colour and that this destruction of the culture is consolidated as the colonized become elevated when they adapt to the standards of the colonizer. The colonized aspire then to be admitted into the white world, to be of the white world and Fanon emphasises this symbolically in the title of his book *Black Skin White Masks* (Fanon, 1968:18,53,63,93).

Freire further develops colonization theory including an action reflection model for working with the oppressed (Freire, 1968:33-34,52). He tends to use the terms oppressed and

oppressor or perhaps the invader and invaded rather than those of colonizer and colonized. His focus is on education as an oppressive or liberating agent but as something that is never neutral (Freire, 1968:15,61). He outlines the tactics used by the oppressor in the domination (colonization) process and recognizes the colonization process as one that has occurred within societies (which he describes as one class over another) as well as outside, when one society invades another (Freire, 1968:150).

Freire outlines four broad tactics involved in the colonization/domination process. Firstly the desire for conquest by the oppressor/colonizer. The way to conquest takes many forms including military conquest, myths, progress, equality, heroism and charity. The conquerors impose their values and objectives onto the oppressed who internalize these and become beings of another, alienated and divided selves (Freire, 1968:133-137). Divide and rule is another major tactic of an oppressor minority who subordinate and dominate the majority and who must divide the larger subordinated group and keep it divided in order to retain power (Freire, 1968:137-143). The oppressed majority also face the tactic of manipulation whereby a series of myths are presented to them as the possibility for their own ascent (Freire, 1968:144-149). Cultural invasion is another tactical theme. The invaders impose their view of the world upon those they invade. This invasion may be overt by force or covert by assuming the role of helping friend. Invasion is a form of economic and cultural domination. Those invaded must consider themselves inferior and recognize the superiority of the invaders. Cultural conquest sees those invaded responding to the goals and values of the invaders. The values of the colonizers become those of the colonized. The colonized then become alienated, from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves. They want to be like the dominant group, look like them and act like them. Freire sees cultural invasion as on the one hand an instrument of domination and on the other, the result of domination. Economic and political invasion is part of this cultural invasion whereas invasion by military or other physical force may or may not be used (Freire, 1968:150-161).

Freire states that just as the oppressor (colonizer) in order to oppress needs a theory of oppression so too the oppressed in order to become free need a theory of action (Freire, 1968:185). His theory for action is one in which those opposing oppression use education as a consciousness raising process whereby the oppressed co-operate with each other to focus on their reality, name this and transform it. He sees the role of those opposing oppression as being one of solidarity with the oppressed, working and fighting alongside them to transform the objective reality which has made these people "beings of another" (Freire, 1968:31-34,169).

Colonization theory has been developed by some feminist theorists to explain women's experience as a group (or groups) within a society. Feminist colonization theorists have also made links between the colonization of women — their work, their roles, their perceptions of self and their world and the colonization of indigenous peoples and nature.

A colonization theory of women is developed by Daly (1973) in *Beyond God the Father*. She draws on the colonization theory of Freire and Fanon while at the same time pointing out the sexist contradictions in their work. Daly contrasts Fanon's righteous opposition to the dehumanizing colonization of Algeria by the French with his simultaneous continuation of the dehumanizing condition imposed on Algerian women by Algerian men, something Daly equates as colonialism by men toward women (Daly, 1973:54). Daly also challenges Freire's failure to acknowledge women as an oppressed group who also carry with them the internalized oppressor consciousness (Daly, 1973:48).

Daly (1973) develops this colonization of women theme further. She states that both women and men identify with the goals of the superordinate group and therefore see the rebellious female as "the enemy". She develops a critique of patriarchal religion and Christianity in particular to explain the fashioning of the "divided self" in women as well as the history of destruction and mutilation of women from the killing of the witches and destruction of their religion to the more recent lobotomy (psychosurgery) to control women, and mutilation and destruction of women is a theme Daly develops more in *Gyn/Ecology* (Daly, 1979).

Daly describes five patriarchal divide and rule, divide and conquer tactics used on women. She identifies a patriarchal planetary caste system which has been made invisible to women and where women have been divided from each other by pseudo-identification with male dominated groupings such as religions which degrade and mystify women so that degradation is not perceived by its victims (Daly, 1973:132-133). She identifies the tactic of wiping out or nonrecording of women's history and other related blotting-out phenomenon (Daly, 1973:134-135). Also described is the experience of men as "externalizers", that is, as active in the ongoing outpouring of human-being into the world — where men are the objectifiers and overseers of the internalization process, and women are internalizers of male produced realities (Daly, 1973:135-136). Paternalism is another tactic according to Daly. Paternalism legitimates men as experts, male knowledge as superior and women as dependent on men (Daly, 1973:136). Lastly Daly describes the tactic of factionalization. This she says produces an illusory identification with male defined

categories and ideologies that prevent female bonding from being effective such as in the dividing of Protestants from Catholics (Daly, 1973:137).

Daly (1973) theorizes women's revolution as decolonization. She describes this in terms of both an inner healing process, involving personal realization of the oppression, consciousness raising, affirming of self and self expression as well as an outer shared consciousness for a sisterhood of revolutionary change.

Summers (1975) develops colonization theory to explain white women's experiences of oppression in early colonial Australia as well as the colonization of the continent now known as Australia and the indigenous peoples of this land. Summers (1975:198) develops an outline of the colonization process consisting of four components. Firstly she identifies the invasion and conquering of a territory. She follows this with the component of cultural domination which sees the inhabitants of this territory persuaded or forced to concede their culture is inferior. Summers next identifies the political tactic of divide and rule, the component which involves the securing of effective control of the inhabitants by creating divisions amongst them. The last component in Summer's theoretical representation of the colonization process is the extraction of profits from the colonized territory.

Summers goes on to compare the colonization experience of women with that of indigenous people and also develops women and colonization theory with examples of women's experience not only in Australia but also in other Euro-Western countries. Summers (1975:244-245), for example, identifies and illustrates how the beginning of medicine as a male profession was a colonization of women's healing work.

Similarly in the 1970s Illich (1976, 1977) also developed theory about the rise of the Western professions as an oppressive and disabling power elite in society. He describes for example how the professional monopoly of doctors has led to a colonization process — the medicalization of life, and death, a social control of the population by the medical system through this medicalization of culture and undermining of cultural heritage (Illich, 1976:5-8,41,100-103,127-132).

Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor (1987) have developed feminist colonization theory. They state that colonialism breaks the ancient maternal kinship groupings and sacred life-patterns of indigenous peoples along with the stealing of their lands, the earth's resources and human labour. They assert that imperialist colonialism always perceives itself as "an instrument of

spiritual enlightenment" — that Christian and Moslem missionaries alike have been sent in to introduce the father God and father-right (Sjoo and Mor, 1987:25). Sjoo and Mor argue that colonialism is a "form of vampirism" that "bloats" the self-image of the colonizers by draining the "life energies" of the colonized people, leaving just enough sustenance to enable the colonized to work for the colonial empire (Sjoo and Mor, 1987:26). They point out that this sapping of the energy from those colonized, is not only present and future but also relates to the past — of memory itself, and the continuity of individual and group identity and culture (Sjoo and Mor, 1987:26-27). This, they argue, applies to women also who have been emptied of the memory of our own cultural histories by colonizing powers that have denied that it ever existed. They believe that women seeking the energy of this buried memory have a decolonizing and revolutionary potential equal to any other current political movement (Sjoo and Mor, 1987:27).

Starhawk is an ecofeminist theorist who has inspired my awareness of and interest in women and colonization. She makes the links between the colonization experience of indigenous peoples with the persecution of the witches in the European middle ages and the enclosure movement which forced the peasant classes off the land in Britain and other parts of Europe (Starhawk, 1982:183-219; Starhawk, 1990b:310-311). Starhawk (1990b) recognizes domination/oppression/colonization as having both structural outer effects and inner psychological and spiritual effects. She theorizes and illustrates the psychology of oppression and develops a psychology of liberation (decolonization). Starhawk (1990b:66) identifies five faces of "the self-hater" underlying societies of domination. These are "the internalized Conqueror" who treats the self and those around us as enemies to be feared and destroyed; "the Orderer" who imposes a rigid control on the self and the environment; "the Master of Servants" who demands that we deny our own needs and desires to serve the needs of others; "the Censor" who keeps us silent and isolated; and "the Judge" who offers to restore value to us in return for obedience and threatens us with further loss if we resist.

Starhawk (1990b:312) identifies that "we need more than psychology, more than spirituality and community: we need an economics, an agriculture, a politics of liberation, capable of healing the dismembered world and restoring the earth to life." Starhawk teaches us a psychology, spirituality and politics of resistance and develops her own framework for building a movement for change. This plan for liberation involves developing a clear vision of what we want, withdrawing consent and support from systems of oppression and control, creating communities of support, mounting ongoing campaigns of resistance, creating alternatives based on our visions, building networks of common interest and

alliances with others with similar aspirations, building pressure for positive change and "taking the next step", continuing the work towards our long-term vision (Starhawk, 1990b:336-338).

Colonization and decolonization theory is a prominent theme in the more recent work of ecofeminists Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993). They develop an analysis which includes the global interconnections of colonization in our history. Mies and Shiva (1993:283-284) discuss the history of the enclosures of the commons in Britain and wider Europe that forced peasants off communal land. They point out that not all these people of the land were absorbed as the wage labourers of the developing capitalist industries. Many were forced through poverty or deportation to migrate to the colonies of the South where the enclosure of the lands of other peoples soon followed. Mies and Shiva (1993:284) assert that this colonialism imported Northern-imposed models of "maldevelopment"; and Mies (1993e:251) tells us that the living standards of the rich North could not be maintained without the past and present exploitation of the South. They illustrate their theory that the capitalist patriarchal world system was established and is maintained through the colonization of women, the colonization of "foreign" peoples and their lands, and the colonization of nature (Mies and Shiva, 1993:2-3; Mies, 1993:43-44; Mies, 1993b:56-59; Shiva, 1993e:244). The individualism and liberalism of Euro-Western societies are rooted in colonialism and its destruction of systems of common land, its wholesale privatization and its commodity production for profit (Mies and Shiva, 1993:12).

Mies and Shiva promote subsistence models of sustainable social, environmental and economic development (something which activists of the third world are leaders in) as a vision and activism for decolonization, and as an alternative to the growth-oriented industrialism and consumerism of capitalism (Mies, 1993b:55-69; Mies, 1993d:151; Mies, 1993e:253,261; Mies, 1993f:297-322; Mies and Shiva, 1993:4,8; Shiva, 1993b:74-75; Shiva, 1993e:232,242-244; Shiva, 1993f 246-250; Shiva, 1993g:268-269). Shiva and Mies illustrate how the Euro-Western colonizers of the North continue to assume a position of superiority and responsibility for the future of all earth's people (Shiva, 1993g:264). As Mies (1993e:253) points out:

we cannot demand that Brazilians do not continue to destroy their rain forests while we in the industrial North continue to destroy the world's climate with an ever-growing car industry.

Work for decolonization is an interconnected process — even to global dimensions as "decolonizing the South is intimately linked to decolonizing the North" (Shiva, 1993g:264).

It needs to be remembered that in Euro-Western society "the application of science to technological control over nature marched side by side with colonialism" (Ruether, 1993:20). During the 16th to the 20th centuries Western Europeans appropriated the lands of the Americas, Asia, Africa, Australia and Polynesia and accrued wealth by this vast expropriation of land and labour which in turn fueled new levels of technological revolution (Ruether, 1993:20; Starhawk, 1990b:310). This was what happened in Aotearoa.

Once aware of colonization/decolonization theory, I have begun to notice that a lot of feminist writing has threads of theory and women's experience that can be woven into the pattern of women and colonization/decolonization theory. Lerner (1986) for example states that women have collaborated in their own subordination, internalized the values that subordinate them and passed these values on to their children. She also says that although women have been oppressed by their fathers, husbands and sons, they themselves have held power over other women and men, and therefore we cannot simply state that women have been oppressed by men (Lerner, 1986:234). Similarly Mies (1993c:129-130) discusses how (colonized) women act as perpetrators as well as victims of colonization and patriarchy.

Maori researchers/theorists/writers have drawn on colonization theory, particularly that of Paulo Freire, to assist their documentation of the British colonization of Aotearoa/New Zealand and its effects on Maori (Ruwhiu, 1994; Walker, 1990:151,180,193,209,227,235). Research into Maori colonization experiences illustrates how the use of religion; cultural imposition; legislation; force, including war; land confiscation; the destruction of the Maori tribal economic bases and communities; the destruction of traditional law and healing practices; the use of a biased recordance of history and an education of assimilation were all used in the British colonization of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Some of this material also illustrates the internal psychological results of colonization as well as the outer structural results. This Maori colonization experience is discussed more fully in Chapter 6, 'Maori After-death Policy, Practice, Legends and Beliefs Before and During British Colonization'. One new theoretical point has been raised by Maori writers. This is the tactic of "bring them together and rule" as well as the divide and rule tactic. For a tribal people such as Maori, the tactic of bring them together and rule is divisive because tribal people lose everything in losing their own tribal identity (Pere, 1987:57-58; Pere, 1988:10; Rangihau, 1975:233). I have realized that similarly the bring them together and rule tactic was also the experience of

the people of the land, the peasants of Europe when their lands (the commons) were enclosed and they were forced to move to industrial cities or emigrate. This forcing of the people off their land, away from their villages, their family and extended family and into industrial cities destroyed their kinship and community social and support systems which also contributed to the breakdown of their old cultural beliefs and practices. This British European colonization experience is discussed further in Chapter 7.

An Ecofeminist Colonization/Decolonization Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Influences — A Summary

In developing my own ecofeminist theory of colonization in relation to changing death practices and beliefs I have learnt from all the theorists/researchers discussed above. Fanon provides early insights into the depth of the inner, psychological and cultural impact of colonization as well as the outer structural tactics, including the biased recording of history to the advantage of the colonizer. Freire substantiates my belief that colonization/oppression can and has occurred within an existing society/country as well as through the peoples of one country colonizing another. He also makes the important point that the oppressed need a consciousness and theory of their oppression in order to effectively take action against it. Freire has provided a pioneering framework which is still used by community workers and other activists who work alongside the oppressed. Fanon and Freire also provide insights and action plans for decolonization.

Feminist colonization theorists have pointed out the sexist inadequacies in existing bodies of colonization theory. They have illustrated how women have been colonized and made links between the colonization/oppression of women and that of indigenous peoples. Existing ecofeminist colonization theory has furthered broadened my understanding of colonization in terms of the inner as well as the outer structural affects of oppression. It also identifies the exploitation of the earth and all plant, animal and inanimate inhabitants. Colonization of a land is not only about taking land from another people and extracting resources and profits, it is also about the rape of the living earth with no thought to the sustainable future of local ecosystems or future human generations. Ecofeminist colonization theorists have also increased my awareness of the web of global interconnections in our history of colonization. Feminist/ecofeminist colonization theory also provides theoretical frameworks for decolonization. Alongside the theory and action for liberation within these frameworks,

feminist/ecofeminist theorists have brought to me the language and imagery of healing — for both people and nature.

Theory and research into the Maori experience of colonization has provided me with additional insights of what colonization can mean for a tribal people. It has provided me with a broad and deep historical picture of what happened in Aotearoa/New Zealand, my own country, as well as specific knowledge about why and how Maori death practices and beliefs both changed and continued. It has acted as a base to contrast and compare the forces at work within Britain and wider Europe that led to the colonization of women's healing work, work which included laying-out the dead. It was the "product" of these forces that was brought to Aotearoa/New Zealand through colonization.

As a Pakeha (white) woman researching the colonization experience of Maori, and making links between this and colonization experiences in Britain, I need to acknowledge that I risk appropriating (or being seen as appropriating) Maori realities and theories (particularly those of Maori women) to enhance my own. It is my heart felt hope that my research (which has included researching and making links between colonization processes experienced in Britain and in Aotearoa/New Zealand) neither appropriates Maori realities and theories nor diminishes the responsibility that Pakeha have to right the wrongs that have been done, and continue to be done, to Maori by Pakeha colonization processes. I want my research to support decolonization processes for (and as defined by) Maori but at the same time I think this will be better achieved by parallel Pakeha processes of decolonization and healing (rather than through approaches that emphasize or encourage Pakeha guilt instead of Pakeha responsibility and understanding).

Understanding Colonization

Colonization is an attack over many realms and at many levels. It needs to be seen in terms of both its structural outer effects and its inner spiritual/emotional/psychological effects. Colonization involves a destruction, undermining and eroding of the spiritual, cultural, social, economic, health, educational, political and legal knowledge and practice dimensions of the indigenous, first nation or existing peoples affected. It hits deeply and divisively undermining personal, family and community integrity, self-esteem and cohesion. It destroys the social fabric and power bases of families, tribes and communities.

Colonization involves the invasion and conquering of a territory for the extraction of resources, wealth and status. This may involve a foreign people coming to another land and

taking by force or manipulation land, resources, legal authority to rule and control of the power bases of the territory, or this may involve a group or groups of people using law, violence, discrediting campaigns, religion and/or other ideology to take over the land, resources, work, roles and status of another group of people within a country/society. Colonization has left a global historical trail of enclosure and privatization of land which has interconnected with, and led to, industrialism, capitalism and the destruction of subsistence community living. The commodity production, growth, consumerism and territorial expansion of "rich" colonizing nations has created poverty in the exploited "third world" as well as huge gaps between rich and poor within many of these so called wealthy nations. In many instances colonization involves a previously displaced and colonized people displacing and colonizing another people. It is important to be aware of the long history of colonization and the global interconnections of this in both past and present terms.

Colonization sees the imposition of the invader/conqueror's belief systems, symbols and practices on to the colonized. This is a cultural, spiritual, physical and psychological as well as ideological domination of the colonized. Those in the colonizing group(s) believe they and their ways of being and ways of life are superior to the colonized group(s) and the colonized group(s) come to internalize this inferior status. Colonization involves the colonizing group obtaining an effective control over the colonized inhabitants by undermining existing divisions such as not recognizing tribal or community groupings (that is the bring them together and rule) and/or by creating new divisions between them (through tactics of divide and rule). Colonization goes hand in hand with processes of mystification, manipulation and cover up through a nonrecordance or biased recordance of history, through developing myths and ideologies to create "truths" that are advantageous to the colonizer and disadvantageous to the integrity/status of the colonized group.

Colonization leads to the degradation of the natural world as the colonizing group acts to exploit both human and nonhuman nature for wealth and power and often also seeks to impose an environment for profit and/or to which it is accustomed, by for example introducing new species of plants and animals from the homeland which involves clearing and/or destruction of native flora and fauna.

Feminism as Decolonization

Feminism is a cultural and spiritual movement as well as a social and political one. It challenges the foundations of our symbols, language and thought, producing new theory

and new practice that examines, challenges and changes cultural activity. I suggest that this can be identified as a decolonization process.

Feminism as decolonization involves addressing the colonization sites of healing, tradition, myth, religion, history, education, law, art, music and so on. It involves naming what we see as oppressive to women (from within our variety of different and similar experiences as women living in sexist societies) and working to remove this from our societies. In relation to this, the feminist position I have adopted also means actively supporting others who are working to name and banish their oppression (and I see all oppression as interrelated), such as that of people of colour, people with disabilities and low income people. The ecofeminist approach integrates an awareness of, and opposition to, the oppression of people, with an awareness of, and opposition to, what is destructive to the natural environment. Decolonization processes therefore encompass understanding and action for both human and nonhuman nature.

Decolonization is a personal as well as wider revolution (with also, I believe, a place for reform). It is a self-healing and group-healing process which addresses the inferiority complex constructed in our "souls", and banishes the self-hater, the censor and the orderer (Starhawk, 1990b) internalized in our divided selves. It is about learning to affirm and love ourselves, and others, as well as honestly challenging self and each other. It is about writing in what has been blotted out of history, by uncovering and rewriting the stories of history through feminist research and with the help of our imagination. It is about allowing ourselves to grieve and rage about the wrongs as we try to right (and write) them. It is about actively producing our own realities through new/old processes and structures. It is about a continual process of consciousness raising and a host of diverse and wonderful strong role models (including Goddess/God and other sacred images) that we can all relate to.

Feminism as decolonization is also about reclaiming old culture and knowledge and adapting this to today's environment. For example Mies and Shiva (1993) discuss subsistence living practices of peoples of the land, past as well as present. Similarly I am reclaiming and revaluing the culture and knowledge of the midwives/handywomen/old wives from my own cultural background. These women had/have roots going back into ancient European folk traditions and these links are clearly evident in the philosophy which informed the practice of these women. The wise women/witches of old were healers, teachers and spiritual leaders in their communities. So too were their descendants, the old wives/handy women, those who survived the onslaught against the witches and carried on much of their healing work and

ritual. The role of the old wife/handywoman continued on into the 20th century in their working class communities (Chamberlain, 1981).

These women (who included those who laid out the dead in their communities), saw their work as part of being neighbourly. Some who laid out the dead were paid, some accepted presents and others refused all recompense as they believed that laying-out was simply a neighbourhood and community duty (Adams, 1993:149-151,157; Chamberlain, 1981:50-51; Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:40-41; Roberts, 1989:194). They took care of their local community for little or no payment (Chamberlain, 1981:1). This was/is a subsistence practice as well as a community model for caring for our living and our dead which contrasts with the capitalist system, including state owned enterprises as well as private enterprises, which are concerned only with their own efficiency and profits, and where measures of efficiency are based on maximising profits "regardless of social and ecological costs" (Shiva, 1993:24).

The healing traditions and practices of the witches/wise women/old wives/handy women are being reborn within feminist movements, for example women's health and women's spirituality movements (Chamberlain, 1981:153-156), and within ecofeminisms. A growing number of women are consciously remembering our dismembered traditions, and many of us are at the same time proudly declaring ourselves witches. In my experience of women's groups, I again see a weaving of community networks and mutual support, a rallying round when someone is in need. This is part of our European heritage which never really disappeared, and an ethic central to Maori tradition and Maori practices of today (and many other cultures). Developing this sense of community is part of what I envision as I work to reclaim death as women's work and women's ritual. This is part of feminism as decolonization.

A Framework for Decolonization

I have adapted Starhawk's (1990b:336-338) framework for building a movement for change into a framework for decolonization. I do not see this framework as a linear process but one that weaves back and forth and cycles and recycles in differing patterns for differing places, peoples and processes.

Decolonization involves working to understand oppression and colonization (and ourselves as colonizer and colonized) through consciousness raising, the sharing of knowledge and experience, and the development of research, theory, action, and methods of evaluation. A

decolonization approach requires that we resist and refuse to support systems of oppression and colonization. As part of this work there is a need to build communities of support and develop campaigns of resistance. This requires developing and clarifying personal visions for liberation/decolonization and working to create shared visions. It involves developing alternative information, choices, beliefs, practices and systems based on these visions and working to promote and integrate these into the popular culture of our communities and wider society.

This decolonization work can be strengthened by a successful weaving of networks and alliances with others who have common ground with us and wish to support us (and we them)—locally, nationally and globally. Important also to strengthening and continuing the pressure for decolonization and positive change is a long term commitment — people prepared to be involved for the long haul. It is important to keep going despite feelings of disillusionment or if it seems that things are getting worse and that we are not achieving the changes that we want. Part of a framework for decolonization is a requirement for strong-willed and committed people who are going to stay on and keep alive movements for change that work to undo the damage of colonization and oppression — past, present and future.

PART TWO:
The Research

This part of the thesis maps out my research paths. I have chosen to use a format which incorporates discussion of my research process with discussion about the specific bodies of methodology and the specific research methods, that I have drawn from and developed within my research process.

The first chapter in this section concerns the research process and the methodological developments that have influenced my approach to research. Central to this, is the contribution and influence of feminist research perspectives. The greater part of this chapter then focuses on the development of my own ecofeminist methodological approach and how this relates to the specific research methods I adopted.

The second chapter moves on to discuss the specific research methods that I have used. Background is provided on the methodological influences that have contributed to the development of these methods, along with the specific innovations involved in my use of them. The chapter then concludes with a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of these specific research techniques and the ways in which they have been applied.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The chapter begins with a discussion about what contributed to the choosing of the research topic — a process as well as a decision, in which personal experience and academic interest were both equally significant and very much interconnected. This is followed by an overview of academic critiques of the positivist mindset, the move to postpositivist research methods and feminist contributions to this. I go on to discuss feminist research, in general, in relation to my own ecofeminist approach and in regard to specific issues such as personalizing the research process, validity and ethics. The next section of this chapter discusses the importance I place on an integrated as well as ecological approach to research, theory and action and includes a diagram I have developed to represent this (Figure 1). The chapter then moves into a discussion of triangulation in regard to research methods and the triangulation involved in my own research. A diagram (Figure 2) provides a summary of this.

Choosing the Research Topic

My interest and motivation to research after-death policy, practices, choices and beliefs was a combination of life experience (my father's death — which was my first close family experience with death) and the very strong feelings that grew within me in relation to this. The intensity of my experience of my father's death was heightened when within a matter of months a friend's young son died also. These death experiences provoked strong feelings, not only of grief, but also of what felt "right" in relation to death, and what did not. In time this prompted me to think more deeply about what I could and would do when again faced with the death of someone close to me, as well as in regard to my own death. This led to a lot of practical information gathering relating to death, and a growing realization that death is a male controlled realm (particularly for Pakeha), and also one in which women had previously been prominent. As well as becoming aware of our legal rights and restrictions surrounding death, I also became fascinated by death as historically an area of women's work and women's ritual, for Pakeha and Maori, as well as for a great many other cultures. I increasingly discovered a sense of my own death culture as a Pakeha woman — a woman of

European descent, the connections as well as differences this had with Maori death traditions, and the stories of how social policy relating to death had undermined and forcibly changed death culture for both Maori and Tauwi in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

As I surveyed the past I also gained a sense of how I could work to influence the future of death social policy and death culture, in my family, in my community and through networks further afield. Choosing my research topic related closely to personal experience which led to a strong desire to create/reclaim new/old choices and work for change for myself and others in relation to that experience. My experience of death was something that stayed with me and demanded attention. I feel then, in terms of a research topic, that in many ways death chose me as much as I chose death.

As Reinharz (1992:260) points out, feminist researchers have often chosen to work on an issue that they find personally troubling or puzzling, it becomes a "need to know". In pursuing the need to understand their issue, feminist researchers often use "everything they can get hold of to study it". In this situation the "problem" or research topic is a blending of a "personal trouble" and an "intellectual question" (Reinharz, 1992:259). This discussion by Reinharz speaks exactly my experience as a feminist researcher. Just as Suzanne Arms in her book about childbirth, *Immaculate Deception: A New Look at Women and Childbirth*, explains that it grew out of her need to understand and explain her own birth experience (Reinharz, 1992:260), so too my research, writing and community work seeks to make sense of my own experience of death as a Pakeha woman living in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Interconnected and inseparable from this is my commitment to action. This makes me seek and work for increased and accessible after-death choices not only for myself but also for (and with) other women, and for all people. I believe that this feminist work on self-help after-death information and choices, and demystification of death, also brings benefits to men and children; this is something I also want to achieve. Alongside this is the reclaiming and promotion of "natural" as opposed to the more usual modern experience of institutionalized and "high tech" methods of after-death practice. For example, the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group's self-help booklet provides information on simple alternatives to chemical embalming that can be used to delay the decomposition of the body in the few days before burial/cremation. Self-help approaches, such as daily washing of the body and the use of ice packs, are usually simpler and more natural and therefore better for the environment. Hence benefits for nature as well as for

people in regard to after-death practices, have also become an important consideration within this research topic.

The Critique of the Positivist Mindset: Shaping a New Paradigm for Social Science Research

Research methods have grown out of a dualistic and hierarchical "positivist" consciousness. This system of thought only recognizes as rational, quantifiable "objective facts" and "observable phenomena". The researcher is expected to be objective, neutral and detached, strictly separate from the researched who are called "subjects". These subjects are expected to be in a controlled environment which adheres to a strictly scientific research design with a minimally interactive researcher who purposely takes on a formal and superior position. This hierarchical relationship between the researched and the researcher closely resembles that of oppressor/colonizer and oppressed/colonized as the researcher (oppressor) defines the problem, the questions, the nature of the research and the style of interaction between him(her)self and his (her) subjects. Positivist thought claims to be value-free and politically neutral. It is a proponent of the "one truth" theory. "Good" results are seen as those that are repeatable and also open to further application in the form of wider generalizations which contribute further to scientific knowledge. Positivist social science research promotes itself as the only valid form of knowledge.

Research paradigms (mindsets) reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in (Lather, 1987:439). Ways of knowing are inherently culture-bound and theory bound, influenced by our perspectives (Lather, 1988:570; Nielsen, 1990:3). Recent times, particularly the last two decades, has seen a growing challenge to the whole mindset of what research and social scientific enquiry was and is seen to be about. This critique of positivism is gathering momentum and derives from many schools of thought, for example critical theory, radical theory, black sociology, phenomenology, grounded theory, existentialism, symbolic interactionism, participatory action research, feminism, postmodernism and poststructuralism (Lather, 1991:1-7; Maguire, 1987:9-10,13,78; Sutherland, 1986:147). I will only briefly summarize the critique of positivism which is covered now by a large body of writing. The feminist sources of this critique that I have drawn from include Bowles and Klein (1983), Cook and Fonow (1990), Du Bois (1983), Harding (1986, 1987), Ladner (1987), Lather (1986,1987, 1988, 1991), Maguire (1987), Mies (1983, 1984, 1993:36-54),

Nielsen (1990), Oakley (1981), Smith and Noble-Spruell (1986), Stanley and Wise (1983, 1983b), Sutherland (1986), Westkott (1990).

The critique of positivism advocates that interest-free knowledge is logically impossible. Instead it recognizes that knowledge is socially constructed, embedded in history and influenced by the values and beliefs of the researcher(s). Many who are challenging positivism argue that since everything is biased we should at least state these biases and be explicit regarding our interests. Postpositivist research approaches seek methods which are value and purpose explicit (with open acknowledgement of funding and other sources of influence to the research) and do justice to the complexity and diversity of human experience. The dichotomous hierarchical ways of thinking inherent in positivism are now breaking down. Objectivity is being challenged by theories and approaches of subjectivity. Generalizations, universalities and grand theories are giving way to concepts of differing truths, realities and perspectives. Qualitative in-depth research methods are being valued as well as, or over, that which is quantitative, and the biases, weaknesses and distortions of quantitative methodology are being recognized and discussed. The new postpositivist paradigm raises research issues of accountability and "giving back" to the research participants who are seen as also owning the research. Researcher detachment, neutrality and impartiality is being exchanged for researcher rapport, reciprocity and partiality (including collaboration, solidarity and co-action) with research participants. The notion of social control of research participants is being rejected for a research process which enhances local self-determination, is empowering to and shares power with the researched. Participants are encouraged to have more control over the research process and content. There is a recognition that the positivist emphasis on "objective facts" and "observable phenomena" has neglected areas of life which cannot easily be measured. Many new topics of research as well as methods are now being pioneered.

The critique of positivism is however taking a long time to be reflected in mainstream social science research methodology. Most researchers tend to study what those powerful in the "system" (whether business, government institutions and/or academia) direct them to study. They are also influenced by self-interest concerns such as the advancement of their own career prospects (Bryson, 1979:90). Bryson (1979:95) points out that the so called "objective scientific methods" are still the major methods used despite the extent of criticism of this approach. This statement still applies today. Studies which deliver "reliable" and objective "facts" and figures are still perceived by most as "real" research and this is also the

position of the great majority of people who hold positions of power in the system (the gatekeepers).

I need to be very careful, however, that I do not fall into the usual Euro-western thought patterns of making dualistic hierarchical oppositions, in this instance between positivism and postpositivism. I am not suggesting that positivism is inherently bad and postpositivism is inherently good. Positivist quantitative research provides, for example, important official research statistics. Similarly I need to acknowledge that postpositivist research is not immune from being oppressive. Postpositivist research has the potential to be oppressive and one example of this is the ignoring of certain groups in society. Maguire (1987:4-5,51-76) examines this in depth in terms of the unacknowledged male-centred bias of the postpositivist "school" of participatory action research. Another example is the white middle-class bias of feminist qualitative research which has frequently excluded women of colour and working-class women (Cannon, Higginbotham and Leung, 1991). At issue then is the ways in which research methods are being used as well as the design and implementation of the methodology itself.

Feminist Research

Feminist research is contributing to the new (postpositivist) paradigm whether the feminist researcher is conscious of this paradigm or not (and we need to be aware that the paradigm concept is but a theory, a tool designed to help us make sense of our world rather than a fact or an absolute). Feminists have challenged the distortion, misinterpretation, invisibility and ignoring of women's experience in the male positivist research tradition where research on human behaviour has often been knowledge about male behaviour, where women's experience has been measured in masculine "objective" terms and where women have only been defined in terms of their relationship to men (Cook and Fonow, 1990:73; Bowles and Klein, 1983:15; Gilligan, 1987:59; Harding, 1986:85-90; Harding, 1987:3; Klein, 1983:89; Lather, 1986:68; Lather, 1988:571; Mies, 1983:118-121; Mies, 1993:37; Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986:136-137; Sutherland, 1986:148-150; Westkott, 1990:59-60).

We need, however, to remember that feminism is a perspective and not a research method (Reinharz, 1992:240). There is no one "correct" methodological framework for feminist research (Harding, 1987:2; Klein, 1983:89; Reinhartz, 1992:7,243). Feminist researchers use all of the methods available to researchers. The ways we carry out these methods of

evidence gathering is however often what is strikingly different to dominant research traditions (Harding, 1987:2). Key differences seen within feminist research are approaches which seek to listen carefully to how women participants think and feel about their lives and their experiences, to look critically at how traditional research has conceptualized men and women's lives, to choose topics which traditional research has not thought significant, and to discover new patterns in, and new theories to explain, existing as well as new historical data (Harding, 1987:2). Feminist research has gone far beyond just "adding women" in to existing social science analyses (Harding, 1987:3-5; Stanley and Wise, 1983b:29; Sutherland, 1986:153).

Feminist research not only "stretches methodological norms" it also "reaches across academic disciplinary boundaries" with its only "true home" being "the inter or transdisciplinary field of women's studies" (Reinharz, 1992:159,250). There is much diversity in feminist approaches to research. Some feminist researchers take the position that "the feminist spirit" is one of breaking free, which includes breaking free of methodological traditions. Other feminist researchers regard methodological innovation as counterproductive because they believe that only studies conducted according to "rigorous" scientific procedures will convince the skeptics (Reinharz, 1992:239). Feminist approaches may opt for one or a combination of "use what works", "use what you know" or "use what will convince" (Reinharz, 1992:14).

...(F)eminist research will use any method available and any cluster of methods needed to answer the questions it sets for itself (Reinharz, 1992:213).

A methodology which promotes consciousness-raising (the opportunity for women to share and compare their experiences with other women and create understandings of women's collective and individual experiences) is becoming a key focus of feminist research processes and their findings (Cook and Fonow, 1990:74-75; Lather, 1986:67,70; Lather, 1987:452; Lather, 1991:68; Mies, 1983:126-127,135-136; Mies, 1984:361; Mies, 1993:41-42). This approach is one that I have incorporated into my work through both the action research and the research into women's stories of their death experiences. I have adopted the position that feminist research is about working towards research for and with women rather than "on" them (Cook and Fonow, 1990:72-73; Kirby and McKenna, 1989:28; Nielsen, 1990:30; Sutherland, 1986:147; Westcott, 1990:63-65). This involves close links to grass (flax) roots struggles and actions and a shared ownership of the research process and findings between the researcher and the research participants (Mies, 1993:39; Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986:145).

Perhaps the most significant difference between feminist research (women's studies) and other research traditions is that feminist studies has emerged from a political and social movement outside the walls of the university (Mies, 1993:36-37). Its concerns are not only academic. Women's studies is dependent on acceptance by the feminist community as well as by the standards of the university (Rutenberg, 1983:75). There is the concern that if women's studies separates politics and science, knowledge and life as it develops within the university setting, it runs the risk of becoming merely an academic discourse, something which can alienate feminists and undermine the women's movement as a whole (Mies, 1993:43). I have been aware of this feminist issue throughout my after-death research. I have consciously worked at being just as appropriate and relevant to the feminist community as I have to academic requirements.

Developing an Ecofeminist Research Framework

Feminism is a political movement for social change (Harding, 1986:24) and correspondingly, in my view (and that of many other feminists), feminist research seeks to create knowledge, action and social change which enhances women's lives and works to end all forms of oppression (Maguire, 1987:79; Mies, 1983:124-136; Mies, 1984:360-364; Mies, 1993:38-39; Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986:138). For ecofeminists, action to end all forms of oppression has broadened to include the arena of nonhuman as well as human nature. Ecofeminist research not only involves woman-centred theory and practice which takes the experience of women's lives, including our own, as central (Stanley and Wise, 1983:195,205; Sutherland, 1986:148), it also involves nature-centred theory and practice which places an awareness of the oppression of nature and the need for humans to learn to live (and research) respectfully, sensitively and responsibly within the diversity of both human and nonhuman nature (Christ, 1990:58,63; King, 1990:107-109,120; Merchant, 1980; Merchant, 1993; Plant, 1990:157; Shiva, 1993:23-25; Starhawk, 1990:74; Warren, 1991). The methodology ecofeminists draw from and the way in which research findings are used therefore needs to reflect this egalitarian perspective for human and nonhuman nature alike.

Ecofeminist theory includes emphasis on political responsibility — an expectation of developing a critical perspective not only with which to understand history but also to influence history. In-depth historical research from a critical perspective and action-oriented

forms of research are therefore particularly significant to an ecofeminist approach. These have been central to my research.

An ecofeminist theoretical and methodological approach was one that developed during my fieldwork and public records research rather than prior to starting it. This is evident, for example, in the development of the homedeath group. This group has worked to share the self-help after-death information we have gathered. We have sought benefits to men and children as well as women, and have strived to be appropriate to differing sectors in society including Maori and Pakeha; gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual; and people with secular, Christian, pagan or any other spiritualities. Information arising from the women's stories research has broadened the knowledge of the homedeath group and has the potential to be incorporated into future after-death education material aimed at women, men and/or children. Environmental concerns in relation to after-death practices and action in relation to this, is an issue that became more significant in the later stages of the action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group and this becomes apparent in the description and analysis of the action research process contained in Chapter 7.

A Statement of Goals for Ecofeminist Research

I felt it important to identify and record an underlying ecofeminist philosophy with specific goals to inspire and guide my research. This was prompted by and adapted from the work of Smith and Noble-Spruell (1986:139) and Maguire (1987:4) and draws from the ecofeminist theory developed in Chapter 1 so as to integrate an ecofeminist approach.

I would argue that ecofeminist research is based on the feminist premises that: women have been oppressed (and that women all over the world face some form of oppression or exploitation); feminist researchers must work to uncover and understand what causes and sustains this oppression and actively show their commitment, individually and collectively as change agents to oppose the oppression of women, extend women's choices and explore women's achievements; similarly feminist researchers should work towards ending all forms of human oppression whether based on gender, class, race, culture, age, sexual orientation, disability or religion; feminist researchers should also incorporate, an awareness of, and an active commitment to, the need to end the domination, destruction and oppression of the natural environment. This commitment to opposing the oppression of women (and all other oppressions) needs to be evident in the topic, theory, methodology, purpose and outcome of the research project.

I established a set of ecofeminist principles to provide guidelines to my research. Firstly I have placed importance on the principle that research methodology is to be based on feminist theory and values which are clearly (avoiding unnecessarily complex language), and openly expressed. For an ecofeminist this involves both a woman-centred and nature-centred approach whereby the experiences and realities of women and nature are given a central position of importance. Another central principle places importance on working to extend women's (and people's) choices in helpful ways which have the potential to improve women's (and people's) lives, while at the same time working for positive outcomes for the natural environment. I decided that the fieldwork involved in this particular research project required my open presence as a researcher, that is, overt rather than covert research activities with the research participants. Another principle that I considered important concerns giving an open and full explanation of the purpose of the research and any funding involved. Similarly an awareness of, and acknowledgement about, who the research is aimed at, and significant to, is another principle which I have given attention to (refer to the introduction). A further principle which underlies my research process is that of working to achieve a non-exploitative power sharing partnership with the research participants based on co-operation, collaboration, mutual respect and joint ownership of the research (between myself and the research participants). Importance has also been placed on being accountable to the needs of the research participants and working to empower the research participants to actively control the limits and possibilities of the research (refer to the next chapter).

Personalizing the Research Process

My particular approach to feminist research has been influenced as much (if not more) by my community work background in women's health as it has by my academic background. My past involvement in the homebirth movement and my long term continuing work in the Palmerston North Women's Health Collective Inc. has involved community work activity that has evolved from the principles of learning from women's experience, and collecting and sharing this experience for and with other women (and families also in the case of homebirth). It is based on the concepts of women as experts on their own experience; women having the ability to make sound health decisions for themselves when they have access to easy to understand health information and choices; and women working collectively for change which seeks to improve women's health experiences and outcomes. This in part means working to demystify medical terminology and processes while at the same time looking to self-help health remedies and alternatives to mainstream medicine. This

approach is again clearly evident in the formation of, and developments in, the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group. It also lies behind my research interest in collecting women's stories (and people's stories) of their death experiences.

Situating Self in the Text and in the Research

The postpositivist position advocates that we need to beware of our biases, our conscious partiality and be prepared to state these (Mies, 1983:122). As we seek to achieve this it is important that we as researchers place ourselves in the same critical plane as the subject matter, inside the frame of the picture we attempt to paint (Harding, 1987:9). We need to continually consider and acknowledge our class, culture and gender assumptions, our personal beliefs, values and behaviours that work to influence our work so that we are not presenting ourselves as "an invisible, anonymous voice of authority" but as the "real, historical individual with concrete specific desires and interests" that we are (Harding, 1987:9). The thoughts, feelings and behaviour of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the process, results and general text of the research (Harding, 1987:9). In situating myself in the research and the text I need to start with my own experience and be willing and able to make myself as vulnerable as those I am researching (Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986:141). This commitment to situating myself in the research is seen for example in my active participation in the community work/action research carried out by the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group. It is also reflected in my decision to be one of the women participating in the one to one interviews, the women's stories of their death experiences. This decision coincided with the decision to include the past and present members of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group in the group of women selected for the women's stories of their death experiences. As part of this group I was faced with the prospect of being interviewed and whether this was feasible. After discussions with my supervisors I decided that this would be a worthwhile approach.

As I move further from the "detached researcher" position I become increasingly part of my research subject and connected with the women participating in it. The boundaries between my research and my life become increasingly blurred so that I live my research (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:170) rather than do it. I identify with the women participating as I seek to know their experience. Being a "vulnerable" researcher who identifies with her research participants is not a particularly "safe" way in which to work and this has brought with it

enormous pain for some feminist researchers (Reinharz, 1992:34-36; 232-234). My social and community work background knowledge of counselling skills and the importance of setting personal/professional boundaries, however, helps me to be aware that I need to find a balance, a balance between feeling my research, identifying with the experiences of the research participants, providing support for the research participants and protecting myself. By this I mean protecting myself without becoming detached. This involves being aware of my boundaries and not taking on other women's pain as if it is my own nor identifying with the injustices that I uncover to the extent that I am left incapacitated or ineffective in my work. It also involves being able to let things go and the ability to take a new direction if necessary.

Passionate Politics and Conscious Partiality in Feminist Research

Feminism must be a transformational politics that addresses every aspect of our life (Bunch, 1987:302).

Passionate scholarship is about not separating emotion from our cognition, our self or our work as researchers (Reinharz, 1992:231). Passionately political scholarship comes from the heart as well as the brain (Klein, 1991:130-131), it combines and integrates our politics and emotion passionately with our self, our thoughts and our research (Mies, 1993:38-39). I argue that passionately political research goes hand in hand with writing styles which use feeling-filled (yet honest) language. As I reject the objective detached approach of positivism I welcome the blending of many levels of consciousness which embrace and integrate feelings and thought, experience and ideas, dreams and visions, knowledge, stories and imaginings, intuition and action. I consider feminist research to be a political, economic, emotional, spiritual, social and physical act, as well as an intellectual one. As such, I feel a responsibility on all these levels.

In my approach to passionately political research I seek to be communal rather than hierarchical (Mies, 1993:38-39; Reinharz, 1992:181). This is about working at community grass (flax) roots levels instead of, or as well as, the academic, government (or private) information/policy levels. I am passionate in my awareness that research has the potential to become an act of liberation on many different levels – the personal, political, community, academic, national and even global, and in terms of both human and nonhuman nature. I feel that as a researcher I have a responsibility to work for the interests of dominated,

exploited and oppressed groups (including nonhuman nature) rather than upholding, serving or legitimising the interests of elite or privileged groups (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:17).

Seeking Validity in the Context of Value Explicit Research

Validity in the positivist approach to research requires an objective, detached and neutral researcher who produces quantifiable, repeatable results. The postpositivist research approach has rejected this mindset and therefore has needed to look to new concepts and frameworks for validity. I agree with feminist researcher Patti Lather when she argues that we must build validity into our postpositivist and action oriented research designs (Lather, 1986:78; Lather, 1987:450). Lather reconceptualizes validity in the context of openly ideological research and creates a research framework that incorporates this concept of validity (Lather, 1986, 1987, 1991). I have found this very helpful and have incorporated her work on research validity into my own research process.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes. This can work to increase validity through seeking counterpatterns as well as convergences in research findings (Lather, 1986:69; Lather, 1991:66-67). On reading Lather I realized I was already doing this with my public records research, participatory action research (community work in the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group) and my plan to do one to one interviews for women's stories of their experiences of death. Reading Lather has however helped me to conceptualize triangulation as a research method and raised my awareness of other research validity issues that relate to this.

Construct Validity

This concerns the need to have our empirical work consciously generated within a context of theory building, the need to let the data speak for itself and of not violating the reality of the participants. For construct validity it is important to guard against theoretical imposition. The contribution of the participants should inform the process of theory production rather than the researcher's theoretical position moulding the data. We need to ask ourselves where the weak points of the theoretical tradition are and if we are extending theory, revising it, testing it and/or supporting it (Lather, 1986:67,69; Lather, 1987:451; Lather, 1991:67).

Originality is central to a Doctor of Philosophy degree. This thesis needs to reflect my own original research approach, and originality in the theoretical development. Theoretical imposition has however been minimalized for the reporting of the women's stories, through extensive use of direct quotes from the women themselves in the presentation of the results. Using a loosely structured interview style without set questions enabled the women participating to exert a lot of control over the direction of the storytelling and what they chose to discuss. The recycling of the written results of this (see face validity as discussed below) has also worked to ensure I do not misrepresent or misinterpret what the women say and think.

The action research has been a process guided by all the women in the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group as well as the people we have interacted with concerning death. The philosophy and aims of the homedearth group were created with input from all those involved. Although I did the writing up of the research into the homedearth booklets a number of people contributed to this and checked the content. Our booklet is about self-help choices rather than an instruction on what should be done. We acknowledge in the booklet that we have had very little experience in caring for our dead before burial/cremation and that we are still learning. The booklet ends with an encouragement to readers to give us feedback on the booklet including questions or issues that they think we should address or information that they think should be included in a future edition. This encourages participation and is an approach that helps to avoid the imposition of our views on others. We have consciously tried to avoid presenting ourselves as all-knowing experts.

Face Validity

This is tied to construct validity and concerns the recycling of the results (the description, analysis and conclusion) by returning them to the research participants for comment, and the subsequent refining of tentative results from their feedback. Recycling processes have been involved in both the women's stories and the action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group. It should be noted also that face validity can be prevented by language which is unnecessarily complex or contains jargon (Lather, 1986:67,70,72,78; Lather, 1987:450-451; Lather, 1991:68). I have consciously worked to use clear, precise and accessible language throughout my research and writing.

Both editions of the homedearth booklet have gone through group processes of planning, drafting, discussion, amendment and expansion with all the current members of the homedearth group. The first edition of the booklet also involved women from outside the

group reading and commenting on drafts before it reached its final form. Although at the time this was aimed at checking the content and clarity of the booklet, this was also important to the face validity.

All the women participants in the women's stories research received a draft of Part Five of the thesis (the results of the women's stories research). The women were invited to request any specific changes they wanted concerning their stories and to give me any general feedback that they had. Those women who have quotes included in other chapters were also given access to these. I checked that each woman had received her copy of the results and contacted all women who had not already contacted me to find out whether there was any part they wanted changed, or any comments they wanted to make about the written results. The women had about two months to read the draft and comment on it before I contacted them (although I did ask women if they had read their copy of the research if I had happened to see them before this time). One woman wrote to me, but most of the feedback was given orally in person or over the phone. One participant who is now living overseas sent her feedback via a friend.

Two of the women recommended changes. These required only single word changes. One had spotted a misspelt word and the other pointed out that one of the Maori words included in her story should have been another. These words were then corrected.

The general feedback ranged from assurances that the women felt comfortable that I had represented them and their story appropriately and authentically to comments on how good they thought the written result of it was. Many commented on how interesting they had found the research results. One of the women told me that she had felt a bit nervous when she received her copy in the post but felt pleased after reading it. Several of the women commented that they had felt quite emotional reading the stories. One of these women said that reading her own story was like reliving the experience and that this was hard (although she assured me that this was not necessarily a bad thing). This same woman told me that she had had to read her copy in bits rather than in one reading because of the affect that it had had on her emotionally. Another woman commented that she had ended up reading her copy on into the middle of the night because she could not put it down, and that her partner had been engrossed by it also. Another participant told me she had shared her copy with her mother-in-law. One of the women noted that she had been really interested to read about the similar experiences to her own of some of the other women. Another said that she wanted to share the research with a women's group she belongs to. Two of the participants asked whether

the results would be published in a form more accessible than a thesis and recommended that this should happen.

The recycling process has made me feel confident that I have not misrepresented the women in the compilation of their stories. The feedback received from the women also proved to be an important source of personal encouragement.

Catalytic Validity

This represents the degree of consciousness-raising, the reality-altering impact of the research process itself in terms of participants self-understanding and self-determination through their research participation. This involves documentation of the insights and ideally activism of the research participants sparked by their involvement in the research process. (Lather, 1986:67,78; Lather, 1987:452; Lather, 1991:68,80) The participants in the homedeath group commented favourably regarding the consciousness-raising and effect on their life that involvement in the group gave them. Some also commented on the importance of this consciousness-raising for the community in general (see the action research chapter). Significant also to the catalytic validity was that women sharing their stories of their death experiences worked as a learning process for both myself and the women as issues were raised and discussed. All the women participating in the women's stories research received the self-help information booklet put out by the homedeath group and this also enhances catalytic validity. Reading the written result of the research into women's stories of their after-death experiences was also potentially a consciousness raising process for the women involved and some of the feedback indicated this.

Some Thoughts About Ethics

My awareness and concern about ethics is always to the fore of my mind and emotion and I feel this concern regarding ethical issues is evident throughout the methodology chapter.

Below I have listed what I see as key ethical issues.

Human Ethics

Language: There was a commitment to using clear uncomplicated language, nonsexist language and a writing style which worked to be sensitive to the diverse individuals and

groupings in society by not only avoiding generalizations, heterosexism, ageism and so on, but also addressing such discriminations.

Informed consent: Participants were given full information and opportunity for questions so that they knew exactly what they were agreeing to partake in and also knew that they could choose to withdraw at any time.

Shared ownership of the research process and outcome with research participants: This involved being accountable to, sharing power and control with, and giving credit to research participants, and an awareness of and commitment to the need to give back to, as well as receive from, research participants. This also meant acknowledging who benefited from the research (for example what groups of women/people were likely to benefit) and how (including acknowledging the benefits to myself as the researcher).

Responding to issues that come up for women participants: This involved not withholding needed information from participants; being responsible for the consequences of the research through providing support to women who had personal issues sparked by their participation in the research process, either at the time or later – this included both support given personally and through access to helpful referral information (Oakley, 1981:41-58; Reinharz, 1992:212).

Confidentiality: This involved protecting each woman's identity and that of others who have been mentioned in her storytelling. Discussion about the women's background was presented in such a way as to ensure confidentiality. Identifying material was excluded through careful editing of the quotes and the use of pseudonyms for the women participating and any people mentioned in their storytelling. The women who are, or have been, members of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group are identifiable to those who are aware of the membership of this group but their identity is hidden within the women's stories chapters by the use of pseudonyms and through being inseparable from the entire group of eighteen women.

Giving information does not involve giving advice: This meant not giving unasked for opinions that could disrupt or demean a woman's life choices (Westkott, 1990:76) and not setting myself up as the all knowing expert.

Ethical Issues for a Pakeha Researching in the "Maori World"

Research into indigenous communities — "the fourth world", is a high risk activity for both the researched and the researcher (Te Awekotuku, 1991b:12). Many Pakeha researchers who have gone into the Maori world have taken from Maori without giving in return. Many have also misrepresented and undermined Maori, both in their research process and research findings. Others have given as well as received, by for example nurturing young Maori

scholars and sustaining ongoing meaningful relationships with those with whom they have worked (Te Awekotuku, 1991b:12). Non-exploitation, respect and "giving back" to indigenous or first nation peoples whose views, theory, research and cultural beliefs and practices are involved in the research is a very important ethical concern that needs to be honestly and thoughtfully addressed. This is an issue of particular importance for Pakeha/white researchers.

My research has not involved going into an indigenous community as such but has involved using the published work of Maori writers/academics and approaching a small number of Maori women to participate in the women's interviews about their after-death experiences. These Maori aspects of my research have occurred with prompting (and support) from my supervisors, and with some trepidation on my part. It has been done with respect (and some awe) and a will to give as well as receive. I have worked to be sensitive and appropriate but fully admit that I am a novice, and that a Maori researcher could have added a depth to this aspect of the work that I am not able to do as a Pakeha who can only communicate in the English language (with a superficial knowledge of some Maori words, phrases and concepts). I have not specifically found ways to give back to Maori other than through my work which although I want to be a gift to all, I have thought specifically about how aspects of my work could be of relevance to Maori and acted on this (for example the contact/networking with the Mana News team as discussed in Chapter 6 which I consider to be an ongoing point to network information that may be of interest to Maori). I do feel there is a "debt" to pay on my part in regard to what I have received from "the Maori world" and do (and will in future) seek to respond to, and create, opportunities to give in return.

Accountability to Maori in regard to my research process and findings, and their practical and political implications, is also an important ethical concern (Te Awekotuku, 1991b:13-19). Through the peer review process and selection of the examiner from Aotearoa/New Zealand this has occurred in regard to this thesis. Appropriate processes and opportunities for ongoing accountability should also be sought and recognised (in the community as well as the university).

A General Ethic

May what I do now be pleasing to my grandmothers, the ancient ones.
And may it be of benefit to all beings.
(A mantra used by Susun Weed, cited in Wilshire, 1994:11)

In our every deliberation we must consider the impact of our decision on the next seven generations. (A saying of many of the indigenous American traditions, cited in Wilshire, 1994:11)

A more general ecofeminist ethic concerning the well-being of nonhuman as well as human nature has become an important consideration in my after-death work, even though the research emphasis has involved human participants. My research project has included exploring and changing human concepts and understandings of death and after-death practices and this has significance for all of nature. The above quotations represent an important ethic which includes beneficence (the duty to do good) and nonmaleficence (a principle not to harm), in relation to both human and nonhuman nature. It is important to me to seek to act and contribute creatively and responsibly to the community, the natural environment, the country, world and universe I live in. The research contributing to this thesis has promoted homedeath and natural death choices. These choices are usually not promoted by those currently involved in the death industry (and have in fact often been actively discouraged). Homedeath and natural death concepts and practices have potential benefits both to people and the natural environment and this is an important theme evident throughout this thesis.

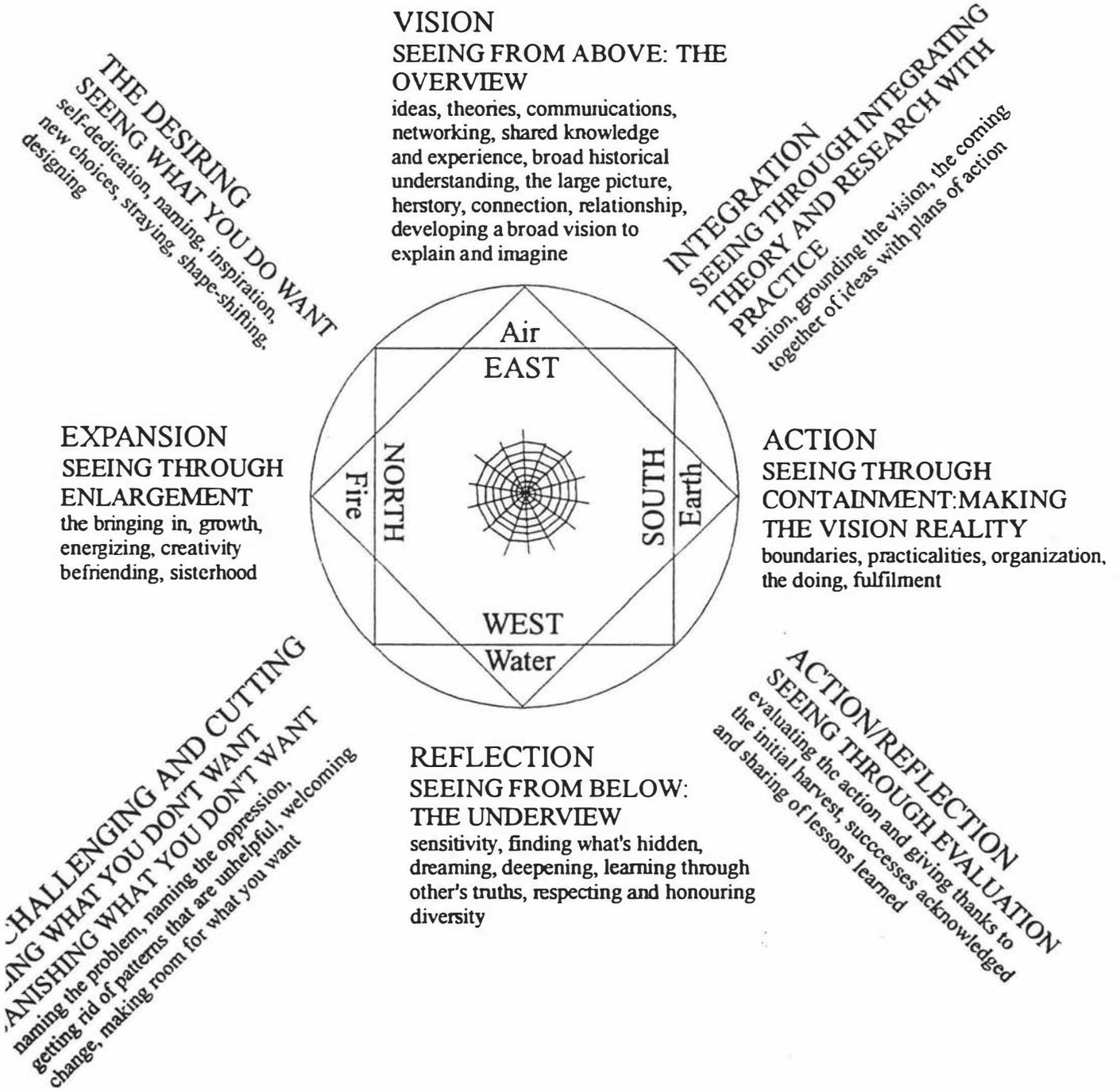
Research, Theory and Action: An Ecological and Integrated Approach

In my undergraduate Bachelor of Social Work studies I was taught about integrating theory and practice. I was given the concept and techniques, the "how to" involved with being an integrated practitioner. This includes ecological understandings, developing an awareness of the complexities and interrelatedness of the whole that influences peoples lives, being aware of the structural disadvantages that different groups of people experience, and having a clear understanding about the bodies of theory that are being drawn on when making informed and consistent links between theory and practice. Maori people and Maori literature have also taught me about holism, particularly through the Maori holistic concept of health. My links with the women's health and women's spirituality movements is another source of my holistic approach, in health, in our lives and in our interconnection with each other and all life on earth. Ecofeminist theory has further developed these ecological/holistic understandings.

This background has influenced my approach to research and theory. I am consciously looking for holistic/ecological approaches and for me these go hand in hand with in-depth and action research methods. It is important to acknowledge however, that I do not use an ecological approach instead of an analytical approach but rather as part of it. The ecological position I have developed involves an awareness of the separate parts that make up the whole as well as their interconnectedness. It should be noted that this concept of holism is not a dualistic one. I argue that holism is not in opposition to concepts of diversity. My understanding of holistic, ecological approaches includes an understanding of the importance of protecting and honouring diversity. I have developed a diagram (Figure 1) which represents my ecological and integrated research approach.

WEAVING THE WEB, TURNING THE WHEEL: AN ECOLOGICAL AND INTEGRATED APPROACH TO RESEARCH, THEORY AND ACTION

(Figure 1)



My Research Triangle

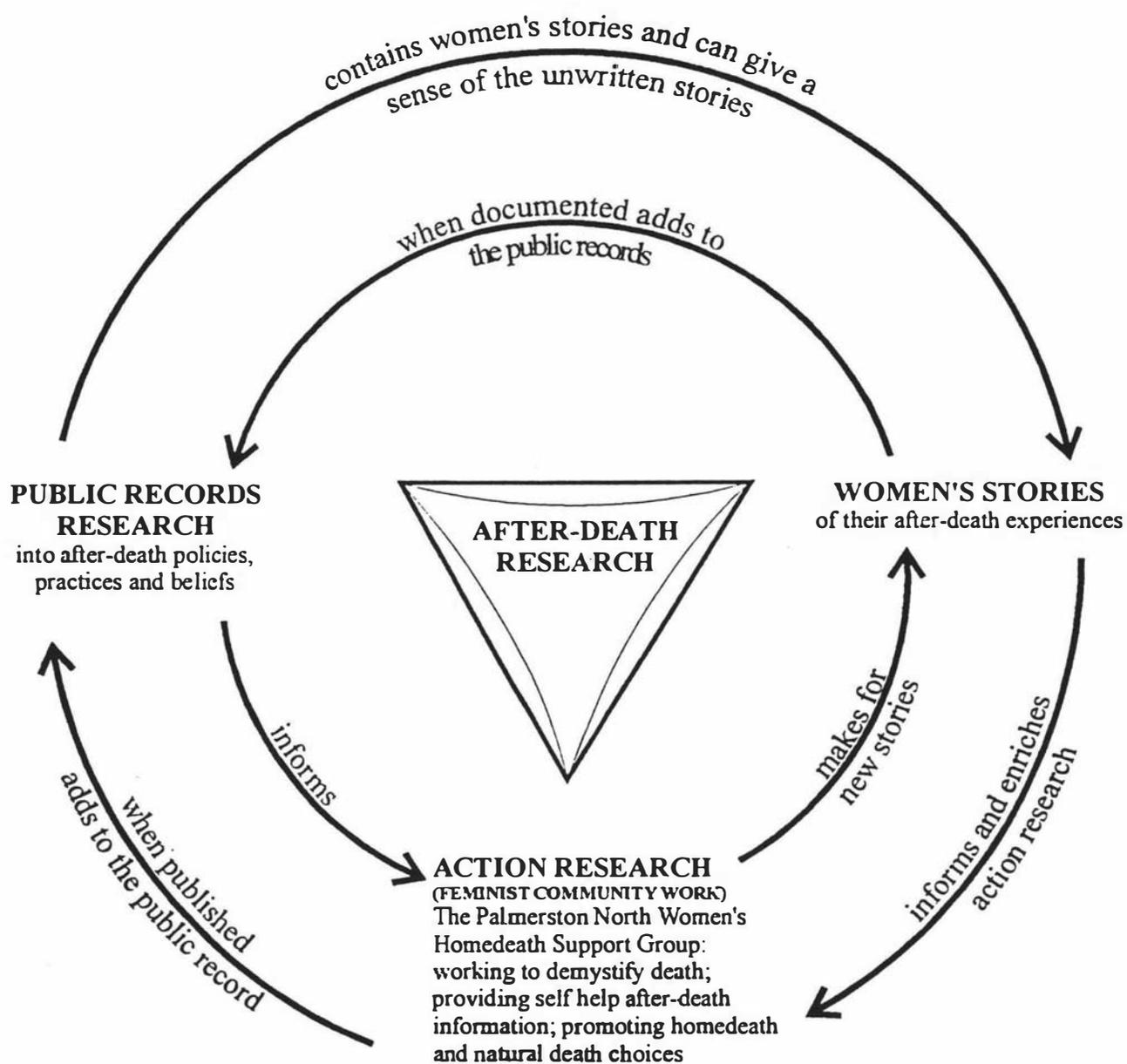
Feminist research often challenges the compartmentalized thought of academia by drawing on multiple disciplines. So too it often rejects single method research for multiple methods in a specific project (Reinharz, 1992:197). As already stated, triangulation is a term used in research to describe the purposeful use of multiple research methods, theoretical frameworks and information sources within a single research project. The contrasts as well as complementary findings produced by a triangulation of methods work to increase the validity and scientific credibility of the results of a research project (Lather, 1986:69; Lather, 1991:66-67; Reinharz, 1992:197:201). This also helps feminist researchers explore and express the complexities of women's lives including both personal and structural influences (Reinharz, 1992:202,204). Frequently triangulation involves the use of at least one quantitative and one qualitative method (Cook and Fonow, 1990:82).

Triangulation of research methods is a way in which feminist researchers, can redress the over-emphasis on quantitative research methods and topics, and also challenge the bias of previous studies by replicating the original methods and comparing these results with results obtained using different methods (Cook and Fonow, 1990:82). The use of multiple methods strengthens our ability to provide significant research contributions to previously unexamined or misunderstood experiences (Reinharz, 1992:197). Feminists choose multiple methods not only for technical reasons but also as a way to address our emotional, spiritual and/or political, as well as intellectual concerns as feminists (Reinharz, 1992:197).

The triangulation of research methods I have adopted (see Figure 2) focuses on in-depth qualitative methods for understanding women's experiences of death rather than attempting to combine quantitative measurements with qualitative understandings of death. This involved a broad overview of the public records about (or including) death, participatory action research (community work involving the formation and work developments of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group) and individual interviews (women's stories) in which women shared personal accounts of their death experiences with me.

THE YONIC GATE: THE RESEARCH AS A TRIANGULAR PROCESS

(Figure 2)



CHAPTER 5

THE RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter discusses the research methods developed for the public records research, the action research and the women's stories. The sections in this chapter which address these three research methods, explore their origins, their significance to feminist research, and include specifics about how I have developed and adapted these methods to fit my own research requirements. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the research processes I have adopted.

Researching Public Records

The public records research has primarily involved published literature available in Aotearoa/New Zealand including books; government statutes, reports and other publications; newspaper, magazine and journal articles; booklets and pamphlets. The material I have used has been predominantly, but not exclusively, non-fiction. I have drawn from some novels, for example Ihimaera (1989). In a few instances the literature has been received direct from England and is not readily available in Aotearoa/New Zealand, for example Bradfield (1994) and Albery, Elliot and Elliot (1993). I have also drawn from some unpublished theses (which are a public record available through university libraries). The public records research has also drawn from television and radio programmes in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Relevant material which is not from the public record has on occasion been included in the documentation of the findings of the public records research in Part Three of this thesis. The oral and written communications I have received are examples of this.

Researching records accessible to the public involves examining the literature and other public sources of information such as television and radio records, for historical evidence, traces and clues that provide material, and in turn lead to further references on the chosen research topic. I went to the literature on death wanting to uncover information on after-death culture and practices, particularly that of Maori and Pakeha in Aotearoa/New Zealand and that of our British heritage and its influences on death in this country. A key focus in my reading was women's roles in relation to death, including information on women laying-out the dead and the practices, skills, values and the popular culture that surrounded this. I

also researched the "how to" of caring for the dead before burial/cremation within today's New Zealand society and laws. In an attempt to understand how our death practices and attitudes have changed over time I researched the social policy changes – the legislation, laws, lobby groups and individuals involved, and the influence of the historically male professions of doctor, undertaker, priest and legislator that have worked to mould our death practices of today. My quest for a framework of theory upon which to sit my findings went hand in hand with my reading on death. This is true also in relation to my research methodology.

I think it is important that I emphasise that my public records research has included elements of historically and cross-culturally comparative research. I have researched and compared traditional and contemporary Maori beliefs and practices surrounding death with those of present day and earlier Pakeha/European beliefs and practices. In turn both Maori and Pakeha death beliefs and practices have been placed in the context of, and compared with, the British death customs and social policy which has become part of our heritage in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Cross-cultural research can help us to understand the different contexts of women's lives (Reinharz, 1992:245). This is true also of historical research. Both have been a crucial part of this research.

My sources, the places I discovered clues and parts to the puzzles I was seeking to unravel, range over a very broad base. This includes texts of history, anthropology, Maori studies, women's studies, nursing studies, New Zealand statutes and government publications, literature of the women's health and women's spirituality movement, sociology, social policy, religious studies, social and community work and more. I feel my most useful sources of information have come from researcher/writers of history, Maori studies/anthropology, women's health, women's spirituality, ecofeminism, government statutes and other government publications. Much of the mainstream death literature ignores women's roles and practices. I have found women historians, women anthropologists and other women writers who have included historical information and insights on death as women's work and women's ritual, a particularly useful source.

There are a number of information gaps that I am keenly aware of. I was and am seeking detail of what women did when laying-out the dead, for example recipes of salt water washes and herbal methods to delay decomposition of the dead body before burial. This was not a knowledge and skill that was written down, but rather was passed on through oral traditions and hands on learning alongside a woman or person experienced in laying-out the

dead. Another gap in the literature is in the area of personal accounts of after-death experiences. The fascinating interviews with older working class men and women of Lancashire concerning death experiences by Elizabeth Roberts (1989) is one of the few exceptions. Also very little has been written about the historical developments of undertakers/funeral directors in Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand, and their affect on the public at large. As Richardson (1987:4) states this is a topic which has so far been neglected by historical research and critique.

Material which analyses the social policy of death is negligible and is found within the research disciplines of history, sociology and anthropology rather than social policy. There is not the death information available to confidently show and explain step by step how people's attitudes to death have changed over time (Richardson, 1987:xiv) due to changes of social policy and social practices relating to death, or in turn how (and which) peoples attitudes have worked to change our death social policy and practice. This in the main is an area for pioneering new studies which include imagination and theorizing based on the information that is available. My research is one such pioneering work.

Action Research

Participatory Action Research

The origins of Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been traced to American Kurt Lewin and the school of "action research" of the 1940s (Maguire, 1987:viii). Lewin's research concept, however, was one which operated from an ahistorical, apolitical value system (Lather, 1987:443). PAR has now been influenced by the many educational schools of thought which have rejected the dominant positivist approach to social science. On the other hand PAR has evolved with seemingly little influence from feminist schools of thought and the male-centred and male biased approaches within PAR is critiqued in depth by Maguire (1987:4-5, 51-76). Feminist (participatory) action research, however, can be traced back further than the 1940s as Reinharz (1992:176-177) points out in her accounts of the late 19th and early 20th century feminist participatory action research projects of Marion Talbot and Crystal Eastman.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a process of social investigation, education and action in which the researcher shares the creation of social knowledge with oppressed peoples. PAR aims to investigate reality in order to transform it (Maguire, 1987:3,29).

PAR is a collective activity carried out by the participants as well as the researcher(s). It removes the traditional dichotomy between knowing and doing. In terms of social investigation, both researcher and participants are active in the problem posing and solving. It is an educational, consciousness-raising experience for the researcher as well as the participants as they interact to name and analyse problems/issues (Elden and Levin, 1991:127). This consciousness-raising leads to collective actions aimed towards social change, which are planned and implemented with the view of achieving both short and long term goals. PAR uses an action-reflection process which moves between reading the literature and working in the field (Maguire, 1987:5). Action-reflection is also evident in the planning and evaluating of the action which is with, for and by the participants.

There are a number of important principles underlying the PAR approach (Maguire, 1987:6-7,30,35-36). PAR firstly recognizes that there is no such thing as neutral or value-free social science and that there is a political nature to all we do. There is therefore an expectation that researchers should be clear and explicit about the values, perspectives and politics that inform their work. PAR takes the position that knowledge has become the single most important basis of power and control, and that at present so-called rational and scientific knowledge is that which has been made the legitimate source of knowledge. PAR emphasises the implications that education and research efforts have for the redistribution or consolidation of power and the responsibility that researchers have to use the research process to work to liberate the oppressed. PAR seeks a dual outcome: to generate information, solutions and action on problems/issues by and for the group or organization the researcher is participating in as well as researching; and to provide new knowledge and interest to the academic world (Maguire, 1987:viii).

PAR has moved towards ethics and goals whereby participants are themselves researchers rather than subjects or clients. A partnership is built between the researched and the researcher (who is a co-learner and co-creator rather than an expert). Participants are considered co-owners of the research question, process and findings. There is an expectation that the research process and outcome are educational and empowering for participants. There is a belief that outcomes should include action on attitudes and structures that inhibit self-worth, social justice or liberation (Elden and Levin, 1991:128-134; Maguire, 1987:viii,30,37-38; Whyte, 1991:8,241).

Community Work as Participatory Action Research

As I read the literature on PAR I realized that the definition and goals of PAR are very similar to my concept of community work and how community work is defined in the literature. A popular definition of community work presented to me in my previous studies is:

Community work seeks to identify the needs and aspirations of those who are excluded, exploited or oppressed by the structures of society; to enable them to perceive and understand the causes of such oppression; and to empower them either to change the present structures or create counter-structures which fulfil human dignity (Elliot, 1978:3).

This definition fits very closely with the philosophy and goals of PAR. Similarly Paulo Freire is a prominent activist and writer who has inspired both community workers and participatory action researchers alike. The concept of action-reflection evident in both PAR and community work originates from the work of Paulo Freire (Craig, 1983:150). In terms of this country I concur with the definition of community work prepared by Craig (1991:4) which describes community work "as a form of intervention that encourages, enables or empowers individuals, whanau or groups within a geographic or tribal area or community, to identify and articulate their needs themselves". In defining community work, Craig also develops four feminist principles of community work — self-determination, collectivity, power and change (Craig, 1991:8,146-154). These principles are also themes which are evident in the PAR theory and methodology as discussed above.

PAR also shares much ground with my own personal experience of community work, community workers and their philosophies and activities. From reflecting on my own experience as a community worker, I feel there are two main differences between PAR and community work. Firstly, most community work is not "written up" in the academic sense and thus not readily available to the academic world or the wider public (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:18). In Aotearoa/New Zealand there has been very little research carried out on community work and even less on women in community work (Craig, 1991:1-2). The second difference that stands out to me is that community workers are frequently working in an area in which they themselves have experienced oppression. Instead of being "outsiders" working alongside the oppressed to work for change, they are "insiders", part of the oppressed group working for change. This is particularly so for feminist women community workers working to change the patriarchal sexist (and heterosexist, racist, ageist, ableist) community (locally, nationally and globally) that surrounds them.

Feminist Action Research

All feminist research is about action in that feminism is change-oriented by definition, action research however stresses change-oriented forms of research (Reinharz, 1992:196). As already mentioned above, Reinharz discusses action research carried out by women researchers who entered the realms of academia in what is known as the first wave of feminism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Reinharz, 1992:176-177). It is not then a new feminist research methodology but has been re-established within modern feminist research. Action research is also central to feminist community work as well as community work in general but in this form is not usually written up and therefore not readily available to those reviewing the literature.

A great number of feminist action researchers, feminist community workers and feminist political and environmental activists have informed and inspired my work. Those with published work include Craig, (1983, 1991); Donley (1986); Kirby and McKenna (1989); Maguire (1987); Mies (1983, 1984, 1993); Shields (1991); and Starhawk (1982, 1989, 1990, 1990b).

Feminist Action Research as Demystification

I like Shulamit Reinharz's (1992:192) definition that demystification is

the change in consciousness that occurs among the relatively powerless when they consider their situation in a new light.

To illustrate the demystification process used in feminist action research Shulamit Reinharz describes the transformation of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective from a small discussion group on "women and their bodies" at a women's conference in Boston to internationally acclaimed women's health researcher/writers (Reinharz, 1992:192-193). Their process of demystification started with self-education and led on to a sharing of this information/knowledge with many other women. This became an ever-widening "process of demystifying an ever-widening audience of women" (Reinharz, 1992:193). Their first publication of *Our Bodies Ourselves* helped spark many women (locally, nationally and internationally) to explore the health issues important to them and led to feedback on what women were looking for in future editions. These demands and suggestions in turn led to the incorporation of new material the Collective had not previously been aware of (Reinharz, 1992:193). This work by the Boston Collective was one of the significant initiators of an international women's health movement.

The work of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group is part of this women's health movement. It draws very much from this type of demystification and self-help research approach that involves women sharing their knowledge and experience with the hope that others will be able to learn and be helped by this (Reinharz, 1992:193-194). The homedearth group similarly has requested feedback for inclusion in future editions of our booklet.

The Action Research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group

The action research on death that I have taken part in and am still part of in the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group can be described simultaneously as both feminist participatory action research and feminist community work. As a researcher I was not however an "outsider" who was working alongside the oppressed but one who had experienced the oppression and alienation of a patriarchal and institutionalized system of after-death practices.

I had contemplated initiating a feminist homedearth group for some time before this actually eventuated. My concept of homedearth did not just concern having the dead person at home before burial/cremation, it also involved empowerment through self-help knowledge about after-death choices and practicalities, and an awareness of the politics of death. I wanted to: work alongside other women to reclaim after-death work and ritual as women's old culture and show the significance of this to today's society; challenge mainstream death institutions and their practices; develop self-help homedearth (after-death) knowledge and skills and share this with others; and promote these homedearth choices in the community. I had discussed these ideas with a number of women before I included this as part of my research proposal at the beginning of 1991. My desire to transform the vision of this group into reality was very important to me. The intense feelings I had about wanting this project to be successful worked to heighten the fears and doubts I held about my ability to achieve this. For some months this had a debilitating effect, delaying the actual beginnings of the project.

Starting a community group was not something I had taken a lead role in before and this brought with it fears and doubts. Although I had gathered a wealth of important information relating to self-help after-death choices I felt inexperienced in the practical realities of homedearth and this also worked to undermine my confidence. I felt a great responsibility to women (and people) past, present and future in the reclaiming of death as a women's work and ritual tradition (and the popular culture associated with this), and was afraid of not being

able to do justice to this important task. I also worried about whether an actual group would meet the expectations of all the women involved, including my own.

Finally I did find the courage to take the risk and make the midwinter plunge in July 1991 along with three other women. This first meeting marked the beginnings of what was to become the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group. The developments and achievements of our group are documented and analysed in Chapter 8 of this thesis. I have developed a diagram (Figure 3) which summarizes the action research process involved in establishing and developing this group. This is a model of practice that provides guidelines that could be followed in relation to other community work/action research.

Women's Stories: Storytelling as Methodology

Interviewers who validate women by using women's communication are the midwives for women's words (Minister, 1991:39).

Women's Storytelling as a Sacred and Revolutionary Act

In patriarchal cultures the stories celebrated are usually those told by men. Women have lived in a world where women's stories are rarely told (or recorded) from their own perspectives (Christ, 1986:4). Women in men's stories appear in roles defined by men — usually as mothers, wives, sisters, lovers, nurses, assistants or whores. Men have thus shaped women's experiences of self and the world (Christ, 1986). In not telling their own stories women have not actively shaped their experiences of self and the world — or the "great powers" from their own perspectives (Christ, 1986:3).

Stories have a sacred dimension (Christ, 1986:3). This sacred dimension involves the interrelatedness of our cultural heritage and popular symbolism, our understandings of the past and our visions for the future along with the deep, spiritual feelings and thoughts we may have when we try to make sense of our own lives in the midst of others and in relation to the earth, world and universe that we are part of. Powerful women's stories, whether true stories or imaginings, have the potential to empower the women who read and listen to them. Telling a woman's story from a woman's point of view is also a revolutionary act. New language patterns must be created to express women's experiences, new metaphors and new themes must emerge — new literary traditions come to life. As women listen to women (with similar experiences and feelings) telling their stories they may hear their own unnamed longings voiced. This new naming has a spiritual and a social dimension (Christ, 1986:7). Carol Christ (1986:13-14) describes this revolutionary process of women telling their stories as a journey of nothingness to awakening, mystical insight to new naming (but not necessarily in this order).

Women (and people in general) often need to tell stories in order to communicate meaning and this is something that some qualitative interviewers have noted (Reinharz, 1992:24). Robyn Munford (1990:29) tells us that she uses the term stories, deliberately, in her research with women carers of children and adults with intellectual disabilities because for her it captures the ways in which women talk about their lives. She states that the "telling of their story" was often the first opportunity that these women had been given to talk at length about their experiences (Munford, 1990:29). An analysis of the women's stories explained and

articulated "the relations of power" which were used to control these women and maintain them in certain roles.

Storytelling is a research method which encourages an interweaving of data and interpretation by the research participants. Hearing other people's stories helps a researcher to understand the experiences and insights of others and this helps broaden her own experience and analysis (Reinharz, 1992:30,34). There is power in being able to tell your story and hear others tell theirs. Sharing experiences triggers feelings and concepts which can lead to a heightened individual and collective awareness of our needs. This awareness can then inspire action which in turn creates change (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:170).

Women's consciousness-raising groups are about women sharing stories, hearing each other speak, inspiring each other to create new life possibilities for self and other women (Christ, 1986:7). Consciousness-raising groups, however, are often in the form of a discussion where members share pieces of their experiences and insights — the talkative members often busting to add their views. A woman telling her story is more of an uninterrupted flow of sharing, a greater opportunity for her to share her feelings and create a broader picture. This can work to encourage the woman to reflect on and name her realities. Setting the right "scene" for a woman to tell her story is an act of creating a special space for the woman to open up, if she so wishes. In a group situation where a number of women take turns at telling their story, early stories can spark ideas and create a feeling filled environment which enhances later stories.

As a community worker in feminist women's community groups, I have experienced the power and beauty, the emotion and empathy, the healing flow of women sharing their stories. These stories may be birth stories, life history stories, sexual abuse experiences or death stories. I have experienced the sharing of our stories as a "sacred act" in "sacred space", a special sharing experience in a realm removed from the everyday world. To me this experience was often one of intimate bonding with other women while also being a personal inner journey of insights and realizations. These insights and realizations were often sparked by listening to other women's stories but also came to me from hearing my own voice speaking my own story. There was a magic in it. There is magic in it. Each time a woman tells her story the focus may be on different parts, each time it is a new creation.

Storytelling as a Form of Oral History Research

Storytelling is a form of oral history research. Stories in the first person have long had their place in the construction of knowledge about the social world. Letters, diaries, autobiographies and folklore in the form of story and song are all examples of this (Graham, 1984:105-107). The research method of surveying through stories can be seen as a form of ethnography, it seeks to record the culture as it is lived and spoken. Unlike much ethnography and observation however, storytelling is not a covert method of data collection, it is openly obtained. The storyteller knows she is providing information and "the story marks out the territory in which intrusion is tolerated" (Graham, 1984:107,120). This helps to provide protection from exploitation and manipulation in the research process. The woman, however, not only sets her own boundaries in terms of protection but also in terms of the possibilities.

The usual interventionist interview style using specific narrow questions has the tendency to lead to brief, stilted and unhelpful answers (Graham, 1984:104). Storytelling, or "the use of narrative in survey research" as Graham terms this, is a way to overcome the "fracturing of women's experience" that occurs through the more structured question and answer approach (Graham, 1984:104). Open-ended and broadly encompassing questions on the other hand encourages participants to take over the interview as their own. The interview becomes a story told by the participant to which the researcher may occasionally be invited to contribute (Graham, 1984:114-115). Storytelling enables participants to become the active subjects rather than objects of research and of knowledge. It is a way to enable and encourage participants to use their own language and style of communication. Storytelling as methodology also fits in with the women's health philosophy that as women we can all be experts — experts on ourselves and our lives.

Oral history is a way to tap into previously overlooked women's lives, activities and feelings to create an understanding of their past and present, to reveal hidden realities, experiences and perspectives that challenge the dominant truths and theories (Anderson et al, 1990:95). Anderson et al (1990) assert that oral historians need to develop techniques that encourage women to say the unsaid. Creating a space of trust, intimacy and "sacredness" for the sharing of women's stories, is a sound method towards achieving this uncovering of hidden realities.

In order to understand women's realities in a society that limits our choices, we need to be aware that what we think may not always be reflected in what we do and how we act

(Anderson et al, 1990:97). As a researcher it can even be lost in the words we hear unless we explore the meanings within the words. The oral "interview" can be used as a medium to not only allow women to articulate their own experiences but also reflect on these. We as the listeners to the story can help in this by attentively listening and seeking to hear not only what is in the words but also working to understand what may lie behind the words (Anderson et al, 1990:101,102,105). Anderson et al state that research has in general focused on activities and "facts" and neglected feelings, attitudes, values and meanings — something that they say gives rise to an incomplete story (Anderson et al, 1990:98). Rather than using the term "incomplete" story (as I feel stories have almost a limitless potential in the telling and retelling) I see this emphasis on activities and "fact", and closed and researcher controlled questions, more in terms of limiting the participants and setting the scene in a way that encourages a narrow and interviewer controlled focus in the response from the storyteller/participant. I agree with Anderson et al when they state that oral history (and I would add research in general) needs to allow for personal reflections, for the emotional (Anderson et al, 1990:98).

We must learn to help women to tell their own stories as fully, completely, and honestly as they desire (Anderson et al, 1990:101).

In terms of feminist theory building, and theory building in general, women's stories are an important contribution to the pool of women's descriptions and perspectives of social life which can be translated into theory. Exploring neglected and invisible areas of women's experience helps us to develop new understandings that inform our formulation of social theories (Anderson et al, 1990:106).

The Process of Collecting the Women's Stories of their Death Experiences

Procedures and Criteria for Selecting the Women Participants

A free workshop on death, facilitated by myself was organized as a means to attract women who might be interested in taking part in one to one interviews as well as creating a general interest in my work and that of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group on sharing death information and choices. This was advertised via a flyer which was distributed through women's networks and community notice boards. Women self-selected through attending the workshop, and deciding to participate after receiving further information. The workshop only attracted five women (and two of these were past or

present members of the homedeath group). A snowballing technique was then used to get other women involved.

It was decided to seek the involvement of women who identified as being Maori. A Maori woman adviser played an important part in this process by paving the way and helping me to make contact with a number of the Maori women participants.

As this process progressed a small sample of eighteen women was finally decided upon for the in-depth interviews. These eighteen included the six past and current members of the homedeath group (which included myself), two of whom have a Maori as well as Pakeha close family background; six women who identified as being Maori; and six Pakeha women. Only two of the women who were approached (one Maori and one Pakeha) declined the invitation to participate.

My Interaction with the Women Participants

All of the contact with the women participants (and potential participants) was carried out by myself except in the case of my own interview/storytelling which was facilitated by my chief supervisor, Dr Celia Briar. The storytelling sessions were timed so that there were at least two days between each one. This allowed plenty of time to reflect on and record my initial experience of each woman's story and also enabled me to prepare for and focus on the next session.

1. Approaching Women to Request their Participation in the Research

I initially made contact with some women interested in being participants in the research through the workshop and gave further information on the research purpose, process and probable time commitment involved for women participants. This was done through a brief discussion of the proposed research and in a written handout for women to take away. The women were told about the tape recorder that I planned to use for the storytelling sessions and were also assured that only I would listen to the tapes and that when finished, the only copy of each tape would be returned to the woman involved. A name, address and phone number list was passed around for women interested in participating in the research to fill in. Any women not attending the workshop but who I contacted or who contacted me expressing interest in being a research participant were also given the information sheet and time to discuss the research with me.

2. Checking to See if the Woman Still Wanted to Be a Participant

I rang/visited the woman to see if she still wanted to participate and discussed/answered any further questions and issues. If the woman wanted to participate we finalized a time and place to meet for her storytelling session. A consent form was provided for her to sign. The woman sometimes asked me what sort of things I was interested in hearing about. I would talk about my interest in hearing about women's death experiences, what they felt was helpful and what they did not like, and hearing their ideas about what they want to see happen in the future.

3. The Storytelling Session

Women's Death Stories – A Storytelling Ritual

(the interview plan)

Allow 2 hours. The woman chose the venue. This may have been my home or hers, and on occasion was a convenient meeting room.

Setting the scene: A large round white candle (the same one used for each storytelling) was placed on a black cloth along with a sprig of rosemary (old European symbol of death and remembrance), kawakawa greenery (traditional Maori plant symbol of death), and a stone. The woman was thanked for agreeing to share her story of her personal experiences with death. I would then check if there was anything the woman wanted to do or clarify before starting. The phone was sometimes taken off the hook, and a do not disturb sign attached to the door.

Purification/prepare for a time of focus: This phase was an informal sharing of our distractions, worries, our present environment, how we were feeling and so on in preparation for beginning the actual storytelling part of our interaction.

Centring/Orientation: The candle was lit and the tape recorder turned on. I would then acknowledge that we were here for the telling of the woman's story of her experiences of death. We were then ready to begin the story. The women sometimes wanted me to help them begin with questions or clarification of where to start. I would say something like: "You can begin where you want to, some women choose to start with recent death experiences and some start with their first memories. You could say a bit about what happened, talk about feelings, what felt positive and what was difficult or not helpful, what you want to have happen in future death experiences."

Storytelling: The woman then told her story (perhaps with some prompting or questions of clarification from me, preferably at the end and as unobtrusively as possible). I sometimes shared some of my own experience if this seemed particularly relevant or if a woman appeared interested to hear from me. At times the woman and myself compared

some of our experiences, feelings, issues, and reflected on the major themes in the woman's storytelling.

Closing: This was a time of thanksgiving. I again thanked the woman for her sharing. The stone (an aventurine, which reminds me of the monarch butterfly chrysalis — something I see as a symbol of death and life transition) was given to the woman to represent my thanks and connection with her. The tape recorder was stopped, the candle was extinguished, the "scene" was dismantled⁴.

Re-integration: I prepared for this to be a time for food and/or drink and coming back to everyday happenings if this suited the woman's schedule and the timing of the storytelling session. If going to the woman's home I would sometimes take biscuits with me. Often it was clear that the woman needed to leave straight after finishing her story so we concluded with a brief chat. Sometimes a sharing of food and/or drink had happened prior to the storytelling session.

4. Gathering Information on the Women's Backgrounds and Choosing Pseudonyms

I contacted the women to ask them to tell me a little about themselves in terms of age, class/culture/religion/educational background/work experience. This usually occurred sometime after the storytelling session via the phone. I approached each woman about choosing a pseudonym (first name). Initially this was to be optional and only a few of the women chose to use pseudonyms but after discussions with my supervisors it was decided to approach each participant recommending that she use a pseudonym not only because of issues of her own anonymity and protection but also to protect family and friends mentioned in her storytelling. This was done via a letter to all the participants with a form to write in the chosen pseudonym and a stamped addressed envelope to return this to me. Only one woman had to be followed up for her response and this was done by phone.

5. The Recycling

The draft chapters on the women's stories and discussions of their death experiences were given to each woman involved to read and comment on.

⁴ The self-help booklet of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group was given to women participants at this stage, in interviews that occurred after the booklet was published. Women who participated in earlier interviews received their copy of the booklet at a later stage.

6. *Feedback*

I contacted each woman (unless she had already contacted me) for any written or oral corrections and feedback she had on the drafted results so as to incorporate this into the final copy.

The Giving Back

In addition to the gift of the stone and the self-help booklet published by the homedeath group, the written account of the women's death stories was given to each woman involved. This was not only for feedback and corrections (as a recycling process — part of improving the validity) but also for the women to keep. The recorded tape of each woman's session with me will be given to the woman herself upon the completion of my doctoral studies. Each woman participant will also be contacted to discuss access to the completed thesis. A copy of my finished thesis will then be circulated around the women participants who want to read it.

On the less tangible level my giving in return to the women participants included a space for the woman to talk about death — something which people often do not want to talk about or listen to, an opportunity frequently denied. Also my ability and willingness to listen with love/aroha, with caring, respect and emotional support (along with some counselling skills and a deep connection formed with the whole subject of death) helped to provide a time and a space which validated the women and their self-knowledge of their death experiences. Emotional support was not only provided at the time of the interview but I had also decided to be available at a later stage if the women felt a need for this on completing our session together or if something came up for them later. Women did not require this. I had also prepared information on more formal grief/death counselling but this was not required either. The sharing of a woman's story of her experience of death had the potential to be a healing time as well as a learning time, for both the woman concerned and myself.

The Analysis of the Women's Stories

The interviews for the women's stories of their death experiences took place during July 1993 to July 1994, the length of the taped stories varied from about half an hour to two hours. The great majority of stories required almost a whole sixty minute tape or more. Two tapes were required for eight of the eighteen women's stories. As already described the interviews were unstructured. I felt quite awed and honoured by the depth of trust I was gifted by the women as they shared very personal, emotional and intimate experiences with

me. At times the storytelling process became a discussion and a clarification of issues raised but this usually occurred at the end of the storytelling.

All parts of the interview process, transcribing and analysis of the women's stories were carried out by myself with the only exception (as already mentioned) being the facilitation of my own interview/storytelling. Although this involvement in every facet of the process was a time consuming and painstaking process for one person with minimal transcribing and typing skills (my only option as a solo parent on a tight budget), it meant that I was continually aware of the whole content and process of the research and this was of assistance when analysing the research material. I opted to transcribe large parts of, rather than the complete tape recording of each participant's story. After listening to each women's story several times I felt able to identify what content to include in the transcript. Significant quotations to include seemed clearly evident when listening to each story.

There were a few problems with the audiotaping. One tape used broke before transcribing had been completed but technical staff at Massey University were able to rescue this. In one of the sessions one whole side of a tape had been turned on but had not been recording and so only half the taping had been successful. At this same session I also failed to notice the click as the tape finished its second side so had missed the opportunity to put on another tape. I found listening to the women's stories an engrossing experience so perhaps I was lucky that I was usually aware of the click each time a side of an audiotape had been completed. Because of the largely unstructured storytelling format of the interview, women were able to express themselves in their own personal language style and process of communication. This I think added richness to the research as women included humour, feeling and personality to their sharing. Some of this was lost in the taping (which does not record facial expression and body language) and again in the transcribing which loses the intonation, emotion, pauses and emphasis of the oral record.

As already discussed, identifying material has been removed by the use of pseudonyms and through a generalized discussion of the women's backgrounds. The women however have chosen their own pseudonyms and this enhances the personal "feel" of the written record of the women's stories. Geographical references have also been disguised so as to avoid identifying information. Women who gave me feedback about the interview process responded favourably. The openness and the depth of the women's sharing is also evidence of a favourable response by the women to the interview/storytelling experience and to the rapport established between myself and each woman participant.

As increasing numbers of the women's stories were being completed prominent themes for analysis began to emerge. It became evident that there were specific cross-cultural themes in common (in terms of both Maori and Pakeha) concerning what the women considered important for positive after-death experiences. This proved significant in structuring the analysis of the women's stories and also when considering the potential practical significance of the research findings. Although death was obviously voiced as a sad and upsetting experience, all the women identified things that made the after-death experience special, helpful, and at times even wonderful. This became the major focus of the analysis.

I decided to present the bulk of the research analysis in the format of direct quotes from the women's stories. This was a way to allow the women to speak for themselves — and this is what I wanted to achieve. I have only edited the quotes to eliminate identifying information (by omitting or changing the names of people, places and groups) and to avoid repetition.

It was from this initial structure that I increasingly began to add more of my own analysis as the researcher. As the work on the women's stories progressed, I found that two key chapters emerged. Additional excerpts from some of the women's stories also contributed to the chapter on the historical and social policy analysis of Maori after-death practices and beliefs, Chapter 6, and the chapter describing and analysing the action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group, Chapter 8. In the statements included in the action research chapter by the past and present members of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Group about being part of this group, the women are identified by their own first names. This is a "public" community group and our identities have been openly available to the public through media coverage and community networks and therefore we have agreed that it is appropriate to maintain this openness within this excerpt of the women's storytelling. The women of the group have agreed to this.

Introducing the Women

All except one of the women participants are mothers. Half are either married or living with a partner, five have had their marriages dissolved or are separated and another five have never married. Several of the women identify as lesbian or bisexual. Their ages range from mid-twenties to early seventies. As is evident in the individual profiles there is a mixture of working and middle class backgrounds. A number of the women depended on social welfare benefits for their income. All the women at the time of the interviews lived in the Manawatu region, most being residents of Palmerston North. The tribal backgrounds of the

Maori women include Rangitane, Te Atiawa, Ati Haunui a Paparangi, Ngati Hauti, Ngati Kahungunu, Nga Puhi, Ngati Raukawa, Nga Rauru and Ngati Tuwharetoa⁵.

Alice identifies as Maori with a Pakeha background also. She is in her twenties and has a provincial, rural and urban background. After completing secondary school to the seventh form level she went on to complete a Bachelors degree at university. Her paid work has been in social work. *Alice* is Catholic and has experienced several close deaths.

Em is of Maori and Pakeha descent and is in her thirties. She left secondary school when about thirteen or fourteen. She has a mainly urban background. She completed School Certificate as an adult student and has also completed a community work certificate. Her paid work has included pricing and ordering in the retail industry, horticultural work, waitressing and being assistant manager of a takeaway bar. She has an extensive background in voluntary community work. *Em* was raised as a Roman Catholic but now identifies with pagan and women's spiritualities. She has a lot of death experience but not of really close deaths.

Jane is in her forties and is Pakeha. She was born and has lived most of her life in urban areas of England, returning to tertiary education as a mature student and completing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. She has experienced a wide range of occupations from factory and shop assistant work to lecturing and research jobs and has also been involved in unpaid community work in both England and New Zealand. *Jane* was brought up in a nonreligious family but recognizes her own spirituality. She does not put a word on this but feels that perhaps egalitarianism is a good way to describe it. She has experienced some close deaths.

Isabelle is Pakeha and in her twenties. She has both a rural and urban background and has lived overseas for several years mainly in London. She stayed at secondary school to the School Certificate level and has now completed a Bachelors degree as a mature student. Her paid work has included factory work, shearing gangs, hotel work, fruit and vegetable picking and working for social welfare. *Isabelle* was brought up a Roman Catholic but left at about fourteen. She is attracted to New Age, Eastern and women's spirituality. She has had two close death experiences.

⁵ It should be noted that many Maori tribes are not represented in the small sample of Maori women participating in the women's stories of their after-death experiences. Some of these unrepresented tribes have been more effective than others in resisting the colonizing process, particularly with regard to tangihanga and other after-death related traditions.

Karen, a Pakeha, is in her thirties and has lived in provincial and urban areas of New Zealand and spent some time overseas. She left school at fourteen but returned to education as a mature student and has now completed a university degree. Her work background includes manual labouring, agricultural, factory and hotel work. She has had a lot of experience with death, some of this being close deaths. She did not have a religious upbringing and identifies her spirituality as non-Christian, more of a universal spirituality.

Kristal is in her thirties, a Pakeha who has a predominantly provincial background but who has also lived in Palmerston North. She spent only two years at secondary school and has work experience in factory, laundry, cleaning and shop assistant work. She does not believe in traditional religion but does have her own spirituality. She has experienced several close deaths.

Lily, in her twenties, is Pakeha and has an urban background. She completed 6th Form Certificate at secondary school. Her paid work experience includes being an accounts clerk and a community worker. She has also been involved in voluntary community work. She was brought up as Catholic but is now a "nonbeliever" who is interested in feminist spiritualities and old women's culture. Her death experience includes close death experience as a child.

Lucy is Maori and is in her fifties. She has both a rural and urban background and has lived for a number of years overseas in different parts of the Pacific. She completed nursing training after secondary school and a variety of on the job training. Her paid work includes nursing, social and community work. *Lucy* is Catholic. She has extensive death experience including a lot of close deaths.

Maria is Pakeha and in her fifties. She has an urban background. She is a Roman Catholic sister who has completed university qualifications. She has worked as a teacher and community worker. *Maria* has had several close death experiences.

Mere is in her seventies, of Maori and Pakeha descent and has completed tertiary education to the postgraduate level. She is a retired senior educator who has also worked in the area of Maori welfare. She is still active in the community. *Mere* has a rural, provincial and urban background and identifies as having no formal religion. She has had a lot of death experience including a number of close deaths.

Moana is a Pakeha with some distant Maori ancestry. She is in her thirties and has an urban background. Her paid work experience includes being a shop assistant, kitchen hand, factory worker, cleaner and community worker. She also has a background in voluntary community work. She left school at sixteen without any formal qualifications but has completed several papers at university as a mature student. She has had a lot of death experiences but only one very close death at the time of her interview. *Moana* was brought up as a Presbyterian but left the church at fifteen. She did not think she had any spirituality until she discovered nature based and women's spirituality.

Leah, in her sixties is Maori and Jewish. She went on from secondary school to complete a number of papers towards a university degree. Her paid work background has involved clerical work, Maori affairs and the arts. She lived rurally as a child with her later life in provincial and urban areas of Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Leah* has had an extensive involvement in community activities. Her spirituality involves both Maori and Jewish beliefs and practices. She has an extensive death experience including many close deaths.

Patricia is Maori and in her thirties. She attained U.E. (University Entrance) at secondary school and went on to complete nursing qualifications. Her paid work experience has been in the area of nursing and education. She grew up in a rural area, moving to a city as a teenager and is again living in a rural community in which she is active. *Patricia* has had a lot of death experience including several close deaths. She is an Anglican.

Priscilla is an Australian born Maori who is in her twenties and has an urban background. She completed secondary school to the School Certificate level. Her paid work experience includes being a shop assistant, cleaner, mail sorter and manageress. *Priscilla* belongs to the Latter Day Saint church and has had a few close experiences of death.

Rosa is Pakeha and in her thirties. She went on to tertiary education after secondary school and completed a polytechnic qualification. She has also completed a university degree as a mature student. Her paid work has included waitressing, working in a shearing gang, laboratory work, tutoring and community work. *Rosa* also has a lot of voluntary community work experience. She has lived in small provincial towns as well as urban Aotearoa/New Zealand. She was brought up as an Anglican but now identifies as pagan and is influenced by the women's spirituality movement. At the time of her interview she had experienced one close death along with a number of not so close deaths.

Sophia is a Pakeha in her mid-thirties. She completed a years secretarial tertiary education and has a background in office, small business and communications work. She is also involved in voluntary community work. *Sophia* has lived in provincial and urban areas of Aotearoa/New Zealand. She has a Roman Catholic background but now finds it hard to put a label on her spirituality which has been influenced by Steiner, New Age and feminist spiritualities. She has had no really close deaths but a number of death experiences involving extended family, friends and work colleagues.

Vera is in her fifties, an Anglo-Irish Pakeha who was born and educated in England. She has been involved in tertiary education in New Zealand as a mature student and her paid work background includes laboratory work and community work. She has lived in both provincial and urban areas of Aotearoa/New Zealand and is very active in the community. *Vera* identifies as being a Catholic, postChristian feminist. She has experienced a few close deaths.

Zarah is in her thirties. She identifies as being Pakeha with Maori background. She has lived in mainly urban parts of New Zealand, completing U.E. (University Entrance) at secondary school and then nursing and midwifery training. She also has a university degree. *Zarah's* paid work background includes nursing, midwifery and tutoring. She was brought up as Roman Catholic but has rejected Christianity. She acknowledges she has a spirituality which is very personal. She has a lot of experience of death including a number of close deaths.

Reflecting on My Research Methods: Their Strengths and Weaknesses

My rejection of the positivist approach to research, my decision not to include quantitative research methods and the small size of my sample for the collection of women's stories of their death experiences could be considered unscientific and invalid by those who demand "facts" and figures. This however is obviously not my position. I am satisfied that the extensive public records research, the action research and the in-depth one to one interviews to obtain women's stories of their death experiences were all equally important components contributing to the development of this thesis.

Selecting participants for the women's stories through attendance at a workshop and through snowballing techniques was likely to attract women similar to myself. This could be seen in terms of presenting a barrier to diversity in the research participants. Yet seeking a wide diversity of women participants brings potential issues of oppression also. Women very different to myself may not relate to me well (and vice versa), I may not be an appropriate researcher to meet their needs. It may also be argued that I am exploiting certain participants, wanting their presence to fulfil my "academic" need to fulfil diversity requirements. I chose a bicultural emphasis which I consider quite fitting for research in a country that is seeking to come to terms with the relationship between, and material and cultural rights of, its first nation Maori peoples, and the more recent predominantly Pakeha colonizers. This could be challenged also in terms of a lack of diversity but again the small number of participants chosen to allow in-depth research material made seeking to include many cultures not feasible. The women participating in the women's stories research did prove to be quite a diverse group of women. This is evident in the outline of the women's backgrounds included in the previous section.

The individual interviews with women (women's stories) was at no stage an attempt at neutral research and at no stage an attempt at selecting a representative group of Manawatu or Palmerston North women. My aim was to talk to a small number of local women who were willing to speak candidly to me about their death experiences. This research is very much linked with the action research which is change oriented. Women were encouraged to identify what choices they wanted (or wanted to help others achieve) as they reflected on what felt good or helpful and what did not, within their experiences of death.

Death is generally not a subject that people find easy to talk about. Discussing the stark realities of death goes beyond taking death out of "the closet". It is more a question of "looking death in the eye", something that most people still avoid doing. The style of the research is often quite intimate. It involved women expressing their feelings, sharing family upsets and deep hurts and in some cases entering the realms of the "nonrational". I feel that knowing me (or knowing of me) enhanced the trust between myself and the women participating and increased the intimacy and the depth of what women shared in their stories. A researcher seeking a relationship of rapport and solidarity with her research participants (both in the action research and the women's stories) rather than neutrality, objectivity and detachment was important to achieving this.

The community work of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group attracted women willing to openly discuss the realities of death and take action relating to this. The women involved in this research had a lot in common. We all shared an active interest in challenging institutionalized death practices, providing self-help after-death information and promoting homedead choices. This can be seen as both a strength and a weakness. Like-mindedness undermines diversity. Yet we all brought different views, strengths, ideas and experiences to the group as well as a feminist solidarity about our goals and process.

As I listened to the women's stories it also became evident that all the women involved shared much in common with the approach of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group. All the women in their storytelling included significant challenges to institutionalized death practices. Their storytelling works to demystify death, promotes homedead choices and provides self-help after-death information. Although only eighteen women were included in the women's stories research, their voices create a solidarity as well as a diversity of experience that goes far beyond the bounds of this small group.

Part Three:

**Understanding After-death Policy
and Practice — An Historical
Analysis**

A society both shapes and is shaped by its social policy (Burden, 1987:25).

Part Three of this thesis is a social policy analysis of after-death practice and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and in Britain our major Euro-western influence through the British colonization processes which began here in earnest in the 19th century. A very broad definition of social policy underlies this. In order to explain the approach I have adopted I will outline developments in social policy research that have influenced this discipline in Aotearoa/New Zealand and myself as a student of social policy.

Social policy research has had a tendency to draw on the British social administration tradition which focuses on the provision of social services by government. This was both a functionalist and empirical approach to social policy which was first established by the poverty research of Booth and Roundtree in the late 19th century. This tradition assumed that there were no deep divisions in society but instead certain problem areas. It was thought that these problems could be overcome through small improvements to the existing system.

The critical social policy tradition which became a major contributor to analysis from the 1970s broadened the previous social administration approach by incorporating a left wing sociological and historical analysis. Richard Titmus was an early contributor to this critical tradition. In his work on the welfare state first published in 1958 he also included a class analysis and analysis concerned with the position of women (Titmus, 1969 (first published 1958):88-103). His broad and critical approach to social policy includes historical, sociological, cultural and religious material in his human blood and social policy analysis (Titmus, 1970:11,15-18).

The main thrust of the critical tradition, which has developed from the 1970s, has been to bring to the forefront of social policy analysis a critique of the capitalist system and research which explores the tension between capitalist and socialist values within the development and erosion of the welfare state (Gough, 1979; Wilding and George, 1975). Furthermore people like Alan Walker (1982) have begun to point out that social policy is not just about government but needs

to be broadened to include any institutionalized plans or intentions affecting people.

This incorporation of conflict analyses of capitalist societies and general broadening of the approaches to social policy is also evident in social policy developments in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Royal Commission of Social Policy (RCSP) set up in 1986 heralded a major contribution to the meaning and implications of social policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Royal Commission was established to facilitate a nation-wide inquiry so as to establish social policy goals and recommendations about what needed to be done to create a more just and fair society (RCSP, 1988, Vol I:v,xvii). Its 1988 four volume report (that has deliberately been ignored by the free-market approaches of both the Labour and National governments in power since its release) was collated after considering approximately six thousand submissions representing some hundreds of thousands of people in every part of the country (RCSP, 1988:xvii).

The Royal Commission's report (which includes a selection of individual papers) adopts a broad approach to social policy. A large number of submissions to the RCSP stressed that a social policy analysis needed to include an awareness of the interconnection and interdependence of social, cultural and economic development (RCSP, 1988, Vol II:279). Many submissions and papers submitted to the RCSP also emphasised the importance of environmental, cultural and spiritual well-being to social policy (Benland, 1988; Dann, 1988; Henare, 1988; Jenkins, 1988; McCallum, 1988) as well as the more conventional social policy topics such as income support, work and unemployment, housing, education and health.

The RCSP states that social policy encompasses a whole range of social behaviour when assessing the values, concerns and goals of a society (RCSP, 1988, Vol I:xvii). Some submissions to the Royal Commission have gone as far as arguing that social policy encompasses everything that contributes to social-well-being (RCSP, 1988, Vol I:329). I am in basic agreement with this position. In the two chapters that follow (and in the theoretical and methodological framework which underlies them) I have purposely woven cultural, spiritual and environmental as well as historical aspects into an analysis of after-death policy and practices in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the British

influences which have contributed to this. I argue that this approach is important to the development of an in-depth understanding of after-death policy, practices and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and to women's changing roles in relation to this.

Benland (1988:453), for example, in a paper included in the RCSP, challenges us to include the dimension of the human spirit when considering questions and answers about social policies that can improve our communities and our wider societies. Our vast cultural heritages have all included a spiritual realm. Every aspect of pre-European Maori tribal society, for example, had a *taha wairua* (spiritual) dimension (Benland, 1988:454). That which is spiritual does not need to be about organized religion, it is something much larger which often no words are fully able to describe (Benland, 1988:453). A sense of spirit, of *taha wairua*, can inform and inspire creativity, policies of empowerment and communities of beauty as well as function. A lack of the spiritual factor can lead to cold charity, faceless bureaucracy and no sense or feeling of community (Benland, 1988:455-456).

I share with Benland (1988) the position that a definition of social policy needs to include a spiritual dimension.

And then we might find we are people of vision, a people of wisdom, whose cities have faces, whose cultures have heart and compassion, and whose offspring have heritage and hope (Benland, 1988:465).

This approach is very much linked to the passionate and active politics already outlined within the methodology chapter and identified in the ecofeminist theoretical framework.

My approach to social policy analysis has much in common with the critical social policy tradition. However instead of focusing on how capitalist relations have influenced social policy as is usual to the critical approach, I have focused on the broader colonization processes of which capitalist influences have been a major component.

The first chapter in this Part Three of the thesis is an historical and social policy analysis of the impact of colonization on Maori and its affects on Maori after-

death practices and beliefs. This chapter begins with an overview of the impact and consequences of British colonization on Maori, the first nation peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This leads on to a discussion of colonization in terms of the position and status of Maori women. The chapter then shifts its focus to look at traditional Maori beliefs and practices surrounding death.

Firstly Maori myth is explored in relation to death. Myth is a powerful form of cultural symbolism and metaphor, which influences our patterns of thought, feeling, psychology, spirituality, creativity and action by providing sacred representations of the human relationship to the universe and the paranormal (Allen, 1986:102-117; Caputi, 1992:425-427; Wilshire, 1994:3-4). Maori myth incorporates traditional Maori theories of death and dying. It provides important insights into traditional Maori beliefs about death.

The chapter then moves on to a discussion of traditional Maori death practices and how these have both adapted and persisted in the face of Pakeha colonization. The roles of Maori women are then examined in relation to these traditional Maori death practices and this is followed by relevant excerpts from the women's stories interviews in which Maori women reflect on Maori death practices. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the Maori and Pakeha after-death practices of today.

The other chapter in this section looks at British historical and social policy developments and their influence on after-death practices and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This chapter begins with an outline of the colonization that has occurred over the centuries in Britain. This is then explored in relation to developments in British history and policy that have influenced our after-death practices and beliefs. These influences were brought to Aotearoa/New Zealand with British colonization. The professionalization of death that has occurred in both Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand (and which has been the general trend in Euro-western societies) is documented and discussed along with the accompanying legislation which relates to after-death practices and beliefs in both Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The chapter then ends with a discussion of the predominantly Pakeha movements of the mid to late 20th century which are working to de-institutionalize and reclaim death, by returning control to the dying and to the family, friends and community of the dead and dying.

CHAPTER 6

MAORI AFTER-DEATH POLICY, PRACTICE, LEGENDS AND BELIEFS BEFORE AND DURING BRITISH COLONIZATION

The Impact and Consequences of Colonization in Aotearoa/New Zealand for Maori

The initial colonization process was a rapid one in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Maori tribes who were sovereign nations in 1840, the year the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, had become subordinated to Pakeha by 1890 (Pearson, 1984:208). Maori sovereignty was not surrendered but was taken, through cultural imperialism, trickery, by numbers, force, including war, by a contempt for Maori and a nonacceptance of Maori opposition (Awater, 1984:13). The British imperial and colonial legislators and the New Zealand government that they initiated has now for over a century and a half passed laws which violate the promises given to Maori under the Treaty (Kelsey, 1984:32).

Maori first contact with Pakeha was with whalers, sealers and traders. They were the advance guard of colonization (Walker, 1990:79) which was followed by the missionaries. For the missionaries the Bible itself was used as a justification for colonization as they believed themselves to be "God's chosen" with the task of converting the Maori from heathenism to Christianity and civilisation, with Christian and civilised being considered one and the same (Walker, 1990:85). Most missionaries perceived Maori spiritual beliefs as filthy and debasing. Missionaries opposed sacred Maori icons as works of the devil, they condemned the tohunga who were the spiritual leaders, healers, teachers and guardians of the traditional knowledge of the Maori, and had ancestral carvings mutilated so as to remove their explicitly carved sex organs (Walker, 1990:9,85-86). Walker argues that missionaries were well aware that the destruction of Maori sacred symbols would facilitate their replacement by their own (Walker, 1990:87). In fact the missionary crusaders aimed to destroy much of Maori culture. They not only opposed cannibalism and infanticide but also cultural practices including reciprocal feast giving, marriage customs, Maori art, chants, karakia (prayers), ceremonies, modes of dress and adornment which missionaries claimed were pagan and/or satanic (Ballara, 1986:11). The colonial Christian dualistic ideology represented "good" as white culture and the detached God, and "evil" as the native culture

and their nature and land-based Gods and Goddesses. These deities, derived from nature and the ancestors, were personified by Christian colonialism as the work of the devil (Awatere, 1984:70-72). The Maori myths, beliefs and stories which included affirmations of the wonder and power of women were reshaped and retold (RCSP, 1988, Vol II:160-163).

What the colonizer found was a land of noble savages narrating his/her stories of the wonder of women. Their myths and beliefs had to be reshaped and retold. The missionaries were hell-bent (heaven-bent) on destroying their pagan ways. Hence, in the re-telling of our myths, by Maori male informants to Pakeha male writers who lacked the understanding and significance of Maori cultural beliefs, Maori women find their mana wahine destroyed (Kuni Jenkins cited in the RCSP, 1988, Vol II:160-161).

Following the missionaries, came the influx of Pakeha settlers wanting land and a Pakeha government. The New Zealand Wars (Raupatu) of the mid to late 19th century (Belich, 1988; Scott, 1987), and confiscation and expropriation of Maori land and fisheries by the New Zealand settler government served the colonizers' purpose. This was followed by the establishment of schools for assimilation (following on from the mission schools), the destruction of the Maori economic base and the destruction of Maori communities (Walker, 1990:106-108,142,146). Some colonists were paternalistic while others were openly in contempt of Maori who did not share the Victorian work ethic of the Pakeha and so were seen as lazy and wasteful (Ballara, 1986:14,21-23).

Legislation enacted by the Pakeha government followed on from, and linked in with, the initiatives of the missionaries. This can be seen for example in the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907 which outlawed the tohunga, the traditional Maori leaders, healers and teachers (Kelsey, 1984:35) that the missionaries had already worked to override and also by the education legislation for assimilation. In fact Pakeha in general saw their "good" human law as built upon the divine law revealed by God himself (Kelsey, 1984:31).

The colonization process involved a concerted legislative campaign and court rulings, which were imposed on Maori by Pakeha legislators and judiciary, and which effectively stripped Maori of their land (Kelsey, 1984:21-36). This was effected by a sequence of Acts of Parliament such as the Land Claims Ordinance of 1841 which claimed "waste land" as Crown land, the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863 that provided for the confiscation of Maori land in any district where a "considerable" number of Maori were believed to be in rebellion and the Public Works Act 1928 which gave government the power to take land for

wide-ranging purposes such as subdivision, "better utilisation" and public amenities. The consequence of the colonization experience meant the impoverishment of Maori communities which were at the same time being decimated by epidemics of Pakeha introduced illnesses which for Maori were particularly lethal (Ramsden, 1994b:204; Walker, 1990:10).

An academic imperialism was also involved in the colonization process in Aotearoa. This saw the British analysis (ideology) being deemed common sense and natural (Te Awekotuku, 1984:245-247). This academic arm of colonization led to the imposition of the skills, needs, desires and intentions of the dominant group (the British) wilfully over all others. As Te Awekotuku (1984:244) points out, Pakeha colonists were guilty of this just as surely as the name New Zealand was taken from the so-called first discoverer of this land despite Maori discovery hundreds of years before. This academic imperialism is still evident in the history books of today. The history of the New Zealand Wars for example has been a situation of one-sided evidence, a patriarchal British dominated historical record which tells the stories of "remarkable" men (Belich, 1988:12-13; Ramsden, 1994b:202).

The loss of tribal lands, the breakdown of the Maori economic base and resulting poverty ultimately pushed Maori into the cities. Up until 1926, 90 percent of the Maori population was still rural (Walker, 1990:186,197). However the experience of World War I and World War II acted as a catalyst for Maori to abandon their rural poverty. Maori urbanization was particularly evident in the 25 years following World War II (Walker, 1979:40; Walker, 1990:197). Most Maori who sought work in the cities were poorly educated according to European standards and were forced to seek jobs and homes in the run-down inner-city areas (Walker, 1979:33). Although many Maori with kinship ties formed family support networks, and those without kin in the city could link up with voluntary Maori associations such as Maori church groups, the Maori Wardens Association and Maori Women's Welfare League, the cultural losses that started with European contact continued alongside this disruption of social ties and loss of whanau support (Durie, 1994b:71; Walker, 1979:36-38). As a result most Maori now no longer speak their language; there is a lack of access to Maori elders who can teach the young about things Maori; high percentages of Maori (as compared to Pakeha) leave school with no recognized qualification, become youth offenders, are in prison, are unemployed and suffer poor health (Pomare and de Boer, 1988; Walker, 1990:38-40). In this urban environment many Maori people became alienated from their tribal identity — something which is inseparable from loss of language and culture. As well as the "divide and rule" tactics recognized in colonization theory, for Maori and other tribal peoples there has also been the "bring them together and rule" tactics which are

divisive because tribal people lose everything in losing their own tribal identity (Pere, 1987:57-58; Pere, 1988:10; Rangihau, 1975:233).

Mihi Edwards (1990) in her autobiographical account *Mihipeka: Early Years* describes in more personal terms some of the effects of colonization on Maori. Mihi (who is now in her 70s) talks about how she and other Maori were made to feel ashamed of their Maori self. She and the other Maori children were hit by their school teachers for using Maori words while the Pakeha children were threatened with, and received, the strap, if they did not tell tales on Maori children speaking Maori in the playground (Edwards, 1990:29,31,35). This assault on the Maori language in Mihi Edwards' school occurred in the mid-twenties and by the late 1930s the children in the area where Mihi lived no longer spoke Maori (Edwards, 1990:36). This is an example of an educational aspect of Pakeha strategies to assimilate Maori that occurred over several generations.

Mihi was made to feel ashamed of her colour, of her poverty, her Maori ways and her Maori name. She wanted to dress and be like the Pakeha children. As she grew older she changed her name to a Pakeha name and started a new "false" life in which she pretended to be Pakeha (as a light skinned Maori). This was partly to get better jobs but also about her desire to live a comfortable life, to be accepted as, and by, Pakeha and have lighter skinned children who would not suffer as she did. She notes this was a common aim in her generation of Maori (Edwards, 1990:24,28,30,78,110,122-131).

Colonization for Maori then (as for other colonized/oppressed peoples) was/is an attack over many realms and at many levels, all of which are interrelated. It has involved an assault on the identity, body, spirit and confidence of Maori (Ramsden, 1994b:202), and an eroding and destruction of the spiritual, cultural, social, economic, health, educational, political and legal knowledge and practice dimensions of Maori life. It hits at the deep personal level of individuals and whanau (families) as well as undermining the power bases of the hapu (sub-tribes) and iwi (tribes). It has had a cumulative affect. The initial impacts of colonization have in turn led on to other colonialist policy which further and further weakened Maori power and autonomy.

Maori however have a long history of opposition to the oppressive policy of the Pakeha colonizers and this is today gathering momentum. Maori opposition has particularly centred around demands for Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) to be honoured and there are still in existence long time Maori political and spiritual movements such as Kingitanga,

Ringatu and Ratana which have worked for Maori rights and for the continuance of Maori language and custom (Awatere, 1984; Walker, 1987; Walker, 1990). An increased Maori activism however emerged in the 1970s and this has continued (Awatere, 1984:92-107; Walker, 1987:161-170). Maori people have developed a clearer understanding of the Pakeha as colonizer along with theories for averting assimilation and specific action strategies for reviving things Maori. This is seen in the work of Maori academics and Maori cultural/political movements emerging at this time, the related recent resurgence of te reo Maori (Maori language) through initiatives such as Te Kohanga Reo ("language nests" for preschool children and their whanau) and kura kaupapa Maori schools, the current moves for tribal development and the many other Maori initiatives. More recently this has led to an escalation of land occupation protests for the return of Maori land. Some Pakeha too are working towards te tino rangatiratanga (Maori sovereignty and self-determination) in Aotearoa/New Zealand through supporting Maori initiatives and through working on antiracism and Treaty of Waitangi education and action programmes in the community. The focus of these programmes is to educate non-Maori about the injustices of our colonial past and present, and the responsibilities non-Maori have in regard to honouring the Treaty and its claims of partnership and te tino rangitiratanga.

Colonization and the Position of Maori Women

Me aro koe ki te ha o Hine-ahu-one

Pay heed to the dignity of women

(a Maori proverb, Mira Szaszy, Maori Women's Welfare League, National Conference Theme 1984, cited in RCSP, 1988, Vol II:158)

Maori feminists, prominent strong Maori women leaders and Maori women within the whanau are challenging the sexist as well as racist influences of colonization. Through the colonization process Maori concepts, beliefs and myths have been reshaped and retold in a way which has undermined mana wahine — the authority and prestige of Maori women (Henry, 1994:122-123; Jenkins cited in the RCSP, 1988, Vol II:160-161). The Judaeo-Christian patriarchal ideology of the Pakeha colonizers has led to a re-definition of gender relationships between Maori men and women (Ramsden, 1994:255) and a re-interpreting of Maori women and their stories

that shove her into a latter day Judaeo-Christian line which sees women as unclean and sees the elevation of God the Father and God as man (Te Awekotuku, 1991:18).

The patriarchal institutions of the Pakeha superimposed Christian morality and Victorian values in Aotearoa/New Zealand which have over time seriously eroded the cultural, social, political and economic structures of Maori people (Kotuku Partners, 1994:105). Christianity and colonization undermined and damaged "the warrior, the shaman, the initiator, the visionary, the groundbreaker — the women at the front" in Maori women's nature (Te Awekotuku, 1994:31). This is also a heritage which has been largely hidden. For example Te Awekotuku (1991:100-104) has recorded previously hidden evidence of mana wahine (the power and influence of Maori women) through herstories, including those of Maori women elders as the keepers of tribal law, and of Maori women carvers, which challenges today's claims that Maori carving has traditionally been a totally male realm.

Another example of the undermining of mana wahine concerns speaking rights on the marae which have become seen as, and represented as, belonging to men (even when they cannot speak Maori), when in fact karanga, waiata and tangi as well as whaikorero all count as traditional oral text (Anderson, 1994:13; Henry, 1994:123; Irwin, 1992:12-15; Irwin, 1994:78; Te Awekotuku, 1994:31). The karanga (call onto the marae) is a women only oral tradition as is the tangi (ritual wailing at the tangihanga). Women "spoke" and today still "speak" through karanga, tangi and waiata (Irwin, 1994:78). Women are needed to begin important rituals with the karanga — this alerts the dead that a time of importance is beginning on the marae (Anderson, 1994:13,15). The traditional forms of Maori women's dialogue such as karanga are not of lesser importance than male forms of dialogue such as whaikorero (Henry, 1994:123). Perceptions of the whaikorero as more important than the karanga is an example of the influence of patriarchal Euro-Western dualistic and hierarchical thinking in Aotearoa/New Zealand which assumed that what men did in Maori society was important and what women did was not (Irwin, 1994:77). It should also be noted that in some tribes such as Ngati Porou and Ngati Kahungungu high-born women do have the right to whaikorero on the marae (Irwin, 1992:15; Pere, 1987:59).

Maori women's colonial experience has led to their diminished and devalued status in relation to women's formal roles. They have become seen as not being able to "speak" on the marae and in relation to this they have been denied membership of tribal trust boards and denied jobs at all levels of the public service (Irwin, 1992:18; Kotuku Partners, 1994:105-106). This shows that not only do men extend participatory rights in Maori culture to other men before Maori women but that they also abuse cultural power off the marae to disempower Maori women (Irwin, 1992:18). As Irwin (1992:18) notes, strange new cultural practices have occurred which see men bonding to each other through patriarchy to

give each other participatory rights across Maori and Pakeha culture in ways which exclude Maori women. Irwin calls this an artificial inflation of mana tane (male power and influence) which can get in the way of keeping Maori culture honest to itself and to Maori people. She asserts that mana tane and mana wahine need to be equally powerful for the empowerment of all Maoridom (Irwin, 1992:19; Irwin, 1994:77).

Mana wahine symbolizes and defines the status, power and authority of Maori women and represents Maori women's matrilineal descent from Papatuanuku, the Earth Mother (Kotuku Partners, 1994:105). Traditional evidence of mana wahine has continued in contemporary Maori society and this is now gathering momentum. Anderson (1994:8-9) describes how she and her brothers and sisters were brought up by her mother to know that women are whare tangata (the house of the people, the bearers of humankind) and Papatuanuku, and as such have great mana and deserve respect, and should only be addressed with words and concepts which foster equivalent respect and mana. Pere (1987) asserts that within her own tribal groups women are of paramount importance. This she says is symbolized in the positive concepts associated with women (wahine) such as the first human parent being female; Papatuanuku (mother earth); awa tapu — sacred river of life (menstruation); and hapu meaning pregnancy as well as large kinship group (Pere, 1987:59). Pere also notes the mana of women in terms of women being the first communicators on the marae and says that in her Tuhoe tribe no self-respecting male will go on to the marae without being accompanied by a woman. Also Rose Pere herself has been given full speaking rights on the marae (that is, she can whaikorero also) within her tribe of Ngati Kahungungu (Pere, 1987:59). Pere asserts Maori traditions of male/female equality in the sharing of roles in the whanau such as the joint care of children, the sharing of fencing and ploughing work and both boys and girls playing rugby at school (Pere, 1987:60).

Maori men have suffered because of British colonization but have also gathered power from the Euro-Western patriarchal system which has worked to position Maori women below Maori men (Henry, 1994:122). Maori men become part of the cause of the racist and sexist oppression faced by Maori women when they practice what Pakeha men have preached (McArdell, 1992:87). Part of the healing process for Maori women is to reintegrate into Maori culture the various traditional elements of mana wahine — "warrior and whare tangata" (Te Awekotuku, 1994:31).

The Maori Way of Death as Represented by Maori Myth

The versions of the Maori myths contained in this section are a compilation from various written sources. Slight variations of these myths occur. These variations are often due to the differing iwi traditions.

Hine-Nui-Te-Po (Goddess Of Death) and the Mythical Origins of Human Mortality for Maori

The Goddess Hine-nui-te-Po is the guardian of the underworld and friend to the Maori dead who are her descendants.

Hine-nui-te-Po was once Hine-titama, the Dawn Maiden "who bound earthly night to earthly day" (Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991:34). Hine-titama was the first born of Hine-ahu-one and the God Tane. Hine-ahu-one was the first human being. She was formed by the God Tane under instruction from Papatuanuku, the Earth mother, who told Tane to shape Hine-ahu-one from the clay of her pubic region at Kurawaka.

Hine-titama later became the wife of Tane, not knowing he was also her father. When she discovered this, Hine-titama was angry and shamed and left the "world of light" to go to the "dark world". Hine-titama instructed Tane not to follow her, but to remain with their children and to care for them in the "world of light" while she prepared an after life for them. In doing this Hine-titama became Hine-nui-te-Po (Great Lady of the Night), Goddess of Rarohenga (the underworld). In this dark realm Hine-nui-te-Po was once again a loving mother to her children after their death (Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991:28-37,58-61,70-71,78).

Another part of the myth told of Hine-nui-te-Po also concerns the demi-God Maui, Mauikitiki-a-Taranga. He was the magical stillborn son of Taranga who was given life through Taranga's action of cutting off her topknot of hair and wrapping him in this and so enabling him to float out to sea to be cared for by the gulls and fishes and then one day return to her (Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991:40-43). There are many stories told of Maui's adventures and achievements. One important myth is about Maui's unsuccessful challenge to Hine-nui-te-Po as he tried to achieve human immortality (Voykovic, 1981:23-24; Batten, 1995:171-172). In an attempt to defeat death Maui tried to gain living entry to the vagina of Hine-nui-te-Po, "the gateway through which only the dead may pass", and living exit (Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991:58). Maui tried to do this while Hine-nui-te-Po was sleeping. Maui took with him his friends the birds to bear witness to this miraculous feat and instructed them to be very quiet.

It is said that tiwaiwaka (piwaiwaka), the fantail was not able to remain quiet at the strange and humorous sight of Maui entering Hine-nui-te-Po and that this mirthful outburst by tiwaiwaka helped alert the Goddess. She awoke, closed her thighs and Maui was killed, "achieving the gift not of immortality, but of homecoming, following death" (Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991:58,78-79; Oppenheim, 1973:92).

This powerful traditional Maori myth contains important imagery about the foolishness of trying to conquer death and the need for continued balance between life and death (Batten, 1995:172). This is a wisdom that has been passed down through Maori generations for a great many centuries. This and other Maori myths also illustrate the association between women, the female element and death (Oppenheim, 1973:93).

The Spirit Journey

Traditional Maori myth describes the spirit journey after death for Maori people. The wairua (spirit) of the dead person is said to travel north along spirit paths to Muriwhenua (North Cape) and Te Reinga (Cape Reinga) at the northern most point of Aotearoa. Here, where the two oceans meet, is Te Reinga Wairua (Rerengawairua), the Leaping-Off Place of the Spirits. It is to this place that Maori dead make their final journey and wait for the sun to set before they enter the spirit world.

According to northern myths, the spirits bring a plant emblem from their homeland such as bracken from Taranaki, nikau (a native palm tree) from inland areas or seaweed from the coast. This leaf emblem is placed on the lone hill of Te Arai which is half-way along ninety-mile beach at the north western tip of the North Island. At the end of the beach the spirits climb the summit known as Taumataihumu (Haumu), the highest hill in this area. Here they turn to bid farewell to the land they are leaving. The spirits then cross a small stream called Te Waioraropo (The Water-of-the-Underworld) and if they drink from this water there is no longer a possibility of returning to the world of the living. Next the spirits come to the beach named Te Oneirehia (Twilight Sands) and cross another stream called Te Waingunguru (Waters-of-lamentation). The spirits journey on and cross one last stream before they reach the rocky point of Rerengawairua/Reinga Wairua (the Leaping-Off Place of the Spirits). This stream is known as Te Waiorata because of its reddish water which flows to the famous pohutukawa tree with its exposed root that leads down to the flat rocky platform below. The spirits descend this root Akakitereinga (Te Aka), the pohutukawa Root to the Underworld, that overhangs the cliff, and arrive at the edge of the sea. A deep hole

appears in the sea fringed with long lengths of floating seaweed (Rimuimotau) that sweep back and forth with the tide over this entrance cave known as Maurianuku (Morianuku), Entrance to the Underworld. The seaweed parts to allow the spirits to dive down to Te Po (Rarohenga), the underworld realm of Hine-nui-te-Po, Goddess of death and also Goddess of conception and childbirth.

Motatau is the door of the Reinga that closes the spirits into this realm. Apparent death may not become permanent until the spirit has eaten the food of the Reinga. There are accounts of spirits who have been told to return to their body in the world of the living and instructed not to eat anything in the Po so that they may do this.

It is believed that the spirits again surface at the island of Ohau (part of the Three Kings Islands) where they ascend the highest hill and look back in final farewell at the land they will never see again. From Ohau the spirits follow the western trail of the setting sun which leads to the spirit land. Here they are welcomed by the spirits who have gone before.

There are a number of both male and female deity in the Po, but it is Hine-nui-te-Po who guards the entrance to this night realm and directs spirits along the path of Tane (te ara whanui a Tane i te Muri-wai-hou ki te Po-Tiwaha) west-ward across the great ocean to join their ancestors in the spirit homeland of Hawaiki. There is also the belief that some departed spirits have gone to a region of the Underworld in the stars or in the Rangi (sky). They followed te aratiatia a Tane, a different path which led to this other spirit region. Beyond the horizons and the stars that surround the earth, it is believed that the night realm of te Po and the sky realm of te Rangi are joined together, as one. (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:429-430; Ihimaera, 1989:73; King, 1985:93-94; Marsden, 1975:213-214; Metge, 1976:28,56; Oppenheim, 1973:94-98; Phillipps, 1966:174; Voykovic, 1981:9-11,24)

Traditional Maori Death Practice and Ritual and their Changes and Continuation after Colonization

The tangihanga is the major Maori ceremonial occasion. Within its orbit is drawn virtually every phase of Maori custom and belief that exists today. Its strength is such that in spite of Pakeha opposition, criticism and derision for more than a century, it has survived and continues, with many adaptations and changes in form, but with the same purpose and spirit as in the past (Dansey, 1975:180).

Today as in the past, the tangihanga takes precedence over all other hui. It is looked upon as the most "Maori" gathering of all and to some it would not be classed as a type of hui but rather as having its own unique place. If the need for a tangi arises then another planned hui on the marae concerned is either interrupted or cancelled (Metge, 1976, 246; Salmond, 1975:180).

Death practices and rituals were surrounded by an extremely powerful tapu. This is not quite so pronounced today, but it is still very important to observe the laws of tapu relating to death. The dying and the dead were removed to a shelter on the marae (whare mate, house of death; whare-a-apakura, house of lamentation) which was large enough to also house close relatives. This was always burnt after use because of the powerful tapu. In earlier times any building in which death took place was burned. Today the tupapaku (dead body) may lie in the meeting house, in the porch of the meeting house, or in a tent or building nearby, depending on the kawa (protocol) of the marae. Rituals other than burning are used to remove the tapu of death. After burial the elders lift the tapu back at the marae at the spot where the dead body lay. This is carried out by reciting karakia, a ritual sprinkling of water (the usual contemporary practice), or by consuming a ritual portion of cooked food or liquor. (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:416; Makereti, 1938:273; Marsden, 1975:200; Metge, 1976:28; Salmond, 1975:181,186; Voykovic, 1981:26-27)

Traditionally the duration of the tangihanga was often 2 or 3 weeks, as the body was not buried while mourners were still arriving. Today obviously, mourners are able to travel much more quickly than in earlier times and the modern tangihanga now usually lasts 3 days and 2 nights with burial taking place on the third day after death (Metge, 1976:28,261-262; Salmond:182-185). This shorter duration of the tangihanga is also due to regulations that were imposed on Maori earlier this century, an issue which is developed later in this section.

Traditional Maori society had its own experts who were knowledgeable and skilled in methods of caring for and preserving the tupapaku for the duration of the tangihanga. The methods appear to have differed depending on the tribe and their tribal region. Some for example used daily salt water washes of the body (Rolleston, 1988-1989:37) and others used shark oil (Oppenheim, 1973:44; Waitangi Tribunal, June 1988:22). Today this has usually been replaced by the chemical embalming methods of the Pakeha funeral industry which is performed by embalmers on funeral directors' premises.

Mourners arrived in hapu and iwi groups. In some tribes mourners wore green leaves as a symbol of mourning (as a women only practice or both sexes). For some this is still the custom today. Some also wore chaplets of seaweed that were symbolic of the spirit journey from Cape Reinga west-ward across the ocean to the spirit land. After Pakeha contact muskets were fired to salute the dead and also were a signal that a death had occurred. Gunfire still occurs in some more remote settlements at the time of burial. (Campbell, 1973:109; Metge, 1976:28; Oppenheim, 1973:43; Phillipps, 1966:174)

Mourners brought valuable death gifts (kopaki, roimata) to the tangi. This tradition is still observed today. These gifts may be given for the duration of the tangihanga or permanently, and the intention is clear in the way the ritual gifting is performed. It was traditional for precious heirlooms that were given to be returned at a subsequent tangi. The kopaki of cloaks, mere and all greenstones whether weapons or ornaments were used to wrap round the dead body and keep it "warm" as it lay in state during the tangihanga. Tahuaroa, gifting ceremonies also occurred at the tangi of important people. These ceremonies occurred after the burial and formed the climax to the hospitality at the tangihanga. They involved the presenting of gifts by the family of the dead person to honour all the tribes present at the tangihanga and also important individual chiefs. These gifts were often of food but other gifts such as cloaks were also given. These gifts were a material symbol of the more important social recognition or gratitude to the manuhiri (visitors) attending the tangihanga. (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:420,427; Del Mar, 1924:85; King, 1983:139; Makereti, 1938:77,323; Metge, 1976:28; Phillipps, 1966:174; Salmond, 1975:104)

Although the tangihanga of today is still a ritual time which is highly charged with emotion, in earlier times the emotional display was even more intense. The nose was left to drip unchecked as this demonstrated the belief that tears and mucus cast on the marae avenged death. Grief was also expressed by self mutilation. The closest women relatives and sometimes men cut their hair and used obsidian flakes or sharp shells to slash their bodies until they bled. They stood naked from the waist up and slashed their arms, breast, faces and lower legs. The older women would cut themselves deep enough to cause scarring to their bodies and rubbed dye such as from charcoal into the cuts to make permanent marks. In the first few days of the tangihanga and intermittently throughout the night there was almost a continuous wailing from the women. In earlier times there was also a stricter observation of fasting by the chief women mourners who kept the continuous vigil watch over the tupapaku. (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:417; Campbell, 1973:108-109; Dansey, 1975:178; Metge, 1976:28; Oppenheim, 1973:50-52; Salmond, 1975:146,182; Voykovic, 1981:30-31)

The tupapaku was dressed in fine garments and sometimes decorated with red ochre paint (kokowai). The body was placed in a sitting foetal-like position. The knees were drawn up to the chin and the arms secured around them so that the head rested on the knees. The head was adorned with a chaplet of leaves or flowers, and feathers such as the white feathers of the albatross were also used to ornament the hair. Sometimes only the preserved head was brought back to be honoured and grieved over as physical evidence of a death when a warrior was killed in battle away from home. A preserved head of an enemy however was also sometimes taken but in this case kept as an object of ridicule. (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:424-425; Oppenheim, 1973:44,50; Voykovic, 1981:29,92-93)

When a chief died, this was often marked also by the suicide (whakamomori) of his wife or some of his wives. This was a custom but was not seen as a necessary occurrence. It was an expression of grief by a wife. The death of a highborn person however often required a slave or slaves (usually prisoners of war) to be killed. These slaves were called ika koangaumu, sacrificial fish. These practices were becoming uncommon by the early 1800s but traditional suicides after a death still occasionally occurred until late in the 19th century. (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:417-418,429; Maning, 1986:222,224-225; Oppenheim, 1973:52-55; Voykovic, 1981:33)

The dead body was wrapped in woven mats. It was sometimes buried in the earth, sand or placed in a hollow tree, tapu swamp, lagoon or spring (not for other use). On occasion the dead body was mummified through a drying process. Cremation was also a traditional practice by Maori, not a usual method but certainly not uncommon. It was resorted to sometimes by war parties in the tribal territory of an enemy so that the body or bones could not be used by the enemy. Cannibalism (kaitangata) was a Maori practice of warfare. The eating of enemies and the defiling of the remains of their dead was a way to undermine the mana of that tribe and a means to strengthening a warrior's personal mana and that of their own tribe. Cremation was practised for example by the Ngati Apa people who cremated the bones of their dead to protect them from their enemies. Cremation was adopted as a usual method by the Ngati Mutunga tribe of north Taranaki. A funeral pyre was built up around the body which was not lit until the wind was blowing out to sea so that the people would not inhale the smoke and "eat" their dead. The tupapaku (dead body) may have been suspended on a platform (whata, whatarangi) in a tree or an isolated rock pinnacle, placed in a cave (toma, rua koiwi) or a special house for the dead (papa tupapaku) until the time of hahunga, when the bones were uplifted, displayed, ornamented and again mourned over. Traditionally a year or two after the first burial this exhumation ritual (hahunga) and second

burial took place for the highborn. The bones were scraped and painted with red ochre (kokowai). They were welcomed back on to the marae along with the bones of other dead ancestors and again grieved over. Hahunga is said to have caused more grief than the original tangihanga. Hahunga may have involved a ritual carrying of these bones to a number of different settlements. It was an important planned ceremonial occasion which was attended by many visitors and included a lavish feast. The bones were placed in a carved wooden burial box (waka tupapaku, papa whakairo) or a flax mat and buried in a secret place such as a cave. This was a ritual performed by a tohunga (priest) away from the sight of any enemies who might defile the remains, and the mana of the dead person and his or her tribe. (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:425-426; Del Mar, 1924:97-98; Metge, 1976:28; Oppenheim, 1973:60-74; Phillipps, 1966:175-176; Salmond, 1975:192-193; Taylor, 1987:8; Voykovic, 1981:62-68,78-94,107-108)

Hahunga is no longer a practice but this has been replaced by the modern Maori unveiling ceremony of the memorial headstone (hurahanga, whakara) which also takes place 1-2 years or even longer after burial. This unveiling ritual has been adapted from the European unveiling ceremony of important public monuments. (Metge, 1976:28,263; Salmond, 1975:192-193; Taylor, 1987:8; Walker,1975:22)

Traditional Maori society had customary acts for avenging a death caused by another. One aspect of the traditional practice of utu concerned the obligation for kin to avenge a death, particularly when this occurred in battle, by a killing in retaliation. The revenge may not have taken place for many years but utu for the death was still remembered and constantly referred to. Utu for the death of comrades was remembered by those fighting in the Maori Battalion active in the two world wars. Muru was another traditional custom observed for payment of an offence which could have been when a person or family caused, or was blamed for, a death by accident. Muru involved a legitimate plundering as compensation for an offence. Maori now usually obtain muru only through the Pakeha law courts. (Dansey, 1975:178,187; Hiroa [Buck], 1987:421; Oppenheim, 1973:102-104; Voykovic, 1981:102-104)

Pakeha colonization of Aotearoa forced change onto Maori death practices just as it did to all facets of Maori life. Maori however also made their own conscious adaptations to keep their death customs alive. The impact of the Christian doctrine introduced by the missionaries greatly influenced Maori death practices. Maori however incorporated their traditional beliefs about death into their practice of Christianity and this intermingling of Maori and

Christian beliefs and practices is still clearly evident today (Belich, 1988:20; Henare, 1988:32-35; Oppenheim, 1973:21; Voykovic, 1981:114-115).

The European custom of wearing black was adopted in the late 19th century, and photographs began to appear at the tangihanga in the late 1890s (and is now common practice) to bring the presence of the dead person and his or her relatives who had died previously (King, 1983:137-138; Metge, 1976:28). It became customary to display the tupapaku (dead body) in a lying position (rather than sitting/foetal position) soon after Pakeha contact (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:417). It became the custom to place the tupapaku in an open coffin for the duration of the tangihanga. The length of the tangihanga decreased (now usually 3 days) and it became usual to give the dead an earth burial (Metge, 1976:261-262; Salmond, 1975:182-185). As already mentioned the custom of hahunga (second burial) ended but was replaced by the important unveiling ceremony of the headstone at the grave.

There were attempts by Pakeha reformers (colonizers) to make the tangihanga illegal in the early 20th century. Customary Maori death practices were condemned as a threat to public health and the Health Department was lobbied for law to be passed to abolish the tangihanga (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:413). Prominent Maori of this time, such as Buck and Pomare, vigorously opposed such drastic action and their influence limited the restraints on tangihanga to reducing the length of the tangihanga to three days in summer and four days in winter, not holding a tangihanga in a district where typhoid or other serious disease was present, requiring sufficient sanitation for visitors coming to the tangihanga and establishing Maori village committees responsible for ensuring these requirements were met (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:413).

Contemporary Maori After-death Rituals

Traditional Maori death practices (with adaptations to Pakeha influences) are still prominent in Maori society today. Variations of these after-death ritual practices occurs between tribes. Some Maori funerals however, especially those held in the cities, no longer follow the traditional form. Many of the young do not have the whanau support or the knowledge of language or culture so as to be able to follow traditional death practices and Maori people may be blocked by funeral directors who refuse to allow Maori customary death practices on their premises (Ngata, 1989:9; Salmond, 1975:187).

Te Tuku i te Wairua; Tuku

The ritual of tuku is a traditional ceremony which still occurs in an adapted form soon after a person dies. This is a karakia to assist the spirit of the dead person to leave the body and join the ancestors in the spirit world. This ritual is to purify the spirit of the dead person and is often now in the form of Christian prayer. Before and during this tuku ceremony mourning begins. The scene of death becomes tapu and the kawa of the tangihanga and its associated death practices is already under way. (Ngata, 1989:5)

Tangihanga; Tangi

At this early stage soon after the body is carefully prepared and as the family and friends weep and wail, the poroporoaki and tangi whakahuahua (farewell speeches, tears and mourning laments) begin (Ngata, 1989:5). Discussion occurs as to where the tangihanga is to be held and decisions are made. The body may lie on more than one marae over the duration of the tangihanga. The marae committee(s) involved are notified and they begin to get everything ready. If the person dies in hospital relatives must wait for the body to be released before they can take him or her home where friends and neighbours are already gathering. The body is dressed in his or her best clothes and laid in the sitting-room or main bedroom (Ngata, 1989:5; Salmond, 1975:180).

The number attending a tangihanga varies. In the case of an important person the visitors can run into several thousand. The customary ritual practices that are part of all hui, such as the karanga, whaikorero, waiata and hongī, occur at the tangihanga but these have an extra dimension at this time of immediate death. The tupapaku (dead body) lies on the marae and the tangi, the wailing of the women and the weeping of the mourners and the poroporoaki (farewell speeches) by the elders are also very prominent over the three day duration of the tangihanga (Salmond, 1975:180-187). The first day of the tangihanga is the time when the local people pay their respects and on the morning of the second day visitors from other districts start arriving (Salmond, 1975:182,184). Burial usually occurs on the morning of the third day.

Te Po Whakamutunga

This is the final evening with the dead person. After the karakia (prayer) it is a light-hearted time for entertainment and relaxation. Speeches are much less formal. Modern songs are sung, and jokes and anecdotes are told. Light-hearted competitions are held between often reluctant performers (Rolleston, 1988-1989:40).

Hakari (Funeral Feast)

The hakari (main funeral feast) is part of the tangihanga rituals. It is a time of feasting, speeches and entertainment. This traditionally follows the burial but may now also occur on the night before the burial in some areas so that guests can leave directly after the burial ceremony (Metge, 1976:263; Ngata, 1989:8; Rolleston, 1988-1989:40-41; Salmond, 1975:186-187).

Te Po Whakamoemoe

This is traditionally the night after the burial (also referred to as the poroporoaki), and means "night causing sleep", "night causing betrothal" or "night causing marriage". It was traditionally also a time for arranging marriages. It is customary for guests to stay on at this time for entertainment, merriment and matchmaking, and to cheer up the mourners. This is a light-hearted time of humour and laughter and includes humorous songs and jokes and the old women performing the kopikopi (hula). In some areas this custom is still practised while in others elements of this are part of the night before burial while all the guests are still present. (Hohepa, 1964:117-121; Salmond, 1975:187)

Takahi Whare ("Trampling" the House)

This occurs after the hakari either on the day of the burial or the day after. The tapu and spirit of the dead person is still present in their home after death and this ceremony removes the tapu, cleanses the home from any harmful influences, and removes any lingering traces of the dead person's spirit. The family also receive emotional support as they re-enter the house with its many reminders of the dead person. Women karanga to invite the ancient dead both to comfort the person who has recently died, and to accompany him or her from the home. Women's wailing also occurs at this time. A tohunga, elder or priest performs the karakia. The takahi whare begins at the gate of the property. Water is sprinkled from a leafy branch to cleanse and bless as the people "trample" each room of the house, perhaps starting with the room occupied by the dead body and extending to the garden. Food or liquor may be served to complete this ritual. The family are welcomed back into their house and speeches of thanks are made to all those who have helped the family through their grief. (Hohepa, 1964:116-117; Ngata, 1989:8-9; Rolleston, 1988-1989:41; Salmond, 1975:186-187)

Kawe Mate (To Carry the Dead)

This takes place after the tangihanga, usually within a few weeks but may not be until several months to a year after the death. This is a ceremonial carrying of the spirit, and since last

century has included the innovation of carrying a photo of the dead person, by family (but may even involve a party of about a hundred people) to other maraes which have genealogical links with the person who has died. The kawa (protocol) of the kawemate is basically the same as for the tangihanga. It is like a smaller version of the tangihanga. Kawemate enables those unable to attend the actual tangihanga to participate in an important death ritual time for the person who has died. It also provides a way for the dead person's spirit to have a formalized presence in more than one marae. (Metge, 1976:263; Ngata, 1989:9; Rolleston, 1988-1989:41; Salmond, 1975:188-191; Voykovic, 1981:97-98)

Hura Kohatu; Hurahanga Pohatu; Whakara (Unveiling the Memorial Stone)

The unveiling of the memorial headstone is an important ceremonial occasion. It usually takes place about a year after the tangihanga but may be delayed until a number of years after the burial. These unveilings may be in the form of a mass ceremony of up to ten stones at once. This ceremony includes much of the ritual of the tangihanga and the speeches remember the person and the events of their tangihanga. The memorial stone is covered with a black (or occasionally white) veil, and sometimes a feather cloak or Union Jack as well. It is often the grandchildren who are selected to unveil the stone and as it is uncovered a woman performs a karanga to the memorial. The unveiling is followed by a midday hakari (feast). These ceremonies are often held on long weekends and combined with yearly sports competitions and associated festivities which bring the young people back from the larger urban centres to their home marae. (Metge, 1976:259; Ngata, 1989:9; Rolleston, 1988-1989:41; Salmond, 1975:192-193)

Death and the Role of Maori Women

Your tears fall. The wailing has opened up your heart and you remember your father...

Look: the kuias, the old women, assemble in the light and cast a shadow upon the marae. Their faces are veiled in the shadows. Upon their heads they wear plaited wreaths of kawakawa leaves. They have threaded their gowns with sprigs of greenery. And in their outstretched hands, they wear small green branches.

Haere mai ki o tatou mate e.

The women moan and sway in time with the wailing. Their bodies quiver, their hands quiver, and the green branches cast fleeting shadows. This is the aroarowhaki, strange and tremulous, the giving up of the body to grief.

Come to our dead.

The faces of the kuias are filled with sorrow. For three days they will sorrow and the lines in their faces will grow deep with grief. Their eyes will be heavy-lidded with wanting to sleep. But always, they will watch over your father. They will not sleep. Every visitor to this marae will be welcomed in this same manner. They will call and they will say: Haere mai. Come. Look upon our son where he lies. Share your grief with us. We are alone now (Ihimaera, 1989:134-136).

Maori women (particularly older women) have traditional roles at the tangihanga that are still practised today and these show their prominent role in caring for the dead. Only women perform the death wail at the time of death. This was the traditional way of communicating the news of the death which was then networked around the community (Dansey, 1975:181; Metge, 1976:261; Salmond, 1975:180). The karanga (ceremonial call of welcome) which calls the tupapaku and the people onto the marae for the tangihanga is also the role of women. It is women who perform the tangi (ritual wailing) throughout the duration of the tangihanga and it is women who act as chief mourners to keep the vigil watch over the dead body before burial (Metge, 1976:63,346; Salmond, 1975:117,145-147,180-191). Maori women have a key role in providing the emotional focus. The older women encourage others to share their grief with them. Their words and their wailing draws out the depth of emotion in the deepest parts of each person (Ihimaera, 1989:89,135-136; Karetu, 1978:71; Metge, 1976:63; Salmond, 1975:126,185-186). There are also specific customs for lifting the tapu of death which are the responsibility of Maori women (Metge, 1976:63; Hohepa, 1964:114-117). Maori women have the first "say" in the karanga, and the last "say" when they make the final farewell to the dead at the time of burial. The karanga and the poroporoaki can be described as the whaikorero of women and in a few tribes (Te Whanau-a-Apanui, Ngati Porou and Ngati Kahungunu) women also speak on the marae in the formal whaikorero situation (Irwin, 1992:15; Pere, 1987:59).

Tangi (Death Wail; Women's Wailing and Weeping)

When a person died at home or when tidings of death arrived, a woman would raise the death wail (tangi). She was often a watcher by the bed of the dying person who would go to the door and raise her voice in a "long heart-crushing wail" that epitomised human sorrow and suffering (Dansey,1975:181; Metge,1976:261; Salmond, 1975:180). This notified the community of the death, initiated the networking of this news around the community as the wailing was carried from home to home, and summoned the people to gather in groups and come to farewell the dead (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:416; Oppenheim, 1973:42-43). In the urban environment the wailing has become subdued (Metge, 1976:240; Walker, 1975:28). The

advent of modern technology and the increased distance from whanau and friends now means the news of a death is usually conveyed by telephone.

Tangi also refers to the ritual weeping performed over the dead, or for the dead, by women. This wailing is intermittent throughout a tangihanga. There is the death wail when the death first occurs; women wail as the dead body is brought on to the marae; wailing occurs at intervals throughout the time the tupapaku lies on the marae, particularly by the chief mourners; wailing occurs as the coffin is closed and taken away for burial and at the graveside; and women's wailing is part of the takahi whare ritual and the kawē mate (Metge, 1976:63,346; Salmond, 1975:145-147,180-191).

After visitors and the dead have been summoned by the women callers (in the karanga), the old women, dressed in black and the green leaves of mourning, move onto the marae. They begin a high wailing, sometimes beating their breasts or waving handkerchiefs as they cry. The tangi of these women is a melodious chorus of grief. It is a ritual performance but is also emotional especially at a tangi (Salmond, 1975:117,145-146). The wailing of women is also important at the takahi whare (trample the house ritual) to drive away any lingering traces of the dead person's spirit or any other kehua (ghosts) (Hohepa, 1964:116-117; Salmond, 1975:186).

Laying-out the Dead/Embalming

Traditionally women performed this preparation of the tupapaku in Maori society but it is not clear in the literature if this was once exclusively a women's domain. One Maori woman states that because of the tapu of death, laying-out the dead was exclusively women's work in her whanau (Joe, 1991:20) and this suggests that in some tribes laying-out was the domain of women. Another written account of the experience of a kuia at a hui in Whitianga states that her father (a Ringatu minister) blessed her and showed her what to do when she began this work (Rolleston, 1988-89:37). The methods of funeral directors today usually replace Maori methods for preparing the tupapaku (body of the dead person). The traditional Maori custom of watching over the dead on the marae before burial, however continues as a central feature of the Maori death practices of today.

Karanga

The karanga, a "ceremonial chant of encounter or mourning" (Te Awēkotuku, 1991:171), is always performed by a woman and it is the role of the older women (60 years or more) to do this if possible. The karanga is a long high wailing chant (in one breath) which appears

effortless as it floats away to a sigh. One or several women singly, or several women chanting simultaneously — their voices threading one over the other, chant for the tangata whenua. Each of their calls is returned by a woman representing the manuhiri (visitors). The women who karanga for the manuhiri may be called pae arahi (leaders over the threshold) as they lead the visitors on to the marae. The first chant of the visiting women is traditionally an acknowledgement of the dead, the dead of that particular marae and their own dead that they bring with them. This is now usually the second chant. If the visitors are coming to a tangi the first chant is a farewell to the dead person. These calls are not only to the living, they also invoke the dead and bring an emotional atmosphere to the marae (Anderson, 1994:13,15; Karetu, 1975:38-39; Metge, 1976:262; Salmond, 1975:117,126,137-141,145) .

By the time the callers have finished the dead are almost tangibly present on the marae. (Salmond, 1975:140)

The karanga is particularly loud and long at a tangihanga as death is immediate and it often becomes integrated with the tangi (wailing) of the women.

The karanga is not only the initial chant of welcome. The old women also karanga at other times such as when gifts are ceremonially placed on the marae, when they enter and leave the dining hall, when their friends start up the kopikopi (hula) (Karetu, 1975:38-39; Metge, 1976:262; Salmond, 1975:117,126,137-141,145).

Tu Poupou (Chief Mourners)

At the tangihanga the close women relatives and related kuia (women elders) act as chief mourners. They keep a constant vigil over the dead body, sitting with them during the day and sleeping beside them at night. They lead the wailing that continues intermittently throughout the tangi. They stay in the house of death and only leave their place for a short time and never all at once. Close male relatives may sit with the women for part of the time and visiting women may also join these women (depending on kawa). The tu poupou (chief mourner) should not desert her post and fasts during the day. Food is brought to the chief mourners after sunset but traditionally the fasting continued over the duration of the tangihanga (Ihimaera, 1989:89; Metge, 1976:124,262-263; Oppenheim, 1973:50,52; Salmond, 1975:147,182).

Whakanoa (Lifting the Tapu of Death)

Women, and old women in particular, have an important and exclusive traditional role in removing certain tapu (Metge, 1976:63; Tioke, 1992:22). Whakanoa (or removing restrictive tapu by special rites) is a ritual in which a woman or women use their noa (power as a woman to remove tapu), cleansing water and cooked food to remove tapu (Metge, 1976:24; Salmond, 1975:46,76). This role is evident in relation to death in a number of rituals. For example, in the far North, very tapu grave-diggers (male), as well as using water, may also touch their body with a loaf of bread (representing cooked food) held by an elderly woman to remove the tapu. This woman carefully treats this bread and herself to remove this tapu. The bread is divided in three. One part is thrown in the air so that it will land in a stream, one part is gently placed in the water and the remainder is carefully placed under a stone (Hohepa, 1964:114-115). Women ritually cleanse the place where the dead body was lying on the marae and also have an important role at the trampling the house ceremony (takahi whare) which removes the tapu from the house of the dead person and ensures that the spirit does not linger in the world of the living (Hohepa, 1964:115-117). Accounts relating to the ceremony of hahunga (exhumation and second burial of the bones) of the past, describe women as being receivers of the bones or as leading the ceremony (Oppenheim, 1973:65,69). This could also be seen as a women's ritual role in relation to whakanoa.

Maori Women Reflect on Maori After-death Practices

Much of the discussion by the Maori women who spoke about their after-death experiences in the one to one interviews, not only reinforced, but also elaborated on, the information about Maori death practices and beliefs I had learnt about through surveying the literature. Some of the issues talked about by Maori women also illustrated the difficulties experienced due to the conflict between Maori cultural requirements and the values, expectations and regulations of a Pakeha dominated society. It is appropriate to include some of this discussion in this chapter of the thesis.

The Importance of the Tangihanga and the Maori Concept of Death to Maori Culture

The importance of the tangihanga to the general continuance of Maori culture has already been discussed earlier in this chapter through drawing on the literature relating to Maori death

practices. Lucy, in her storytelling also stressed the importance of the tangihanga to the continuation of Maori culture when she said:

For us as Maori people it is one of the most important parts of us as a people, because we quite often say once the tangi goes then we as Maori people go...We see the tangi as one of the most important parts of holding us together as a culture.

Lucy also spoke about the Maori concept of death when she said "death for us is a continuation of life". Lucy explained that this concept is reflected in the laughter as well as grieving that occurs at the tangi and that it is connected with the belief that the person's spirit is there with the body for a time. Lucy said that it is also evident in the way the dead person is still very much part of what is going on and spoke of one of her experiences to illustrate this:

One of the stories that I tell, and I tell this quite often, will say to you in some ways how we, or I as a person I suppose, or we as the family, have in some ways looked at death, and that was when my father's stepfather died and we were all in the meeting house...One of the grandaunts came in..It was winter and she had her fur coat on and was looking for somewhere to hang her coat and then taking it off and putting it over the foot of the coffin and turning to my grandfather (his dead body, in the open coffin) and saying "there you are you old bugger, this is just to keep your feet warm, don't think you're taking it with you".

This action by Lucy's grandaunt epitomizes the Maori approach to death (as part of life) and the belief that the dead person is connected to, and aware of, the activity of the living. This gesture to keep the dead person's feet "warm" (when it is well known that the dead body becomes cold) was a symbolic act of aroha as well as one of humour.

Patricia spoke about the educational significance of the tangihanga experience at her marae:

They'd cover the front of the marae with pongas and in between the pongas they'd intersperse the old photos and that was...how we as kids learnt our ancestors...who was who...it was just like a who's who gallery of people who had gone before.

Patricia emphasised this educational importance of the tangi to the continuation of Maori cultural and ancestral awareness.

Patricia also spoke of the change in the form of the tangi for her people between the 1960s and 1970s, due to the move to urban living. Patricia noted that in the 1960s the tangihanga

experience was more organized and elaborate, more formal in the continuation of the culture. As people moved away from their rural marae to live in other areas, Patricia noticed a falling away, not only of the people, but also a weakening of some of the old practices:

Everybody had their jobs...As kids we'd help with the trifles, you know those sort of jobs...In the 70s when we used to go back to the tangis they became less formal, there was less greenery and there was less...old people around.

Patricia expressed concern about this and felt the significance of this should be noted.

The Importance of the Elder Women

Some Maori women spoke about specific Maori women's roles surrounding death. Lucy spoke of her observation of the power of the women elders in relation to the tangi where her whanau comes from:

When I go home my mother and a group of old ladies sit by the door on the right...When my father died...I discovered the big part these ladies played. Nothing ever happened without them saying what is to be done. You never actually saw them do it but it was just the way they were referred to all the time and the way that they ran the whole of what went on. When you're used to being on the marae a lot of things you take for granted and things just seem to happen and I suppose they just happen for generations in lots of ways. As I said the fact that those ladies always sat there...as far back as I can remember...things just seemed to happen...and it wasn't till I was at the other side that I noticed that their role was very definitely a large one...Nothing happened without them actually directing it or knowing it was going on. That doesn't happen in every marae I'm sure, but it certainly does in ours at home.

Patricia spoke about the women at her marae decorating the whare with the traditional plant greenery:

The greenery was my Nanny's job and Aunty Huia...It was women's work...They'd all go up into the bush.

She also described the older women's role of leading the intense outward display of grief through the weeping and wailing (tangi) and karanga at the tangihanga:

It would really amaze me how they could tangi...it almost used to seem to me on demand...like one minute they'd be singing, laughing and chatting away and the next minute they'd be calling someone in...and the tears would be streaming down...and the voice, the voices were the things I really remembered...how could their voice have so much tragedy...I guess a Pakeha word for it would be passion...you'd never forget that wailing and the karanga...and it was really interesting when my Nanny died and I went back for her funeral...It just came to me, and I could karanga and I could wail...It was just there...Our marae lost a

lot of people to urbanization...I took over her role...I sat by the coffin...You never saw it as an apprenticeship when you were growing up...I did it for her as a mark of respect...the role just came, I didn't have to push it.

This discussion of the roles of Maori women by Lucy and Patricia gives further evidence of mana wahine (the power and influence of Maori women) in relation to death.

Maori Women Express Difficulties with Maori Death Practices

Lucy expressed the view that difficulties were caused if the person who had died had not said where they wanted to be buried. She said "traditionally it is usually the experience for a Maori person to say where they want to be buried". Lucy felt however that the drift into urban areas has made it difficult to know where you want to be buried and transport to the home marae can be expensive.

Sometimes the difficulties discussed were because what the marae protocol demanded was hard on the grieving person. Although this was expressed as being hard at the time it was still seen very positively overall. Patricia spoke about the difficulty she experienced with the expected/compulsory continued presence of her (as a close mourner) by her father's coffin at the tangihanga:

The thing I really hated about it was the nakedness I felt, of my grief...because for the first time I was the one sitting up the front...and I had to stay up the front, I couldn't go down the side of the hall and I couldn't just run outside and play any more...and I couldn't walk away, my duty was to sit there and listen to all the speeches, to hear all the wailing. I can remember the morning we were going to bury him we were allowed to go for a shower over at my cousin's house. I can remember...that feeling of relief to be able to leave the marae and get away from it for 5 minutes, and then go back.

Lucy expressed the difficulty yet security of having to follow tribal protocol:

There is always an uncle or an aunt or someone like that who will come and tell you how to do it right...It's hard having to do what you are supposed to do...I suppose the difference between the...tangi and the funeral is knowing what's expected.

Alice expressed solidarity with her relatives who did not completely follow expected protocol and her dislike of the treatment they received because they did not adhere strictly to the usual behaviour:

My grandmother and my three aunties all wore red because that was Grandpa's favourite colour...and he had given one of my aunties a red dress and she had wanted to wear that dress because her Dad had given it to her. And I remember the old kuia making comments about that "oh typical...have to be different and stand out and not adhere to the code" kind of thing...It was the colour that Grandpa liked, he hated black, so they were paying tribute to him and red was something that he liked...and I thought good on them for wearing it and not (submitting) to what everybody else said should be done...And the other thing that my Nanna did which you're not meant to do either was that she went back to the house to get some clothes and things before they performed you know the takahi of the whare after the person's been buried. She went back to get some clothes and have a shower and things and people were sort of looking deep down their noses at her for doing this because that's not the right thing to do either. Something bad might happen for doing that. She was just being practical, saying "well look it's my bloody house, my clothes are there, I need to go back". So she did it. But I can remember there were comments made about that too — not the right thing to do and you might bring bad things.

Mere discussed customs of women's exclusion from specific parts of the after-death rituals and her disapproval of this:

That's a bit I don't altogether like about tangis, the widow doesn't usually go to the graveside, she stays behind and I don't think that's always helpful to the person...When we came back she was still in the marquee...with some of the older women...where she had been with the mate (dead person)...but other people met at the meeting house and the purpose of all this was to decide before they called her in, whether or not to give her permission to marry again...My feminist hackles rose...Anyway they did decide that she could get married again and they asked her in to give her this bit of news...Mostly the men were doing the talking (I asked who was making the decision)...the men really.

Mere spoke of another instance of this:

His widow didn't go to the burial site and then when they had the unveiling she didn't go to that either...She was at the meeting house...but she didn't go to the actual...to the grave...I must find out the reason for that.

There is often a fine line that separates a positive experience of security, of being shown what to do, of being looked after, from becoming a negative experience of rigid adherence to a protocol that does not meet or respect people's differing needs. The demands of following Maori protocol, in relation to death, treads this fine line. It can be experienced as both helpful and difficult.

Influences From Pakeha Society's Disapproval of Maori Ways of Being

Pakeha attitudes of disapproval towards Maori and Maori culture have worked to undermine traditional Maori death practices. Mere referred to her experience of this:

My mother (a Pakeha) didn't like having...the reactions of, in her day, that society had to somebody marrying a Maori. She would have nothing to do with things Maori at all, she wanted to cut that out entirely, so she did...So that when my (Maori) father died and my brother who was a bit younger than I am died, I did organize those funerals but I just had to make them personal but not really include the Maori dimension at all...My daughter and my son-in-law and my son and my daughter-in-law, we did sing 'Tama Ngakau Marie' ...but that was it.

Alice discussed being pulled between work commitments and her need for more time for the important rituals following her Maori grandfather's death:

I was meant to start a new job the week that my grandfather died...I had to ring in and say...I can't come it's really important I be at my grandfather's tangi...I was away a week and a half with that. Then I got back and went in to work and I was just so full of cold and sick that I ended up going home for another couple of days...Then with the kawē mate (a few months later) I kind of felt that I couldn't ask for more time off...There was only one other Maori...guy...at my work. He wasn't very confident about Maori things so it was kind of like I wasn't sure how people would take it, how my boss would take it if I asked for more time...so I ended up not asking...I felt like I missed out, on not being able to go because I had not been to a kawē mate before (they don't have a kawē mate for that many people, it conveys an honour to the dead person)...only what I'd heard and read about...and not for as many places as Grandpa went.

The Pakeha "norm" has often overshadowed Maori custom and Maori needs. Maori after-death rituals and their longer duration is an important aspect of this. Maori who work in a predominantly Pakeha setting frequently have to curtail their cultural after-death needs/requirements to remain secure in their jobs. Alice noted that her employer was more sensitive than usual, but despite this she still felt unable to ask for leave to go to the important kawē mate ritual for her grandfather.

The Maori Tangihanga and the Pakeha Funeral: A Contemporary Comparison

Maori and Pakeha tend to have very different values and beliefs concerning death, and this is evident in the differing experiences surrounding the Maori tangihanga and the mainstream style of Pakeha funeral. I am very aware that making generalizations is often unhelpful and

that this can lead to stereotypes which undermine diversity. I feel however, that it is important to outline the themes that have been presented to me by both Maori and Pakeha, when making comparisons between their experiences of the Maori and Pakeha ways of death. Further evidence for many of the issues discussed in this section is also apparent in the women's stories section.

The gap in difference between Maori and Pakeha death practices has narrowed somewhat as Maori people have been influenced by the laws, religion and ways of the Pakeha which now dominate in this country. The gap is now also narrowing in the other direction as some Pakeha are standing firm in the face of opposition from the professionals involved, and the pressures to conform to society's norms, to assert and demand the death rituals that feel right to them and that make death the personal experience which they need. This modern trend is partly due to the growing Pakeha awareness, experience of, and respect for the Maori way of death which is working to influence our death practices. It is also due to the growing emphasis on knowing and asserting our rights as "consumers". For Pakeha it is a move towards our European death culture of earlier times (although this is not usually the conscious reclaiming of culture as is evident in the approach of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group, see Appendix 1).

For Maori their dead are very close to them, they are remembered at all hui in the karanga, speeches and waiata. Life and death are not seen as opposites but are considered complementary, both a part of living (Dansey, 1975:174; Hoskings, 1985:39; Tioke, 1992:22; Voykovic, 1981:116). This is not (or no longer) usually so for Pakeha people. In fact Pakeha often feel awkward and uncomfortable talking about death or about someone who has died, and avoid this (Hoskings, 1985:38). The individualistic and dualistic thinking of our Euro-Western culture sees life as good, and death, its opposite, as bad. Life and death are not both a part of living. Death is the enemy as it destroys life. As such it has become something to be hidden from our lives and our minds.

The mainstream Pakeha way of keeping death hidden from sight as much as possible has seen death being hurried out of the hospital ward and the home and hidden away in a mortuary or funeral parlour. The dead body is usually seen briefly or not at all (except perhaps on films and television where it is prime viewing). The death of those close to us, that is, real normal death, is hidden from us in the usual contemporary Pakeha experience (the "conventional" funeral). We do not usually watch over our dead or have them at home before burial/cremation (although this was our culture of not so long ago). This is now

usually considered too scary, distasteful, unhygienic or just not the done thing, not a choice to be considered (Dansey, 1975:177; Parker, 1987:69; Penny, 1985:30-31; Te Wiata, 1987:22).

Maori on the other hand want to see death and be with their dying and their dead. For Maori the tupapaku (dead body) is in the home and on the marae before burial where the tupapaku is constantly kept company, slept with, talked to and sung to. The dead body is a taonga (a most treasured possession), to be cared for, cherished and honoured. The focus of the tangihanga is the dead body. The tupapaku is the special person of honour and is addressed as if he or she is still alive. It is believed that the spirit (wairua) of the dead person is present and that his/her soul/spirit must be kept continually warm and comfortable by whanau and friends to assist his/her journey to the spirit world. The spirit of the dead person is called to the marae(s) where the body is usually lying for the duration of the tangi. (Dansey, 1975:177; Karetu, 1975:38; Koia, 1992:27-28; Ngata, 1987:5; Oppenheim, 1973:19; Salmond, 1975:137,140,182-185; Te Wiata, 1987:15-19)

The Maori need to be with their dead is so strong that at times Maori have resorted to "kidnapping" the tupapaku. A situation where this has happened, is when members of the immediate family have not allowed tupapaku to go back to their marae. Prominent entertainer Billy T James is considered by many to have been one such "kidnapping" when his tupapaku was taken to his marae. Actual events indicate that this was more of a struggle that occurred between his Pakeha wife and Maori whanau over the after-death arrangements, which was eventually won by the Maori whanau with the support of Billy's daughter (*Evening Standard*, 9/8/1991:1). Although these after-death arrangements went against the last spoken wishes of this great entertainer, and his widow's wishes, for many this was "the ultimate accolade" to Billy T James (*Evening Standard*, 9/8/1991:1). As a very prominent Maori, the tupapaku of Billy T James was highly treasured. His Maori whanau and iwi demanded that Maori protocol be recognized.

For Maori the coffin is usually open while the tupapaku lies on the marae with the people. People have the freedom to touch and hongi (a Maori nose to nose greeting/farewell) with the tupapaku and in this way show their aroha and grief, their greetings and their goodbye (Hoskings, 1985:38; Salmond, 1975:182; Te Wiata, 1987:15-16). The coffin is closed just before burial and this is an important ritual, a moment charged with emotion (Salmond, 1975:185). If the body is not available for the tangi then a photo is used instead and this takes on an "alive" quality (King, 1985:96,98; Salmond, 1975:41). In contrast the

Pakeha funeral usually has a closed coffin throughout. The funeral director usually closes the coffin before the funeral, away from the view of family and friends.

Although some Pakeha are influenced by "old" European ideas (Richardson, 1987:5-7), Maori, and/or "New Age" beliefs, that the spirit of a dead person remains for some time in the vicinity of the body, the usual Pakeha Christian based funeral of today does not incorporate the belief that the spirit of the dead person is (or may be) present. Instead the mainstream Pakeha approach adheres to the Christian teaching that the spirit or soul departs at the time of death, or to rational thought which perceives a dead body as a thing rather than a person. Maori people have incorporated their traditional beliefs about death into their practice of Christianity (Belich, 198:20; Henare, 1988:32-35; Oppenheim, 1973:21; Voykovic, 1981:114-115). For Maori, death is more of a process than an event. "In the Maori context the body is still alive until it begins to decay" (Gregory, 1988:4366). For Maori there is a fine line between those who are living and those who are dead, whereas for Pakeha there is usually a vast gap (Koia, 1992:27).

The Maori belief that death and dying is part of living is seen in their death practices. Death is something that is grown up with. Children are included in the tangihanga, they see death, and experience the rituals and emotions surrounding this (Te Wiata, 1987:15). The Pakeha experience as children has usually been one of exclusion from the funeral and of not being allowed to see a dead body, and often still is. If they do see death, it is usually only a glimpse in the foreign environment of a funeral director's premises. For children, death has often been made scary and mysterious and not something for children to participate in. In earlier times Pakeha women have also experienced exclusion from the funeral as it was "proper" for the men to represent the family and for them to stay at home. I have not found this exclusion of women from funerals evident in the historical record of after-death practices. It is more apparent in historical novels, for example, the work of Victoria Holt and Catherine Cookson.

For Maori the tangihanga is a time of emotional release and renewal. The rituals expect and encourage a release of the emotional tension of grief. Maori tell the dead person how they feel. Both men and women grieve openly casting their tears on the marae. It is a very conscious goodbye to the dead person. It is also very honest. The dead are told publicly of a person's aroha (love) for them and their anger if this is the case. The tupapaku may be rebuked if it is thought that she or he has done wrong. (Dansey, 1975:177,180-181; Ihimaera, 1989:89,135-136; Koia, 1992:29; Te Wiata, 1987:16-19)

For most Pakeha, emotions are to be controlled and repressed (Dansey,1975:186; Parker, 1987:92-95; Te Wiata, 1987:18-19). There is a belief that you must bear up, you must be composed and consequently the grief process is delayed (Funeral Choice,1987:37; Hoskings, 1985:38)). A little crying is acceptable particularly from women or children if present. Men are less likely to show emotion and this is what is expected of them by many. Loud grief noises are a source of embarrassed discomfort to most and rebuking a dead person would be unusual at a Pakeha funeral. For Pakeha there is usually not much of an opportunity to even talk to the dead body (or an acknowledged belief that the spirit is present). Pakeha tend to be inhibited from talking to a dead body, especially in the presence of others, or just do not think to do this. As a consequence Pakeha people may feel they have not really said goodbye ('The Last Goodbye', TV1 23/6/1991).

Traditional Maori society worked, lived and shared together in a collective lifestyle and this tradition is still evident in Maori culture today. For Maori grief is a shared experience. For Pakeha however grief tends to be individualistic, just as individualism is now a cornerstone of our way of life. Grief is often a very private suffering (Hoskings, 1985:38).

Pakeha often carry unresolved grief with them for years, perhaps to their own grave. Maori are often stunned by the repressed emotions of Pakeha and Pakeha are often deeply moved by the experience of the tangi. For Pakeha, attending a tangi for the first time is often a healing experience, dealing with past unresolved grief, as well as a time for addressing the grief of the present death of the person that the tangi is for (Funeral Choice, 1987:36-37).

At the tangihanga the rich oral tradition of the Maori people is evident, as it is in other hui. Many people speak. The powhiri which is repeated over and over as new groups of mourners arrive, helps to highlight the reality of the death and the loss (Hoskings, 1985:38). The eulogy is usually made by someone who knows the dead person very well (Ngata,1987:8). Pakeha funerals however are much more a matter of following the service sheet or the notes. For Pakeha the funeral usually involves one person, a priest or funeral director, doing all the talking (funeral celebrants however are now also an option in some parts of Aotearoa/New Zealand). The eulogy is more usually an impersonal and/or formal account of the dead person's life which is compiled from notes taken at a meeting with the family and read out, although it is now becoming more frequent to see people who knew the dead person speaking about their life. The Pakeha funeral tends to promote an idealized view of the dead person (Hoskings,1985:38) with an eulogy which is an unreal description of that person and their life, for example describing him or her as having a blessed and

happy life when people may know very well that this is not true. Often the priest or funeral director does not know the dead person well and it is not unusual for important details about them or their family to have been said incorrectly. In many cases in the past the dead person has been referred to only as "the parishioner" by priests (Barnes,1991:17-18,25-26; 'The Last Goodbye', TV1 23/6/1991). In many instances the Pakeha funeral has not only not helped the grieving process, but has also been an additional wound (Barnes,1991:26; Funeral Choice, 1987:37).

Maori are aware of the need to use the time between death and burial to express grief and also use humour and entertainment to help the grieving "return to the living" (Salmond, 1975:187; Rolleston, 1988-1989:35). Pakeha in many cases do not understand this or do not know how to address this need to use the before burial/cremation period and the funeral as a crucial time to assist the grieving process (Funeral Choice,1987:36-37). However the Pakeha home gathering after the funeral may to some extent assist the bereaved family and friends to return to the task of living (Hoskings, 1985:39). The funeral feast or wake which was the usual practice in Britain in earlier times was however an important time of therapy which included humour and entertainment for the bereaved (Gittings, 1984:98,159).

Time is an issue of difference between the Maori tangihanga and the Pakeha funeral (Te Wiata, 1987:18). A Pakeha funeral is usually only about an hour in duration (often with the addition of an invitation to join the family afterwards for refreshments). The contemporary tangihanga usually lasts 3 days and 2 nights and there are other rituals for grieving that follow this. The spirit of the dead person is again greeted, grieved over and farewelled at the kawē mate (carry the death) ceremonies at other marae several months to a year later, and the unveiling ceremony of the memorial headstone a year or several years later (Hoskings,1985:36,39; Metge, 1976:261-263; Salmond, 1975:182-187,192-193). This provides a cultural indication of the period of mourning for Maori and this is something that Pakeha no longer have (Hoskings,1985:39).

Getting time off work is a difficult issue for Maori who need to attend a tangi and other after-death rituals. This often means travelling to a rural marae and spending a significant period of time away. It is also an issue of mana and personal need for Maori to attend the tangi of extended family even if they did not know the person well (Dansey, 1975:179). This is not understood by many Pakeha who frown at what they see as too much leave for tangi (Hoskings, 1985:35).

For Maori the *hakari* (feast) is an important event which traditionally follows the burial but is now in some cases the night before burial (Marsden, 1975:200-201; Salmond, 1975:186). As already mentioned there is often (but not necessarily) an invitation to join the family for refreshments following the Pakeha funeral, but this is seen more as optional — some at the funeral attend while others do not.

The cost of the *tangihanga* (and the work) is usually shared amongst the extended family and the visitors attending through the Maori custom of *koha* (Metge, 1976:246,248). For Pakeha the cost is usually the responsibility of the immediate family with some gifts of baking and flowers from friends and relatives and perhaps a request for donations (instead of flowers) to a charity such as the Cancer Society or the rescue helicopter service.

For both Maori and Pakeha the funeral/*tangihanga* is a family time, a bringing together of family and for Maori this bringing together is bigger as it includes a large extended family and an acknowledgement of *hapu* and *iwi* links. In the Pakeha context however it may not bring such a strong sense of emotional togetherness as for Maori since many Pakeha people have been socially conditioned to repress and control their feelings.

At the Pakeha funeral it has been men who control and are visible in the public death rituals and this is still usually evident today. They are the priest, funeral directors, ushers, pall bearers and speakers. They are usually obvious in the public ritual while women are behind the scenes baking, doing the flowers, looking after the children, giving words of comfort and so on (Penny, 1985:31). We are now beginning, however, to see the presence of women as pall bearers and speakers and as funeral directors, priests or celebrants as women begin again to enter these previously male realms. For Maori, women are prominent in public death rituals. Women set the emotional scene with the *karanga* and the wailing, they sit in the vigil watch over the dead body. Maori women have a public role in the *tangi* as well as the men.

The female element is also evident in the divine images surrounding the Maori way of death such as *Hine-nui-te-Po*, Goddess of death and *Papatuanuku* the Earth mother to whom the dead return when buried (Batten, 1995:188; Ihimaera, 1989:206; Te Wiata, 1987:17). For Pakeha there is usually only the male imagery of the Christian God to relate to (though a minor role for the Virgin Mary for Catholics). However once again if we go back to older European culture we can find the crone or death goddesses and spirits such as the *bean-sidhe*

(banshee), Caillech, Macha, Hecate, Cerridwen, the valkyries and harpies (Austen, 1990; Walker, 1983; Walker, 1985:74-75,85-86).

Maori have many other cultural death rituals before and after the tangihanga to guide their death practices. Pakeha do not. For Pakeha there is often a feeling of panic, of not knowing what to do. We have lost our death rituals, we have lost our knowledge of what to do and we have lost our confidence. Subsequently we tend to hand death over to the control of the doctors, funeral directors and priests who guide/control what happens.

Maori (although to a lesser extent) are also controlled by professionals. They are subject to the death requirements that affect us all. This control may be due to statutory requirements, or the policy and practice of hospital staff and funeral directors. One long-time Maori grievance has been with the Coroner's requirements which can prevent access to the tupapaku required for the tangi for a lengthy period of time. It is also clear to me that Maori people have been manipulated into believing that chemical embalming by a funeral director is a legal requirement for a dead body (Rolleston, 1988-1989:37).

For Maori the tangihanga is a strongly cultural experience. Every phase of Maori custom and belief that exists today is drawn from the tangihanga, the major Maori ceremonial occasion (Dansey, 1975:180). The children and young people present are immersed in their culture at this time and absorb this. It is something that is remembered in later years (Dansey, 1975:181-182; Metge, 1976:264; Ihimaera, 1989).

The Christianity evident in mainstream Pakeha after-death practices is culture, as is the popular practice of sharing food and drink after a funeral. There is not however usually an awareness of culture at the Pakeha funeral. Perhaps we do not perceive the dominant culture as a culture because it is so pervasive. I argue that the funeral has become more of a convention, something that is expected and something that others arrange for us. In conforming to the dominant death ideologies of today's society we just do what is seen to be normal. It can be argued that this "normal" behaviour of today is not death culture that has been handed down to us by our ancestors but is an intervention that was instigated by male professionals and a market-oriented undertaking industry, who deemed this as necessary in the name of hygiene and respectability (Consedine, 1987:59; Gittings, 1984:100).

Although a lot of change is happening which is beginning to again personalize after-death practices for many Pakeha, the usual Pakeha experience of death still sees the dead body

hidden from sight. The funeral is most frequently impersonal and performed by someone who does not know the dead person well. The grieving is controlled as people try hard to put on a brave face. Embalming and cosmetics are often used on the dead body to make it as life-like as possible for those who go to view the body. The subject of death is either avoided or is clouded in euphemism (De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:17-18). The dead person is the "deceased" or "departed" who is "lost" or at "eternal rest" and so on. All of this contributes to a continued "dishonest" experience of death for Pakeha.

The Maori way of death is in comparison a very honest time. The talk is honest, the seeing of death is honest, the emotion is honest and the saying goodbye is honest. The mourners watch the coffin being closed and the grave filled in. When the dead person is buried many of his or her closest belongings are also buried or burned (Dansey, 1975:183). The repetition of the powhiri and the repeated expression of grief helps people to accept the reality of the death and what this means to them (Hoskings, 1985:38). This honesty at the Maori tangihanga may however not always be a positive experience as heated (sometimes bitter), disagreements occur between whanau members about for example, which marae the tupapaku should lie on for the tangihanga, or where the burial should occur.

CHAPTER 7

PAKEHA EXPERIENCES OF AFTER-DEATH POLICY, PRACTICE AND BELIEFS AND THEIR HISTORICAL ORIGINS

This chapter begins with an historical overview of the numerous waves of colonization that occurred in Britain over the centuries. Emphasis is then given to the 15th and 16th centuries onwards when colonization processes became more of a legacy of domination by the elite classes within British society over the peasant or working classes. Enclosure — the taking of the land, the slaughter and terror tactics of the witch hunts and the destruction of old sacred places and icons are identified and discussed as key components of this destruction of the old social, cultural, spiritual and economic order that was led by these male elite classes within British society.

This colonization material provides important background knowledge which informs the subsequent social policy analysis of the colonization of women's healing work and ritual by the male professions that emerged at this time, and the implications of this for after-death practices and beliefs in both Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand. This in turn leads into an analysis of the death, and death related, legislation, policy and practices in both Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand, and its implications in relation to changing after-death practices.

The chapter ends with a discussion of the movements of the mid to latter 20th century which are working to reclaim death from professional and institutional control and which are asserting the rights of individuals, families, friends and communities. These hospice and simple death, natural death, homedeadth and community and ecological movements regarding death and after-death practices, that I have termed collectively "natural death movements", are working to challenge and change mainstream death culture in this and other Euro-Western countries. At the same time indigenous and first nation people such as Maori are continuing their home and community based after-death practices. These community based and nature-honouring indigenous/first nation approaches to death are also working to influence contemporary movements working to de-institutionalize and reclaim control over after-death practices.

An Overview of the Emergence of a Christian Capitalist Britain: A Colonization Perspective

The inhabitants of Britain have a long history of being conquered and colonized. Tribalism was the social and political organization in Europe prior to the development of the feudal system (Vinogradoff, 1951:3-36). In Britain private ownership of land had been unknown to the tribal Celtic people (Birnie, 1969:12-13; Vinogradoff, 1951:17-24) as was the case for the Maori people of Aotearoa before colonization.

The Roman conquest occurred in AD 43 and was completed within half a century (Collingwood and Myres, 1956:76-120; Richmond, 1970:17). It was the Romans who first introduced methods of landholding, private ownership and appropriation of land to Britain (Birnie, 1969:17; Vinogradoff, 1951:52-57). England was a Roman province for 400 years but many areas were untouched by Roman influence so that Celtic tribal and village organization continued unchanged (Birnie, 1969:16; Vinogradoff, 1951:52-57). Scotland, Ireland and Wales were not conquered (Birnie, 1969:15-16).

During the 5th and 6th centuries England was overrun and conquered by a Nordic race from north-west Germany (Birnie, 1969:20). It was in this Anglo Saxon period that the languages of the Celtic peoples disappeared from England (Birnie, 1969:23). This was followed by Danish invasions which continued almost to the eve of the Norman conquest in 1066 (Birnie, 1969:24-25; Davis, 1972:165-166,295-296; Vinogradoff, 1951:121-122,131). The invasions also became a Christian conquest as Christianity spread through Europe from about the 5th century (Chamberlain, 1981:330). Christianity first reached England at the end of the 6th century and within a century had spread across the country (Sawyer, 1978:2-3; Whitelock, 1971:7,155-188). What survived of the Celtic religion later became known as witchcraft (Benland, 1990:248).

The tribal organization of English society was giving way and by the 10th century every person was made incumbent to a lord (Birnie, 1969:25-26). The lord conveyed not so much ownership of the land but the right to certain payments and services from it. The Norman conquest in the 11th century merely added the finishing touches to the native feudalism, and this feudalism reigned from the 11th-16th centuries (Birnie, 1969:26,38; Vinogradoff, 1951:291-306).

It was in the middle of this feudal era beginning 1348 that the plague claimed one third to one half of the population (Birmie, 1969:58; Ziegler, 1976:240-242). The massive depopulation that resulted made it hard for the lords to find labourers for their lands (Holmes, 1971:94-95; Ziegler, 1976:241). As a consequence wages doubled, and in some districts increased even more, in the generation after the plague — a golden age for the English labourer (Birmie, 1969:59-60; Ziegler, 1976:244-247). A growth of leasehold occurred as lords surrendered the right to exact labour services from resistant villeins (a class who cultivated the lord's land two to three days a week as well as their own). The lords leased land in small lots and supplied tenants with the stock and seed required. As the 15th century progressed the tenants who leased land supplied their own stock and by the 16th century it was common for the whole of the lord's lands to be let to a single tenant (Birmie, 1969:63-64). In the 16th century money became the measure of all things resembling the 19th century with its contrast of increasing wealth offset by grinding poverty (Birmie, 1969:66-67) which is also a trend of the latter 20th century that we are now experiencing.

It is from around 15th-16th century Britain onwards that I want to concentrate my focus on the colonization process. As I have delved into the history and social policy of this time I have become increasingly aware of a colonization process occurring within a society and imposed on a society by a literate and powerful male elite who were intent on changing the beliefs and practices of all, particularly the peasant classes who were resisting this change. I became aware of the great destruction that occurred at this time, of culture and of human lives. The common land of the people was seized; their sacred places were decimated, made inaccessible or assimilated into Christianity; the spiritual and healing knowledge, the economic base of the people and their village custom (including their system of common law) was attacked and destroyed. I will trace the different but interrelated aspects of this colonization process and at times ground this with comparisons to the Maori colonization experience.

Enclosure: The Taking of the Land and the Destruction of Common Law and Popular Culture

The enclosure of common fields and subsequent decline of the English village community was a social and economic policy imposed on the people beginning in the 15th century, slowing towards the end of the 16th century, taking on a new character and object in the 17th century and continuing even into the 19th century (Birmie, 1969:75-76; Tate, 1967:21-22). Enclosure refers to the surrounding of a piece of land with hedges, ditches, fences or walls as barriers to the free passage of people or animals. It was a mark of exclusive

individual ownership and occupation and a step towards conversion to pasture (Slater, 1968:1-2; Tate, 1967:43,187).

Enclosure essentially abolished what was previously an organization of village co-operation in the use of shared land. It produced a forced rural depopulation (Slater, 1968:xi-xiii,266; Tate, 1967:167-171). The people were forced off the land and into the cities in search of work as was the case for Maori in New Zealand in the so-called Maori urban drift (a neutral term for what in reality was also a forced survival strategy). The words enclosure and (rural) depopulation were used as synonyms in the documents and Acts of the British Parliament of the 16th century (Slater, 1968:91) and this shows how pervasive the link between the physical act of enclosure and consequence of depopulation was. Enclosure was something the local peasantry underwent as well as the land itself (Slater, 1968:261) as will be explained in the paragraphs that follow.

Before enclosure, the people had a common law system of working the shared land based upon principles of common rights (Starhawk, 1982:190-191; Tate, 1967:34,38). This early open field system of agriculture and village co-operation prevailed throughout Britain in varying forms and was known as run-rig in Scotland and rundale in Ireland (Slater, 1968:170-177). The open-field village was essentially a self-contained social and economic organization based upon production for subsistence, not for market, and guided by an economic principle of use not gain (Starhawk, 1982:191; Tate, 1967:32).

Enclosure was instigated by the lords, legislators and landowner/farmers. It was enforced by the lord via vestry meeting, more formerly by Chancery or Exchequer Decree and by Act of Parliament (Starhawk, 1982:193; Tate, 1967:45-54).

Enclosure was motivated by a number of influences. It developed alongside the industrial revolution, the corresponding agrarian revolution, the move towards capitalist production and the rise of the market economy. Sheep farming (which required less labour than horticulture) and its exports of wool, was seen as more profitable. At the same time enclosure provided labour for the emerging urban industrial cities by dispossessing rural people (Birnle, 1969:70-71; Hill, 1969:64-65; Slater, 1968:266; Starhawk, 1982:192; Tate, 1967:22). This was encouraged by Adam Smith and other economists of the time in the name of economic progress (Slater, 1968:94; Tate, 1967:22). The protestant Christian work ethic sought to force peasants (whose pagan ways were seen as lazy as was also the case for Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand) into being labourers every day of the year (Hill, 1969:42).

The scarcity and high cost of labourers after the plague (Birnie, 1969:262-263) contributed to pressure for enclosure as did a desire for increased profits from rent (Slater, 1968:262-263). Another contributing factor was the declining fertility of the land which became seen as better suited to pasture rather than cropping (Birnie, 1969:71; Starhawk, 1982:192).

To the people enclosure meant terrible hardship, grief and social disintegration. Enclosed land instead of serving multiple needs now served only one and this meant an accumulation of land within a few hands (Starhawk, 1982:194; Tate, 1967:172). Enclosure caused the destruction of the medieval peasant village's network of common rights, obligation and mutual charity (Pollock, 1977:65). It destroyed their "common law" legal system (Starhawk, 1982:193). Enclosure meant a massive depopulation of villages. Whole parishes were converted into great sheep runs which resulted in poor people being driven to parishes which remained unenclosed, burdening these, and towns were filled with beggars (Slater, 1968:264,266; Tate, 1967:167-171). This caused the destruction of cultural, spiritual and political beliefs and practices (Starhawk, 1982:196-197) and the breakdown of extended family and community networks. It meant the loss of autonomy and independence, the destruction of the peasant village as an economic unit and the loss of the traditional ability and opportunity to live a subsistence life on the land.

Loss of access to the land meant loss of access to food gathering, game and fish (Hill, 1969:52; Starhawk, 1982:194); loss of access to fuel (Slater, 1968:118-119,122; Starhawk, 1982:194); the loss of grazing land for animals (people had to give up stock), acorns for feeding pigs and manure for cropping (Slater, 1968:114-115,122-123; Starhawk, 1982:190,194); lost access to healing herbs (Starhawk, 1982:194), to shelter, wood for building, and loss of housing and other improvements people had put on to the land (Hill, 1969:52; Slater, 1968:119-120; Starhawk, 1982:194). Poverty, landlessness and helplessness, destitution and recklessness, pauperism and drunkenness and bands of beggars were direct consequences of enclosure. It led to a decay of the people as well as to deserted villages (Birnie, 1969:72-72; Slater, 1968:4, 265-266; Starhawk, 1982:195).

Growing numbers of people became totally dependent on the need to sell their labour for wages and there was no longer a chance to rise in prosperity through hard work (Mies and Shiva, 1993:284; Slater, 1968:131; Starhawk, 1982:195-196; Tate, 1967:174). This increased villagers' dependence on their landlord who often became their employer also (Hill, 1969:52). Not all of the peasants who were driven off their land were absorbed into the growing industries as wage labourers. For a great many it led to starvation and death

(Hill, 1969:65). Life was so terrible that many people were forced to risk treacherous journeys to new colonies such as America in search of free land and a livelihood while others were deported to these new colonies (Mies and Shiva, 1993:284). Nearly 80,000 left England between 1620-1642 (Hill, 1969:53).

Enclosure led to a circular process (Hill, 1969:64-65) where low wages stimulated industrial production, especially in the clothing industry, which in turn encouraged a boom for pasture and thus further enclosure and eviction. The switch to pasture at a time when urban populations were increasing, sent food prices rocketing. Landless labourers were at the mercy of employers as the existence of a pool of unemployed helped keep wages low.

There was much opposition to enclosure through anti-enclosure movements, petitions and rioting but this opposition was mainly from peasants who were disadvantaged by a lack of literacy and oral skills as compared to those promoting enclosure (Birmie, 1969:73; Hill, 1969:8,51-52; Starhawk, 1982:196; Tate, 1967:70,89,152,165-166; Thomas, 1971:510). The State initially acted as a brake on the enclosure movement (Birmie, 1969:74). The famine year of 1597 however, saw the last Acts against depopulation/enclosure and 1608 saw the first pro-enclosure Act. The Crown itself became an enclosing landlord and no government after 1640 seriously tried to prevent enclosure or make money from fining enclosers (Hill, 1969:51). Before the Restoration of 1660 the clergy generally opposed enclosure but this moved to a concern in securing a share of the proceeds for themselves (Tate, 1967:151-153).

The taking of land and property was also a policy of the European inquisition/witch hunting era against people accused as heretics or witches and this greatly enriched the Church, the State and the emerging profession of lawyer (Mies, 1986:85; Walker, 1983:1086-1087). The property of the accused was instantly confiscated and accused persons were expected to pay for the costs of their own imprisonment — even their own torture (Daly, 1979:216). This was the experience of those accused as "witches" in Britain (Walker, 1983:439-440; Walker, 1985:143).

The Witch Hunts

During the five hundred years of Inquisition, representing the triumph of Christian imperialism over pagan Europe, a woman could either become a totally subservient "wife" — beaten and bullied by her husband, her eyes to the ground as the priests and preachers condemned and blamed her sex for all things — or

she could stand straight, proud in her own woman-wisdom, and be burnt as a witch (Sjoo and Mor, 1987:207).

Enclosure and its social consequences closely intertwined with the witch persecutions of the Middle Ages. These were primarily, but not exclusively, against women, and were particularly prominent in 16th-17th century Britain (Starhawk, 1982:186,196-198). A parallel to this attack on the witches (though not in terms of the numbers of court prosecutions or killings) can be seen in the 18th-19th century attack on the Maori tohunga by the Pakeha colonizers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The wisewomen/witches were healers, teachers and spiritual leaders in their communities as were the Maori tohunga in theirs. Just as the New Zealand Suppression of Tohunga Act of 1907 oppressed the tohunga, and Maori beliefs and practices in general, so too witchcraft legislation in Britain during the 16-17th centuries oppressed the wisewomen and the beliefs and practices of the peasant classes who still followed the pagan traditions of their old religion/culture. All these Acts were based on the Christian ideology that non-Christian beliefs and practices were evil, inspired by the "devil" and corrupting and damaging to all society. The Gods and Goddesses of the pagan people of Britain became the devils of their conquerors — a colonization experience similar to that of Maori people in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Awatere, 1984:70-72). I think that it is important to note here that the term pagan originally simply meant "of the land", "people of the earth", "country dwellers" just as heathen originally meant someone who lived on the heaths (Alder, 1989:152; Cameron, 1989:57; Daly, 1987:153-154; Sjoo and Mor, 1987:201; Walker, 1983:758). It is my belief that the original meanings of pagan and heathen are very similar to the Maori concept of "tangata whenua" which has been discussed previously in Chapter 1.

Although Christianity which began to spread through Europe from about the 5th century (Chamberlain, 1981:33) had been working against pagan beliefs since its arrival to Britain (Thomas, 1971:253-254), in medieval experience there had been a lot of intermingling of the old beliefs and ritual with the Christian religion (Chamberlain, 1981:38-39; Hill, 1969:89; Starhawk, 1989b:19). We can compare this to the Maori response to Pakeha colonization of combining their traditional Maori beliefs and practices with the introduced Christian teachings (something still clearly evident in Aotearoa/New Zealand today).

In the Middle Ages almost anything women did could be described as witchcraft because throughout their daily lives women invoked the Goddess. For example Minerva was remembered when spinning and Venus was associated with weddings (Walker, 1983:1081-

1082). Christian symbolism however became superimposed over pagan. Pagan Goddesses often became Christian saints, pagan magical springs became holy wells for Christians and Christianized healing spells became popular practice. Rural religion was a form of Christianity interpreted according to local folklore which stemmed very much from old religion/culture (Chamberlain, 1981:38-39; Thomas, 1971:47-50). Wise women/witches were able to maintain legitimacy under this system although their position was becoming more vulnerable (Chamberlain, 1981:40). Many parts of Britain however, remained untouched by Christianity for a long time. In 17th century England there were still rural people who knew nothing of Christianity and even as recent as the early 19th century there is an account of a priest arriving in Fordington, Dorset to find a total ignorance of Christian ways (Thomas, 1971:165-166).

In 11th century Europe a shift began in the churches thinking — paganism, even the old ways of healing became heresy (Chamberlain, 1981:42). An attempt to cure became seen as devil worship as the church saw disease and death as God's punishment to a sinner (Chamberlain, 1981:33). The Inquisition that followed beginning in the 12th century was a five hundred year reign of terror which appears to have been invented to force public acceptance of a church the public did not want by exterminating those seen to hold the wrong ideas about religion (Walker, 1983:436-437; Walker, 1985:125-126). Church and state at this time were one and the same. The power of the Inquisition was established and enlarged by a series of Papal Bulls such as the 1252 Pope Innocent IV Bull against heretics (Walker, 1983:439). Inquisitors were placed above the law and all citizens had to assist them or be punished by excommunication and other penalties (Ehrenreich and English, 1973:9; Walker, 1983:442-444).

The witch persecutions were a later development of this Inquisition (Walker, 1985:126). Anti-witch doctrine was developed with the Papal Bull of Innocent VIII in 1484 and the 1486 *Malleus Maleficarum* text which was a guide to witch hunting written by the Dominican Inquisitors (German Catholic priests), Kramer and Sprenger (Ehrenreich and English, 1973:9; Ehrenreich and English, 1979:36; Thomas, 1971:439). The 1484 Papal Bull declared witchcraft a heresy and unleashed the power of the Inquisition against the old religion/culture (Starhawk, 1982:187; Starhawk, 1989b:19). Its associated women-hating text by Kramer and Sprenger on witch hunting and the evils of women in general (particularly midwives) was like a bible which lay on the bench of every judge and was used by inquisitors and witch hunters throughout Europe (Daly, 1979:189-190; Ehrenreich and English, 1973:9; Hoch-Smith, 1978:246; Walker, 1983:442). *Malleus Maleficarum* (The

Hammer of Witchcraft) laid down the ground work for the reign of terror enacted during the era of witch persecution (Starhawk, 1989b:20). Women became objects of hatred and scorn under Christianity. The witch hunt became a focus for a sexist hatred which was associated with Eve, and all women, who were blamed for causing "the fall" of humankind (Walker, 1983:1079).

It was in the 16th century that witch hunting reached Britain. The rise of Protestantism coincided with the witchcraze in Britain and saw Protestants as well as Catholics active in these witch hunts and killings (Daly, 1984:92; Starhawk, 1990b:7). The leading men of these churches fostered a public delusion that witches were active in some great conspiracy to overthrow the kingdom of God on earth (Walker, 1983:1088). The onset of the Reformation was also a major influence in 16th century Britain. This involved a Protestant attack on Catholic doctrine as well as pagan beliefs and practices (Daly, 1979:186). The Reformation meant a growing protestant disapproval of anything considered to be magic (Hill, 1969:89-90; Thomas, 1971:52,61,256).

It should be remembered that at this time, in the 16th-17th century, Britain was a pre-industrial society with a relatively sparse population. In 1700 over three quarters of the British population still lived in the countryside (Thomas, 1971:3; Thomas, 1983:243). There was however a growing desire to bring people out of the forests and to the cities — to civilise the pagans (Thomas, 1983:243) (and again this can be compared to the pressures which forced Maori from their tribal lands and into towns and cities). This was a time when the great many were illiterate in contrast to the social (almost exclusively male) elite who were highly educated (Thomas, 1971:4). The invention of the printed word had made possible the preservation and dissemination of systems of thought from other societies (Thomas, 1971:5) to the rich and literate in Britain. In an age without radio, television, or newspapers (until the mid 17th century), the pulpit was an important direct means of communication to the people. The sermon discussed not only theology but morals, politics, economics and current affairs in general (Thomas, 1971:153).

The Church was a very powerful force on the public consciousness and on public opinion. It controlled censorship of the press, the licensing of school-masters and doctors and governed the universities. The legal system was predominantly a Church system of ecclesiastical courts (Thomas, 1971:153). The Church was in addition a huge landowner and its leaders, the bishops and archbishops sat in the House of Lords and played a prominent part in politics and government (Thomas, 1971:152-153). The Church made

money from tithes, church rates and miscellaneous fees that parishioners were required to pay to the clergy (Thomas, 1971:153) and at the same time it was conveniently seen as a crime against the Church and the state not to be Christian. The Christian Church was then a major part of the state, the judiciary, the press and big business — a very powerful agent.

The British witch hunts were particularly prominent in the 16th-17th centuries with nearly all executions taking place in England in the second half of the 16th century and the first three quarters of the 17th century (Thomas, 1971:453; Starhawk, 1982:186-187, 196-198). A lead up to the Witchcraft Acts is evident in early legislation to control midwives/women healers. Midwives were a key target of the witch hunters. Kramer and Sprenger attacked midwives along with (or as) witches, declaring that midwives did the most harm to the Catholic faith (Chamberlain, 1981:54; Daly, 1973:63; Ehrenreich and English, 1979:36; Sprenger and Kramer, 1968:128; Walker, 1985:128). A 1512 Act in Britain declared that all midwives must obtain a license from the Bishops' Court and made midwives swear oaths that they would obey the rules of conduct that the Church demanded of their practice, and not use charms. Midwives had to produce character witnesses — usually the parson and church wardens as well as six "honest matrons" whom they had attended (Chamberlain, 1981:54; Donnison, 1977:5-6; Thomas, 1971:259). It also stated that none could practice medicine unless graduates of Oxford or Cambridge or licensed by the Bishops of the Diocese, and allowed for the punishment and suppression of the rest (Chamberlain, 1981:58; Donnison, 1977:5-7). This enforced religious orthodoxy influenced death rituals and practices as well as those for birth. However, in the case of unlicensed women attending the poor and seen as doing a useful service, it was often judged more appropriate to encourage them to take out a license rather than apply the punishment (Donnison, 1977:7). Further Acts saw a strengthening in the position of doctors and a repression of the women healers (Chamberlain, 1981:59).

The first British legislation making witchcraft a capital offence was passed in 1542. It became a felony (punishable by death) to conjure spirits, practice witchcraft, enchantment or sorcery in order to find treasure; waste or destroy a person's body, limbs or goods; to provoke unlawful love; to declare what had happened to stolen goods; or for any other unlawful intent or purpose (Hill, 1969:90; Thomas, 1971:442,457). This was repealed in 1547 and replaced with Royal Injunctions of 1547 and the Elizabethan injunctions of 1559 which forbade magical practices. A second witchcraft statute was passed in 1563. This 1563 Act was more severe than the 1542 statute in the sense that it made it a felony to invoke "evil" spirits for any purpose whether maleficium (intention to harm) was involved or not.

In fact those using witchcraft to do good were deemed to be even more detestable than those causing harm (Daly, 1979:193). The 1563 Act established the death penalty for a first offence of witchcraft causing death or on the second offence for a lesser witchcraft. A 1604 Act strengthened the 1563 Act. This stated that any attempt to cure by unauthorized persons could be used as evidence of witchcraft and a death following this could be and was interpreted as a deliberate act of witchcraft (Chamberlain, 1981:60; Hill, 1969:90; Thomas, 1971:258-259,442-443). The crime of witchcraft was defined as "crimen exceptum", a crime distinct from all others and the ordinary rules did not apply (Daly, 1979:181-183,201). This gave witch hunters and torturers the power to make their own rules. The onus was on those accused of crimes of witchcraft to prove their innocence and this was an impossible task.

The Witchcraft Acts were not formally repealed until 1736 in Scotland. The last English trial however took place in 1712 while the last execution occurred in 1685. The last witchburning in Scotland occurred in 1727 but unofficial incidents continued even later than this (Hill, 1969:90; Thomas, 1971:442,452; Walker, 1983:1087-1088). Despite the readiness of the courts to treat witch killings as murders after 1736, the lynching of witches remained a sporadic feature of English rural life until the latter 19th century (Thomas, 1971:453).

Those targeted and persecuted as witches were mainly women and girls. The women were often midwives and healers. They were likely to be poor and old, and were frequently described as ugly and deformed⁶, and as Barbara Walker asserts, perhaps this was a convenient way to be rid of women not strong enough to do productive work and therefore dependent on the support of others (Walker, 1985:132). Witches were frequently widows and spinsters, that is, independent women apart from men. Another theme was that of being non-Christian with witches being described as blasphemous and as having not received communion. They were also often women with a "scolding tongue", that is, outspoken women; or women seen to have unusual abilities and/or to be performing miracles, that is learned and intelligent women. Witches were perpetually described as lustful women, and powerful and non-Christian sexuality in women is also a key theme. Witches were frequently linked to an enormous secret society and to being organized. (Chamberlain, 1981:64-65; Daly, 1979:180,184-186,217; Ehrenreich and English, 1973:10-13; Pollock,

⁶ This is also evidence of some of the historical origins of the oppression of people with disabilities.

1977:40-43; Thomas, 1971:567-568; Walker, 1983:1077-1078,1083; Walker, 1985:89,132).

Witch accusations often involved wealthier people accusing those of a lower social and economic status (Pollock, 1977:56,164). The available evidence suggests that this persecution of women as witches links with the breakdown and abandonment of the old common law expectation of mutual charity. An old woman's reputation for witchcraft may well have been her last line of defence to ensure she would be treated fairly by her fellow villagers. The uncharitable however were able to divert attention from their own guilt (under popular culture) of not giving to the needy, by focusing on a poor old women's chastisement for not being charitable, as a curse of witchcraft which resulted in illness or other hardship (Thomas, 1971:566-567). Accusers did state that their misfortune due to the witchcraft of a so-called witch was following the witch's request for charity or neighbourliness from them which they had turned down or felt forced to give in to (Thomas, 1971:533,565-566). Those vulnerable to witch accusations became deterred from knocking on doors and asking for assistance for fear of being labelled and persecuted as a witch (Thomas, 1971:567).

Witch persecution fractured peasant class society and raised to power the university educated male experts (Starhawk, 1990b:7). The witch was a victim, not an aggressor (Walker, 1985:144). In time the divide and rule tactics of the colonizers and the ideology of their experts, who used fear, manipulation and torture to force even family members, friends and neighbours to accuse each other of witchcraft, also had the working poor themselves hunting and persecuting suspected witches who were thought to be behind all the ills in the community (Daly, 1979:197-198). The word witch became synonymous with evil (Starhawk, 1990b:310). Witches became universal and convenient scapegoats for anything that went wrong. This included being blamed for weather problems, ships sinking, crop failure, houses burned, wagons broken, cows or wells dry, infertility, illness and death (Daly, 1973:64; Starhawk, 1990b:196; Thomas, 1971:460,530-531,536,544-545; Walker, 1985:132,137). Doctors and veterinarians conveniently blamed their failure to cure on witchcraft (Ehrenreich and English, 1973:19; Walker, 1983:1079; Walker, 1985:132).

Doctors' opinions were crucial at witch trials as it was doctors alone who could determine if sickness or death was attributable to natural causes or witchcraft (Chamberlain, 1981:61; Ehrenreich and English, 1973:6,19; Ehrenreich and English, 1979:39). It was in doctors' professional and economic interest to eliminate the women healers/witches — their competition (Ehrenreich and English, 1973:19; Ehrenreich and English, 1979:38-39; Mies,

1986:83,87; Walker, 1983:1089). Upper class women healers had been the first to be attacked and eliminated but this was more focused on women daring to attempt to cure at all, rather than for being incompetent, or for being witches. By the 14th century the medical profession's campaign against urban, educated women healers was basically complete throughout Europe — male doctors had a monopoly over the upper classes (except obstetrics). They were then ready and able to play a key role in the elimination of the main body of women healers — the witches of the rural peasant communities (Ehrenreich and English, 1973:18-19). The male doctor was lifted up in the heavens on the side of God and the law while the wise woman/healer was discredited and persecuted by a campaign which placed her on what became seen (dualistically) as the dark side — of evil and magic (Chamberlain, 1981:62).

This genocide, this slaughter of witches continued in Christian Europe for nearly five centuries. Estimates vary as to how many women were actually executed in this genocide — from hundreds of thousands to several million (Mies, 1986:110). Over nine million people is a figure which is often cited (Daly, 1979:183). Even in England which was not as murderous as other parts of Europe, 30,000 witches were officially killed between 1542 and 1736 (Walker, 1983:444).

This persecution of women (and men and children) as witches was a colonization process motivated by capitalist economic interests as well as social and religious beliefs. Witch trials and the confiscation of the property of those accused of witchcraft benefitted the lawyers, judges, investigators and others involved, as well as the church and governments of this time (Mies, 1986:84-87). Doctors who became important expert witnesses at witch trials, were also uplifted as a profession by the associated undermining and demise of lay healers (Chamberlain, 1981:61-62; Ehrenreich and English, 1973:6,18-19; Ehrenreich and English, 1979:38-39; Mies, 1986:83,87; Walker, 1983:1079,1089). The scientists of this era developed methods which paralleled the ideology of the inquisition against women as witches, and contributed to the emerging capitalism. Nature was to have her secrets extracted, be forcibly violated by the new mechanical devices, dissected and constrained into service (Merchant, 1980; Merchant, 1993:274-276; Mies, 1986:87-88).

The church, the State, the new capitalist class and modern scientists collaborated in the violent subjugation of women and nature (Mies, 1986:88).

Destruction of the Sacred Places and Icons

Alongside the destruction of the witches and the old religion/culture, a destruction of the old sacred spaces, places and icons occurred just as Christian Pakeha colonizers destroyed Maori icons and assaulted the sacred and tapu places of the Maori which also meant damaging the mana of their iwi, hapu and whanau. In the British experience however this may have been in the form of assimilation as well as destruction. Christian leaders struggling to convert the pagans to Christianity frequently coveted ancient pagan sites of worship such as wells, trees and stones and declared them Christian. Similarly pagan festivals were incorporated into the church year (Thomas, 1971:47). Music, such as carols which were pagan in origin, was also assimilated into Christianity.

The onset of enclosure denied the people access to their old pagan sacred spaces and places of worship. Also much of the sacred pagan icons of the old religion were physically destroyed in Britain. The Christian church for example began a long fight against the Avebury stones in 634, smashing them or exorcising them. Both inner circles were destroyed sometime after 1700. At the height of the witch hunts, when witches were being tortured and killed these sacred stones were also tortured and destroyed. They were burnt, chipped and mutilated. The establishment of private property finally brought about the end of the sacred Avebury stones with the enclosure of the common land by private capital in the form of wealthy farmers. In 1722 72 stones were left but by 1934 only 4 were still standing (Sjoo and Mor, 1987:134-135). Some of these stones however have since been dug up and reinstalled. Another example of the destruction of pagan icons is that of the Celtic Sheela-na-gig (Sheila-na-gig) carved stone figures of a naked woman displaying her holy yoni (vulva). These still appeared on old British churches as well as castles but were later removed, defaced or destroyed by offended Christians (Austen, 1990:118; Walker, 1983:931-932) as was the case in Aotearoa for Maori carvings with explicit sex organs. Some Sheela-na-gig stones have however remained and others have been found buried near the churches they once decorated (Austen, 1990:118; Walker, 1983:931-932).

The Colonization of Women's Healing Work and Ritual, and the Rise of the Male Professions: the Continuation on into the 20th Century

The beginning of medicine as a male profession provides a clear example of women's culture (and popular culture) being destroyed (Summers, 1975:244). The male medical

profession and allies of church and state discredited women healers (Chamberlain, 1981; Ehrenreich and English, 1973; Ehrenreich and English, 1979:33-39,93-98; Starhawk, 1982:201-205) and this can be described as a three pronged attack (Summers, 1975:244-245) involving licensing laws which forbade women healers from practising; the denouncing of women healers as witches and torturing and killing them; and a campaign to discredit women healers as ignorant, incompetent, dirty, evil and immoral. This campaign to discredit and negatively stereotype women healers is evident in the caricature created of the women who laid out the dead. The most well known example of this being seen in the Dickens' character of Sarah Gamp (Adams, 1993:165; Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:39; Litten, 1991:72).

As the popular culture was destroyed another was simultaneously being imposed via religion, violence, law, state economic and social policy, capitalist business interests, ideology and education. This was a colonization process which continued on into the 20th century.

This persecution of lay women healers/handywomen/old wives as witches did not eliminate their existence. The social needs of the poor ensured their continuing work (Chamberlain, 1981:32). There was contradiction apparent as some old wives/healers were prosecuted as witches and others tolerated. The poor were not seen as deserving the range of treatment that was available to the wealthy but were allowed what was seen as the inferior provision of the old wife/handywoman/lay midwife (Chamberlain, 1981:77). Doctors did not aspire to practice among the working classes until the mid-19th century and medical provision for the poor remained largely in the hands of these lay women healers (Chamberlain, 1981:84,91).

The almost complete demise of these lay healers was ultimately linked with changes in their social base as well as changes in the nature of the competition. Their social standing in the community continued to be undermined and they were not equipped to compete with the growing market interest in health care — which grew to include the poor (Chamberlain, 1981:85,91). The 1902 Midwives Act recognized the work of old wives/midwives and until 1926 permitted them to practise, provided they were registered. Although the Act gave the midwife a better position than that proposed in an earlier Bill of 1890 (Donnison, 1977) it also marked a phasing out of the autonomous old wife/handywoman, who was replaced by the "qualified" midwife (Adams, 1993:153-155; Chamberlain, 1981:119; Roberts, 1989:194), an assistant and a subordinate to the doctor in the health system.

The Male Professions Colonize Each Other

During my research I came to realize that the male professions colonized each others' domains as well as that of women's work and women's ritual. The clergy were once the leading male profession. They held a paramount position in society. Their ears were supposedly closest to Gods, and law on earth was to be based on God's law. They were controllers of social and economic policy. They were the judges and enforcers of judicial punishment, deterrents and religious orthodoxy through their ecclesiastical courts and licensing systems. They were the censors. They produced legislative rulings and also became a key influence in Parliament and big business. They also once held the job of writing people's wills (probably because they were initially one of the few groups in society who were skilled in reading and writing).

Legislators, policy makers and planners (who are again also often big business representatives), lawyers, doctors and funeral directors have taken over roles that were once performed by priests. It is the doctor now who usually "stands over" the dying and is in charge of the associated rules of ritual and medical practice. Doctors however were once controlled by priests who licensed their practice and controlled their schools of medicine (Ehrenreich and English, 1973:15-17). I find it interesting to note that doctors have been/are described as acting like God, a medical priesthood (Illich, 1976:216-217,205,253; Illich, 1977:20). Both religion and medical science, in fact all the professions, have been powerful and key sources of sexist (racist and elitist) ideology in our culture (Ehrenreich and English, 1973b:5-7,21-89; Illich, 1977:9-15,17-19). As Ehrenreich and English (1973b:6-7) have theorized, medicine inherited from religion its role as guardian of sexist ideology. Doctors replaced the clergy as the more powerful group of "priests" in society.

The legal profession rather than the clergy are now the ones involved in the rules and rituals of defending and prosecuting those accused of criminal offences as well as overseeing and writing legal documents such as last wills and testaments and informing us in general about what is legal or illegal. The clergy are also now no longer a prominent part of the legislative process. The New Right "priests" of big business are now however very much involved in economic and social policy.

Funeral directors/undertakers and their associates have also colonized the roles of the clergy, and interestingly also some of the roles of doctors as well as those women who laid out the dead. Funeral directors now often take on the role of performing the funeral service in the

chapels that are part of their premises. Even when the priest is performing the funeral service the funeral director is there to "direct" and take away the body for burial/cremation or is at the graveside inviting people to sprinkle the ritual dirt on the lowered coffin. Funeral directors as embalmers/morticians (or embalmers as a separate "profession") have taken over the early physician role of embalming and reconstructing the dead body. I suspect however that this is because after-death practice became a role that was not popular with doctors (to whom death became seen as a failure). Funeral directors have established themselves as grief experts (and counselling was/is also a role of priests and doctors), as part of their advice to us on our funeral needs and requirements, and as self-appointed experts on the public good in relation to death (Illich, 1977:19-20). Funeral directors/embalmers can also be described as taking on the role of illusionists as they attempt to make dead bodies look as life-like as possible (Aries, 1981:599). The funeral director then, has taken on a "priest" role and "doctor" role as well as that of respectable professional businessman (Aries, 1981:598) though the 1980s marked the beginnings of a few women also qualifying as funeral directors/embalmers in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand, 1984:16). A few women entering these realms, however, does not mean it is no longer a male profession.

The funeral director has become the co-ordinator of after-death arrangements — a colonization of the role that was once that of the extended family, friends and community (Aries, 1981:611-614). In their role as co-ordinator, funeral directors link up with the priest or funeral celebrant, the hospital mortuary workers, the cemetery and crematorium workers, the justice department staff registering deaths, the newspaper re the death notice as well as the family. The exclusive knowledge involved with this role means a great deal of potential power over the family and friends of the dead person (and the body of the dead person). There is a great potential for mystifying the process involved and controlling the information and choices presented.

The Colonization of Death by the Male Professions and Subsequent Decline of Death as Women's Work and Women's Ritual in Britain

Male involvement in preparing the dead began in Britain with the aristocracy, as the emerging profession of physician/surgeon began to practise embalming as a way to preserve the body for a long enough period to allow the organization of lavish funerals (before this

effigies of the dead were used). The women of this class were then left only to dress and trim the corpse (Gittings, 1984:167). The aristocracy also had heralds who organized the funeral ritual from the middle ages (Gittings, 1984:166). Heralds were the aristocratic forerunner to the undertaker.

For the great majority of people it was still women who were in charge of the laying-out and before burial period. It was women in the household or women in the community who did this work (Litten, 1991:124). At one stage Acts of Parliament were passed (1660 onwards and repealed 1815), that forced the use of woollen shrouds, sheets, shirts, shifts and other items, so as to boost the woollen industry, unless people chose to dispense with the shroud altogether and bury their dead in herbs or flowers, and hay (Bradfield, 1994:25; Gittings, 1984:112-113; Litten, 1991:73-74; Richardson, 1987:20-21). Linen was the preferred option, but only the rich could afford to pay the five pound fine for breaking these laws (Bradfield, 1994:25; Gittings, 1984:113; Litten, 1991:74; Richardson, 1987:20-21). Affidavits had to be signed to declare that wool alone had been used and these were signed by the women who laid out the dead. For two centuries women known as "searchers" were given official sanction to certify the event and cause of death (now the role of doctors), to collect the data on mortality, and to institute any sanitary measures required (Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:37). These women were given the public health role of stopping further infection when deaths occurred from contagious disease as well as the responsibility for providing certification of these deaths (Litten, 1991:143). Women also played an important part in the public after-death ritual in both rural and urban Britain. They led the funeral from the house, acted as bearers of coffins, performed traditional women's funerary dirges and keened over the dead (Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:37). Sometimes women were hired as public mourners (Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:37).

The Reformation and witch hunting era which saw a conscious attack by the dominant religious institutions on anything which was considered to have associations with magic and the old religion greatly influenced death practices. For example the ritual tolling of the church bell at a death, rituals or prayers considered not of Christian origin, distribution of doles to the poor, and the wake were discouraged or forbidden (Thomas, 1971:66-67). The connection of bell ringing and religion for instance was broken with the Reformation which saw bell ringing strictly forbidden on Sundays. The Sunday ringing of the church bell was only formally restored in the late 19th century (Young, 1992:82).

The desire to discourage popular magic and control healing work and ritual lay behind the early 16th century law which gave bishops the authority to license doctors and midwives (Thomas, 1971:259). This enforced religious orthodoxy influenced death rituals and practices as well as those for birth. The licensing and scrutineering of midwives/handywomen by bishops and the church must have greatly affected the practice of these women healers who combined laying-out the dead with midwifery and sick nursing (Chamberlain, 1981:1; Donnison, 1977:8; Richardson, 1987:17-19).

Later in this same era of witch persecution, at the end of the 17th century, the undertaker began in London and by the 18th century undertakers had taken over from the aristocratic heralds with the upper classes. Before this many suppliers were contacted to supply the coffin, shroud, grave-digging and so on. Undertakers were well established by the 1830s and the "respectable funeral" had become a middle class aspiration (Richardson, 1987:4). The poor however, still had little need of the services of the undertaker except perhaps for a coffin and transport. Although undertakers were well established by the mid-1800s, embalming was not offered by a majority of undertakers until the 1920s, and for some undertakers embalming was not usual practice even in the 1960s (Litten, 1991:54; Mitford, 1980:204-206, 212-219).

Just as health became a commodity under capitalism with the rise of the medical profession and druggists, so did death. The dead body itself also became an item to buy and sell in the grave-robbing era of the 17th to early 19th century which co-incided with the rise of the surgeon-anatomist. When they began in the 16th century surgeons were not an autonomous "profession", but part of barber-surgeon guilds, and remained so up until 1745 (Richardson, 1987:32-35). Those skilled in cutting hair and shaving beards extended the use of their sharp knives to bloodletting, dentistry and anatomy through these guilds (Mitford, 1992:24; Richardson, 1987:32-35).

Initially grave-robbing was carried out by the surgeon-anatomists and medical students who were using dissection to study the human body. By the 1720s anatomists were paying others (grave-robbers/body snatchers/resurrectionists) to bring them corpses (Richardson, 1987:54-55). Since the time of Henry VIII, the only legally ordained source of corpses for dissection had been from the gallows. Up until 1752 only six bodies a year had been officially available to surgeons. In 1752 an Act was passed that gave judges the discretion to substitute dissection for the punishment of gibbeting in chains after death (Richardson, 1987:35-36). Post mortem was viewed then as a terrible punishment, and it should be noted

that here lies a connection between the grave-robbing era and the witch hunting era that preceded, and co-incided with it, as the torture chambers of the witch hunters were the early laboratories where the texture, anatomy and resistance of the human body, mainly female was also studied (Mies, 1986:83).

A black market for corpses occurred as the demand for dead bodies increased with the rise of the medical profession and their interest in human anatomy, physiology, and "good" doctoring. Bodysnatchers earned a good living in comparison to other occupations (Richardson, 1987:55,67-69). All sorts of people were involved in this industry. As well as the grave-robbers there were hospital workers, undertakers, grave-diggers, sextons and women who posed as relatives to get dead bodies from the poor houses and hospitals for the bodysnatchers (Richardson, 1987:58,64-65,69). They were all in the pay of the anatomists. Stealing corpses was not legally a crime as long as the shroud, coffin or any other grave items were left behind (Richardson, 1987:58,68,71). To supply all the anatomy schools of Britain in the 1800s the scale of grave-robbing was probably about several thousand annually (Richardson, 1987:87).

At the height of this industry in dead bodies no body was safe from the dissectors slab, specimen jars and skeleton collections. It was mostly the poor who went to the anatomists, but the dead of the wealthier classes were also obtainable, they were just more expensive to acquire (Richardson, 1987:63). Bodies were sold whole, dismembered and sold in pieces or measured and sold by the inch (Richardson, 1987:72).

The surgeon-anatomist believed that dissection was a necessary inhumanity (Richardson, 1987:30-31) in the quest to learn about human anatomy and physiology (and here lie some of the origins of the clinical detachment of the medical profession today). Very inhuman activities did occur. No respect was shown for the dead person taken for dissection, and this is also evident by the sideline industries that developed such as the sale of human hair, the sale of human fat for making candles and soap, and human teeth for the making of false teeth (Richardson, 1987:67,97). The dissection room was also a place of pornography (pornographic necrophilia). Records show that women's bodies were viewed for male sexual gratification as well as for anatomy lessons and one 18th century anatomical picture shows a women's body chained down on the dissection table as if opened alive (Lonsdale, 1870:101 cited in Richardson, 1987:96; Peachey, 1924:30 cited in Richardson, 1987:95). The corruption surrounding the sale of dead human bodies also led to "burking", that is, the murdering of poor people so as to obtain money for their bodies from the anatomists. It

appears that some anatomists were aware of this activity and even acted in a way to encourage it (Richardson, 1987:135-141). Burking was however a crime and some burkers were caught, executed and themselves dissected as a penalty for this crime (Richardson, 1987:143,193-197). William Burke, for whom the term burking was coined, was subsequently dissected after his execution for burking. His actual dissection was witnessed by only a select number of ticket holders but his partially dissected body was publicly displayed the next day on its slab to be seen by between thirty and forty thousand members of the general public. The presiding judge had declared that Burke's skeleton should be preserved in memory of his crimes (Richardson, 1987:143).

The dead body became a clinical object to be poked and dissected and put into jars and collections. It was a major resource in the teaching and researching methods of doctors. It became a source of money and professional power for doctors as well as undertakers. The era of bodysnatching and grave-robbing was in contrast a time of great emotional trauma for the common people. Richardson (1987) gives accounts of frenzied villagers digging up graveyards to discover if their dead were missing. All sorts of strategies were developed to combat grave-robbing. Villagers organized systems to guard their cemeteries. Locked dead houses were established in some parishes so that dead bodies could be stored until they were too decomposed to be of use to the anatomists. Even lead and iron coffins, with internal latches designed to foil grave-robbers, became available to those rich enough to afford them (Litten, 1991:109; Richardson, 1987:81).

Finally in 1832, after decades of public unrest, public outrage and rioting in opposition to grave-robbing and dissection, 'An Act for Regulating Schools of Anatomy' was passed to stop the theft of dead bodies for dissection, well over 100 years after the practice began (Richardson, 1987). This Act is an euphemised form of an earlier proposed version called 'A Bill for Preventing the Unlawful Disinterment of Human Bodies and for Regulating Schools of Anatomy' with for example the term "dissection" becoming known as "anatomical examination" (Richardson,1987:198). This Act confiscated the bodies of the poor who had died in workhouses and had been unable to pay the cost of their burial, for dissection. The plight which had previously been reserved for the worst criminals became the punishment for being poor. The Anatomy Act was very much linked with the harsh Poor Laws that occurred soon after in 1834 that also in effect criminalized poverty (Richardson, 1987:192).

The dismembering era of grave-robbing and dissection influenced the attitudes of the male professions of doctor/scientist, politicians and undertakers and this led to an altered experience of death in society in general. The legislation that controlled the schools of dissection and criminalized the poor was euphemised, and euphemism and dishonesty still abound today in our death language and attitudes. The bodysnatching and dissection of the Georgian era threatened the entire conceptual framework of popular death culture, the laying-out, the watching and waking, the customary burial and this experience went on to influence the death practices and beliefs of Victorian England where expensive display replaced the desire for secure burial (Richardson, 1989). The society-wide fear and abhorrence of grave-robbing and the subsequent demand for stout and secure coffins stimulated a rapid growth of the undertaking business and also the promotion of 19th century cemeteries outside city limits. Out of town became seen as a more secure and salubrious place of burial as new rural cemeteries were established with solid fences and gates or moats (Richardson, 1989:111-113).

Those on the poverty line were in desperate fear of a pauper's funeral and were forced into paying death insurance to avoid this. A large proportion of the meagre weekly budget of the working classes was used for funeral insurance so as to avoid the dreaded pauper funeral (Gittings, 1984:65; Reeves, 1979:79-87). The funeral insurance companies that were established were called burial clubs or friendly societies. They greatly increased in number in the second half of the 18th century with their development paralleling that of the undertaking profession as they were frequently run by undertakers (Gittings, 1984:98; Litten, 1991:165). For some, this was a very exploitative system of insurance as a family who had paid regularly for years could lose the lot if the weekly payment could not be continued because of unemployment, illness or other misfortune (Reeves, 1979:70). A proper and decent Christian funeral was considered extremely important. This was something that undertakers could and did play on (Gittings, 1986:65,98-100) and this influence is still evident today when funeral directors advise us in terms of what they think is respectable.

In the middle and upper classes in which the respectable and safe burial had now been achieved, the respectable funeral became an end in itself. The high expenditure for secure burial became rationally but not emotionally redundant so that the desire to protect the dead from bodysnatchers moved to and fed the desire to display respectability in death (Richardson, 1989:115). The Victorian display of death became a powerful statement of social status and financial ability to honour the dead in an acceptable and respectable way.

Working-class funerals of grand display did not appear until the turn of the 20th century and by this time great funeral displays were losing favour with the upper classes who viewed the grand working-class funeral with derision and incomprehension (Richardson, 1989:115-116).

At this time the doctor, the nurse and midwife (whose roles were becoming that of doctor's handmaiden), and undertaker, were gradually taking over from the lay women who laid out the dead and the family and friends who watched over their dead at home until burial. Euro-Western developments in the 20th century, described by Illich (1977:11) as the "Age of Disabling Professions", led to the medicalization of society and of culture (Illich, 1977:131-132; Zola, 1977:51,59), the medicalization of both life and death (Illich, 1976:8,41,100). Modern medical enterprise and the professions dealing with both life and death endeavoured to do, and succeeded in doing for people, what their genetic and cultural heritage had formerly equipped them to do for themselves. As Illich (1976:8), argues this medicalization of life was a colonization process, an internalized colonization. The Christian, capitalist and patriarchal doctrine inherent in all the professions, combined with the ideology and fashions that filtered down from the undertakers and upper classes of Victorian England, were key influences on the values and the practices that were transplanted, via Pakeha colonization, to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Homedead was still however very much the norm as before World War II the dead body was kept at home before burial in 90 percent of cases (Mitford, 1980:214).

Developments in the Colonization of Death by the Male Dominated Health Professions in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In the previous chapter I discussed Maori death beliefs and practices and the effects of British colonization on this. I will now focus on the changes surrounding death for the Pakeha population and the trends in society in general.

Death was a home experience for Pakeha as well as Maori in colonial New Zealand. Initially settlers had to prepare and bury their own with no undertaker's services available. As the Pakeha population grew builders became more available to make coffins, and undertakers as a specialist business began from 1840 in the larger centres (Ninness, 1988:102). Embalming however, was barely known until the 1940s (Ninness, 1989:86).

In 1910 death was still very much a home experience for Pakeha New Zealanders (Dickey, 1980). Although approaching one third of deaths occurred in hospitals or other institutions it was usual for the dead body to return home. One survey by a funeral director in 1910 found that out of 45 deaths 95 percent returned home or remained at home and this is confirmed by the death notices at this time that state that funerals departed from the residence of the dead person and their family (Dickey, 1980:30). The undertaker's role was minimal, one of supplying the coffin and transport and only those without family and friends, the destitute and the isolated, were laid out at the undertakers (Dickey, 1980:30,37). Women usually did the laying-out. They may have been women in the family or women in the community known for being good at this work. In Roman Catholic communities the nuns were known for being great "layers out" (O'Regan, 1988:44; O'Regan, 1991:20-21). District nurses also performed this work (Maud, 1912:31) and this was still occurring as late as the 1960s in Palmerston North although undertakers were called in after the district nurse had done the laying-out (Rodgers, 29/5/1995).

A shift has occurred this century for Pakeha New Zealanders that has seen death removed from the home and this mirrors the similar experience in other Western countries. In an attempt to discover when, why and how this happened I examined the legislation concerning death in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand there is also an Anatomy Act and this was passed in 1875. It was simply titled 'The Anatomy Act, 1875'. It gave our schools of anatomy licence to practice and provided bodies for dissection by giving the "keepers" of "lunatic asylums" and "gaols" and surgeons of hospitals the authority to allow those who had died in their charge to undergo anatomical examination, unless the person had made a statement against this in the presence of two or more witnesses during the illness of which he or she died (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1875:159). Dissection therefore became a fate for the mentally ill or prisoners who had died in institutions in this country rather than specifically a plight for the poor. Many of the British who were coming to Aotearoa/New Zealand were wishing to escape the memory of the harsh and unpopular British Poor Laws. The strength of this feeling may well have been behind this difference in the New Zealand Anatomy Act as compared to the British example.

This changed however with the 1908 Medical Act Part II which extended and replaced the Anatomy Act. This legislation, which sees dissection further euphemised and also hidden as a secondary part of the 1908 Medical Act, gives the "keepers" of any "asylum" or

"establishment for destitute persons" as well as those for "mental asylums" and "gaols", surgeons of hospitals and police officers the authority to provide the bodies of those who died in their charge for anatomical examination. This applied, unless as stated in the 1875 Anatomy Act, the person had in his or her last illness stated against this in the presence of witnesses, or if the relatives would not allow this (*New Zealand Consolidated Statutes*, Appendix D Vol IV, 1908:108). Thus the British example of targeting the poor as a source of dead bodies for dissection was eventually adopted by our policy makers and I would speculate that this was because the demand for dead bodies in our anatomy/medical schools at this time outweighed the previously lesser legal supply. Today however this legislation appears to be defunct in terms of generating a supply of dead bodies for medical science as the voluntary donation of bodies to science has become greater than the demand.

The beginnings of a growing concern for public hygiene and the move towards the separation of the dead from the living is evident in late 19th century legislation. For example the 1876 Public Health Act which provides "the Justice" with the authority to order a dead body in a state "as to endanger the health of people in the house" to be buried immediately, to be buried in a limited time or to be removed (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1876:386) and also in the Burial Ground Closing Act of 1874 and the Cemeteries Act 1882 which discontinued certain burial grounds for the protection of public health and moved cemeteries outside town and city limits (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1874:243; *New Zealand Statutes*, 1882:530).

The progression of the Registration of Birth and Death Acts in this country gives an indication of the move from family or lay person responsibility to professional control in arranging the legal requirements of death. This shows a 20th century broadening of the role of undertakers and here lies a key factor in death being removed from the home and into the funeral parlour. The 1875 Births and Deaths Registration Act describes the relatives of the deceased or those present at the death as responsible for registering the death with the Registrar while undertakers only had this responsibility by "default" if family or friends were not available to attend to this task (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1875:72). The Act states that the undertaker or other person burying the body should provide the burial certificate which was to be signed also by the minister officiating at the burial or two witnesses (meaning "respectable" householders) while a medical practitioner was to provide a certificate as to the cause of death if attending during the last illness. (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1875:73-75). The 1908 Births and Death Registration Act makes provision for further certification if the death is a Coroner's case (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1908:214).

A 1912 Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act does not change these key issues but it makes an initial provision for the registration of Maori births and deaths. This was in a separate register via "Order in Council" regulations made by the Governor from "time to time" as he saw fit (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1912:53). This separate register applied until the implementation of the 1961 Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act which established the same system of registration for both Maori and Pakeha (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1961:235).

There is a noticeable change in the 1951 Births and Deaths Registration Act in relation to who is seen as responsible for the necessary certification of a death. This Act established the requirement of three certificates by the Registrar when a death occurred. Firstly a medical certificate of death signed by a registered medical practitioner and "made available to the funeral director having charge of the burial", or a Coroner's order to bury the body, is required before burial or cremation can take place (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1951:123-124). Secondly the Act states that a death registration form has to be filed and names the "funeral director having charge of the burial", or the Coroner if the death is a Coroner's case, as responsible for this although it was (and still is) within the law for a lay person to attend to this instead of a funeral director (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1951:125; Department of Justice, 1984:13-14). The third form required by this Act is the burial certificate and once again the Act states that the "funeral director in charge of a burial" is responsible for signing this and giving it to the Registrar after getting it countersigned by the minister or other person officiating at the funeral, or by two witnesses of the burial if no minister or other person "so officiated" (*New Zealand Statutes*, 1951:124-125).

Between 1912 and 1951 the funeral director rather than family or friends became seen as "in charge" of the after-death care and funeral in co-operation with the other professionals involved. Death fashions and concepts of the "respectable" funeral had filtered down from the undertakers and upper classes of Victorian England. This was a key influence on the values and the practices that were transplanted, via Pakeha colonization, to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Another cause of change in traditional mourning in the 20th century was the experience of World War I which saw many troops killed in a short space of time. Many families were affected by this tragedy and in an effort to keep up public morale during war time the customary practice of wearing black mourning attire for lengthy periods of time was curtailed to avoid streets full of people dressed in black (Whittaker, 1989:48-49). War channelled women into the paid workforce and this also disrupted the traditional custom of women staying home in mourning (Whittaker, 1989:49). Both world wars created the

common experience of not having a dead body to care for and grieve over at home. All of this interfered with the usual death rituals.

The available evidence suggests however, that the more significant underlying causes of the decline of women laying-out the dead are to do with developments in the first half of the 20th century, which have seen the medical profession becoming a very organized and influential body, which has moulded our death practices in this country along with the undertakers and others involved in death as an industry and business. Aotearoa/New Zealand followed Britain's lead with the introduction of the Midwives Registration Act of 1904. As in Britain this heralded the end of the era of the handywoman and the phasing in of the nurse midwife whose role became that of assistant to the more powerful doctor (Donley, 1986). This Act which was a response to demands by the medical profession provided for the training and registration of midwives to gradually replace the previously autonomous lay midwives, the traditional attendants of both births and deaths, who were phased out over about a twenty year period (Donley, 1986:29-30). Registration depended on doctor certification which meant that lay midwives were no longer autonomous. The incoming "trained" midwives were discouraged from working independently and became doctor's assistants, "medically-orientated handmaidens" (Donley, 1986:11,15,23,30).

Donley (1986) describes the process of the medicalization, intervention and mystification of birth which occurred in this country in the 20th century. It seems this process is mirrored by that of death which has become medicalized (Aries, 1981:566-593; Illich, 1976:8,41,100; Raphael, 1983:37), sanitized and mystified by medical professionals and funeral directors alike, who have made death their domain. This has been a process which has helped shape our fear of death and our fear of death has helped shape this process. As in Britain it has also involved the "rules" of hospitals, mortuaries, doctors and funeral directors, both explicit and implicit about what is acceptable, respectable, rational, allowable and legal (Adams,1993:153-155,163-165).

The role of the old wife/handywoman/lay midwife in Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand was eroded by the legislative changes, and by a campaign to discredit and eradicate these traditional attendants of both birth and death. Lay midwives were depicted as dirty and dangerous, incompetent and drunken by the medical profession (Adams, 1993:165; Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:39; Donley, 1986:44; Litten, 1991:72). Evidence suggests that these attacks on the character and ability of lay midwives often coincided with the lead up to legislated changes to prevent their continued practice (Donley, 1986:44). The

role of the lay midwife was also weakened by the growing trends filtering down from the upper classes which saw a privatization of the family (and the norm of the nuclear family) which also meant a subsequent decline of neighbourhood networks. Husbands no longer wanted their wives called out at all hours to lay-out the dead. Their place was seen to be in the home rather than the community. Distancing between neighbours must also have led to a reluctance to ask a neighbour to perform such an intimate task as laying-out (Roberts, 1989:196-197).

20th Century Movements to De-institutionalize and Reclaim Control Over Dying and After-death Practices

Over the last few decades international, national and local movements have developed that are challenging and changing our death practices. Women have been in the forefront of many of these movements.

The modern hospice movement (pioneered by Cicely Saunders) which originated in London in the late 1950s and 1960s (De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:126) is now active in many countries around the world including Aotearoa/New Zealand. Cicely Saunders' work led to the opening of St Christopher's Hospice in London in 1967 (De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:126; Torrens, 1985:15). In the United States Elisabeth Kubler Ross has been a prominent pioneer in this area with her work with the dying. She began to write her findings in 1967 (Torrens, 1985) and continues to publish in the area of death and dying. The hospice movement is a growing one. There were thirty hospices in the UK in 1975 and seventy by 1980. The first American hospice began serving patients through a home care programme in 1974. In the United States and Canada there were twelve hospice programmes in the mid 1970s, about fifty by the late 1970s, about five hundred by the early 1980s and well over one thousand four hundred by 1984 (De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:128; Torrens, 1985:15,23).

The first hospice to be established in Aotearoa/New Zealand is the Mary Potter Hospice in Wellington which began in 1979. By 1986 there were 11 hospices operating and 5 more forming (Social Monitoring Group, 1989:133). The Arohanui Hospice in Palmerston North opened in 1991 (*Evening Standard*, 3/5/1991:10-11).

The hospice movement has begun to move dying and death back into the home and the community by providing people dying of cancer and their carers with information, support and clinical services. The British hospice movement has also more recently seen the

establishment of the Buddhist Hospice Trust in 1986 and the Pagan Hospice and Funeral Trust (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:213,217), founded in 1991 from the earlier Pagan Funeral Trust that had been formerly constituted in 1990. These organizations have worked to incorporate non-Christian spiritual philosophies into the hospice and natural death movements as well as provide pagan and Buddhist information and services to the public.

Funeral and memorial societies/associations began in the United States in 1939 and by the 1960s had become a continental movement (Mitford, 1980:285-286; Morgan, 1988:68-69). These societies have been concerned with death education and consumer action (challenging funeral directors and the funeral industry) so as to obtain the right to a dignified but simple and economical funeral (Mitford, 1980:19-20,259-287; Morgan,1988:67). Differences in emphasis has been evident between groups (Mitford, 1980:268). Some have emphasised cremation, others have been more interested in educational programmes and/or bequeathing the dead body to science. Another emphasis in some groups has been to stress freedom of choice as their main concern. Funeral/memorial societies have had some influence in this country with groups in existence here from at least 1977 (Consumers' Institute of New Zealand, 1978:102-108). A Manawatu Memorial Society was established locally in 1986 but went into recess in 1988.

Marian Barnes pioneered the celebrant funeral alternative in this country in 1979 (a funeral celebrant replaces the priest or funeral director in facilitating a funeral or memorial service) and has now written a book which discusses funeral practices and provides self-help information on planning a funeral (Barnes, 1991). The celebrant funeral option is now growing in popularity throughout the country with more and more people taking on the role of funeral celebrant either informally for friends or as paid work.

In 1987 a small Christchurch group of men and women called Funeral Choice formed. Funeral Choice has, and still is, providing many New Zealanders with information concerning our legal right to organize both the after-death care and a funeral ourselves without the assistance of either a funeral director or priest (Funeral Choice Collective, no date).

Women in the feminist movement have begun to reclaim death. This is evident in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the articles on death over the last decade in the feminist magazine *Broadsheet*. There has been the naming of the male domination of the funeral (Penny, 1985), the vision of what a lesbian feminist funeral could be like (Joyce and Rosier,1987)

and the reality of the death and funeral of Ruth Charters which is woman-centred, celebrates lesbian ways of living and creates lesbian rituals for death (Lethal, 1989:5; Sabbage, 1989:13-16).

There had not however been any feminist community groups formed with the purpose of researching, promoting or supporting feminist alternatives in relation to death that I know of, until the forming of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group in 1991. It seems that our group's feminist approach to reclaiming death (Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group, 1993) is not only a first for Aotearoa/New Zealand but has pioneering feminist implications internationally. Certainly we appear to have pre-empted our British sisters in regard to this (Bradfield, 21/6/1994). Our group has developed a feminist self-help approach to caring for our dead. Our work is bringing new dimensions to the existing movements which are supporting and promoting the choice of death as a home and/or natural experience.

Also founded in 1991 was the Natural Death Centre which is based in London, England. The Natural Death Centre plans to be a prominent force at the vanguard of health politics (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:7-8) as well as working to influence popular death culture through death information and education. Although this nonprofit organization is only in its early phases it has already made quite an impact with the publication of two books (one in its second edition) and its association with the establishment of nature reserve burial grounds and the associated promotion of "green" burial options in Britain (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993; Bradfield, 1994).

Action for "green" burial options is also now becoming evident in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group has begun looking into this locally after making contact with the Natural Death Centre in London. We have also become aware of the work of Elizabeth Francke in Auckland who has successfully lobbied her local Waitakere City Council (known for its pioneering "green" activities) into researching the eco-burial option as a means to restore damaged land via the creation of memorial parks for burial and tree planting over graves (Francke, 1994; National Radio, Brian Edwards standing in for Kim Hill, 3/10/94). The Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group made a submission to our council's annual plan incorporating Elizabeth Francke's Waitakere initiative but as yet this has not been incorporated into our council's plans. Further work in this area is ongoing.

The work of all these groups and individuals (mainly in an unpaid capacity) shows clear evidence of mid to latter 20th century movements to reclaim control of death from the professionals, and to take death out of the institution and return it to the home (or home-like environment) and the community. It is my view that these movements combine to form a broad natural/homedeath movement which is gathering momentum, alongside the rising influence of indigenous and first nation beliefs and practices (which also connect with the natural/homedeath theme), to the extent that this is now having a marked impact on our popular culture in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

PART FOUR:

**Feminist After-death Research In
Action**

From the very beginning of my doctoral studies, and even before, I had thought about broadening my personal interest concerning after-death practices, beliefs, choices and politics, into a community work project with other women⁷. As I began my doctoral research I realized that the community work initiative that I wanted to pioneer was also a form of participant action research — a recognized methodology. I began to see the connections between my interest and involvement in community work and activism, my desire to apply this to the whole area of after-death practices, and the uses of action research in academic studies. The subsequent development of my understanding of action research assisted the integration of these community work plans into my academic studies.

⁷ See Chapter 5 for definitions and a model of community work practice.

CHAPTER 8

THE COMMUNITY WORK OF THE PALMERSTON NORTH WOMEN'S HOMEDEATH SUPPORT GROUP

We are beginning to reclaim our death rituals as we realize death is also a birth that requires midwifing (Morgan, 1986:29).

This chapter outlines and analyses the founding, development and achievements of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group. Discussion starts with the group's beginnings, its composition, and reflections from myself and the other members about our experience of being part of the homedearth group. This is followed by a discussion and analysis of the group's structure and processes, the various stages of development, and the community work initiatives we achieved over a four year period of our existence. The chapter then concludes with a discussion about the future plans and directions of the group.

Group Beginnings

In a sense the women's homedearth group first began as a visionary "seed" within me after I experienced my father's death in 1987. At first the "seed" was so small that I hardly recognized it. I was caught up in confused feelings of knowing that I did not like much of what happened when my father died, but not really having much idea about how I could have made a difference. A lot of what did not feel right took some time to be identified, as my memories, thoughts and feelings framed and reframed themselves. By 1988 I was beginning to be aware of the presence of this "seed". I began a journey of outrage at what had happened to death (particularly for Pakeha), and women's roles surrounding death. This personal journey of outrage very much paralleled my response to my first (high tech.) birth experience, which had led me to a local fledgling homebirth group in 1981, and in which I worked as a voluntary community worker for six years.

I began talking about death in my own networks and mentally gathering other women's stories and feelings about their after-death experiences. I began to research death and write essays on this.

The Palmerston North Women's Health Collective Inc., a community group of which I have been a member for nine years, was central to the setting up of the homedeath group. The women of this health collective encouraged and supported me and in fact all but one of the women who have been members of the homedeath group are current or past members of the Collective. In a sense the homedeath group is a subgroup of the health collective or perhaps it is more fitting to say that the health collective is a mother group to the homedeath group. The Women's Health Collective still gives us practical support by allowing us to share the Collective's post office box and by providing a meeting venue.

As I talked about death in my various circles I developed an understanding of which women were interested enough to form a new group and work on death with me. The vision was now without as well as within me. After ongoing talk with these women an initial meeting date was organized. The "seed" had germinated and I felt simultaneously both as one giving birth and one of the midwives attending the birth.

At this first meeting at the time of winter solstice, June 1991, four women met to share our after-death stories, our fears and hopes. We remembered our foremothers who laid out the dead in their families and communities, and spoke of our commitment to forming a women's group to reclaim this knowledge and skill. At the following meeting two weeks later we named our group, explored our purpose and created our philosophy and statement of intent (see Appendix 1). The Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group had begun.

Group Composition

Initially there were four members in the homedeath group. A fifth member joined the group after about three months but then as we neared our first year of existence two of our members left when they were soon to have babies and this left only three of us. We remained for some time with only three members in the group and this small size at times led to meetings being postponed or cancelled when members could not attend. Another member joined our group when we were two years old, after attending a workshop I did in association with my search for women participants for my doctoral research into women's stories of their after-death experiences, in June 1993. She stayed for eight months but then decided to put her time and energy into other areas of personal health and development.

We are, and have been, a predominantly Pakeha group although one past member and one current member have a Maori as well as Pakeha background. The range of ages (of all past and present members of the group) are from early twenties to late thirties. In terms of education two left school without any recognized qualification, one left after passing School Certificate, one went to Sixth Form Certificate level and two completed University Entrance and Seventh Form Certificate. All however have gone on to tertiary education at some stage. Some have completed polytechnic courses, four have passed papers at university and three have completed university qualifications. One member has nursing and midwifery training and experience. We all have an interest in spirituality although none of us identify as Christian. Most group members have women's spirituality and pagan leanings although the women involved have tended to find it hard to put a label on their spirituality. All past or present members are mothers (one however left the group shortly before birthing her first baby). Four are solo parents. One member has been active in the lesbian and gay community, two are married, one has had her marriage dissolved, three have never married. Our backgrounds are a mix of middle and working class with current family incomes ranging from higher to middle and low income levels. Three of us have been recipients of domestic purposes or illness benefits during (or at some time during) our time with the homedeath group. All members have had some previous experience in community work, with some having a paid as well as unpaid community work background.

Being Part of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group

Participating in the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group has not only been a central part of my doctoral research it has also been crucial to my tackling of such a difficult subject. Like the great majority of Pakehas I was socialized to fear death. This is not something that is easy to overcome. The women of this group, and the group itself as an entity, have given me courage and support. It has also provided a mantle through which to network the self-help information that we have gathered, to secure the funding that we required and to lobby for change. I feel that the booklet we produced (see Appendices 2 and 3) is one of my, as well as our, most significant achievements.

In one of the first storytelling sessions Sharlene spontaneously included some reflections on her experience of the homedeath support group. This prompted me to then ask all the past and present members to include in their stories, something about how it felt to be part of this

group. Sharlene referred to the significance that the work of our group has for the community when she said:

I think (the homedeath group) is really really important work...(Death is) just so untalked about and unthought about and joked about. It just totally makes sense to be surrounded by the people who love you, and be looked after and your body cared for...

Anne spoke about what she had received personally from being a member of the group:

The homedeath group has been very good for me, it has made me think about what I want to have happen to my body after I die and what I want to have happen to people I love and care about...I think it's a very special group, some very special sharing goes on in it...It's made me not so scared of death...I've confronted it and thought about it...and I think in doing that it has lost a lot of its scariness...I feel really empowered...It's really amazing...being with like minded people and talking about these things and confronting them...and it's all the knowledge we've gained along the way, it's been really empowering.

Carole's response focused on her appreciation of being able to talk with others who were prepared to openly discuss death:

I learnt some things...I'd never met people before that you could openly discuss...death with...that didn't think, "gosh she's a bit of a wierdo"...that could talk about it...had a similar philosophical view about it and...had thought about what they wanted for their own funeral.

Krys said quite simply:

It made me realize the choices that I have which is really good...and realize what I'd like...It has shown me you can still have some control.

Anna emphasised how being part of the group had facilitated discussion about death in her family:

She (Anna's mother) knows that I'm involved in the homedeath (group) now and I think it's opened a few doors, I can speak to her about it.

Being part of the homedeath group has involved both an inner/personal/in-group dimension and an outer/public/political dimension. Our own individual experience along with the collective in-group experience involved in our exploration of after-death choices, have both been very significant. We have examined in depth our own thoughts and feelings about what we would and would not want when we die, or when someone close to us dies, along

with options that other people may want. We have also examined the practicalities of implementing these choices.

The outer dimension of our work involves the information service we provide to the community, and nationally, through sharing and promoting the self-help after-death information which we have generated, and the networking that has occurred with other individuals, groups and organizations about this. This outer public, political and community dimension also involves the group's action (and potential) to take on a lobbying role in regard to after-death options and practices, an aspect which did not really evolve until the later stages of the group's development.

These inner and outer dimensions of the work of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group are obviously interrelated and interconnected. They have impacted on each other. There have been many personal experiences and feelings shared by group members throughout the development of our homedead group. This sharing has enhanced and interconnected with our practical information gathering. Our personal feelings and ideas about after-death practices have also influenced the way in which we have presented after-death information to the public. Similarly, the ideas and feedback we have received from the many people who communicated with us (locally, nationally and internationally) have influenced what we know, think, feel and do, both personally and as a group.

Group Structure and Process

Our group is a collective. This means we do not have office holders or a formal hierarchy of status or responsibility. One member has however taken on the role of treasurer and keeps our financial records. At meetings members take turns recording the minutes in our minute book and take turns at facilitating. Our meetings have always used consensus decision-making. We have never voted during a decision-making process and have never reached a "stalemate" when making a decision. Through discussing the options and hearing each others ideas and opinions we are always able to reach a consensus. We begin our meetings with a sharing round of how we are feeling, we draft an agenda, read the last meeting's minutes and take a note of matters arising. We list who is present at each meeting, note apologies and go through the matters arising. We discuss correspondence, publicity and

finances along with items on the agenda. We finish with another round of how we are feeling and a brief evaluation about how we felt the meeting has gone.

Group meetings were fortnightly for the first six months and then changed to monthly meetings because of other demands on the members and a feeling that this would still meet the needs of the group. At some stages however because of cancelled meetings there have been two, three or even four month gaps between meeting times. However the work has gone on during these occasional long gaps between meetings with phone calls to members and the organization of group activities relating to our after-death action research.

Our group has been quite flexible about our meetings. This flexibility has been a weakness at times when flexibility meant meeting frequency slipped, but it has also been a strength. In the month leading up to the launch of our booklet meeting frequency increased because of the extra work that was needed. Flexibility has also occurred over the venue of meetings and this has been useful. Sometimes we have held our meetings in the Women's Health Collective room to achieve a quiet space away from family activity. At other times we have met in member's homes because this better suited our needs. This occurred, for example, when group members did not have childcare readily available.

My background experience in community work suggests to me that I have taken on a role in the homedeath group similar to that of many paid workers in community groups. Although I receive no payment for my work, I have had the time and the interest (and incentive in terms of the work of the group being important to my doctoral studies) to take on a lot of the work that needed to be done. I am the one that takes responsibility for the day to day running of the group. I post out the booklets that people order, I write most of the letters that arise from decisions made by the group. I am the main contact person for the group. The whole collective however is responsible for the management of the homedeath group and provides the forum in which key decisions are made. Our meetings also sometimes provide a group time to draft a letter or write or finalize a submission. Members of the group have also met outside the usual monthly meetings to work on a group project, for example, a funding or other submission, or a visit to a community or statutory agency to research and discuss after-death information and practices, and network information about our group.

Group Developments

The homedeath group can be described as having gone through different stages of development. Initially we had a very low profile. This was more of a time of inner work, a focusing on what we needed to do, what questions needed to be asked, exploring what our own after-death wishes involved and what we would want when someone close to us died. This was a time of developing our knowledge base and the resources associated with this. We did seek to attract more members to the group, but it was decided that this was to be very low key, through posters in women's spaces and our local women's shop. Over time this only attracted two women and they were really only wanting information.

Our group has gone through high and low energy/activity times. This has been partly due to our members being involved in a lot of other community work (and the various pressures and crises associated with these other community groups) as well as being associated with developments our group was going through (or not going through). Initially there was a rapid development phase with the forming and naming of our group and creation of our philosophy and statement of intent. We drafted a logo and took this to a local woman artist who made the final design for us. We started planning what needed to be done, gathering resources and networking locally and nationally.

One member brought to the group her knowledge gained from a family homedeath experience in which a funeral director was used only for purchasing a coffin and transport. She gave us useful first hand knowledge about laying-out. This was an important learning experience for the whole group. During her time with the group this member also assisted some people she knew with the laying-out and after-death arrangements of their father. This again by-passed the funeral director which was in accordance with instructions left by the father. These after-death instructions had been prompted because this particular member of our group had earlier discussed death with this man's son (after her own involvement in various discussions about death within the homedeath group), which in turn had led to his family discussing what they wanted after death. Our group's, and the family's, experiences surrounding this death led to the gathering of much practical information. This included the knowledge that some funeral directors would not co-operate and sell a coffin only, and also information about who would and who would not. We also learnt that workers fronting the local births and deaths registrar may (and do), give misinformation to the public. The information given initially in this instance by staff was that only funeral directors could fill out the after-death certificates required (probably because these workers had only ever

experienced funeral directors doing this work). Further enquiries to a more senior staff member were required before access was granted to the death and burial forms that needed to be filled out. Other death workers involved, such as those at the mortuary and the crematorium, were also tentative and uncomfortable about people making arrangements without a funeral director. This was our first local experience of a death that did not use a funeral director and the various reactions of the death workers involved. This gave us a wealth of information.

After about six months, group development and activity slowed. We were all guilty on occasion of agreeing to take on jobs and then not doing them. At times the same matters arising would turn up week after week. I think some of this was due to blocks we had with some of this death work. We kept going however and survived the ebbs in our energy and progress. After a year, activity seemed to increase again and we opened our bank account, successfully (in the end), made our first funding application (see funding section later in this chapter), and had a first draft of our self-help information booklet.

From our very beginnings we had recognized the need to produce a self-help homedeath information booklet. Funeral Choice, another group in Aotearoa/New Zealand based in Christchurch with whom we had begun to network, published a booklet titled *A Dignified Choice. Alternative Ways of Celebrating Funerals*, in September 1991, and we bought copies of this. We recognized that our approach was different to Funeral Choice in the sense that we felt that it was important to acknowledge laying-out as traditionally women's work and the taking of death out of women's hands as central to the professionalization, medicalization and removal of death from the home and community. We also felt that it was important to provide detailed information about laying-out a dead body because people in most cases had very little knowledge about what to do. We decided to focus less on ideas about planning a funeral, which had been covered elsewhere (we could refer to these publications), and more on the practicalities involved in after-death care.

Having an actual first draft of our booklet on self-help after-death information that we wanted to share (which was completed in November 1992), also helped us to identify further questions that we needed answers to. This led to various "official" visits by our group such as to our council cemetery and crematorium, and the mortuary. This gave us a lot more information to integrate into the booklet. People who knew of our work also contacted us with information they thought we might be interested in, for example, we were put in contact with a local man who had made his own coffin which was subsequently used when his

young adult son died. He shared with us the knowledge he gained from this experience which also involved his making of the grave marker for his son's grave.

A second draft of the booklet was circulated in May 1993. Further subsequent information was added to this, including additional laying-out information we had learnt from a woman embalmer with whom we had made contact with, and follow up information that had been attained regarding burial at sea. By August 1993 the booklet was in its final draft form and ready for formatting, publishing and launching (the details of the funding, publishing and launch of the booklet produced by the homedeath group are discussed in sections included later in this chapter).

On completion of the booklet the group could have decided that our work was complete, except for the distribution of the booklet, but we instead identified subsequent work that is still ongoing. This work includes: ongoing and extended local, national and international networking and further research into death; the development of a homedeath kit that could be borrowed/hired for laying-out; a resource kit that people could borrow for ideas when planning a funeral, including poems, readings, music, sample eulogies, service sheets and death notices; offering workshops in the community.

An interesting new development occurred for the group in October 1994 after I heard Auckland woman, Elizabeth Francke interviewed on national radio about her work lobbying the Waitakere City Council for the establishment of an eco-burial ground/memorial park which would offer people the burial option of planting trees on their grave. This was the first such initiative that we had heard of in Aotearoa/New Zealand although our homedeath group was aware of similar initiatives occurring in Britain with the establishment of the woodland and nature reserve burial grounds that the Natural Death Centre was (and still is) supporting and promoting. This was also an area which our group had been contemplating working on. I naturally decided to get in contact with Elizabeth Francke to exchange information and ideas. I phoned our local contact for National Radio and in addition to getting Elizabeth Francke's phone number I was asked if I would be interested in speaking about the work of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group. I was phoned by the Auckland studio, talked to by one of the programme organizers about our work, and asked to courier our group's booklet in preparation for an interview with well known media personality Brian Edwards (standing in for Kim Hill), the next morning.

The interview the following day went well and gave me the chance to talk about the work of the homedeath group and the booklet we had published. I made sure I was given the opportunity to include our postal address at the end of the interview along with the cost of purchasing a booklet. This was repeated later after many people had rung the radio station wanting our address. I also received some phone calls following the programme including one from a reporter for Mana News, a national Maori news team. She interviewed me and included this as an item on the Mana News that evening. She also requested a copy of the booklet with the view of perhaps including this in a future article for *Mana*, a Maori news magazine. The morning interview with Brian Edwards also featured on the 'Late Edition' of the day's best interviews which aired later that evening.

The coverage on national radio led to an influx of letters, requesting booklets and sharing personal experiences with our group. In the first few days we received up to sixty letters a day. In the few weeks that followed the interview we received about two hundred and fifty letters. Further letters in response to the interview continued to drift in for months after. One of the letters in response to the interview was from the Legal Deposit Office in Wellington informing us of (and educating us about), our responsibility to supply three copies of the booklet for their records. Our response to this request from the Legal Deposits Office meant that our booklet became included in the publication listings provided to libraries. This has led to numerous libraries in Aotearoa/New Zealand purchasing and providing public access to single or multiple copies of our booklet. We were also contacted by two different researchers for local film productions in the after-death area for television. One of these researchers has had ongoing contact with us and through this we have received as well as given information.

By June 1995 the first edition (one thousand copies) of our booklet had almost sold out and we were working on a second improved and updated draft. This was published in September 1995, a little less than two years after the first edition. The second edition of our booklet arrived just in time for two workshops that the homedeath group had been invited to facilitate at the national 1995 Home Birth Conference held in Palmerston North. This was quite a small conference (of more than fifty but less than one hundred attending). Our workshops were very small with four attending the first, and six attending the second but successful in the sense of the interest and discussion that was generated within these workshops. Much of the discussion involved stillbirths, neonatal deaths and miscarriages due to the conference's emphasis on birth. This also worked to increase our knowledge by raising issues that we had not thought about before, or were unsure about, for example

whether a midwife is able to fill out a death certificate if a baby dies (as midwives are now autonomous practitioners and do not need a doctor at a birth), when this is not a Coroner's case, and the stage at which a foetus becomes a baby in terms of requiring a death certificate, and whether a death certificate is an option that can be requested for a baby/foetus that dies before this stage. This prompted further research (which is still ongoing). It also led to our discovery of a new 1995 Births, Deaths and Marriages Act, passed the very month of our enquiries, and significant implications of this, such as an official birth now covering foetuses of 20 weeks and older or weighing more than 400g. These findings were also then discussed with one of the local homebirth midwives which in turn raised further points for clarification.

Another initiative subsequent to our workshops at the Home Birth Conference has been our September 1995 submission written to the recently established Health and Disability Commissioner, concerning the proposed draft code of rights for consumers of health and disability services. This submission incorporated the information and women's stories that came out of the workshops at the Home Birth Conference. In this submission we have lobbied for the code of rights to take into account the rights of the next of kin and those close to a dead person, who as such have contact with, and use the services of, ward and/or mortuary staff involved with the death. We proposed that the definition of health care provider needed to encompass this after-death area of health, and suggested that perhaps this should also apply to funeral directors and cemetery and crematorium staff. We argued that those who care for a sick, dying or dead person are in an associated sense also using the health services involved with that person, and gave real examples of infringements of after-death rights that we have been told about, and that we feel need to be addressed. Copies of this submission have also been shared with a few interested individuals and organizations. We sent our submission to Mana News as we felt that what we were advocating had much common ground with Maori initiatives regarding after-death cultural requirements. Maori concerns we were aware of had been included in our submission. Mana News subsequently interviewed me about the submission and this subsequently led to an item on Mana News later that day.

Funding

We talked about potential funding sources for a long time before we applied for any and I think this was also connected to our initial tentative approach. Similarly we did not open our bank account until nearly a year of being in existence.

The "inside" story surrounding our first funding application did actually substantiate our fears of being perceived as a bit odd. Just after our first year of existence we applied to our local Community Services Council for \$350 administration money. As a contact person I was rung by one of the members on the committee that allotted the funding, with some follow up questions. This phone interview did not leave me feeling very confident. The woman who interviewed me did not seem to be able to relate to what we were doing and I was left with the feeling that she found the job of contacting our group quite distasteful. Luckily for us there was someone on the committee who was aware of the work that I (as a student) and the group were doing and he acted as a powerful advocate for us and the relevance of our work. His influence led to the committee changing from its initial position of wanting to turn down our funding application to a final position of agreeing to grant our request for funds. He told me that at first it was only himself and one other member (a woman) who could see the value of our group's work and also that the woman who had the job of interviewing our group did not put our case well and did not think that we should be funded. In the end we received the amount we applied for and this was an important initial local validation of our work.

Just before we reached our one and a half year stage we applied for \$1142.15 from a special women's suffrage year centennial trust fund (to mark one hundred years since women attained the vote in Aotearoa/New Zealand) to publish our self-help information booklet. It was not until nearly six months later that we heard we were successful in this funding application and still another two months until the money arrived.

Our group is currently at the stage where we are self-funding. We have sold most of our one thousand copies in the first edition of our booklet at \$2 a copy direct or \$3 to cover both the cost of the booklet and postage and packaging (\$1 covers the cost of posting up to 10 booklets in one package). This is a little more than cost price and along with extra donations received has meant that we have the funds available to print a second edition and to cover basic ongoing costs.

The Publishing, Launch and Promotion of Our Booklet

As already mentioned the first draft of our booklet had been produced in November 1992. This and a subsequent draft were circulated for feedback from people both inside and outside the homedeath group. Further research findings as well as feedback was incorporated into both drafts. A friendly "computer whiz" donated his time and resources to format the final draft text into its booklet form. We had the money in the bank to pay for the printing after

receiving our funding grant for the booklet the month before. Two local artists contributed to the booklet cover. One had made us the logo that was used on the cover and another did the cover text. The cover was completed by the end of August 1993. The booklet was then finally ready for printing and taken to a local printer. The cost for the one thousand copies of the booklet that we had printed was \$1,175.00, and all but about \$30 of this was covered by the grant that we had received for this purpose from the women's suffrage year trust fund. We picked up our thousand copies of the booklet from the printer as we neared the end of September. We decided to charge \$2 for each copy of our booklet (and \$1 for the postage and packaging of up to 10 copies), a low enough price so that anyone who wanted a copy could afford one but high enough so that our group would be able to fund future editions and basic administration costs (this policy continues).

We were finally at the stage of being able to present our booklet to the public. The end of July 1993 to the beginning of October 1993 saw much activity as we finalized the booklet, had it printed, and planned a local public booklet launch and media release. We had decided that if books could be publicly launched then so could booklets. We thought our booklet was very important to the public and wanted to use the opportunity of the actual launch to promote the booklet and the work of our group. We asked the artist who did the cover text if she would also make an invitation that we could photocopy and distribute. She agreed to this. We chose the date, time and venue for the booklet launch and then produced the invitation with the help of our artist friend. We then distributed the booklet launch invitation to friends, people who had given us information about death, community groups and the media, and placed it on community notice boards. The whole lead up to the booklet launch was a very busy time. As well as distributing invitations to the booklet launch we produced and circulated a press release, had media interviews, planned and purchased the food and drink for the launch (we had no publisher to do this for us). We also had to plan the format for the launch and think of and approach people to ask them if they would speak at the launch. On the day we also prepared the food and finally finished arranging everything just as people were arriving.

We publicly launched our booklet *Homedeath. Caring For Our Dead Before Burial/Cremation. A Self-help Guide* on the 6th of October 1993, two and one third years after our group had come into existence. The launch was held at a well known local city centre which has several small shops and a cafe, houses some community groups and alternative therapists, and is often used for community activities and art displays. We were fortunate enough to be able to use this facility for free (at an after hours time) due to group

contacts. The cafe provided us with tables and chairs that we could rearrange and a large space for people to gather. We had two adjoining tables set up for the booklet display. One with copies of the booklet and a place to pay the \$2 for each booklet purchased. The other acted as a special table for decoration (rather like an altar really) with a beautiful piece of black material with a spider web-like design, a copy of the booklet, a round white candle (the candle that was also being used for the women's storytelling sessions about their death experiences), greenery of kawa kawa and rosemary (Maori and European plant symbols of death), and some flowers that a friend had thought to pick for us.

Seventy people attended the booklet launch which seemed to us to be a good number and our catering provided enough snacks and drink to provide what we felt was a fitting welcome. A local community women's singing group 'The Brazen Hussies', that two of our members sing with, performed a few songs to get things started. Krys (a member of the homedeath group) acted as mother of ceremonies. Speeches were given by representatives of our local women's bookshop and a community worker from the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) as well as from myself on behalf of our group. All past and present members of the group attended and were individually acknowledged, and a general acknowledgement was given to the many individuals and organizations, both locally and nationally, who had provided us with information and encouragement, and of course our funders. Group members were both pleased and relieved as we reflected on the launch afterwards. We were happy with the result.

Networking

Networking is recognized as an important part of community work practice. Networking involves making contact, and this is often a continuing contact, with other resource people, groups and organizations at the local, regional, national and even international level. The purpose of this is to gain and share information and knowledge, to consider and develop common ground and make links for mutual action and support.

The networking we did initially was low key on the local level through talking to contacts we had, for example to nurses about laying-out. We were however more adventurous on the national level as we made contact with other groups and individuals working on self-help after-death information. This included "Funeral Choice" in the Christchurch area, a community group similarly seeking to give people self-help information about doing all the after-death arrangements yourself. This group differs from ours in that it is made up of men and women and had not identified in its literature that death was once a key domain of

women, whereas for us this was a key issue. We also made contact with Marion Barnes, a pioneering funeral celebrant in Aotearoa/New Zealand whose book *Down To Earth. The Changing Funeral Needs of a Changing Society* had just been published. We also had a letter published in *Broadsheet*, the longest running feminist magazine in Aotearoa/New Zealand, asking for information on laying-out and seeking women contacts interested in receiving information we put out. This drew little information but established an initial network of about a dozen women around the country.

I think it was harder to be "out" locally as we were conscious that some (probably many), would think we were a bit weird (which was even the case for some of our own family members — and led to one of our member's children jokingly renaming us "the Drop Dead at Home Group"). We also initially felt like novices in the whole area of death and not particularly ready to be in the public eye. Although I had brought a lot of information resources to the group from my previous research it took some time for the other members of the group to absorb this and feel confident with their after-death knowledge.

As we moved through our second and into our third year of existence our local networking increased. We contacted the local newspaper, council crematorium and cemetery workers, the mortuary, births and deaths registrar, the Coroner and local monumental masons in regard to death information. In hindsight, taking our time over beginning this more direct stage of our research made us better able to identify the questions we wanted to ask. These phone calls, letters and visits provided useful information for inclusion in the booklet and also for the reworking of existing information.

At times people contacted us wanting to give us information. As we neared the end of our second year of existence we wrote a letter to the editor of our local daily paper in response to an article about a man who wanted to organize his own low-cost funeral. In this letter we talked about our group's work and our booklet which was soon to be published. A journalist from the paper contacted us and turned the letter into an article. Two memorial businesses contacted us after seeing the article. They were keen to bypass funeral director's commissions and deal with people direct and so were useful sources of information in this sense as well as to explore the whole area of memorial stones and plaques. The monumental mason from one of these firms also contacted me by phone to tell our group about a person he knew who had organized the after-death arrangements for his nephew who was killed in a road accident. I arranged to meet with this man and discussions with him provided us with further useful information. A snowballing research process began to occur. Different

contacts we made gave us other useful contacts and so on. Alongside this research in the community was the gathering of more and more information through our own ongoing experiences of death.

After publishing our booklet, near the end of 1993, we entered a new phase in our networking with an increased local and national profile due to booklet sales and complimentary sample copies of our booklet that we gave to local groups, and through the media coverage we received. Local groups that received complimentary copies of the booklet included the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the supervisor of the local mortuary, the crematorium/cemetery overseer and Arohanui Hospice. We sent copies of the booklet to established contacts and also women's community health groups and gay and lesbian health and welfare groups around the country that had been included in a Ministry of Women's Affairs listing of community health groups. This, as well as the media coverage, has led to a networking of information from groups and individuals to us, and to other contacts that they have, who in turn have often contacted us for copies of our booklet and sometimes to exchange feedback and ideas. This networking plays a very important part in circulating the information that we have gathered. It also contributes to a general consciousness raising process that prompts people to think about, and explore, their after-death choices.

This increased networking phase also developed an international dimension after we decided in the middle of 1994 to send copies of our homedeath booklet to the Natural Death Centre in London, and to the English Pagan Hospice and Funeral Trust with whom we had already made an initial contact. We were pleasantly surprised to receive five letters back from this effort and information about further English contacts that we might be interested in writing to. Nicholas Albery of the Natural Death Centre and a consultant for this nonprofit organization, John Bradfield, replied with much enthusiasm and affirmation for our work along with a wealth of relevant and highly useful information. The information shared with us by the Natural Death Centre marked the beginning of our informed interest in nature reserve burial grounds and associated "green" burial options, and also further extended other areas of our after-death awareness and knowledge such as in the area of important issues and methods in relation to lobbying local and national government.

We also received affirming and supportive letters and relevant information from a woman involved with the Buddhist Hospice Trust as well as from the Pagan Hospice and Funeral Trust that we had written to. A few days later we received another letter from London telling us we had received a highly commended award from the London based Institute For Social

Inventions (with well known patrons including Fay Weldon and Anita Roddick and honorary fellows including Edward de Bono). This letter informed us that our award meant we would be getting a free copy of their book *Re-Inventing Society*, in which our group was to feature, along with a glass framed "highly commended" certificate for our work. This was a complete surprise and initially a bit of a shock (although a pleasant shock) as we did not know we had been nominated for any award or how this could have happened so quickly. We had first written to the Natural Death Centre (who we subsequently discovered had put our booklet forward to the institute) on the 2nd of June. We received the letter informing us of the award we had won from the Institute for Social Inventions the same month (it was dated June 21st).

The Palmerston North Women's Homedead Group soon "starred" in the media once again (we had already had good local coverage for the launch of our booklet). After a local media release about our award we received news coverage locally and on national radio. We also featured in the British media releases put out by the Institute For Social Inventions.

Another important British contact we subsequently began networking with (thanks to information given to us by John Bradfield of the Natural Death Centre), is a nonprofit driven, self-help after-death funeral supplies and information service called 'Green Undertakings'. This group along with the Natural Death Centre has been interested in helping us in our search for a simple, low cost cooling refrigerated pad that can be placed on a mattress under a dead person's body (and other simple and convenient alternatives), in order to delay decomposition for the period before burial/cremation. We have yet to find (or get someone to invent), a low cost portable refrigerated cooler pad. This is the one key goal that we have put quite some effort into but have not as yet been successful in achieving.

Networking in Britain is now also evident through our contribution and contact address included in the Institute of Social Inventions bumper book of best ideas (Albery and Mezey (eds), 1994:245-246) and also the Natural Death Centre's *Before and After* publication of best new ideas including those for inexpensive, green and family-organized funerals (Albery et al, 1995:53-54).

Networking is also widening in Aotearoa/New Zealand as we increasingly make contact with groups and individuals interested in (or who we think may be interested in) our work. For example, I recently attended a local meeting concerning women and the environment, with workers from the Greenpeace Mana Tangata team who were interested in the work of the

Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group. They were keen to receive a copy of our booklet and also further information concerning the environmental aspects of our after-death work.

Where To Now — The Future

The current position of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group is that there are projects that we want to continue and new areas that we need to address. As already discussed we are still keen to discover a low cost portable electric cooler pad that could be used to delay decomposition. We see this as a central part of a homedearth kit, and this is probably why we have not as yet created such a kit. We are aware that there are cooling systems that could be used, for example, the equipment in hospitals used for patients with very high temperatures. This is however quite complex (and likely to be very expensive), and does not plug in to the usual household electrical systems, and is therefore not appropriate to our homedearth requirements. After-death cooling equipment can be hired in parts of Britain but this involves a refrigerated table system which is quite expensive, and not something that can be used on a bed or in a coffin. We have not however given up hope of discovering the type of cooling pad that we require, this is still an ongoing project. The recent inclusion of discussion about our search for such a "refrigerated plate" in the Natural Death Centre publication *Before And After*, and the shared interest in this held by the Natural Death Centre (Albery at al, 1995:53-54), may assist us to achieve this goal.

We have now developed a workshop format that can be adapted to fit the differing needs and interests of workshop participants. We are planning to send a letter out to local groups and educational organizations offering and promoting this workshop. We are also currently involved with ongoing correspondence with the Waitakere City Council in Auckland about the current stage of their research into "green" nature reserve burial options for their community. On receiving this information we will again contact our city council, through the appropriate committee, regarding the establishment of a nature reserve burial option for our area. We are also planning to contact a number of local community groups concerned with the welfare of people and/or the environment, to seek support for this initiative.

We are aware that research is an ongoing part of all our projects. As we talk with people about death new questions are raised which in turn prompts us to seek answers to these questions. We see this process of ongoing research and action in response to questions and

issues raised by the individuals and groups we come in contact with as a key part of our ongoing work .

The group supports the idea of a national homedeath/natural death movement for this country. We would be keen to contribute to such a group but feel that the work involved with establishing this is beyond the means of our small group. This is however an area for ongoing consideration. We are now becoming involved more in the area of advocacy for after-death rights and choices, as seen for example by our submission to the Health and Disability Commissioner and our work on the nature reserve burial option. We are keen to continue and extend this advocacy and lobbying dimension of our work.

In Conclusion

This chapter is difficult to finish because the work of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group is ongoing, it is not completed. Perhaps it is fitting then to sum up by saying that the group has only just begun. There is a determination about what we are doing. New aspects and phases of our work are in progress. Where this all leads, only time will tell. But we do know that women are reclaiming control over birth...and now death also.

PART FIVE:

**Lifting the Veil and Rattling the
Coffin — Women's Stories of their
After-death Experiences**

The title I have chosen for this part of the thesis was inspired after reflecting on the women's stories. "Lifting the veil" not only represents the demystification of after-death practices and beliefs through the honest sharing by the women in their stories, it also relates to actual references about the veils and satins used by funeral directors to adorn the dead in their coffins, a practice that some of the women described as quite strange and incongruous. Another form of veil is the cloth or sheet that is commonly placed over the face or whole of a dead person. These "veils" (and there are also other forms of "veil") are symbolic of the separation of death from life. They are a barrier that gives us messages of "don't look" or "don't look too closely", "don't touch", "don't disturb" and "don't interfere".

The "rattling the coffin" phrase comes from Patricia's story, when she described how she expressed her anger at her father's suicide during his tangihanga. As well as verbally releasing her anger, she actually shook his open coffin. I consider this to be a very powerful and symbolic expression, of, not only emotion, but also a very "hands on" closeness to the body of the dead person concerned. This expression of grief as well as anger, this honest communication by Patricia, counters absolutely mainstream society's messages relating to death, of "don't touch", "don't disturb" and "hold yourself together". The women's stories are about closely scrutinizing death. They "rattle" the foundations of our after-death practices and beliefs, and provide very useful insights and challenges for anyone who is involved with death. Many of the women who told me their stories have acted as change agents within the family, and on the community and institutional levels to help themselves and others express and achieve the death experiences they wanted. For Maori women, as well as, or instead of working for change, their important contributions were involved with continuing Maori death practices. It is also evident from the stories, that Maori women and Maori men have also shared their own cultural death practices to the benefit of Pakeha people.

In listening to the women's stories of their death experiences I began to recognize common threads relating to what was considered important regarding positive after-death experiences. This was of cross-cultural significance applying both to the Maori and the Pakeha women. A framework for structuring the research findings emerged from this and took form to become a selection of

ten prominent cross-cultural themes regarding what constitutes "good" after-death experience⁸.

I have divided these ten themes into two chapters. The first chapter is focused on the personal realm of after-death experiences, with the inclusion of the themes 'being "prepared" for death'; 'active participation in the after-death planning and ritual'; 'death as a "home" experience'; 'the importance of being with the dead person's body'; and 'acknowledging the importance of "nonrational" experience'. The second chapter relates to the public aspects of after-death practices with discussion around the themes of 'a personal and fitting public tribute to the dead person'; 'an honest release of feelings and an honest approach to death'; 'public recognition of death and community support networks'; 'the party/socializing element of the tangi or funeral'; and 'empowerment, support and respect from the professionals and institutions involved'.

The significance of these themes, which are woven throughout the women's stories of their death experiences, is substantiated through a compilation of direct quotes from the women themselves. The themes should not be seen as standing alone or apart from each other but rather as aspects of the interrelated and interconnected whole that they represent. This is backed up by the women's quotes which although positioned under one specific theme, in many cases are also at the same time relevant to one or more of the other themes. It has been difficult to fully represent each story by taking quotes from each woman and connecting these with the relevant themes. I cannot do justice to this as I write up the stories into a summarized form. Each woman's story had a lot to teach me as the researcher and the listener, and was often a learning experience for the woman herself as she reflected on her death experiences and interacted with me about these.

The stories relating to Pakeha or mainstream death practices indicated that women have experienced and observed positive changes to death practices in

⁸ Excerpts from the women's stories have also been included in other thesis chapters. Parts of the Maori women's stories have been included in Chapter 6 'Maori After-death Policy, Practice, Legends and Beliefs Before and During British Colonization' and the reflections of the women in the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group about this support group have been included in Chapter 8: 'The Community Work of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group'.

their more recent life experience. The experiences that women were most critical of tended to be related to their more distant past but this was not always the case. Although the themes concerning what constitutes a good death experience emerged solely from women's stories they also have relevance to men and children. In many cases the experiences and feelings the women discussed were interrelated with that of other women, men and children they know. The women's stories frequently included stories within stories, layers of experience which involved the retelling of the stories that others had told to them and also empathy with how other people (men, women and children) had felt about their after-death experiences.

Despite the emphasis on connection, the voices of the women themselves illustrate difference, a diversity of experience and perspective. The stories for example illustrate that Maori women who have grown up with their Maori culture have been socialized into feeling more at ease with death than the women from Pakeha families. It is interesting and significant however that the women with all their differing experiences and perspectives identified similar issues in relation to what constitutes "good" after-death experience.

I find it very difficult to find the right words to sum up my experience of listening and "participating" in the women's stories of their death experiences, except to say that the stories were truly magnificent. After each story I came away feeling very privileged and uplifted. I not only gained insights into problem areas and patterns that were identified by the women, but also insights into the depth of beauty and "specialness" that can be achieved in after-death practices and ritual experience. As Lucy, one of the Maori women, summed up "it (death) can be a wonderful experience...sad as it might be".

CHAPTER 9

IMPORTANT AFTER-DEATH THEMES: THE PERSONAL REALM

The Themes:

- Being "Prepared" for Death
- Active Participation in the After-death Planning and Ritual
- Death as a "Home" Experience
- The Importance of Being with the Dead Person's Body
- Acknowledging the Importance of "Nonrational" Experience

This chapter focuses more on the personal, the inner world, in a discussion that explores five of the ten cross-cultural themes selected to structure and analyse the women's stories. The first of these themes is 'being "prepared" for death', building up an awareness of death, knowing what your choices are, what you want and being able to achieve this. The next theme is 'active participation in the after-death planning and ritual', that is, feeling and experiencing involvement instead of alienation. Following this is 'death as a "home" experience', a theme which is prominent in the women's discussion about positive after-death experience and also in their hopes for future after-death involvement. The chapter then turns to a theme raised by many of the women in their stories concerning 'the importance of being with the dead person's body', as helpful to coming to terms with the death, expressing your feelings, and showing your love/aroaha for that person. The last theme of this chapter is titled 'acknowledging the importance of "nonrational" experience'. This theme moves away from the notion that only rational thought processes have validity and instead gives credence to the magical/spiritual incidents and thinking which was a significant theme that women wove into their storytelling.

Being "Prepared" for Death

The importance of being "prepared" for death, feeling at ease with death, and growing up with inclusive experiences of death from childhood onwards was expressed by most of the women in their stories. This theme also concerns the issue of knowing what you want and

knowing how to achieve this, and being able to assist others to express and achieve what they want when a death occurs. Sophia discussed this broad concept and included her experience of the death of much loved family pets as an important part of the development of her death awareness:

I think the more experiences of death that you have and the different ways that you handle them, it's like you build up a way of coping with death so that when the time comes for those who are closest to you, you've kind of built up a history of death and dealing with death so that you're better equipped at coping than if you sort of avoid all those sort of lesser experiences of death, people who aren't so close to you...If you avoid those, how have you developed yourself to deal with the ones that do...I see it as a sort of building layers of experience up, to equip you to handle it, so that I see myself in a few years to come as being more of a central figure in the family who will be of value to others in organizing funerals and coping with death.

...One of the most significant...experiences for (my husband) and I was losing our first cat before we had any children. It was the most traumatic experience...This cat was sort of...our surrogate child...I remember...just being struck with grief...I remember coming home after work and we couldn't see anyone or take phone calls...I think we went to bed at seven o'clock at night...we were just absolutely devastated...The next day we buried him (the cat) and we went out and bought a tree to plant over him...

Cultural Influences

All of the Maori women talked about how Maori culture, and the tangihanga experience in particular, socializes people into being at ease with the realities of death. Some of the Pakeha women who had experienced the tangihanga, and other Maori cultural death practices, also gave recognition to this. I have chosen statements by Lucy and Leah about their Maori cultural experience to illustrate this at this point but this is an issue that comes up repeatedly throughout both the chapters in this section. Lucy talked about her considerable community experience of death on the marae:

Death for us has always been part of our family right back you know, as young children. It's never been a worry...too much...I mean it's always been very sad...but we grew up with it...If there was a death on the marae then we were part of that death...One became no longer afraid...it was part of our life.

Leah's story provides a similar description to Lucy's:

Death...was something that was discussed...it was always there ...dealing...with a dead person became normal...When someone died you went to the meeting house, you went to the marae, you went to the pa. There you sat, you paid your respects, you ate food together, you slept, you know you did all

those things and so that to me was the background to what I expected to happen when someone died.

For some, the Catholic tradition of keeping the open coffin of the dead person in the church for a time provided a cultural "growing up" with death experience. Zarah's story reflected her increasing ease in the presence of a dead body through her Catholic convent school experience even though it was a more mysterious, supposedly "don't touch" situation for a child:

Anyone in the parish who died got to lie in state...We would miss our play lunch to go...you were expected to go and say a prayer...As well as say a prayer and light a candle we would have a damn good look at that body...After a couple of years we were brave enough to touch the body...see if we could part the hands...and if anyone came quickly put the cloth over them and pretend we were praying reverently for them...With four years at a convent (school) I saw really a lot of bodies..it (death) didn't scare me in the least.

Preplanning for Death

The importance of planning the death arrangements you want, and talking with family and friends about this, was also an area discussed by many of the women. Rosa made the point that she did not think about death arrangements until faced with a close family death:

I needed to have I guess a close experience of death to really think about what I did want when I discovered on quite a really feeling level that there were things I didn't want.

Lily discussed the importance of preplanning your own after death arrangements and said:

...it's important for everyone to do of course, then other people who love you and relatives can have some idea of what you wanted.

Jane admitted she was yet to make her after-death plans and suggested that people need to be encouraged to plan for their death:

Maybe people should be encouraged to prepare for their own death as part of their will...I know some people do but an awful lot of people don't...I keep putting it off...I'll have to put a time aside to think about what I want when I die.

Vera raised the point that having others to talk to about death helps when planning what you want:

I was grateful to the (women's spirituality) group because we have talked a lot about death and death rituals and what we would like to have happen.

Although Mere admitted she had yet to make her after-death plans she raised the point of assisting family by telling them a key person to go to for help in organizing a funeral:

Anyway I said...I will write something down, I will try to get it down but if something should happen to me suddenly and you don't know what to do just get hold of Pania...and go on from there.

In the Maori experience of the tangihanga those in the extended family do know what they want and often assert this vigorously. This can lead to arguments about what is to happen. Priscilla talked about how she has written down what she wants to avoid any of this friction:

I've already organized what I want when I die...what I want to be dressed in...what colour coffin I want...songs picked out...who I want to talk...I actually did that because when that cousin that I helped dress, when she passed away, a lot of people wanted to come in and help dress her...the mother only wanted certain people...I thought I don't want any of this hassle...if I specifically state who I want then there's not gonna be any fighting of who's gonna come in and dress...When it comes to the service you know sometimes they can't agree on what songs to have and who to talk, so if I state what songs I want, who I want to talk providing that they're around when I die...half the battle will be over you know because it's all been written out...Most people respect that...I've got it all written down...where I want to be buried, what I want to be dressed in, who's going to dress me, how I want the service to go, who I want to speak, who I want as pall bearers...I think I've covered everything...except who pays the bill.

Alice supported Priscilla's position about the importance of identifying one's after-death wishes so as to minimize extended family in-fighting. She talked about this in relation to her grandfather's tangi:

We had a whanau meeting because there was a big issue about where he was going to be buried...There was some that wanted him to be buried at the particular marae he was lying at...The family knew that he wanted to go back to...his own family marae...it ended up that he did go back there because that was his wish he had stated before he died.

Family discussions about what is to happen when a family member dies leads to a family preparedness, in advance, so that when a death occurs people are not then hurriedly trying to work out what to do and who is to do it while also trying to cope with their grief and shock. Zarah talked about decisions that have already been made in her family in preparation for death:

My mother knows exactly what she wants. As soon as she dies my brother who lives in the same town as her, he's to ring me and I'm to go there...and no-ones to touch her till I get there...and I'm to instruct the others what to do...So I hope for my daughter that she sees that we just talked about it...and that's what we're gonna do...

We've got (what we want)...written down and we've got this book with all our insurance policy numbers...and information and things like this...I also gave my mother that form you get from the court house (the death registration form with personal details) to fill in...and I said here take this home and she said, "Oh when I go to bridge do you think I should take along a few of them and say here...fill out this form, it's really handy to have this form filled out".

Knowing what family members after-death wishes are can also contribute to a personal sense of security. Alice talked about this aspect of being prepared for death:

I've had discussions with Dad about where he wants to go and he wants to be buried (beside) his parents...so we've discussed that and he has said I'll come back and haunt you if you don't do that...Dad has said he wants Mum to be able to come and be with him and Mum wants that too...so that's quite neat, I feel secure in that...I know that's what will happen.

Experience involving someone who had planned and expressed after death wishes prior to their death was looked on favourably for both Maori and Pakeha. Mere discussed the funeral instructions a dying Pakeha friend had written down and given to her the weekend before she died:

...she had written out and gave to me just a sheet of paper with what she wanted...she put down the hymns she wanted 'All People That On Earth Do Dwell' and 'Fight the Good Fight'...and she put down that she wanted me to do the eulogy and she put at the bottom "no gloom, no doom, no funereal music".

When Unprepared for Death

The women frequently referred to problems arising due to a lack of experience of, and preparation for, death. Some of the Pakeha women, or women brought up in a European way, described how their families and society in general had not helped prepare them for the realities and experience of death (also see the end of Chapter 6 for a comparison of contemporary Maori and Pakeha death practices). Isabelle articulated a common feeling among the Pakeha women when she said "death seems to be so separate". Maria made the link between not growing up with death experience and her subsequent fears:

I feared death, because death wasn't spoken of in our home...I'd not experienced death with my family members.

Karen talked about her childhood experience of her young brother's death and how being denied the opportunity of talking about his death made it seem unreal:

I don't even remember having a conversation about him dying...or them (her parents) talking to me...or even asking if I was OK about it, or asking questions..I don't think I really believed he was dead.

Karen later spoke of her uncle's death and dying and his family's total avoidance of speaking about it even though he wanted this discussion to take place. Preparation for death is often a need for the dying as well as being of importance to those who are left behind:

It was his last chance to have some kind of meaningful conversation with the people he loved...and nobody was talking to him...this is the time to say all those things that you want to say...and ask him what he wanted...where he wanted to be buried...all those kind of things...Nobody even talked about it...and he wanted to talk about it, I'm sure he did...because he said to me three or four weeks prior to that, 'I'm not going home you know'...There were avoidance conversations from family...and you're not going to sit there and spill your guts if people aren't receptive to it...I think I was the only one who acknowledged the fact he was on death's door.

Sophia made the link between unsatisfactory funerals and people not being "prepared for death" but also pointed out this should not be seen merely as a failing by an individual or family, but rather as a societal problem:

I think it comes about because the people who were responsible for his funeral didn't have the knowledge of doing it any other way and they're also, you know, in a state where they're probably not able to cope with finding new ways at that time so they sort of go with the system, if you like, that's in place, the done thing, because it's the only way they can cope. I certainly don't blame the people...I sort of blame our culture. It's a shared blame.

Mere talked about her awareness of a movement towards alternatives to the usual formal funeral and correspondingly that last minute attempts to achieve this may not work:

People were not wanting the usual formal thing but not quite knowing what to do...They did try to do something a bit different to the usual formal thing...people were trying but they had to think about it so quickly and I think...what we need to do...people need to think about it, not have it suddenly foisted upon them and I've noticed this whole movement to trying to do something so I've actually organized two or three funerals of friends who's families said "will you give us a hand?".

The different approaches of Maori and Pakeha and one cultural approach dominating the family experience was also an issue identified in one woman's story. This is more likely to happen when family have not fully discussed their own after-death wishes. In this case it was a Pakeha dominance and this went hand in hand with the usual experience of earlier (and sometimes still present) times of decision-making regarding funeral arrangements being left to men and dominated by men. When Leah's Pakeha father died unexpectedly, her Maori mother was too shocked and bewildered with grief to influence the decisions being made about the funeral arrangements by a close Pakeha friend of the family and Leah herself (although having grown up with death on the marae) felt somewhat unprepared and too young to have an influence. This undermined the needs of Maori relatives:

My Uncle Clive came, he was...my father's friend. He was Pakeha and he knew nothing of Maori protocol...My mother allowed him to make all the arrangements and organize the undertaker and so on...While it wasn't Maori, my father wasn't Maori you see. I accepted that in a way. Everybody came and paid their respects to him and that was great and they wanted him to go to...the marae, to go back there, and my Uncle Clive talked to my mother and my mother was so bewildered she didn't know what to do and Uncle Clive decided no. So while it didn't seem to affect mother and me I think it was really bad for our Maori relatives and I regret not being older and wiser at that stage, not for my reason but for theirs. So it was really very very difficult, and I...thought, I can't impose this on people, this was decided, and it's happened, and we were all there and we felt all right about it ourselves, but in the Maori world of course we wouldn't have had any say...because our hapu or relatives would have taken over and we would have just been the mourners...and we would have been cared for.

Leah's story also illustrates how important it is for those who are organizing funeral arrangements to be aware of, and sensitive to, the differing cultural and spiritual needs of family and friends. This is an important aspect of being prepared for death. It is also significant to other themes discussed in this section of the thesis, such as, encouraging an active participation from all those who are close to the dead person, and achieving a "fitting" public tribute.

Being Unprepared for the Experience of Being with a Dead Person's Body

Several of the Pakeha women or women brought up in a "Pakeha" environment commented on their shock and nervousness when experiencing the reality of the dead body, and of not being prepared for this. This was often an experience as a child or young adult. A number of the Pakeha women, or women socialized into Pakeha ways, also commented that experiencing the tangihanga and the Maori approach to death, helped them to overcome their fears of a dead body.

A person's body loses its warmth after death and in addition to this the dead are often kept in a chiller so as to delay decomposition, and as a convenient storage method, which gives the dead person an extra and unnatural coldness. Some of the women expressed their shock when discovering a dead person's body was cold. Kristal said:

No one told us that he would be cold, I didn't know a body would be cold...it really shocked me.

This was an issue for Ema also when she went to see her dead grandmother:

I remember kissing her and...getting such a shock to see how cold she was and asking for the heaters to be turned on...I didn't know they went like that...It gave me a hell of a shock.

Priscilla talked about her first experience of a tangi as a young adult and her fear of a dead person's body:

I saw everybody bending over and kissing Uncle in his coffin and I thought hang on a minute I'm not going to do that...I thought, I don't think I can do that and I just couldn't look at him...I didn't know where to look...but it was a really good experience because they just greeted me and hugged me and I didn't kiss Uncle, there was no pressure there.

Priscilla talked about a later experience of helping to dress the body of a cousin who had died:

I was asked to help dress her body...I was really scared...It's all right to look at someone laying in a coffin, when you actually have to dress them and really touch them...I think I had probably watched too many horror movies and expected them to sit up or...?

Karen discussed her experience of assisting the dressing of her Maori boyfriend's dead mother and learning to overcome her fears. The women of the whanau included Karen in this laying-out time:

She was dead and she was lying on the couch and everyone was talking to her...All the daughters were there and all the men had disappeared...and all the women were there and they stripped her down and washed her and I was kind of like standing back...up against the wall freaking out thinking wow that's a dead person they're touching and they said "Well don't just stand there do something. Go to the bedroom and pick her out something nice to wear"...Everyone had a job to do and they all just knew what to do. Nobody was crying...everyone knew exactly what to do...She was only away about two hours at the funeral directors, whatever embalming took place was a minimum amount...She came

back to the house and they put her in the lounge and she stayed in the lounge and by that time everyone was arriving...The Maori tohunga had arrived to bring her back when the hearse came back. He brought her back into the house and there was kind of like a ritual then and that's when people started crying.

New Experiences of Nonconventional Death Ritual

Karen recognized that her close hand experience of the death and tangihanga of her boyfriend's mother taught her to be a lot more comfortable with death. It showed her a different approach to death. A nonconventional or different funeral ritual can create discomfort, embarrassment and raise fears for people who aren't prepared for this but the experience itself can on the other hand result in raised awareness, and realizations of how being more involved can feel good. Vera gave another example of this:

What Alan and Julia had done frightened the rest of the family...having two ceremonies and taking her in the station wagon. (Vera went on to describe how special, personal and participatory the death rituals were and how those resisting this were pleased about it afterwards)...So that was a very special experience and I realized that that kind of unpreparedness created some fear for some people and created some embarrassment for others...(but later) they talked about how wonderful (it) had been for them...they were so grateful that Alan and his wife had taken the initiative to do that and it was so inclusive and no-one had been left out...I saw how different it was to my own family experiences of death and how I would like it to be different if I had to in the future, you know, prepare somebody in my family.

Vera's discussion also introduces us to another very important theme running through the stories, the importance of active participation by family and friends when a death occurs. The themes of preparation and participation are of course very much interconnected, as preparation for death works to enhance a person's ability to actively participate after a death occurs.

Active Participation in the After-death Planning and Ritual

The ritual time that follows a death, when managed sensitively and well, can act as a time of honoured recognition to the dead person and their life through the sharing of personal and public tributes. This in turn can create a special time that provides cherished memories for the living. The women identified that active participation, by those who are close to the dead person, in the planning and creation of the ritual experience is important to achieving this special time. This may be a public participation such as performing music, song/waiata or writing a poem that is performed at the funeral/tangi, making a speech or reading, or

writing and performing the eulogy; or it may be a behind the scenes contribution such as laying-out and/or dressing the dead person, arranging the flowers or organizing the music that is to be played. People with their differing personalities and experience need to be encouraged to find the kind of contribution that feels right for them, a way to personally express their love, respect and/or connection to the dead person.

Feeling the need to actively participate was expressed by Rosa when discussing her father's death:

I had obviously ...felt needs to do things..I took some...bits of plants from my garden with me and some jonquils that I had picked...I somehow managed to take all that on the plane with me. I must have really wanted to take it...I took them with me to the funeral. I had a bit of rosemary and a bit of ake ake off this tree that I had just planted that I connect with my father and...bay leaves...and those jonquils ...so when everyone was throwing their dirt on I sort of threw my leaves on instead, which felt like something for me, and the children all wanted a jonquil and they threw a jonquil on which was quite nice.

Rosa's feeling of needing to participate more added to her dissatisfaction when other groups seemed to her to take precedence over the family at the graveside:

I felt the RSA (Returned Servicemen's Association) had too, too prominent a role...It felt like people had been given the role to go along and they didn't even know Dad very well and I'm sure that they got invited to the graveside...like the funeral director went first and put the dirt on and then the RSA and then I felt like the family got put down the line really.

The Experience of Active Participation

The experience/feeling of participation was discussed favourably by a number of the women. Sophia talked about helping in the kitchen when a work colleague died and said "that was a good feeling, that I was helping out in some practical way". Sophia also discussed the active participation involved in the funeral of her teacher:

Her coffin was open...everybody sat around in a circle around her...it was quite a collective sharing of feeling...and that seemed quite, quite real...lots of people who had known her spoke.

Alice spoke about the active participation of family and friends in relation to her grandfather's funeral (on her Pakeha side):

We planned all the service ourselves as a family...and we all had different parts to do...and people did readings and communion givers and the little ones took

flowers up to put on his coffin, you know everybody was involved. It was really really special...and then there was a time for different people who had come to the funeral to stand up and say their bit about Pop...it was really lovely and really special.

Leah in her storytelling discussed how her son's tangi at his home marae encouraged a lot of participation from his young adult friends who really appreciated this and were very moved by this experience. Mere spoke also in relation to a tangihanga for a young person:

That was a really good tangihanga and a good unveiling. There were a lot of young people there and (at) that marae...there aren't too many people...who are going to be authoritative and say this is the way it's going to be done...They've got the Maori protocol but...they're prepared to adapt and so forth...His friends were...shattered...and they did it really well...acted for his young widow...They really incorporated the young people and I think that was tremendous.

Priscilla discussed her first experience of helping to dress a dead relative, although Priscilla was not really close to this cousin this experience made her feel closer:

...I actually felt very close...I felt like she wanted me to be there...after we dressed her it was so nice, she looked really lovely...and we sort of didn't mourn for her then...because we had sort of had that contact.

Jane spoke positively about the family contribution at her stepmother's funeral in England and how this made the after-death experience less alienating:

At least I organized the actual send off, the actual wake I suppose you might call it and played some music at it with my sister...and my Dad had been thinking about what he would say about her from the moment she died...He had been preparing his speech for her to have at the crematorium...and he held a memorial service for her a few months later as well which was apparently really good but I couldn't get to that...So I do feel it is important to be involved...I was glad that my father did what he did...He gave a very moving speech and apparently it was very unusual, the guy who was officiating said that it was the first time that a husband had got up and spoken in all his years of celebrating funerals...I think the fact that us children were able to organize a bit of a do for Nancy after the funeral, that made it a whole lot less alienating...that we could be involved.

Jane talked about the importance of women actively participating in the after-death rituals. She pointed out that she had not as yet been to a funeral where a woman had spoken. She had however liked what she had heard about a funeral where women had spoken:

I've never been at a funeral service where a woman spoke yet...I've heard of (other) funerals but I haven't attended...there was one, the great grandmother of the woman that was living in my house died...She had to give a speech...as the

eldest great grandchild, and the eldest grandchild and the eldest daughter all had to give speeches about what they remembered of her which I thought was really good...and it was held in the garden, that was a good thing about it as well, it was held in the garden of her house...I think probably when somebody dies who is close to you, being really involved in the funeral is probably really good for you, even though it is probably hard as well.

Women need to be encouraged to actively participate (both publicly and privately) in the after-death decision-making, arrangements and ritual practices for people they are close to. This is part of achieving an equal participation by women in all aspects of the social and public life of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I believe that seeing and hearing about other women actively participating in after-death arrangements will help to foster this opportunity for all women.

Maria spoke positively about her and her sister's participation at their father's funeral and how this helped to make the funeral more personal:

We each took part...I wrote the prayers...myself...and said them. And I could speak personally and I addressed Dad...I could call him Dad.

Maria also discussed how her community of Catholic sisters are now participating more in the funeral rituals and how positive this has been:

Now in recent times we've had a lovely development, we've always had a vigil...the vigil mass the night before the burial...in the Catholic church...a gathering of the community in prayers for that person...Now what we do is gather...and we all sit around and tell stories about that person, the things that we remember, the happy things, the good things, the things we found difficult about the person...It's not all cloaking over the wonderful things...We've found that in recent years to be just so affirming and bonding really with the person, with the community...In the past it used to be the priest who would give the homily, you know say the few words at the mass...the sermon...maybe something about the person if they knew the person...In more recent times we just told the clergy that we wanted to talk about sister ourselves, so they may have said a few words about something scriptural or something to do with the hope of resurrection...One of us would talk about the person and somebody who knew the person well would be asked to do that...

One of the things we do now too is that we are pall-bearers...that's another change, whereas it used to be the men, always was men...(Male relatives or men from the parish would have been asked in the past)...Now...we always have one or two of the sisters as pall-bearers at some stage.

Maria identified that a Catholic sister's family is now also more involved in the funeral than in the past and how this church innovation has improved the after-death experience:

It used to be that sister had left her family, not that she didn't love them or keep in touch with them...family had very little to do...Now, the family can be involved in any way they wish, they can be part of the preparation...Family are always mentioned by name and may take part in the actual ritual — so they may do the scripture readings or say the prayers or talk about their family member as well as one of the sisters. It's much more a sharing of people who are significant for that person.

It is important that all the various friends, relatives and colleagues (and their connections to the dead person) are incorporated into the public tribute which honours the dead person and their life.

Rosa spoke positively about the wide participation at a recent funeral for a relative. She felt that this was a key aspect of what made the funeral a special experience:

A woman took the service...I found her really good...She managed to sort of have the Christian stuff there without it being too...I just felt more at ease with it...Sometimes it's like it's being shoved down your throat and stuff...but I felt as though I could participate with it and just acknowledge it as somewhere where people sit their spirituality...and it was about love and about all the nice things I connect with my spirituality...It (the funeral) was very personalized...there was quite a lot of humour too...the organizing of it was really good...It involved so many different groups like the children, the family...his wife...the fire service...even the...family dog...It felt very right...it was very moving, it was special really.

Vera spoke favourably of a funeral she attended recently, and also of being inspired by the active participation of family and friends:

The grave was dug...the young men in the family had actually been there in the morning and dug it themselves and there was...no undertaker or anybody in charge...As she was lowered somebody said a few words about her and then someone else said we should sing a song...Nobody knew what song to sing...Then my friend said I think we should sing 'For she's a jolly good fellow' so they sang 'For she's a jolly good fellow' and Julia's mother was appalled...It was really quite funny...Then Julia's mother decided we should sing 'Now is the hour'...Then people dropped rosemary and there was a large basket of rosemary that Alan's sister had brought and some flowers...As people dropped the flower and some soil onto the coffin they said something about her...they spoke to her in the grave...The young men started to fill in the grave...and then they got in and danced on it to compact it down...and gradually they filled it in and we just stood quietly in the rain while they did that...and suddenly in the quaint little church...the bell started to ring...and the...youngest grandchild had gone in and found the bell...(It was a surprise, they didn't know who had done it. When they found out) they just laughed (It became a memorable part of the ritual).

This story from Vera also shows how an active family and community participation can lead to spontaneous and unexpected gestures which add warmth, beauty, humour and significance to the after-death rituals.

The Experience and Feeling of Nonparticipation

The experience and feeling of nonparticipation in the after-death rituals, or the sense of no real participation, was not seen to be a positive outcome by the women. It created a feeling of alienation and isolation. Sophia spoke about her feelings of alienation at her grandparents' funerals:

It sort of seemed quite unreal really...I never saw them laid out. I just arrived at the church and the (closed) coffin was in the front of the church and the service was said and everybody did their dutiful part it seemed. A tear or two may have rolled down our cheeks while we sang hymns...Even though we were part of that funeral it seemed as if we were just doing what was expected and there was cups of tea afterwards and something to eat and then a trip back home.

Karen also described the minimal participation at some Pakeha funerals and her description depicts the hollowness of this experience:

It was kind of one of those Pakeha funerals where you kind of arrive there the morning of the funeral, go to the service have a cup of tea and go home again...The cup of tea bit was all very polite and then everyone went down to the RSA (Returned Servicemen's Association) and got pissed.

Isabelle expressed her feelings of alienation at her father's funeral, and reflected on ways that this could have been better:

It's like I had to play this social game of, I don't know, compliance I think...It (her father's funeral) didn't do anything for me at all...There certainly was no place for me there...All in all it wasn't a good experience...A funeral where everybody has a chance to stand up and say something...about the person who has died, that would have been probably quite good I think at my father's funeral.

The Participation by Children in After-death Rituals

Participation by children in the after-death experiences was considered important by all the women. The participation of children is very much part of Maori cultural death practices. The Maori women made the point that in the Maori cultural experience children grow up with an inclusive and participatory experience of death in the home and on the marae. Mere discussed this:

(At the tangi) the other marvellous thing is that the children just look in the coffin and go on with their own affairs and are part of it all because I think still some people don't want children to be involved which seems to me crazy, absolutely crazy...Children worry about things just the same as anybody else, don't they, and it's the same when there is a death in the family, they worry about it, and people plonk them off to stay with somebody else...in the Maori tangihanga that's never the case, children are there as a matter of course.

Patricia illustrated this when she talked about her own childhood experience of the tangihanga:

As kids...we just sort of ran around, there was no mystery about death. I can remember you'd go up and have a look at the coffin...and off you'd go, so there was no scariness about it...Because my Nanny was always up the front or calling people I was always allowed to sit with her...you just got so used to death...The awful deaths were where you couldn't have the coffin opened...for me those were the scary ones.

Alice shared memories of her first tangi as a young child and talked about this as a positive early learning experience about death:

I can remember Dad sort of explaining what would happen when we got there...because I'd never been to a tangi before...I remember him talking about how you actually have to go up and kiss and touch the body...and I was thinking...Oh that's not how some of my friends...they don't do that...but when we actually got there...it was just like a normal thing everybody else was doing it. It didn't feel wrong or yucky or anything like that...The children were all a part of it too, it wasn't like we were separated out or anything like that...I just remember being included. It didn't matter what we did, it was fine...I just remember my grandmother wailing, that's what got me the most...She wouldn't stop. She kept going and going...Then I can remember just going outside to play with my cousins...and that was alright...We wandered in and out, went off and played and did our own thing.

The Pakeha women, and Maori women through their involvement with families who followed the established mainstream European way of doing things, expressed their experience of children being excluded from death and from the person who had died, and their opposition to this. Sophia spoke of her own experience of this:

The children in the family were not allowed to attend the funeral because it was considered not the proper place for children to be.

Lily spoke about two of her own experiences of exclusion as a child:

I just remember we were told we were too young to go to the funeral...and feeling really angry because I was reasonably close to Grandad, I had a lot of memories and I wanted to go to see the coffin and say goodbye...My older sisters and brother went...I remember feeling really pissed off about that...

I had a best friend who all of a sudden didn't come to school and we were told a week or two later she had died...That was horrible, just literally one minute she was there and then she wasn't and not being told much about it was really sad.

Lily also reflected on a friend's childhood experience of not seeing his baby brother who died soon after birth:

I definitely think it's important for kids to see the brother or sister they lost...to see the baby, to see the life you know, to touch it...I think it's part of the grieving just to know it was real.

Priscilla remembered her childhood experience of exclusion at the time of her grandmother's death:

Nobody said much...to me as a child...nobody really wanted to tell you what was going on...The day they were burying my grandmother my aunty wanted to see my grandmother...I said I wanted to have a look as well, to say goodbye because my grandmother died suddenly...They said oh no, no you don't want to go.

Vera spoke of her daughter's death and her other children's experience of exclusion in relation to this:

...suddenly my house was filled with people and my kids didn't know what was going on, and people just came and kind of took over...a hive of activity...they took the children away...maybe I did want (the children) taken away, I agreed to it...I hadn't had time to tell them (of their sister's death), so they heard from these other people...We went to the cemetery and the people who were looking after my children were there and then they took the children away again...the children (now adults) have talked about that in recent years and said how awful it was...They didn't want to go (away)...and they didn't know what was happening...or whether they would ever come back...I gained an understanding of...the importance of children's grief, no matter how young they are they still experience grief...It would have been preferable to have her (Vera's young daughter who had died) at home, to reclaim her from the hospital...I had had no experience of a close death...it was all very foreign to me.

Talking to her adult children years later led Vera to realize just how important including children in the after-death experience is. Vera and Mere both explicitly pointed out that children feel grief and worry over things and that this needs to be recognized and allowed

for. Excluding children undermines this need and can also increase fears and misunderstandings about what is happening.

Jane talked about her experience of exclusion as a young child in England:

My family didn't talk about death very much...I remember somebody who was very old died in my grandmother's boarding house...when I was a child...I really wanted to see where she'd gone to and they wouldn't show me. I think she actually died when I was there and it was all very hush hush as far as the children were concerned...I really wanted to see the body...I knew the person...I remember asking several times...I think I was explicitly told that children weren't allowed to see the body...it wasn't nice.

When Jane later spoke about not remembering much about her grandmother's death she identified that this was probably because her grandmother died in hospital and because she was a child at the time she had little involvement:

They (her parents) might have said oh no you can't see her she's in hospital because children weren't allowed in hospitals in those days.

This comment by Jane gives recognition to the link between hospital policy earlier this century, which excluded children from visiting family or friends in hospital (which occurred in New Zealand as well as England), and the exclusion of children from death and dying (when deaths occurred in hospital). This would also have worked to influence public attitudes as to whether children should be allowed to be around death. If the health experts were against this, the public, who look to experts for advice, would similarly think that children should be kept away from death. Health professionals have in fact been leaders in the approach that believes that death should be kept hidden and separate from the living (see also the next chapter theme 'respect, empowerment and support from the professionals and institutions involved').

The Exclusion and Alienation of Adult Women by Relatives

Many of the women expressed feelings of alienation from after-death rituals. A more extreme experience of exclusion, because of the action of other relatives, was also an issue a few of the women experienced as adults. For Leah this happened because her stepfather, who took precedence over her as next of kin to her mother, totally excluded her and other Maori relatives from the funeral arrangements. This experience also illustrated a clash between Maori and Pakeha protocols, in this case to the detriment of Maori needs:

She left instructions that she wanted to be buried beside my father. She said I don't want to go home to...the marae...she said I really feel I would rather be buried (beside) your father. We arranged a double plot...So she told me that but she didn't write it in her will unfortunately...When she became ill...I discovered I was not her next of kin, her husband was, even though I was her only child...When she died he had promised me that she could come to Palmerston North...so I sent the undertaker...to bring her...She arrived...and he decided she was going back to (where he lived) and so I had virtually kidnapped her...So I had her here, not in the house but I had her up (at the funeral directors)...and I was able to stay with her all the time so that was the best I could do because I knew he wouldn't let me take her to the marae, and he wouldn't, we had a terrible row...it was dreadful...He arranged the funeral in (the place he lived) and she went back (there) and he arranged everything, the way the funeral was to go, what was to be done and said and he sat in the front pew and put me and my children out...and it made me very angry...and of course all the Maori relatives were hurt once more...I would have loved Mum to go home to the marae, she would have liked that and then she could have come back to Palmerston to Dad...She was the senior member of our whole not just hapu but iwi, a very important person.

The reference by Leah about her mother being a senior and important member of her hapu and iwi also relates to the theme in the next chapter concerning the importance of a personal, special and "fitting" tribute for the dead person. For Leah and many of her relatives the funeral was not a "fitting" tribute.

For Kristal a restricted participation occurred because of the enforcement of a dishonest family code of behaviour of not discussing the imminent death as well as not being given access to her grandmother's dead body:

We were all told we were not allowed to mention anything about the cancer...I really wanted to say a lot of things to Nanna...to thank her for all the things she had done for me...and special moments...they took that away, the family...and all this make believe stuff...everything normal...everything happy...and this women is dying.

(Kristal felt however she was able to communicate with her grandmother through touch. She gave her grandmother a massage only hours or even minutes before she died.) I gave her a massage...there was a lot of feeling that went into that massage and I could feel a lot coming from her too, but I could also feel how much pain she was in too...no matter what my aunties or anything did my Nanna still gave me a special moment...and I clicked then that this was a special moment...when I put her back down...she looked at me and said "some people have got their funny ways"...and she knew, she knew what I was feeling...We just looked at each other...I was thinking a lot when I massaged, there was a lot of feeling, a lot of thoughts and everything that I wanted to say, it was going in and she clicked and it was her way of telling me that she did know, she knew what I was feeling.

(Soon after Kristal arrived home she heard her grandmother had died) I remember going back over...we knocked on the door and she (an aunty) answered the door and she stood in the doorway and wouldn't even let us in...she said "she's already gone".

The discussion above (and also throughout both chapters in this section of the thesis) illustrates that the barriers to experiencing active participation are numerous and complex. They involve the attitudes and practices of families, health and death professionals and the institutions they work in, and the wider society. There are legal restrictions to contend with, and also our individual fears, unpreparedness and lack of confidence. As some of the women's stories illustrate, one way to increase the active participation of family and friends is to opt for a homedeath experience.

Death as a "Home" Experience

The importance of death as a home experience was a theme that appeared in many of the women's stories. This was not just in the case of the past and present members of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Group but involved the wider group of women who shared their stories.

"Home": A Definition

My use of the term "home" is as a concept as well as a physical place. This is an approach that I have experienced and noted in relation to homebirth. The decision to have a birth or death in the "home" is in part about reclaiming control. The "home" is our space⁹, and we decide what happens here. This feeling and experience of being in control works to enhance the actual control we assert in our relationship with the professionals involved with a birth or death at home. Being in control means that we have the power to create a space and a process that feels right for us. Being in our own home is also about comfort (although I need to acknowledge that home, for a variety of reasons, is not always a comfortable or empowering place for those that live there). The comforts of home mean having the facilities and resources, the familiar surroundings, so that we can eat, sleep, feel relaxed, have friends call in and generally behave in a way that is natural and unrestrained.

⁹ This definition of "home" as our space is not to be confused with the oppressive sexist concept (and experience) of women's place being in the home. The concept of "home" discussed here includes the expectation of emotional, physical and social security and empowerment in the home, for women and their families.

Through my past experience with homebirth I have also realized that you can have a homebirth in someone else's home, or something similar if you are given a very home-like hospital birth experience. Similarly the institutions and professionals involved with death can work to facilitate a home-like community environment which makes people feel comfortable, empowered and in control.

The marae is a communal "home" setting. The marae a person is from is often referred to as the "home marae", or as "home". This "home" experience on the marae is very evident in the discussion by Maori women of the tangihanga on the marae. For example descriptions of children being able to join the adults who are keeping the dead person company or go off and play as they pleased, is a very home-like situation. Alice also identified the "home" significance of her family's marae in discussion about where she wants to be buried:

I said "I want to be buried (beside) you guys" and he (her father)...said "well you're married now your husband might want you to go to be buried with him...where his family is". I said "no, it doesn't matter, I want him to take me back home where I belong"...Even though I haven't lived there for a long period...it's still where I want to be, where my tupuna are...

The marae and extended family experience of death is not however always a comfortable "home" experience. It is sometimes more of a community take-over inflicted on those closest to the dead person. Mere discussed how the tangihanga can be experienced as a community take over:

Tangihangas...have their unwritten rules which can be very confining really to some people, members of the family who would like to break out of that a little bit, because the community takes over and it's got to go the way the community says...If you wanted to do something quite different from the usual general pattern of a tangihanga you might have a bit of trouble then because there is a pattern to go through.

Patricia discussed her experience of her whanau attempting to railroad the immediate family over after-death arrangements:

We made some decisions about what we wanted before we put the phone call up North...there's nothing worse than Maoris on mass...within hours we had a full house...Once the cousins came down...they tried to railroad us...One of the very few times I was very proud of my brother was when he stood up and said..."if you don't like what we've chosen we'll cremate him", and you say that to a bunch of Maoris and they shut up straight away...Not only did he say it in front of all the cousins but he said it in front of all the elders...They couldn't understand why they couldn't have his body then and there. We were suffering enough having lost our father. We didn't want a bunch of irate Maoris coming

down to try and storm the police morgue...So that shut them up...Some stayed with us for when his body came back and the others went up North to raise the tangi.

This story is also an example of the great importance that Maori culture places on being with the dead person, and caring for and honouring the tupapaku on the marae. It illustrates the tensions that arise when Maori are denied access to their dead. This may lead Maori to want to "kidnap" their dead (refer also to the discussion concerning the death of Billy T James near the end of Chapter 6).

Mere spoke about an instance where the Maori extended family takeover was attempted but did not succeed:

He (the man who had died had joined a particular religion) with his wife...There was a terrible to do because his own people wanted to take him back up the Coast but (the religion he belonged to has) a ruling that you should...not be buried too far from...where the family lives,...his wife and children...When that happens Maori people can get very bitter...I should imagine those children are growing up pretty cut off from their...father's whanau...because of that...There's often some very bitter arguments among different groups...at a Maori tangi...about where the body will lie and where he or she should be buried...but sometimes they're not bitter they're almost ritual, they're an honour...But sometimes they're bitter...but then this happens with other people not just Maori, but the community has more say with Maori.

In the tangihanga experience another "home" issue, is that of which side of the family's "home" marae is to take precedence. Alice discussed how she feels pulled between her and her husband's tribal connections:

...I guess I worry if (my husband) passes away too, going to his marae...When his Nanny passed away...they actually had her body in a tent outside of the whare...that was really strange for me...and I thought this is what will happen for (my husband)...where will I fit in what will my role be...a stranger in that territory?...Those kind of things worry me...who does he belong to?...And then when you come to children...what happens?...It's kind of like ownership issues...If our children were to die I would want them to go up North and (my husband) would very much want to take the bodies back to his marae...Some of that is solved in that we have what they call kawē mate...where although they've done the burial and the physical body is buried at this particular place they have a tangi for the spirit and take it back to the other marae. (Through the kawē mate ritual, the spirit of the dead person can be taken to a number of marae).

Women Express their Preference for Homedeadth

A home or home-like experience is something that non-Maori as well as Maori are seeking, and in some cases have experienced. The "home" theme is one that runs through a lot of the women's stories. Lily reflected on the feeling of home she wants for her own death and those close to her:

I would like to die at home...and just...be surrounded by family and friends...I definitely don't want to be embalmed if that's possible, I don't want that at all. I mean I really would feel like it was a rape by a man I didn't know, as well as I'm just not into chemicals and shit anyway...It just totally makes sense to be surrounded by the people who love you and be looked after and your body cared for by the people.

Rosa expressed the intense feelings involved with her preference for homedeadth:

I have this really strong feeling that I can't stand the thought of anyone I care about being in a funeral parlour and I don't like the embalming process and a lot of that is that it's just so detached and impersonal...When someone's alive I would never do that to them...and also it's that thing when are they actually totally dead...like if their beard still grows after death it's like something is still happening with that body isn't it...It's like death is not an event (but a process)...(and even recently people have been found to be still alive in the mortuary)...That's another good thing about homedeadth you can be reasonably sure that someone is dead...things are starting to deteriorate by about three days.

Priscilla talked about wanting to have time with her parents at home after their death:

If I have any say when either my mother or my father passes away I would like to have them at least one night before I bury them...as in like have them at home.

Ema reflected on what she would want after her own death and identified that she would only be able to do this in a home environment:

I'd like my cat to be able to come in and out and jump on me like he does now...the animals and kids could just come in and out if they want to. I like that idea, see you can't do that in a funeral home.

Women Reflect Favourably on their Homedeadth Experiences

Homedeadth encompasses many of the important themes that have been identified in both of the chapters relating to the women's stories, but particularly to this chapter which focuses on personal themes. The following excerpts from Zarah's story, about her five year old sister's homedeadth after a lengthy illness, includes many of these important themes such as

preparation; participation; the importance of being with the dead person's body; and personal and "fitting" rituals:

My mother wanted her to be buried in a dress not a shroud and my sister chose the dress. It was a special long dress with a pink petticoat underneath and my mother spent ages embroidering little rosebuds on it...and making it this special dress and my sister was going to wear these beautiful shoes that she had seen in town...(it was like) she was going to this great party...my sister talked about this all the time...when she got sicker it got hard to take...

(After she died) we kept her...on her bed...which was on the south side so it was cooler...We didn't pull all the blinds down...She had net curtains and we did pull those across and that was really for the neighbours sake...We had candles and all her toys around her...We did have things that she had chosen. She wanted to have these wee roses to hold when she was in the coffin...We got little baby pink roses and she had those all around her and she had some in her hair...like a bridesmaid's outfit in a way...When we were washing her and doing her hair...it was like we were preparing her for...being a bridesmaid. We were putting up all her hair...We were talking to her like we would at any time...We talked to her, we cried, but when we were doing things with her it was like we didn't need to cry as we were actively doing things with her...We said oh doesn't she look lovely...We had put really nice oil in the water, nice rose oil...We washed her...In fact I think we took her and gave her a bath...dried her and dressed her...and I was adamant we didn't put powder on her because that's what they did at the hospital and I didn't want to do that to my little sister...

(Zarah was a qualified nurse at the time) So I had some idea how to prepare a body anyway as I had done that at the hospital...My mother and I looked into what was really necessary...At home it was really nice...We dressed her. We didn't have to stuff all these bits here, there and everywhere. We kept her at home...kept her cool...We put a nappy on her...and put ice in plastic bags around her...She was never left alone and always had a candle going...The room had a few flowers but no different to when she was sick...My relatives came and saw her and talked to her, we sang songs...everyone was in there just talking. It wasn't like everyone was talking in hushed tones...My little brother would come in and pick her up and give her a big hug and give her a kiss and put her back down again...It was like he would have done before. I remember my aunt saying oh careful, careful don't do that...Every day we changed the nappy she had on, by the second day there wasn't much on it...My parents took photos...anyone who wanted to touch her my mother encouraged...On the third day we noticed that when we changed her...you had to be really gentle cause her skin...would come away...it was just a bit of skin coming off.

(Zarah went on to talk about putting her little sister in her coffin) Dad picked her up and put her in her coffin...everyone got to kiss her for a final time...everyone cried then...(Her mother stalled, saying I'll just fix her hair, having to do a last something before the coffin closed)...It was harder getting her in to the coffin rather than the lid going on...and when Mum was saying oh I'll just fix this...now have I done everything now.

Several other women also talked about their homedeath experience and in each case this was spoken of in favourable terms. Mere spoke of a Pakeha friend who was kept at home until her funeral:

They had her at home which was lovely...She died at home...she was kept company...and that was really good because it was a Pakeha household...and they asked me if I'd karanga her into the crematorium so Hine and I went and sat with her for several hours to prepare ourselves for doing this...and it really felt good, because now people are trying to set up different patterns and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't work too well but that worked really well and I think it helped Laura, the daughter who had looked after her...I think it helped her enormously.

Alice spoke of her homedeath experience with her Pakeha grandfather:

It was really lovely...we actually had him come to the house, we brought him home to the house for one day before he was buried and that was pretty radical I think for some of Mum's family...My grandmother...she wanted him to come back to the house but she wouldn't go and look at him...Nanna liked the fact that he was there but she wasn't going to go and touch him and things...(It) was really lovely because there wasn't heaps and heaps of people coming in...We had our special time with him, we had that night with him...I can remember my little five year old cousin going up to him and sort of touching him and saying "Oh but he's so cold...it's cold"...The fact that they were able to touch him and caress him and all that, I thought that was really neat that they could have that experience.

In each of Zarah's, Mere's and Alice's storytelling about their homedeath experiences they repeatedly used phrases such as "really lovely", "really good", "it felt really good", "really neat", "worked really well". Their observations of, and participation in, homedeaths proved more than satisfactory, they were very memorable and special experiences.

Remembering Laying-out as a Home Experience

Only Zarah's story included an in-depth discussion about the entire process of laying-out a dead person at home. None of the women had learnt traditional laying-out skills through knowledge passed down by other women in the family and community. Zarah and Patricia discussed how they had gained some knowledge about laying-out in their nursing training. There were brief references in other women's stories about laying-out knowledge and work performed by family members and friends at home and in the wider community. Rosa talked about this:

...My mother's father's mother was someone who laid out the dead in my family...I remember my mother telling me the story of her father's death

vaguely...when I was a child...and how his beard still grew (after death)...and how he'd been at home.

Kristal remembered some mention of laying-out the dead by her grandmother and hearing that her grandmother's mother or grandmother's mother's mother had performed this work. Kristal linked this with old healing methods and customs and expressed her regret at not getting her grandmother to teach her about this:

I wish I'd gone into more of it...I knew she used to use her own medicines...now I want to know...and it's lost...it's gone with her...If only I had had the sense to ask.

Kristal had experienced an old method used by her grandmother to shut her grandfather's jaw after he died and before the undertaker had arrived:

My Grandad was laid out on a mattress on the lounge floor...he had a handkerchief tied up around his head.

Lily also had a little knowledge of her great grandmother doing this laying-out work in the community in a small provincial area of Aotearoa/New Zealand but it was really only knowledge of the role and not what was involved with this role:

I was really proud when I heard she laid out the dead...She must have been a really important person in the community.

Lucy discussed her Maori experience and recollections of laying-out the dead. She said "usually certain people in the family do it". Lucy however was not sure if it was traditionally women in Maori society who did this work but thought it probably was although she said "others would likely tell you otherwise". There is now a man in her family who does this as he has worked for a funeral director. Similarly Priscilla discussed how male relatives in her husband's whanau are involved with the laying-out process:

Because my brother-in-law and uncle...they're qualified...embalmers, they've actually been able to go into the funeral homes and actually do the bodies themselves so it's not actually like a stranger...and it's relieved some of the burden of costs.

Priscilla and I discussed the dressing of the dead person in her experience of contemporary Maori death practices and Priscilla agreed that women dress a woman and men dress a man. Priscilla added:

Sometimes a lady might sort of check how the men dress the men, just to make sure they're dressed right.

Vera reflected on death experiences in her childhood in a working class area of a city in England. Vera remembered that it was women in the street who did the laying-out and recalled "memories of someone dying in the street and (how) the whole street would be involved" she also remembered "having the rosary in the home".

Vera also spoke about her friends' recent experience of laying-out their mother at home with the help of a friend with nursing experience:

My friend Julia had a friend who was an oncology nurse, she supported them through the whole laying-out, and told them what to do and how to do it. She stood aside and told them what to do, and they did it, and they wept over her body and they laughed...they shared stories...and remembered their mother as she was...and my friend who is a dress maker...made her the most magnificent shroud...It was a lovely experience for me that they wanted me to share that and they wanted to tell me about it and have me as part of it.

A large part of the theme 'death as a "home" experience' involves the importance that the women placed on being with the dead person's body. This issue was prominent in the women's stories and involved discussion which went beyond homedeath discussion. This became a theme in itself.

The Importance of Being with the Dead Person's Body

In their stories all of the women spoke about how it was important for themselves and others to be able to be with a dead person they were close to, or connected with. This not only involved seeing the dead person but also touching them, caring for them and being able to say goodbye. The women identified and reflected on the positive and not so positive aspects of their experience of being with a dead person's body as well as their regrets when denied this opportunity.

In discussing her father-in-law's death, Moana emphasised the issue of wanting, of needing to see her dead father-in-law at home but being denied this. She also described the strangeness of the experience of seeing him laid out at the funeral directors:

What upset us was...we got ready as fast as we could to go but by the time we got there...the undertaker had been and taken his body...Every time we used to go up there while he was sick we would immediately go into his room which was right opposite the door, the entrance door, and you would sort of walk in and see Dad, lying in bed. But all we saw this time was just an empty bed...It was a nicely made bed and it looked all wrong, it looked like he had never been there. The room was all pristine, clean and tidy and there had been new sheets and everything put on the bed...That was really difficult...not having seen him dead.

We were hoping...we were holding on to this dream that he would be there but he wasn't (for 18 months the household had revolved around him) then all of a sudden he had just gone – like he'd vanished.

(They went to see him at the funeral directors but this was also an unreal sort of experience for Moana, especially as it was her first such experience.) He was lying in a coffin with all this lacy stuff around him...which I found quite strange...a bit reminiscent of weddings really, more than anything wedding veils...I think I thought when I walked in, what on earth did they put a wedding veil on him for. It was really strange...and they had these sort of spot lights trained just right, on the coffin...He obviously had make-up on but I do remember thinking, oh he looks well and thinking at the time that was OK, they had made him look like his old self...But there was something that bothered me about his hands...they looked like they had make up on them too and they looked really posed, like they had really posed them, the fingers and everything just so, because his hands were folded one on top of the other down on his stomach...We were too scared to touch – we all kissed him...but we stood around...and at various times had a cry and there were a few laughs too...

That was the only time we went to see him. Mum went again the next day...I think a few of the family went with her, I can't remember who...(Moana's husband) didn't want to go again. I don't think he liked seeing his father...like that...I think it would have been easier if he had been at home, for a lot of the family, I think, would have felt more comfortable...I remember when Mum came home from that visit, that was the actual day of the funeral...she was really upset, actually she said "I wanted to bring him home with me, I didn't want to leave him there".

Moana's story vividly illustrates the abruptness of her father-in-law's transition from being an ill and dying person cared for at home to a "vanished" and mysterious body at the funeral directors. This is a common experience when someone dies.

Rosa's story about her father's death also emphasised the same issue as Moana, of wanting her father's dead body to be at home when she arrived. She also expressed her dissatisfaction with the experience of going to see her father at the funeral directors:

I remember...my youngest sister...met us (at the airport)...it was like I knew things I needed...but I actually couldn't really say them and maybe I wasn't even that good at expressing them to myself and I made this comment..."Where's

Dad" and Pat looked at me thinking...Rosa you're being weird...and it was like that was my thing, that I wanted him to be at home really and I knew that he wouldn't...He'd actually died at home and Mum and Pat had washed him which I guess was something that was quite special...We went to see his body once (at the funeral directors), we went together, quite a lot of the family...It was really quite an emotional time, quite a time of crying seeing his body...We went by appointment and it was kind of like someone decided we'd go and we all went and it was sort of like not at my own pace really...Hardly anyone else went to see his body which I felt quite sad about for some reason...I felt quite glad that some of (my brother-in-law's) family who are Maori did go and see him.

In contrast Zarah reflected on her sister's homedeadth and the importance of everyone in the family having their own private time with her dead sister along with the shared family time; this is something that is more difficult to organize when a dead person is at a funeral director's premises:

When she died it was really good that we all had our own private time with her...to hold her...She looked like she did the day before when she was asleep.

Lucy drew on her Maori experience to express both the therapeutic and social importance of, seeing, being with, and touching the dead body, and the importance of being able to say goodbye "properly":

For someone that you care about and someone that you love it is important that you share those last evenings with them...It helps the grieving...having them there with you...If you're going to say goodbye to someone it's so much harder to say goodbye and not be able to see them, even though you know they're there in the coffin...you get all your goodbyes done before they put the lid on...it makes it so much easier to accept they're gone as well because you see them there and you see them for all their good memories and bad...they're still part of the family...

As Maori people we find it very cold...if the wife or husband...insist the dead go straight to the chapel and then it becomes very cold and you know there is no-one there to keep them company. But then again that's the family's choice but it still leaves us with a cold feeling...We think it's important to be part of the whole thing and keep them company.

Lily talked about a stillbirth where the mother had spent time at home with her dead son:

I did like the way she had a lot of things to remember him by...and she had him at home quite a bit and she was allowed to hold him and dress him and all sorts of things which I thought was very good.

Kristal spoke about being with her nephew's body at the funeral directors along with her sisters, one being the baby's mother. Spending some hours with Daniel's body helped to facilitate a loving time of remembrance for him and for his short life:

We were there for hours, just talking about him and how nice he was...we talked about the birth...and talking to Daniel...She (the mother) said there was nothing to tuck him in with so I took off my cardigan...and we tucked that around him.

Isabelle's Nanna was at the rest home she had lived in for about three days after her death and Isabelle talked about this as an important, special and home-like time:

I had the chance to go there for two days and that was really special...We could just sort of sit around the end of the bed and talk...to Nanna...and talk about her life...and talk about her funeral and organize the funeral...We organized that the grandchildren should all have a part in the funeral and the great grandchildren.

Vera talked about going to see her daughter who had died at the undertakers, and how it felt good to have her sister go with her:

My sister arrived from (up North). She was very supportive...she wanted to see Jenny and so we went up to the undertakers and Jenny was lying in her little white coffin...That felt good, to go back again and see her, to be there with my sister, it was just the two of us.

Mere discussed her personal experience of saying goodbye to her dead brother and in her story this very much interrelated with active participation by her family:

One of the nice things was that we said goodbye to him before we took him in the chapel. We took him in ourselves...We put the lid on ourselves. We all screwed the coffin down which my mother found very helpful, I think...I used to try and suggest these things...I just think it's so important to be involved.

Emma talked about seeing her grandmother at a funeral director's premises and wanting her body to be somewhere else where she wasn't alone:

I didn't like seeing her there (at the funeral directors). It was awful, she was so much alone there.

In a later part of her story Emma talked about what happened after a friend's death in hospital. Emma was able to keep her friend company for several hours after his death:

We all stood up and sort of grabbed each other and had a big hug...We all went up and gave Bill a hug and gave him a kiss, and called in the doctor to confirm it (the death)...then we just went and sat around Bill...and I sat by Bill the whole time then and kept stroking his head...or his hand...While we all sort of talked about what we were going to do...We sort of said goodbye...I think I was there for about 3 hours after he died...We waited for the family to come over...I noticed a lot of them wouldn't go near him...It was as if he is gone you don't touch him now...They stood at the end of the bed...but they wouldn't go near him and I thought that was really sad...He was still a person and just because he'd stopped breathing doesn't mean you stop touching him...I don't know why I stayed there so long and I don't know why I did what I did, it just felt like what I had to do...and I knew Bill was a touchy guy...It was just something I did, an instinct.

Jane talked about her experience of going to see her grandfather at an English undertakers, and her shock at how her grandfather's body was dressed. This did not seem fitting to Jane and made the whole experience quite unreal:

I went to see my grandfather...he was all dressed in blue satin...looking like a saint...It astonished me as...my parents, the funeral director's customers, wouldn't have seen it...I just felt really surprised, a bit bewildered really, you had to look really closely to see that it really was him...It wasn't quite so difficult with my father-in-law as he had a very distinctive nose...It seems quite funny not to put people in their ordinary clothes...It was like a gown...it was a bit like a wedding dress or something.

Patricia spoke in relation to her preference for an open coffin at a funeral as well as a tangihanga, to be able to see the dead person and the reality of the death:

For me it's that identity thing, like if you just see a box going away then you just see a box. You don't know what's in that box...and it makes it all mysterious...are they really in there?

I can remember the first Pakeha funeral that I went to...I must have been about sixteen, seventeen...I can remember that it was a closed coffin, it was his 21st, it was a real tragedy, but for me the tragedy was that they kept the coffin closed. I said to Mum why didn't they open up the coffin and she just said oh they don't do that sort of thing...It was really really sad and I can remember that same feeling I felt at my Uncle Bill's funeral (a tangihanga where the coffin had to be closed because of the condition of the body).

The Presence of the Dead Body at the Tangihanga

The tangihanga involves being with the dead person's body over several days and nights and touching, talking and singing to the dead person. Pakeha as well as Maori women felt that this was a very positive experience. Priscilla described her experience of the tangihanga:

They (the dead person) usually have a few days with the family...friends...whoever wants to come...You can sleep beside the coffin...nobody's scared or anything...you can just sit there and talk and stroke their face.

Mere described the way a number of photographs of different life stages accompany the dead person at their tangihanga:

I think that the other thing that is really helpful about a tangihanga is the fact that you can talk to the person...and I love the photos all round and you can look and see what they were like...If you'd only known them when they were older there's these photos of when they were younger lined up around the bottom of the coffin.

Karen spoke positively of her experience of spending several days with her boyfriend's mother's dead body at the tangi:

I was kind of like treated as family...and I had to go up and say goodbye to her before they put the lid (of the coffin) on and sort of by this stage she had started sort of to get a bit puffy so they put a lace handkerchief over her face...It was one thing to sort of kind of sit...and talk to her but I didn't want to go and touch her...I kind of wanted to kiss her goodbye...I wanted to because everyone else had...I didn't want to look like the woosy Pakeha that couldn't handle it...and also I thought it would be a very nice sign of respect and even though I hadn't known the woman I definitely got to know her in the last five days, because...we'd all been together and I...kind of got to know...her whole sort of history...I really enjoyed the experience. It was definitely an experience that brought closeness to people. I had become quite close with the family in just a short time. So I went up and gave her a kiss goodbye and that was good...There was lots of touching and handling of the body till the last day or so...because she was starting to deteriorate...It was...a completely open coffin...I think she had like a little rug or something, maybe from the knees down...People were stroking her arms and holding her hands...It was a really wonderful experience, it really was...

Karen pointed out that through being closely involved in a tangi she became no longer afraid of death:

I was quite comfortable with death after that...It was a very positive thing...I went to five or six tangis after that...there's generally a period of time when the bodies lie in state at home...and then it goes to the marae.

Discouraged, Delayed and Denied Access to Seeing a Dead Person

Some of the women discussed their experience of discouraged, delayed or denied access to seeing and being with their dead during the after-death time. This was described as

unhelpful, upsetting and distressing. For some this occurred due to the professionals and institutions involved, for others it was because a family member or members blocked the access of other family members. For one woman access to the dead body was denied through the more unusual experience of the dead person's body being unlocatable, destroyed or unrecognizable.

When Karen's father died it was a long time (about five days later) before the family had access to his body because of delays in his autopsy. This was a very difficult aspect for Karen:

So you never kind of got that sleeping peacefully look you got that quite gaunt dead look straight away...He looked very ashen and dead looking and that was quite a shock...They had said for us not to move him...said not for us to touch him very much or something and we could only see him for ten minutes, something about he couldn't be out of the chiller too long...because the embalming fluids hadn't gone in because the autopsy had taken...days...I never kissed him goodbye and I've always regretted that.

Jane spoke of her recent experience in England when she had wanted to go and see the body of her stepmother at the undertakers but because of his manner feeling not able to request this:

Her body was held at the undertakers in a nearby village and my brother and I went along to take some flowers. (Jane and her brother had discussed going to see their stepmother's body and thought they would if it was possible)...The undertaker came out of the house and it was a Sunday and he didn't invite us in and didn't ask if we wanted to see her or anything, he just took the flowers from us outside...his whole manner was one that I was sure he would consider it (asking to see their stepmother's body) an unusual request.

Children have often been discouraged from, or denied, the opportunity of seeing a dead person's body by family members as already discussed but this can also occur for adults. Jane discussed her English experiences:

When my grandfather died and when my father-in-law died...we went to the undertakers and saw the body and my parents thought that was...a bit off really...they sort of tolerated it because (Jane's husband of that time) was a Catholic.

For a child or young person, not being able or allowed to see a dead person important to you is something that can still feel upsetting in later adulthood. Priscilla talked about this when she described her experience of the death of her grandmother:

I remember crying and I think it was not because she was dead, it was because I couldn't see her and say goodbye to her...I still feel like that now, that I would have liked the opportunity to see her.

Emma also expressed intense feelings about being denied the opportunity to go and see her uncle after he died:

When he died my family wouldn't let me go and see him...To this day...twenty years later, I still resent them for it...I still haven't forgiven them for it...I've never been back since he died...or even to where he is buried...I feel like I haven't said goodbye to him...One day I will go there...I wish I'd fought harder and said yes I want to go, you can't stop me.

Being with the dead body involves facing up to the realities of death. For some, and perhaps I should say a lot of people, this is scary and unpleasant. It does not need to be like this however. Just as Alice's childhood experience of going to her first tangi socialized her to accept that it was normal, and not unpleasant, to be with a dead body, our wider community experience of death could also facilitate this ease with being with our dead before burial/cremation. After listening to the women's stories it became clear that this is what the women want to see happen. This is the Maori way of death and increasingly once again becoming the Pakeha way also.

Seeing and being with a dead body (when we are allowed this opportunity) can make death a very "real" experience (when death language and cosmetics do not euphemise this into a sleeping peacefully facade). We turn now to a less tangible realm, to consider the importance of "nonrational" experience in relation to what happens after a death.

Acknowledging the Importance of "Nonrational" Experience

As already discussed in Chapter 1, an ecofeminist approach advocates the need to pay attention to "nonrational" as well as rational forms of knowledge, thought and feeling. The Euro-western overemphasis on rational, scientific forms of knowledge, and exclusion of "nonrational" understandings, is questioned and challenged as ecofeminists seek an ecological and balanced approach to developing bodies of knowledge. Ecofeminists also recognize that "nonrational" forms of knowledge such as dreams, intuition, magical/spiritual experiences, visions and visitations have been given credence and places of honour in indigenous and/or old cultures, and that it is important to respect and learn from this heritage.

The importance of "nonrational" experiences was evident in the stories of many of the women, both Maori and Pakeha. This was not only concerned with religious beliefs, and perhaps the word spiritual gives us a more inclusive domain, but involved a broader sphere of experience. In fact the "nonrational" elements raised in the women's stories did not usually relate to religion but were instead more to do with culture, family perspectives that have been passed on and very real and often intense experiences that the women have sought to make sense of. Some of the discussion included in this theme relates to "nonrational" experience just prior to a death. I have included this as relevant because it had become enmeshed with the after-death experience, it became an important and special part of what happened after the death.

In most of the stories I did not ask the women to talk about "nonrational" experiences, it was something that just emerged as part of the storytelling. Kristal discussed at some length the vivid experience of "seeing" the spirit of her dead uncle as a child:

That night when I went to bed I had a real spiritual experience but I didn't know what was happening...I could see this glowing, like a shape of a figure at the end of my bed...and I remember hearing my Uncle Tony's voice...and you could see the hand...the hand reached out and he said to me it was going to be all right...he said you'll have a good life Kristal and we'll always love youse...(later the next morning)...Mum called us in...and she said I've got something to tell you and I just said I know Uncle Tony's dead...I told Mum that I saw him...I suppose I was very lucky I had a really understanding Mum...and she said that's special...you really meant a lot to Uncle Tony...I wasn't scared...I suppose I felt I was dreaming in a way but when I told Mum about it she told me I wasn't dreaming...She said that it was very special and that I must have meant a lot to Uncle Tony.

Alice talked about her feelings of being deprived by not having a visitation from her dead grandfather who she was very close to, but discussed how she had felt his presence through certain incidents that had happened to her:

People talk about how they had visits from people (after their death)...and I never had that...and I think, I had this close connection with you, how come you didn't come and see me kind of thing...but there's special voices and I can remember his voice saying particular things that I remember and I guess I think that's his way of you know reminding me of things and different things that other people say or incidents will happen and I think Oh I bet that's you, that's Grandpa doing that. It's a lesson for me to learn...I've talked to girlfriends about that...A girlfriend, her grandmother passed away and she had the same thoughts you know..."Why didn't you bloody come and see me and tell me this was happening"...I guess we've felt a bit let down about that.

Patricia talked about the dying and death of a young patient of hers. Discussion in this part of her story illustrated the significance she placed on talking to her patient when he was comatose and on his ability to influence his dying process:

He was in a coma...there was a nurse on the ward he really hated...she didn't like him and he didn't like her...It was like four o'clock in the afternoon and I was supposed to go off and I went up to him, he was comatose...and I said "Rawiri", I said "this is my last day on"...I said "if you're going to die you better die now because Bevs gonna be on tomorrow"...and he died three hours later...and I just stayed cause I didn't want to go because I'd been through the whole thing.

Priscilla discussed an incident that occurred during the dressing of her dead cousin which she interpreted as a communication from this cousin:

I was asked to help dress her body...I actually felt very close...to her. I felt like she wanted me to be there. There was two of her aunties, myself and another cousin that were dressing her...I believe that if somebody (a dead person) doesn't want you there they're going to let you know, and as we were dressing this cousin of ours one of the aunties had a hard time doing up the bra strap...this particular aunty just couldn't get this strap done up...and then I said to my aunty oh look here I'll try and it just snapped on straight away...that was telling me like...I don't want you to do up my bra strap, give it to somebody else to do.

Priscilla discussed her usual experience of talking to dead relatives when visiting her husband's family cemetery:

We go to visit (her husband's) grandparents, his brother and cousins and they are all sort of in a line and great grandfather...we just touch the headstones and talk with them.

Emma described a special and spiritual experience at the time of a friend's death in hospital:

We were just sitting there with him, talking to him, talking about the past, talking about what he used to do...It was a beautiful sunny day...It seemed so peaceful in the room...and then something happened, it was really amazing...the room seemed really brighter...it went very still...and the room went really bright, and it wasn't the sun, it was just the whole room changed...and we all looked at each other and then we looked at Bill and he'd stopped breathing, that's when he had died...You didn't have to look at him to know when it had happened...I'd never felt that before, it was just really amazing.

Rosa talked about the lead up to her father's death as important to the whole death experience:

For me it was quite a sensitive time...I had this experience. I was writing this letter to Mum and Dad and I started writing and noticed I had written "Dear Mum" instead of "Dear Mum and Dad" and was actually quite shocked at seeing that and then it made the letter turn in to a letter to Dad really...It just turned into quite a special letter and just saying that I loved him and things like that, and it arrived just a few days before he died really so it was my last...communication with him...Just a bit after I'd done the letter I was out at Massey and sitting in the lecture block next to someone and this fantail...came...and it had to try really hard because the doors go back and forth, back and forth and it hovered there and hovered there and then came in and I was sitting next to Jan and she...talked about what it meant and who's going to die and I said maybe it's going to be my father...So I was actually in quite close contact with my family at the time and the night before he died I had rung up and I said to Pat (Rosa's sister), "do you think he's going to die" because he was quite unwell and she's a nurse and she said "Oh no, no no"...and I said "go and hold his hand for me" and it was like she was saying no, no but I think almost like we both knew it was quite a possibility really or why would I be making a big deal about go and hold his hand from me...and I felt really kind of nervous yet excited that night, it was quite funny, it wasn't all bad, the feeling...but then still getting the phone call the next morning was still like a shock, it was like part of me knew but part of me didn't...it's that whole thing of not trusting those feelings really, not believing them.

Rosa also talked about a "nonrational" experience which surrounded the time of a friend's young son's death:

I woke up the morning of the day that he drowned and I had had this dream which was vivid but it didn't seem extraordinary, but I actually thought of Susan and thought I'd like to go and see Susan...and then I didn't want to because (of other personal reasons) so I pushed away that feeling...(Rosa heard later that day of Susan's son's drowning)...

We went back and saw Susan after she brought his body home and he was in his bed...and Susan and I were sitting by him...and you know sometimes, special times or very sacred times theres this real hushed feeling...It was quite a hushed atmosphere even though my children were playing, somehow they were really quiet or it seemed really quiet...and we talked about (her son) and then Susan talked to me about (things that were going on for Rosa)...and we were on like these two different levels, someone was sitting higher than the other and then after it had happened I realized that was what my dream had been...was that conversation...I didn't actually know in my dream, I didn't remember the bit that (Susan's son) was there dead in his bed, all I did remember was the conversation...and I guess...although I didn't feel guilty about it, it seemed like maybe if I had known I could have gone round and maybe if (my son) had gone too he wouldn't have gone to the swimming pool (where he had drowned)...It seemed so frustrating, it was almost like I knew but I didn't and I didn't do anything about it.

Maria talked about the significance of the anniversary of her father's death:

I still feel Dad very close and it's quite amazing how things happen near his anniversary (of his death), really significant things for the family.

Jane talked about a special experience a few days before her stepmother died and how this helped her in the after-death experience that followed. Her stepmother didn't know she was dying, no one had told her, and Jane was instructed that she wasn't allowed to tell her either. Jane wanted to say goodbye and felt that through music she was able to communicate her feelings to her stepmother:

When I found out that she hadn't got very long to live I went round to see her...I had taken my (musical instrument) to play her a tune...so I played her a couple of tunes and then she asked me to sing to her and it's not something that I usually do, I don't usually sing with the (musical instrument) on my own...She asked me to sing 'The Spinning Wheel'...so I sang 'The Spinning Wheel' to her and for some reason it worked...and even my son Larry who was there said so...He said it was really special and it's not the sort of thing a twenty year old boy would often say...It was a magical experience...I was so glad I was there. I thought it was important I was there at the time.

The "nonrational" was a very real part of the death experience included by more than half of the women. I have included most but not all of this discussion. I also suspect that a number of the women who did not include discussion about "nonrational" experience could have. Women may have not included this type of discussion thinking it perhaps not relevant to academic research.

Death is both a personal and a public experience. This chapter has explored the more personal aspects of the women's after-death experience along with their views about what was (and what would be) helpful. I need to acknowledge however, that these personal and public spheres of experience are not separate realms, but interconnected, interdependent reflections of each other.

Our personal experience, thoughts and feelings influence our behaviour in the public domain. The public domain mirrors, to a large extent, the dominant attitudes and beliefs held by the individuals in a society, and the institutions they create. As the feminist slogan asserts "the personal is political", that which affects us personally is frequently significant to a wider group. At the same time it should also be remembered that "the political is personal". Our public experience is the culmination of the personal beliefs and actions of groups of people, although admittedly a few individuals in powerful positions usually dominate this process. In the next chapter attention is turned to this public domain as the more public aspects of the women's after-death experience are examined and analysed.

CHAPTER 10

IMPORTANT AFTER-DEATH THEMES: THE PUBLIC REALM

The Themes:

- A Personal and "Fitting" Public Tribute to the Dead Person
- An Honest Release of Feelings and an Honest Approach to Death
- Public Recognition of Death and Community Support Networks
- The Party/Socializing Element of the Tangi or Funeral
- Empowerment, Support and Respect From the Professionals and Institutions Involved

This chapter focuses on the public aspects identified in the women's storytelling in relation to what the women considered important for positive after-death experiences. Experiences in the public realm work to mould our individual and group understandings and attitudes. Our social experience in the public domain becomes a socialization process which along with our family experience, greatly influences the social behaviour and social roles we adopt. The significant public players who influence after-death practices and rituals, such as funeral directors, medical practitioners and priests, have socialized and instructed individuals and communities (both explicitly and implicitly) about "acceptable" after-death beliefs and practices. In Maori communities kuia and kaumatua and other senior members of the community are also influential, although this is usually in terms of continuing traditional after-death cultural practices.

The women who shared their death experiences were aware that they could influence after-death practices in their families and communities, and some had already done this. In discussing their after-death experiences and wishes, the women provide insights into what they would like changed and what they would like to see continued in the future. As already stated, the women's discussion not only concerns women's issues, the points raised are likely to be equally relevant to men and children.

Five themes have been developed to structure the women's discussion about the more public and community aspects of after-death practices. The first theme in this chapter is titled 'a

personal and fitting public tribute to the dead person'. This theme explores the women's perceptions about what makes public after-death rituals appropriate, special and memorable. This is followed by the theme 'a honest release of feelings and a honest approach to death'. This theme of honesty not only relates to being allowed, and supported, to freely and publicly express emotion after a death, but also to a desire by the women for honesty (rather than mystification) in society's death practices. The third theme of the chapter concerns 'public recognition of death and community support networks'. The women felt that public recognition was an important element of after-death rituals — to show the significance of the person who has died, to formally acknowledge their connection as part of a family and community, and to recognize and honour the contributions they have made. Other elements of this public recognition and public support concerns the need for a shared community expression of the loss and grief people are feeling and also of the the need to especially support the close mourners. The next theme is 'the party/socializing element of the tangi or funeral'. A number of the women indicated that after-death rituals should include a time of social interaction, of shared food and drink, as part of an honouring of the dead person's life and death, and to provide a supportive experience of community for the living. The final theme included is that of 'empowerment, support and respect from the professionals and institutions involved' with death, so that positive after-death outcomes are facilitated. The women's stories affirm as well as challenge the practices of the professionals and institutions involved with death and indicate ways in which their services could be improved.

A Personal and "Fitting" Tribute to the Dead Person

The women thought that public funerary tributes needed to be both personal and "fitting", and drew from their experiences to give examples of what they found "fitting" and "unfitting" in a funeral ritual. There obviously is not one clear formula as to how to create a special and "fitting" tribute. This depends on the life and personality of the dead person, their culture, the people who are close to that person and the wider public recognition for that person. There were, however, definite preferences identified by the women in their stories. The women's stories provide important guidelines for consideration when planning a fitting "send-off" for a loved person.

Reflections on Impersonal and "Unfitting" Tributes

Part of knowing what you want in an after-death funeral or memorial ritual is an awareness of what you don't want. Much sadness, regret and anger was expressed by the women

about impersonal and "unfitting" tributes that have occurred. The worst instance of this is the death story remembered in Moana's family about Moana's grandmother, Mari, who committed suicide in a New Zealand psychiatric institution in the late 1920s. With Mari's death there was no funeral service and the possibility of participation or anything fitting in a funeral service was denied because the body was confiscated. There was no access to the body or the grave, and this is a painful memory in Moana's family. Moana described this tragedy:

It was in the days when communication (was more difficult)...My grandfather didn't have a telephone or anything...They (the mental asylum/psychiatric hospital) had actually sent him a telegram to say that she had died but he must have been at the time the telegram arrived...travelling to see her. So he got to the hospital and got told she had died and they had already buried her in an unmarked grave (somewhere on the grounds of the hospital). He didn't even have a grave to visit...they wouldn't (show him where she was buried)...Various members of the family have tried since to find out but there seems to be no record.

This personal story told by Moana, represents, important New Zealand history that needs to be recorded; a terrible oppression which would have been the experience of numerous families in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Moana suspects that Mari's body may have been given over for dissection (anatomical examination), which was quite legal under the 1908 Medical Act Part II, unless the person who had died had stated against this in the presence of witnesses during their last illness, or if family members did not allow this (see thesis Chapter 7). In this case there was no consultation whatsoever with the family and therefore family members had no opportunity to influence what happened to Mari's body.

A common issue undermining the achievement of a "fitting" and personal tribute, which was identified in a number of the women's stories, concerned the person performing the eulogy not knowing the person very well and not doing justice to that person's life in the eulogy. This is usually more of an issue when only one person speaks about the dead person's life. A eulogy with mistakes and important omissions can be disappointing and also very upsetting to close family and friends.

At some funerals there has been no eulogy at all, and the dead person's name may not even have been mentioned. Four of the women discussed their experience of funerals where there was no eulogy, no tribute to the person's life at all. Mere talked about her sister-in-law's funeral of some years ago:

It was a Catholic service...from his wife's side they didn't want him to take the children, but we took them down to age five, I backed him for that...It was a requiem mass in the Catholic church...and her name was not mentioned once...I thought it was just awful...and I looked at these children either side of me and either side of him and...it just didn't connect...It was really I thought horrible...There was nothing in it that was helpful to anyone.

Vera recounted the story of a nun's funeral as told to her by another nun:

When they got down to the funeral...the priest said the mass...and then said there will be no eulogy...and she was absolutely angry, just furious that he didn't want to say anything therefore nobody was going to say anything and didn't ask the women who had spent their lives in this congregation with her...Her life didn't count for anything after ninety years, and a lot of those spent in a convent teaching...unpaid work...And it's that whole thing about not being able to call on women. Some men in our church can't call on women to take over where they can't cope...It's an awful lack of respect...Apparently the nuns got together and had their own ritual later and talked about her life.

Many of the women discussed the eulogy, and/or shared speeches, and stories about a dead person and their life performed at the tangi or funeral. This was seen as a significant part of the funeral ritual which needed to be "fitting", to honour and to show knowledge of, and love and respect for, the dead person.

Rosa expressed some dissatisfaction about her father's eulogy when she said "the priest didn't really know Dad very well and he got something a bit wrong." Isabelle also raised this issue:

(The priest) didn't know my father at all...He called my father Bill and my father was never called Bill.

Moana discussed this issue of mistakes in the eulogy in relation to her father-in-law's funeral. A woman priest presided over this funeral and Moana's story illustrates that having a woman priest does not necessarily facilitate a more personal funeral or greater sensitivity to the needs of the family:

She (the priest) got his name slightly wrong, she got some of the details about his life wrong, she got somebody in the family – she got their name wrong...Oh it was all so wrong and I remember just sitting there, and it was like I was stunned or shocked or something, you know, and just having no reaction...

Moana also felt that the priest had indulged in her own agenda to make herself feel better and by doing this had acted inappropriately and insensitively to the family:

She said something that I thought was really awful...She said she had only met Peter a few times...She had met him early on in his illness, that's right, but that she hadn't met up with him since then...because the family hadn't called on her but they knew she was there, they only had to call and she would have been there...It was really horrible...It was like she was saying his family had deprived him of something.

Some of the family said what a lovely service it had been and Moana just couldn't believe it. Others in the family did however express their dissatisfaction and anger:

But there were a few other members of the family who noticed the things I noticed, they were really angry about it...One in particular...whose father-in-law's funeral this (same) priest had done and had got things mixed up and said some quite strange things and upset the family...She was feeling really angry about it...so that was pretty horrible and I didn't feel able to say anything at the time...I didn't feel able to say well I didn't think it was very nice because I didn't want to upset anybody.

Jane spoke of the usual crematorium funeral in England that may only last for fifteen minutes because of the sheer numbers of funerals, and of her dissatisfaction with this. Jane felt that this did not allow for any significant recognition of the person and their life. She referred to one such family funeral at an English crematorium:

...at the actual funeral it was obvious he (the minister) knew nothing about Dave's life. He was having to struggle to remember his name. It was totally impersonal and it just confirmed my feeling about...the crematorium funeral in England as something where people's lives almost count for nothing...fifteen minutes of "our dear brother" or "our dear sister"...they might as well have never existed, their whole life and all the things that they'd done never really mentioned...It seems so wrong really to let (their lives) go by unremarked in that way...just a kind of processing.

A number of the women made the point that a priest giving the eulogy is often not as personal or "fitting" as one made by someone closer to the person who had died. Sophia pointed this out when she discussed a less than satisfactory funeral she had attended:

...the minister didn't know him, it was like the church was doing him a favour by holding his service there, and the minister was quite honest in saying he didn't know him as a person and it just seemed really inappropriate that all the people who did the talking weren't the people who were closest to him or knew him well. It seemed really sad and inappropriate and I think that probably hindered the grieving process for those that were close to him. I think it left a feeling of anger – that it wasn't a fitting tribute to his life or achievements. It seemed false.

Maria described her sister's response to their father's eulogy, and how with the knowledge of hindsight her sister had felt that the family could (and should) have written a more personal and "fitting" eulogy:

My sister and I, particularly my sister, was really disappointed with what the priest said...he spoke very well of Dad but (Maria's sister) said oh you know there were so many things...that were personal to us as the family, that we could have said...She wanted something more personal and not so churchy.

Another key point raised by a number of women concerned a religious funeral, or a religious dominance of the funeral, not being appropriate for a person who was not religious. Lily talked about what would be "fitting" for her own funeral:

I don't want a hypocritical service...I don't live as a religious person, I don't want a religious ending.

Moana raised this issue in relation to her father-in-law's funeral:

...and it was so Christian and he was never a church goer...(and Moana felt unable to sing the words of the hymn) because they were meaningless to me and I thought they were totally irrelevant to him.

Isabelle talked about the Catholic funeral for her father who was not a church goer and compared it to her grandmother's funeral which did feel like a "fitting" funeral and a "fitting" tribute to her life:

The first time I saw him (after his death) he was in this church surrounded by candles...which was really bizarre...I didn't really think it suited who he was...He didn't like going to church...It didn't fit him...It wasn't my father...It didn't seem to be an appropriate sort of ritual for him...I sort of felt that I was completely powerless really, I just had to go along with what was happening...My grandmother was a very spiritual person...she went to church every day...For her death it was very appropriate that (the funeral) should be in a church, whereas for my father...it wasn't an appropriate place.

The women's stories indicate that a "fitting" tribute needs to be appropriate, both to the dead person, and to those attending the funeral.

Reflections on Personal and "Fitting" Tributes

Breaking away from the old mainstream formal Pakeha approach to funerals was an issue frequently raised as women reflected on their desire for after-death rituals which are both personal and "fitting". Mere commented on people wanting something "different from the

usual formal thing". Kristal felt formal protocols were a barrier to what she wanted to do when she said "it was just so formal". She also used the word "proper" to describe the codes of behaviour. Sophia touched on this issue I think when she used the phrase "doing what was expected".

Isabelle reflected on what she felt would and would not be "fitting" for her own funeral:

I would quite like to have...I think I could handle having a funeral somewhere like the cathedral because it is really aesthetically pleasing. I just love it, it is wonderful, colourful, bright...but I wouldn't like a priest presiding over me, I wouldn't like a traditional Catholic ceremony either...I'd like a really special place...maybe outside in the garden at home...I would like people to be able to speak at the funeral, about me, different people who had known me, say what they want to say, basically quite relaxed.

Moana noted:

Children's funerals...tend to be a bit different...people seem to be more open to doing things differently at children's funerals for some reason and I can't work out why.

Moana went on to talk about specific children's funerals, one in particular:

(It) was in Keith and Joan's garden, they had borrowed seating from a church hall...He (the child who had died) had some very young aunts and uncles that weren't much older than him and lots of cousins that were round about the same age and they were...in charge of the music...He used to like MC Hammer so they played that sort of music...One of his young uncles stood up and said the eulogy and talked about his life and how he used to like dancing to MC Hammer...and he had written a poem for Jamie which was really beautiful, just about his life. Like his life was so short but there was lots to write about...(This young uncle had) listened to everyone talking about (Jamie) over the days...between the death and the funeral...and he had just been writing things down and then he put it all into a poem which was really lovely and really special...and his young aunts and uncles carried his little coffin to the hearse to the accompaniment of MC Hammer...It just seemed really appropriate, you know these kids were all dressed in bop pants...it was just really appropriate. (It was as he had lived.)

Moana's storytelling describes how the funeral ritual for Jamie reflected the way this little boy had lived his life. It was filled with symbolism as well as words and music that spoke of his life. It represented his death as part of (rather than separate from) his life.

Many of the other women also expressed satisfaction about personal and "fitting" tributes. Sophia in relation to her teacher's funeral said:

It felt...more satisfying I think, than some other services. It felt like those that spoke, spoke from the heart.

Moana spoke about a family friend:

Her funeral was in a church...but it was really appropriate, it was really nice, because she was a church goer, a regular church goer there, and the minister who did the eulogy knew her really well and talked about her life.

Karen spoke proudly and appreciatively about the eulogy her brother wrote for their father:

I was...very proud of my brother for coping marvellously as he did and he sort of got up and spoke for about ten minutes and did a brilliant job of that...I learnt quite a bit about him (her father) in the funeral speech my brother gave.

Isabelle discussed what made her grandmother's funeral a personal and "fitting" tribute:

The whole funeral for her was really special...It was a very woman-centred funeral and that was good as she was a very woman-centred woman...She had five daughters...she was a widow from the time my mother was eleven...The eulogy was said by a...Catholic sister...She had known Nanna for thirty to forty years...(Isabelle's son) had drawn a card and brought some flowers and all the young children...took up these cards and flowers in the offering which is part of the collective ritual...and some of the other cousins said some readings and said some poems...It was all lovely.

Ema spoke of a friend who had organized his own funeral and discussed how this and the gathering held after the funeral was a "fitting" tribute to him and to his gay identity:

He'd done a sort of religious type funeral (he had chosen the hymns and prayers himself)...the minister was a gay minister who he'd known...lots of people knew him...They had Bill's picture on top of the coffin in a typical Bill pose...but his last song...was Queen's 'Magic'...It was a real contrast...all of a sudden you were jiving out the door...We had the after do up at the club and his family came up for that...there was no homophobia...It was actually a gay funeral.

Ema discussed another gay friend's death in which this friend's gay identity was kept hidden from public notice by his family. He had a funeral that the gay community was excluded from. The gay community, however, organized their own memorial service for him.

We did the memorial service...We had that up at the club...We arranged that and we had flowers and we bought a book for people to sign...We spoke about Ian...A few...talked about the funeral, that were able to be there...Even though the family didn't want any gay input...they actually got more gay input than they realized because the people that were there and one of the poems that was read out...and that was good for the community, I think, to have that...It shows that no matter whether we get excluded, you're still not excluded, because you can still go and do what you need to do...and I think that's really, really important...that people are able to come together...We just got together and decided on what to do...Someone would introduce and welcome people there...Everyone...talked about what they knew of him...We had this bowl of flowers that we had set up in the middle and as people would come into it they picked up a flower and they signed the book and we had it set up on the table with a candle and after they spoke they put their flowers around the candle.

The setting of the burial and/or final farewell to the body also came up in connection to what seemed "fitting" and special. Feeling a family, community and/or nature connection to the final resting place are key issues evident in this discussion. Mere talked about the tangihanga and how "fitting" and special the funeral procession that occurs on foot to the burial site is:

One of the lovely things about many Maori funerals if they're on their own marae is they've got their urupa within walking distance and you walk from the marae...It's always on a hill...up to the urupa...and that gives a different feeling to it somehow, it really does, you are really carrying the mate (the death, the dead person) even if you're walking behind, it's not just a machine, an automobile or something...So those women led the cortege up the hill with their taiahas.

Vera talked favourably about her friend's mother having chosen where she wanted to be buried.

It was this little country church and she had chosen the place herself...It was a very special place.

Isabelle found her father's burial place one of the few aspects of his funeral that did seem "fitting" because it was somewhere that he had connected with in life:

The burial up at the cemetery was quite nice, that was probably the one place I actually sort of felt O.K. because it's a really lovely cemetery...with lovely trees and it's overlooking the hills...I remember...my father used to joke something about being buried over at the cemetery...so...I had sort of remembered that...and it did happen.

Rosa also appreciated the natural beauty of the setting where her father is buried, this was an aspect that felt satisfying for her:

It was quite nice...the graveyard was right next to this little church, this country church...and it had mountains as a backdrop and so that was something that felt better...I guess I wouldn't have liked a crematorium...and sort of just pushing the coffin through a hole and things like that.

In contrast Moana talked about her experience of the crematorium "disappearance" of the coffin and her feelings of shock and dismay at this practice:

I think in most crematoriums it happens, the coffin just disappears at the end of the service...and it's revolting. I just remember thinking where's he gone, what's happening to him. It was just so sudden.

Alice discussed her and her mother's dissatisfaction of burying her grandfather in an impersonal cemetery (rather than a family one), and not with other people they knew:

One of the other hard things was that whereas Grandpa...was buried in a family cemetery (Maori urupa)...Pop was buried in (a public cemetery) and it didn't seem quite as personal because there was nobody else from his family there, it was kind of like he was lying there all by himself...The process of the burial and that was lovely...Mum was feeling like she wished she had somewhere special for her father to go rather than in the cemetery with a whole lot of other people that you don't know.

Alice added that later on when her uncle was buried beside this grandfather the situation felt a lot better.

Public ritual that achieves a personal and "fitting" tribute in memory of the life of a person who has died, helps us to mark and share the reality and significance of their death. Such rituals can provide us with powerful community experiences that symbolize transition and continuity. The women's stories provide insights into what is "fitting" in an after-death ritual. A "fitting" funeral ritual is one that personifies the person who has died, representing their life, the people they are connected to and the activities important to that person. A "fitting" ritual also shows a community and family regard for the person who has died. Honesty is an important part of this ritual time, in our approach to death, in our acknowledgement of the person who has died, and through the open release and sharing of our feelings. We turn now to the women's discussion about the importance of honesty in the after-death experience.

An Honest Release of Feelings and an Honest Approach to Death

As already discussed last chapter in the discussion about being unprepared for death, many of the Pakeha women, or women brought up in a "Pakeha" environment, felt they had been socialized to avoid discussing death and into dishonest approaches to death. Many of the women, both Maori and Pakeha, talked about the importance of honesty surrounding death: honest discussion and action which does not mystify or hide death, and honesty in the sharing about the person who has died and our feelings in relation to this.

The Honest Release of Feelings at the Tangihanga

An honest release of feelings is an important element of the tangihanga. Lucy talked about this:

From the whole marae anyone can get up and say what they want to say whether it is, you know, he was an old hound and I really didn't like him very much but he was always there for us or you know he was a caring loving person that we used to fight with and do the usual things the family does...just being able to express those things...People are allowed to say whatever they want...they may hold back a bit...but certainly in some ways that's the place to say it...but there is always certain protocols, certain acknowledgements.

Karen spoke of the honest sharing at the tangi and how this can involve humour. She gave an example of the sort of humour she had heard at a tangihanga when she said:

You bloody bitch what about that fifty dollars you still owe me...I'll never get that now...You better have it when I get to see you, when I get up there.

Patricia expressed the importance of honestly releasing her feelings of anger at her father's suicide and how she was given the opportunity to do this at his tangi:

You were forced to recognize the feelings of anger and I can remember the night before we buried him on the marae, I was so angry I screamed and yelled and shook the sides of the coffin...I was so angry and it was how could he do this to me...and I felt that at that time it was just me and him and my mother...I shook this coffin so really hard saying...you know how dare you do this to me you bloody shit and all this sort of stuff and I swore...and it was good you know, it was really good and I felt really good...and that's why I think when his coffin went down I just felt such relief because I wanted to go on...I just remember feeling so drained once I'd done all this yelling and screaming...We were in the middle of the marae, people were there but I didn't notice them and they didn't make a big thing of it...like nobody came rushing up to me to say there there there it will be alright...They just let me alone to it and realized it was something

between him and me...Nobody hassled me or said don't do this...they just let me go...and it was good.

Mere talked about the open expression of grief at the tangihanga over a number of days and the therapeutic value of this:

I hadn't been to any (tangis) until...I was 30...The thing that influenced me was that people were involved, and people grieved openly...I've always loved what they say at the finish..."join the lines of the dead to the dead and join the lines of the living to the living and you've done your grieving and now you must pick up life again"...but it's done because the people have done their grieving...the family has got no more tears left often by the time the period's finished and they can start picking up the pieces.

Ema felt very positive about the intensity of emotion at a tangi she attended:

When they sung I got very emotional...When the people of that marae started talking to the people who came on...it took your breath away.

The intensity and repetition of the ritual emotional expression at a tangihanga fosters the release of emotion from those participating. Buried emotions are brought to the surface. All the dead are acknowledged and grieved for once again along with the person who has just died.

General Discussion about the Importance of Openly Releasing Feelings

Both Maori and Pakeha women expressed the importance of an honest and open release of feelings, and their discussion illustrates the importance of the wider social context in facilitating this. What everyone else is doing has great impact on the individual expressions of emotion.

Lily talked about how the open and shared expression of grief amongst her relatives felt very positive:

I remember crying heaps and that felt really good...lots of people were crying...and having a connection with some of my relatives I didn't usually have a connection with, just standing there and crying and hugging each other.

Rosa expressed the importance of having someone to cry with at a funeral, something which had not always been her experience in the past:

Donna and I...had a big cry together...it felt quite good to actually have someone there to do that with.

It has often been particularly hard for Pakeha to honestly release their feelings because there is a societal expectation that this is not the thing to do, that you are supposed to keep your grief under control. Similarly it may be frowned upon to laugh and joke too much. Controlling yourself can go both ways. The Pakeha way has also not been honest in terms of expressing anger or acknowledging the faults as well as the strengths of the dead person. Jane talked about her English experience:

I think at an English or probably Scottish funeral...if you show any signs of levity at all it's considered totally inappropriate and wrong and it can cause rifts in families for years...That's happened in my own family...my stepbrother...according to him (my side of the family) didn't show sufficient grief at Nancy's funeral...which actually is quite untrue as there was a whole row of us in the front row bawling our eyes out, but then later on we lightened up a bit and at times between the death and the funeral I must admit I saw the funny side of some of the things and he obviously thought that was completely inappropriate. Whereas I think at the wake you would see all the different sides and...I think possibly at the Maori funeral you would see the different sides as well...the lighter sides and the things you're angry about with the dead person...all sorts of things...not just everything had always been a hundred percent wonderful.

Lucy talked about her experience of the coldness of Pakeha funerals and the holding in of grief:

I found it very cold...whereas if we want to cry we cry...you just felt like everyone was holding themselves in...I think Pakeha people are becoming more relaxed about it but in most cases I found it very cold, very caring yet still very cold...Not being able to touch them (the dead person) or just say "Hi Dad" or those sorts of things...having to make an appointment almost...not in a natural sort of surroundings, a natural sort of situation.

Isabelle did not feel able to express her anger at her father's suicide at the time of his funeral, she felt she couldn't be honest:

I was really angry...but...at this particular time I couldn't actually be angry...It was like I had to play this social game of, I don't know, compliance I think.

Isabelle also discussed her grandmother's funeral and the repressed emotion that was apparent:

In true sort of Catholic fashion or Western fashion, everybody was holding back their grief. So I was crying and felt I really wanted to have a good wail but couldn't...I was really aware of it, I was really aware "I am really wanting to have a good cry" but I can't.

Isabelle described how repressing her emotion had made her feel quite ill afterwards. She talked about feeling conscious that because she was only a granddaughter she couldn't cry more than other family members who were closer to her grandmother. Isabelle also identified that the need to cry was not only for her grandmother's death but also for other deaths:

I sort of feel Nanna's funeral is not only Nanna's funeral you know. I'm crying for my father's funeral, I'm crying for other people who have died and I'm crying for life as it is...We are all going to die...I think about that a lot at that time of death.

Similarly Lucy spoke of her Maori experience:

Quite often you may not be crying for the person who's actually there because you may not be that close to that person...quite often you are not crying for them you are crying for those ones of your own who have gone.

Alice spoke favourably of the open emotion shown by Maori men in her family:

My brother...I'd always seen him as a staunch...male macho sort of guy...he was really heart broken (at his grandfather's death)...and he just openly wept, he was just distraught, he didn't care at all what his other cousins were thinking...There was a part where I was even feeling a bit embarrassed...then I thought hey come on leave him alone, he's allowed to do that, that's O.K...and I thought where did that come from (the discomfort at her brother's open display of emotion)...Dad cries at the drop of a hat...he is not caught up with what other men think of him...It was really lovely to see, even though I had pangs of being embarrassed about it. "He's still crying and everybody else has pulled themselves together"...it was really neat.

This discussion by Alice about her brother's open display of grief at his grandfather's death shows how pervasive the dominant attitude of controlling your grief has become in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Even for Maori, who have a tradition of open and intense displays of grief after a death, the internalized voice of "pull yourself together" may be apparent.

Rosa discussed one of her early experiences of funerals and her need to cry because of an overwhelming feeling of empathy for family friends from her childhood:

Sitting in the church everything was alright until I actually saw my Aunty Clare (it was her husband's funeral) and her children come in and I guess it was just the look of them...and I guess it was just the shock and the grief and it...just really affected me and I really felt quite choked up and upset...and so I was trying to control that...everyone else was under control...I wasn't that noisy but...I was crying...Afterwards it just knotted my stomach all up and my throat and...I had difficulty saying...how I was feeling...I remember my Aunty Clare saying "Oh you've lost your godfather" and feeling for me and I was trying to say no it's not that at all it was just feeling for them.

Rosa later made the point that music helped her to grieve at her father's funeral:

The music was good even though they were traditional hymns it was like it helped the grieving really, it made me cry singing the songs.

Perhaps this provided a safe time to cry a bit louder because of the volume of the singing and also if you participate in the singing you are expressing your own voice, allowing noise to come out of your body.

Vera added another dimension to controlling your emotion, that of women thinking about the needs of others and not their own:

I had conditioned myself that I had to hold myself together...and look after everybody else.

This is a socialization pattern commonly experienced by women in modern patriarchal societies.

A Need for Honesty in Our Death Practices

A need for honesty around death is a theme that runs throughout the two chapters in this part of the thesis. Discussion about honesty (and lack of it) in after-death experiences brought up issues about specific common death practices. Patricia pointed out that if you just see a box going away at a funeral then that is what you experience — this masks the reality of the death. Similarly, Rosa discussed how she felt a need to see her father's body at the funeral:

I didn't like the idea of a closed coffin. For some reason I wanted to actually know he was in there.

Rosa and Vera discussed their dislike of the imitation grass that surrounds the open graveside covering the freshly dug soil. Rosa said:

I can remember the green turf stuff that they put around the dirt, I didn't like that...it seemed like plastic flowers or something..it seemed a bit false.

Vera spoke about this when she discussed a recent funeral ritual that involved family doing things themselves including the burial where the family filled in the grave themselves:

I thought this is how it must be, people must own it and not have this horrible artificial grass around the grave.

Demystifying death involves honesty, honest and open discussion about death, honest and open release of emotions and honesty in our death practices. Pakeha, mainstream approaches to death have left us with a legacy of dishonesty which will not be easily overcome. It is evident however in the women's stories that there is a movement towards more honest approaches to death, and that Maori cultural influences in this country are helping to facilitate this.

Public Recognition of Death and Community Support Networks

Women expressed the importance of a community presence when a death occurs to show the significance of that person's life and the significance their death has for family, friends and the wider community. Although there are two aspects to this theme, public recognition and community support, these aspects are very much interconnected and difficult to separate. The public attendance at the community after-death rituals is not only a tribute to the person who has died but also an important occasion to show support to those who are closest to the dead person.

Alice's lengthy storytelling about her grandfather's tangi described how a big attendance (in this case very big — so big that the army was called in to help cook and set up tents for people to stay in) and all that this entails can bring with it both feelings of pride at the public recognition of the death, and of overwhelming burden and lack of support. Alice's sharing showed how emphasis on the public recognition aspect of her grandfather's tangihanga (without a similar degree of emphasis on providing support to the bereaved) worked to undermine the personal expression and participation by family at the after-death ritual time and also resulted in the close mourners not receiving the support that they required:

It was a big tangi, there was...ten thousand people...that was really really huge...and that was hard because you felt like you didn't have any special time

with him because there was so many people coming...it was the public man, I had to share him...The second day...there was a couple of hours at night time when just the family were there but that was only for a short time because as the tangi went on there was more and more people coming so even at night time, usually...people don't come at night time but because he was so prominent and there was just so many people coming it was going into all hours of the night...We were sleeping by him and I just remember people constantly coming in, two or three o'clock in the morning there was still people coming in to pay their respects, to have their time with him...I hardly knew any of them really...it was really overwhelming...I was also really aware of looking after my mother because it was really overwhelming for her...being a Pakeha...and there was some older Maori people that kept pushing her out of the road because they thought she was a Pakeha and they didn't know her connections to him...that he was her husband's father...She was getting hurt by it all...I just felt I had to watch out for her...It hurt that those people were pushing her away when she was hurting too...

Alice spoke about her and the other grandchildren's anger and hurt that the dignitaries needs were catered to at the tangi at the expense of the family, and of her irritation with, and disappointment in the elders (particularly Maori men), who were preoccupied with increasing their own mana and leadership status:

We took him to our family marae and that was a lot smaller and it was even harder because there was people everywhere and we had to push our way through to get anywhere...I remember we had to wait to go on to the marae because the Prime Minister or Governor General or somebody had turned up and some elders were saying "Oh no youse all have to wait because the dignitaries have arrived"...We all got really pissed off about that, getting shoved aside for these people...they might be important in society's terms...(but) you know we were his mokopuna...we were his blood, you know we should be there with him...

It would have been good if there had been a bit more nurturing...some elders not being caught up with I guess being the chief as such and perhaps saw to the family's more emotional needs...I just remember there were some pretty arrogant old men there...caught up in the mana...being the stars of the situation...because of Grandpa and his status I guess the question was who will be the next leader...

The large tangihanga for her grandfather, attended by many people, including important national figures and visitors from other countries and with its magnificent cultural performances has however provided Alice with very special memories to take pride in:

I did feel proud in that there was so many people there...just at the time it was overwhelming...but reflecting back it was pretty awesome...there was even people who had come from the Pacific Islands especially for his tangi and the gifts they brought, the fine mats, the kete, the taonga that they had given to the family because of what Grandpa had done for them...that was pretty awesome...really special...My grandmother gave me a kete from the tangi that

the Governor General's wife had given her...that was really special to have that part to take away as a memory of that tangi...I'm glad it happened that way it just would have been nice not to have so many people and to have a bit more of my own special time with him...All the orators...the haka, the waiata, all those kind of things that were performed...that was amazing and really special...the taiaha displays...then the crying and the wailing...it was really powerful stuff and special too...so those were the neat things about having so many people coming...

Alice was appreciative of the small amount of more personal time she did have with her grandfather at his tangi, but wanted more:

Just before we took him down to the urupa...they actually did close the doors for the family, his children and grandchildren, and we spent probably about half an hour or an hour just by ourselves saying our farewells before he went...That was good to have that space...but even then there were all my cousins there...I guess I would have liked to have been able to have my own quiet time with him but there was just no way that would ever happen...but it was lovely just having that small amount of time just by ourselves...

It was really neat after we actually buried him all the mourners went except our family. We stayed behind until everybody...had left, and we actually filled the hole in, put all the dirt back in, and we just spent our time sitting around and talking and laughing and deciding what we were gonna have for headstones and all that kind of thing...so that was good.

Alice pointed out that following Maori protocol, and fitting in with the various needs of the Maori communities involved in such a large tangihanga put a great strain on the family:

We had the hakari after...we had done the poroporoaki...all the farewell speeches from all the different people...then we went to go and sit down and eat...my uncles nearly had a fight there because my uncle ...said we can't stay here we have to go back to the...big marae where we had been originally because they're waiting for us to eat there and so he said to my grandmother who was just about to start eating, "You can't eat here we have to go"...My other uncle was about to punch him out because...he said "look Mum's tired and we've got the food here why can't we just eat"...he said "No we have to respect the other marae"...There had been phone calls and pressure from the other marae..."We're waiting for you to come back here and we can't eat until you come back"...So we left, we couldn't eat there at that marae...and I remember hopping on the bus and there was all these kuia and kaumatua at the bus for the mokopuna...and these kuia were moaning at us saying "Why did youse take so long we've been waiting for you"...We were trying to be respectful but at the same time thinking they're not taking any notice of our needs...This particular kuia was just harping on about how insensitive we were for making them wait (by spending so long at the graveside)...We went back to the other marae and by the time we got there everybody had eaten...they gave up waiting in the end...We got the left overs and it was cold...We couldn't eat straight away we had to wait for the process of being called back on to the marae and the poroporoaki...

Alice appreciated the takahi whare, the cleansing the house ritual time with the family as a more personal time to talk and recover:

Once (the massive clean up) was all done we went up to the whare...Nanna and Grandpa's house...to cleanse that...and then we had a barbecue afterwards, and that was really lovely because the family could just really relax...and recover...We had a little ceremony, karakia and stuff...and the kai after the ceremony...and that's where we all just relaxed and talked about what had gone on and bitched and laughed...that was more personal...I guess I enjoyed that part of it.

Alice's storytelling about her grandfather's tangi illustrates how conflict can occur between the personal and public aspects of grieving for, and paying tribute to, a person who has died. An awareness of this, and of the needs of the close mourners, is important to minimalizing and avoiding such conflict.

The Giving and Receiving of Support When a Death Occurs

Many of the women discussed how important it is to feel supported and to be able to give support when a death occurs. This was seen as a crucial part of a positive after-death experience.

Receiving communication of a death is of course crucial to being able to give support as well as recognition of the death. Sophia talked about feeling angry and disturbed that her family had not told her of a relative's fairly recent death and that this had prevented her from being involved and offering support to this relative's immediate family at the time of his death. Sophia expressed concern that this lack of acknowledgement of her great Uncle's death to a broad network of relatives and friends was a reflection of a growing trend in contemporary society:

My great Uncle died a few weeks ago and I wasn't told by my family and I'm really angry about that...I found out after my mother had been to the funeral...We had had a bit to do with him over the years...even if I hadn't gone to the funeral I certainly would have sent a message...I sometimes wonder whether there is a sort of attitude developing that people are busy...you don't sort of want to bother them unless it's really important and their view of what is important is becoming distorted...death is taking a lesser place (unless it's) immediate family.

Lucy spoke of her experience of feeling supported in the marae setting:

It's wonderful knowing there'll always be someone there...I was pretty young when my grandmother died but I can remember...there was a family that we

were very close to and one of the girls arrived with a big sack of puha and a big lot of meat...and there she was putting up the first lot of food for the people that were coming...just making sure everyone was cared for.

Priscilla also described the community support involved in the tangihanga:

A tangi brings people closer together because there are so many people working...contributing something...Everybody's helping so it's quite a uniting experience.

Priscilla talked about how important it was to her to give support to her friend after the death of this friend's child:

I really wanted to be by her side all the time...I thought how could I help...making sure the kids were looked after and dressed so she didn't have to worry about it.

Sophia discussed her friend's appreciation of the support she received from Sophia and another friend through their attendance at her father's funeral and in their caring gestures to her in the days after his death:

She said afterwards that meant a lot to her...she said you wouldn't believe just how much that meant. She knew we were busy and working and had children and that we had dropped everything to be there for her...We would ring or pop round and see her...and we actually sent the flowers not sort of at the funeral but a few days later and she said that was really neat, she was going through a low and she said that really picked her up.

Lily talked about the importance of the community support for a couple who had not long been in the country at the funeral of their stillborn baby:

...they didn't have many relatives or friends and there were lots of people at the funeral, mostly...people from (an organization they belonged to)...and I think that meant a lot to them that a lot of people came and supported them.

Karen talked about the period leading up to her father's funeral and her appreciation of the practical support that was given:

People kept arriving with food...that was really good.

Maria spoke about her father's funeral and feeling really supported by the various communities she was involved in. She spoke in particular about a large group of people from a Maori community who had come some distance to be with her at the funeral.

One of the lovely things was...I didn't know they were coming but when they arrived I asked them if they would sing...and they sang...Mum was so moved with that and so was I. And a lovely part of that was the feeling of belonging to so many communities...I felt really supported...and loved...by these various people...close friends, friends of friends...It felt really good.

Public Recognition for the Person Who Has Died

Some of the women discussed the importance of public recognition, for the person who has died, and for their life. This not only relates to the funeral or tangihanga but may also involve a later memorial service, or in the Maori context the kawē mate ritual; and the unveiling ceremony (of the memorial stone) which is held from one to several years after the death.

Mere pointed out how helpful the Maori ritual time of the unveiling ceremony is to those grieving as it provides a public ritual occasion to remember the dead person:

I think that one of the things that Pakehas really miss out on...is the thing like the unveiling. I think that's...terribly important...things can go in a bit of a blur for the people most intimately involved (at the funeral) and the unveiling sort of clarifies it all and closes it and it's a very positive occasion and it's lovely...it's the grandchildren who usually take the veil off...the unveiling is extremely helpful and that's something I'm putting down to do...it doesn't close it off but it completes it.

The 'personal and fitting public tribute' theme, previously discussed, is very much linked to this theme of public recognition for the person who has died, and of their life. A "fitting tribute" is hollow without a significant number of people to share this experience with. The key then to achieving good public recognition of a death, is having a good attendance at the public after-death rituals, or at least feeling that the numbers attending meet your expectations. Maria's story illustrated how important the community recognition of a death is to her and how she fears this may not happen for her mother to the extent that it did for her father:

And that's one of the things I guess I'm feeling about Mum is when she dies...is...a lot of family friends were Dad's friends...Mum has become involved with some groups...but she's going to be older...and we notice with our elderly sisters that the people who come are fewer because the person tends to become more invisible within the community...so that's a kind of sadness

that's there...I love her so much and I want her to be loved...and I want the right sort of send off...I feel quite vulnerable in saying that...She perhaps was a different personality to Dad, she was a quieter person...lived in his shadow...Everyone who knows Mum...they call her a saint...she is such a dear person and a good person and a person of great integrity...and somehow I'd like that to be recognized by the community.

Rosa raised her feeling of disappointment with the lack of public recognition for her father's death through the small attendance at his funeral:

It also seemed like there wasn't that many people went really, to the funeral, when Mum and Dad had lived there for a while in the past although they had been away and just gone back again. I thought that was a bit sad...that not that many people felt that close to Dad, to go to his funeral.

This was an issue also for Alice at her grandfather's funeral particularly as her other grandfather had had such a very big tangi:

I thought there should have been more people there...at the actual church service I thought that was the time for heaps of people to come. There were lots of people there but I think I kept comparing it to my other grandfather and thinking where are all those people. It would have been neat if all these other people could have come and paid their respects to Pop...It was neat too in that some of Dad's family came to pay their respects to Pop...they thought highly of Mum's family...so it was really lovely to see that.

Karen talked about her father's funeral and the importance of having a full church:

I thought God did you pick this church, it's so huge it will never get filled up...I was counting heads...it was important who came...By the time the funeral started...the church was packed...and that was good.

Karen also reflected positively about the attendance at her uncle's funeral:

He had a good turn out which was nice, that's always welcoming...it's a bit like throwing a party.

This last point made by Karen brings us to another important theme raised by both Maori and Pakeha — the partying, socializing and celebration side of the tangihanga or funeral. This is closely connected to the public recognition and community support aspects of after-death rituals.

The Party/Socializing Element of the Tangi/Funeral

A party is usually associated with a time of happy celebration, a social gathering of family and/or friends to enjoy each others company, and perhaps to mark a significant time of the year or a goal that has been achieved. A party also functions to enable a community to share in a transition time. A funeral or tangi is one such transition time. It is a very special final farewell to a person who is leaving, forever. A farewell party is also however a time to celebrate the memorable times we have shared with the person who is leaving. It is not all sadness.

A number of the Maori and Pakeha women identified the importance of the social dimension of the tangi or funeral. This was seen as part of honouring and celebrating that person's life and also important in helping those who are grieving to make the transition back to the world of the living. This element of after-death ritual provides those involved with a sense of community, and belonging. A community feast with food, drink and entertainment is a traditional part of after-death rituals in both Maori and European cultures (as already discussed in Part Three of this thesis).

For Maori, humour, laughter and entertainment is a traditional part of the tangihanga. The main time for this is the last night before the burial and the hakari (shared feast) after the burial. Lucy spoke about the night before the burial:

...the night before when one's buried, families will gather and they will tell stories about that person's life...like the night before for my father the children and grandchildren sang songs to him...it's a happy time more than a sad time...everybody sat around and talked and told stories about him growing up.

Priscilla talked about the hakari as well as the night before the burial:

After the service you have a big hakari which is a big feast...the atmosphere is more relaxed, it's a different way of grieving I guess (people aren't just mournful)...If you want to sing and dance you usually have singing the night before (the burial)...people get up and talk, express their feelings...everybody just gets up, you might have a story to tell about them...people are throwing jokes...even though it's sad it's not sad...it just seems to make, maybe the burden lighter because there's so much support around.

Patricia reflected on this social dimension in her experience of the tangi:

I really enjoyed funerals because everybody came. It was like one big party...it was great for kids...it was a great playtime...Death was never anything really disastrous for me.

Mere spoke about another social aspect of the tangi, that of community networking:

It was such a big tangihanga that people were renewing friendships and relationships and acquaintances all the way around...people do go away feeling different.

Karen discussed her observations of the social and networking side of a tangi:

(There was) a lot of laughing...a lot of joking...a lot of bonding between the other relatives...it was definitely a social time...family business plans were made for the future...a lot of personal interaction...It was sort of like it just flowed...There was always food...there was always cigarettes and there was always beer...There was never any question about who would cook and who would do the dishes and who would do the spuds...it all just happened...It was just so organized.

Alice spoke about the social significance she experienced through her involvement in her friend's father's tangi:

There was an old woman there who knew my grandfather...I didn't know her...She came over and talked to me...She sort of said "oh you've got ties to this area because of who your tupuna are, your whakapapa" and I remember feeling good about that...I do have a link, it's not entirely strange...So even though it was a sad time...there were good things that came out of it, making the links...also the togetherness...a whole group of us went up together...through that sad experience we got to know one another a bit more...and got to meet Marama's whanau.

The importance of the partying or social element was also raised in regard to Pakeha death experiences. The Irish wake is probably the best known cultural heritage of this. Lily referred to this in relation to her great grandmother's death:

When she knew she was dying...I remember Dad telling me how she called him aside one day and gave him...money. She said this is for you and the family to go to the pub and celebrate my life...I like the idea of the Irish wake type thing where you have a drink and remember that person and celebrate that person's life.

Maria talked about her experience in a Catholic community:

We always have an afternoon tea or a lunch...so the sharing of food is also important and people are always invited to come back to our place.

Zarah reflected on childhood memories of her grandmother's funeral:

But at the funeral, although it was sad, afterwards all the relatives came back and it was like we had a really good party...People laughed and joked and said what a wonderful woman she was and I thought wow this is great, there are hundreds of people and they are all saying how good she was...and I really loved her and I thought she was good and it was like she was gone and she would have wanted us to have this big send off and by God they gave her a great send off...and I thought that was great.

Ema talked about the sort of social send off she would want (and wouldn't want) and challenges the usual "funeral etiquette" she has experienced.

If it's summertime...have a barbecue afterwards...that would be quite neat, that would be different...You know how you go round and have little cups of tea and things, that wouldn't be me...and if it was winter time we could have a soup party...I quite like the idea of a barbecue now...I'd rather have something like that than this cup of tea and stand around in your fine clothes...because it's more natural, come round in your bare feet if you want to.

Much of the discussion in the women's stories can be described as a challenge to the usual "funeral etiquette". Part of this challenge concerned the policies and practices of the professionals and institutions involved with death which brings us to the concluding major theme regarding positive after-death experience, that of 'empowerment, support and respect from the professionals and institutions involved'.

Empowerment, Support and Respect from the Professionals and Institutions Involved

The death of a close friend or relative is in many ways a vulnerable time for people. Those dealing with professionals and institutions are usually those closest to the dead person, and they are likely to be in a state of grief and shock, and therefore less able to be assertive about their needs. Death has become a highly mystified area of our lives in Euro-western cultures, and this hiding from death has encouraged the professionals and institutions involved to expect us to not only trust them (as the experts) about what should and should not be done, but also literally hand death over to them, often almost totally. Death has become their domain and this is particularly so for Pakeha. This professionalization and

institutionalization of death can be, and frequently is, very disempowering for both Pakeha and Maori, but particularly for Pakeha for whom death is less likely to be a home and community experience. This however is beginning to change and this is evident in some of the women's discussions about more recent after-death experiences.

The women's stories contain a mixture of positive and negative experiences at the hands of the professionals and institutions involved with death. The most negative experiences tended to be in the more distant past, though many of the criticisms were from quite recent death experiences. I think it is fair to say that the women identified more hurtful than empowering experiences in relation to the professionals and institutions associated with death.

Nurses, Doctors and Medical Institutions

Two of the women participants who had nursing backgrounds shared this experience in their stories. Both of these nurses courageously decided to trust in their own personal experience and feelings to challenge and influence hospital procedure.

Zarah reflected on her early nursing experience of laying-out, the air of mystery surrounding death, and the mortuary in its hidden and isolated situation:

At the hospital they used to express the bladder and put horsehair in their bottom...We used to go to the mortuary and go down and get the mortuary pack...A mortuary pack was not kept in the ward, you had to go right down to the bowels of the hospital and in this cupboard was the mortuary pack, one for an adult and one for a child. So I don't know if there was a rush on and there were two dead bodies what you did, cause there was only ever one of each and then you wrote it in that you took it and what ward you took it for.

Zarah's hospital training had taught her to behave in a very disciplined, serious and reverent manner around death, to have all the blinds pulled down and to remove all the bedding except for a single sheet covering the dead person. Zarah had difficulty with this very regimented approach. On one particular occasion, as a young trainee nurse, the pressure to keep a straight face was something that got the better of her. She got the giggles (which had been partly due to her nervousness as well as the absurdities of the hospital procedure) and found herself in trouble with her seniors. Zarah reflected on how her later homedeath experience with her sister influenced her own nursing approach in relation to death:

In hospital it made me think that death doesn't need to have all this mystique about it...I really changed my way I treated patients and those ones that died...Well what is respect?...Talking and including it as part of life is respect. I had more respect for the patients...who had died than a lot of other people did. Surely when you are

washing a dead body what does it matter if you talk to them, you don't need to be quiet.

Patricia reflected on her experience as a nurse on a children's cancer ward:

It's how you play the system a lot of the time...and I think I was really good at (that)...I learnt that from a very early age in nursing...One night we had this kid who died and they were from (a rural area some distance away) and we got it sorted...We'd get all the paper work done out if a child was dying on the unit, so that as soon as the child died the parents were able to leave at their will...like they didn't have to call in any doctors from outside, our doctors would come and deal with it. They were good like that and then this one family they just picked up their dead child, put her in the back of the van and drove her back (home)...(they) didn't go out via the mortuary, the mother stayed with her the whole time and...they drove through the night, arrived at home in the morning (where) the whole marae was waiting...A couple of ours went through like that...because we had all the paperwork done beforehand...none of our deaths were ever Coroner's cases because it was cancer, it was an expected death.

Patricia reflected on nursing in death and dying:

To me it's the purest form of nursing...it was only I think my backing on the marae that gave me the strength to do it, because I wasn't scared of death and I saw it as a really good way of doing nursing, of making a difference in people's lives...It took it's toll...but I know that when I was there I made a difference in people's lives and that really was what counted for me.

The experience of those on the outside of the health system was also discussed in some of the stories. Ema, in regard to the recent death of a friend who died in hospital said "the staff were really great with him, they sort of left us alone with him". Central to this positive experience was being allowed to remain for some time with her dead friend in his room, after he had died.

In contrast Vera discussed her bad experiences with doctors and the hospital at the time of her daughter's death quite some years ago. In this instance hospital staff had been very controlling and had undermined the parent's access to their dead child:

They sat us in the waiting room and wouldn't let us go in and see her...the doctor wanted to talk to us the nurse said...It was hard because I was in shock...and I didn't have any rights in there, she'd kind of been taken, and the doctor was the one who was deciding when I was to see her, even whether I touched her, and the way he spoke, as if I should be afraid of her...That was taken out of my control...

In addition Vera felt hindered rather than helped by the tranquillisers given to her by her doctor:

The doctor came round and he gave me some tranquillisers...the next morning I got up and it was if nothing had happened...I was very dopey...I had never taken any kind of medication (before) and he had given me two (tranquillisers) to take each night. I was quite upset and angry about that for a long time...I went to the doctor and said I'm not going to take these pills I just feel terrible...

Vera also had information kept from her by her doctor and suffered unnecessarily because of this:

When she had the post mortem we were never sent any results and I kept asking the doctor have you had the report...in the end I just gave up...I didn't know I was entitled to it...the more I asked the more I began to feel well maybe I shouldn't have this. Maybe I'm not supposed to, maybe there is something I've done that caused the death and they don't want to tell me...I didn't find out until I had a headstone made for her grave...that was only ...8 years ago...I sent for a copy of the death certificate...the stone mason wanted to see the death certificate...I found out it was...meningococcal septicaemia (that caused her daughter's death)...Looking back I realize how badly treated I was.

As already referred to in the previous chapter, Jane, through reflecting on memories of not knowing much about her grandmother's death as a child because she wasn't allowed to visit the hospital, made the connection between the earlier policy of children not being allowed to visit people in hospital and their subsequent exclusion from death which usually occurs in hospital. Also discussed was Moana's recollections of her family's experience of being denied access to her dead grandmother's body and grave after the suicide of her grandmother in a psychiatric institution in the late 1920s. This illustrates the degree of authority hospitals and hospital staff have wielded in the past in relation to death, to the detriment of family and friends.

Leah talked about her 25 year old son's death in a road accident and her experience of the mortuary when this happened:

He was in the morgue when I first saw him...the thing that really made me angry in this case was that there were no facilities. Because it had been an accidental death he had to have a post mortem...and I understood all that...that was fine...but there were no facilities there for me to stay and we couldn't take my son anywhere to be with him. I brought the children to see him immediately that I could and told them what had happened...

This experience prompted Leah to later work to improve conditions for people waiting for their dead to be released from the morgue.

Funeral Directors

The women's stories generally illustrate changes for the better in the attitude and services of funeral directors in more recent times. There appears to be a greater willingness by funeral directors to be more flexible to meet the differing needs of those using their services. On occasion the storytelling about funeral directors showed them to be supportive and empowering, but not in general. The usual ignorance of the public relating to after-death choices also indicates that empowerment is not a widespread outcome as yet. The women's stories illustrate that being assertive and eloquent definitely helps individuals and families to be in control.

Zarah in relation to her young sister's death about twenty years ago discussed the behaviour of the funeral director who was only used for the coffin and transport. The funeral director attempted to use his position and authority to imply that Zarah's sister's body had to be embalmed. This experience is something that has been repeatedly related to me throughout my wider research by both Maori and Pakeha and has in fact been my own experience when my grandmother died in 1994. In the case of Zarah's sister a determined mother was not going to be intimidated by the undertaker:

We kept our sister at home...the undertaker came with a coffin...My mother refused to have her embalmed...the undertaker said she really has to be and my mother said show me where it's written that she has to be embalmed...she said you show me it in writing...I remember there was quite a heated discussion about it.

Rosa talked about a funeral director who had tried hard to impose his views to change the after-death arrangements a woman wanted for her son:

Susan had to be really strong to get those things. She was discouraged from having an open coffin (at the funeral).

Mere's discussion about funeral directors also illustrated her ability to be assertive and get what she wanted:

I didn't like the funeral director for my mother but I just told him what I wanted thank you very much, I just didn't like him, I didn't like his style but I found the funeral director for my exhusband and the one for my brother, they were

extremely helpful and ready to do whatever you wanted to do without falling all over you.

In Jane's fairly recent English experience, when Jane and her brother went to drop off flowers at the funeral directors, the abrupt and unwelcoming behaviour of the funeral director of standing at (and blocking) the door and not inviting her and her brother in, discouraged and prevented them from requesting to see their stepmother's body. In contrast Ema discussed a recent positive experience with a funeral director after a friend's death in hospital:

The funeral director came and he was good, he sort of sat at the end of the bed and talked about funeral arrangements.

Rosa spoke about her mother's unsatisfactory experience in relation to her father's death (a little less than ten years ago) of being hurried into handing his body over to the funeral directors:

I remember Mum saying that the funeral director (who had been informed of the death)...kept on ringing about wanting to come and get him...like making a nuisance of himself a bit really.

Rosa discussed her observations at a recent funeral and made the point that she thought a funeral director's role should be that of assisting the family, in the background, rather than being a "star" of the occasion:

I did notice the funeral director...as they were going out. He was the one that had to lead...I thought really, I think a funeral director should be staying in the background...they sort of like the pomp and ceremony...He was in the lead, and almost the walk, they have this special walk, like a slightly slow walk, it's like an everyone look at me walk.

Vera discussed her experience of the funeral director who was involved at the time of her young daughter's death some time ago and the funeral arrangements which were made by her husband and the funeral director. This funeral director basically informed Vera when the funeral had to be held:

The funeral had to be the next day because it was a Saturday and I was told it had to be on Saturday morning...I was told...it would be too long to leave it till Monday...(There was) no consultation at all...no what did I want.

Vera in contrast later discussed a recent positive experience of friends of hers in which the funeral director had assisted them in their alternative funeral plans. This included transporting their dead mother themselves, a role which is usually that of a funeral director:

The undertaker had been most willing...he had assisted in every way he could with a special trestle for the back of the station wagon. They found it a very good experience dealing with the undertaker.

Lucy talked about an incident concerning her son-in-law's experience with the funeral directors at his grandmother's funeral which was not empowering. This related to the close mourners not being made aware of aspects of the funeral arrangements that were important to choices they wanted to make, and consequently meant that opportunities for participating in the funeral ritual were lost:

She was cremated and suddenly the body after the actual funeral was whisked away, (her son-in-law had decided that he wanted to go with her) by the time he and my daughter got up there...they (the funeral directors) had obviously whisked her round to the back of the crematorium and she was gone, and he still felt he hadn't finished seeing his grandmother off.

This story told by Lucy illustrates the need for funeral directors to give clear information and choices throughout the entire process, not only the planning of the funeral arrangements, but also when proceeding with this, so as to allow for any spontaneous needs that may arise. It is important to anticipate and allow for these needs, as well as responding to direct requests and questions that occur before, during and after the funeral or tangihanga.

Priests and Religious Institutions

As discussed earlier (under the theme of a personal and fitting public tribute), a great many of the women's stories, in the Pakeha funeral setting, expressed hurt and disappointment at the eulogy performed by priests. This often did not do justice to the dead person's life. Mistakes about the name of the person and family members or an aspect of their life was a common experience which upset and annoyed women. In some cases the priest decided not to give a eulogy at all and this was one of the greatest insults and hurt that was expressed. The women's stories represent a challenge to priests and other facilitators of funeral rituals to stand aside if they do not know the dead person well, so that others more able to speak about the person and their life can take on this role. Similarly there is an underlying challenge, for those closest to the dead person to at least have a greater contribution in the writing and overseeing of the content of the eulogy.

The women's stories also raised the issue that often a religious service, presided over by a priest, is not appropriate for a person who is not religious and does not attend a church. Alternatives to the mainstream religious type of funeral service need to be developed so that people are able to choose a style of funeral or memorial service (and a venue) that is "fitting" for the person who has died and their family and friends.

There were also other issues relating to priests and religious institutions raised by a few of the women. Jane discussed an unsatisfactory family funeral where a minister had taken over the funeral arrangements, uninvited, and how the widow whose husband had died had not felt able to stop this:

A minister just appeared on the widow's doorstep because he (her husband) was nominally methodist...but not religious really at all...and this clergy person turned up and took over and she didn't really feel up to telling him to clear off so she allowed him to take over...I think one of the issues was that they never really addressed the issue of what they would do when he died in that respect...I think...when you're grieving...if you're not prepared it's a very hard time to start thinking about it, you need to have thought about it beforehand.

Vera challenged some of the men in her church and at the same time affirmed others who are accepting and acting supportively in response to women's calls for change:

...her mother had died and she hadn't been to church for ages and she just knew she wouldn't want to have the rosary and in our church the rosary is a formality. If somebody dies the night before the funeral there's the rosary in the church and the coffins usually there...there isn't any other alternative offered...This woman rang and asked, she thought that I would know of some kind of ritual as I belonged to (a women's spirituality group) and she wanted us to actually conduct some kind of ritual for her, she wanted women to do it...so I rang several of (the other women in the women's group) and talked to them and they were quite happy to work with me...The woman had asked if I would come along the next day and meet with the priest when he was coming to find out what she wanted for the funeral, she wanted me to be there.

Earlier Vera had made the observation that "some men in our church can't call on women to take over where they can't cope". However this instance was different and the women involved created a new innovation to church ritual:

(The priest) was a young man and was very willing...he was quite relieved...as he had no idea what he could do apart from the rosary...I actually wrote it out (the ritual they prepared) and got a copy of it...I thought we'd have to have something if anybody else asks us...This woman had Irish connection so we had some Clannad music playing...and Enya music...It was in the back part of the cathedral just in the little chapel at the back and the coffin was there...We had a

large...pottery bowl of water and I held the bowl and she (another member of the women's group) had a branch and she just dipped it in and blessed and walked around the coffin and blessed the coffin and we lit candles and we blessed everyone there...Somebody read something and we had a time of reflection...and then we asked if anybody would like to come up and say something about (the woman who had died)...and they came and stood and said what they wanted to say about her and then somebody did another reading from Joy Crowley's *Aotearoa Psalms* and we had a final blessing...people were just so pleased.

The ritual was well received by those attending. Vera reflected on the importance she and the others who had planned and facilitated the ritual had placed on process rather than content and how the ritual very much belonged to all the participants.

Maria discussed her experience as a Catholic sister and how in her later years as a nun the sisters have helped to change religious practices. Maria spoke initially about how her religious duties as a young nun kept her from attending her grandmother's funeral:

I've often really regretted that I wasn't there with my family at my grandmother's funeral and burial, because looking at it now from my situation with my mother I would think it would be awful if her grandchildren didn't come to her funeral because they had other commitments that someone else could easily fill.

The sisters have become more self-determining in the last twenty years however and this has affected the death rituals favourably in Maria's view:

Officially women are not supposed to preach...In the past (at a funeral) it used to be the priest who would give the homily, you know say the few words at the mass...the sermon...maybe something about the person if they knew the person...In more recent times we just told the clergy that we wanted to get up and talk about sister ourselves...When the stone begins to roll it just gathers momentum and that's what's happened...We haven't asked if we might do things, we've just said well this is what we're going to do and asked them to fit in with that...

Maria also spoke of the move to incorporate a reverence for the earth in contemporary theology, a move which is compatible with traditional Maori beliefs:

In the Catholic church cremation wasn't permitted up until a few years ago...Now there are people (sisters) saying well I'd like my ashes scattered on Mt. Ruapehu or...Whether they'll actually write this in their wills I'm not sure but they're talking about it so that kind of preference is being aired...It shows the changing spirituality and theology...creation spirituality and the strong links that sisters are feeling to the earth.

The women's discussion concerning the professionals and institutions involved with death illustrates a clear call for a move away from an authoritarian, rigid and mystified approach to death. The women want to be actively involved rather than passively dependent. They want to be assisted to achieve their plans rather than informed about what they should (or must) do. They also want the opportunity for themselves and others to creatively contribute to, and participate in, personally and publicly meaningful after-death ritual experience.

In Conclusion: What Can We Learn from the Women's Stories?

During my own storytelling I commented that after experiencing my first close family death I realized that "work had to be done on death". By this I was not only referring to my own dissatisfaction with the after-death practices I experienced, but also to my need to work on death so that I could achieve a better experience next time. I also recognized that there was a shared need to address the general lack of knowledge by lay people in the community in relation to after-death choices and how to implement these. The women, through their stories, have created an in-depth analysis of the after-death practices they have experienced. Contained within this are both implicit and explicit recommendations about how we (women, men and children) can achieve more positive after-death outcomes. As a conclusion to this part of the thesis I have summarized the recommendations arising from the women's stories (with further analysis of the research findings of the women's stories included in the chapter that follows).

After analysing the women's stories it was clear that the women firmly believed that death education is an important part of our life long learning, from childhood onwards. All the women advocated that children needed to be included in family and community experiences of death. The women felt that this was important to the well-being of children. They also pointed out that experiencing death as a more natural part of life socializes people to be more at ease with death. This was seen as a way to help people achieve a general preparedness for death, particularly important when facing those closest deaths that are the most distressing, and that also often require a lot of decisions to be made by us. This preparedness and inclusiveness is also likely to encourage people to actively participate more in the after-death ritual time.

Active participation was identified by many of the women as a key component in achieving a less alienating and more meaningful after-death experience. Retaining and returning death in

and to the home, marae and community was a key theme in the women's stories. De-institutionalizing death and returning it to the home and community will assist and develop our opportunities for active participation. The women felt that this de-institutionalization of death was part of what was required to encourage people to be more at ease with death. This also relates to the women's recommendation that death should not be mystified or hidden away.

Death is both a rational and "nonrational" experience, a personal yet also shared experience. This is evident in the women's stories. It is important to allow for both the "realness" and "other worldly" aspects of death, and the diversity of ways this is experienced and interpreted. There is a need to work for a death experience that respects, embraces and incorporates the needs of all — children, men and women, differing spiritualities, cultures and life styles. Women also felt that after-death rituals should be relevant and "fitting" to the person who has died. After-death rituals celebrate and commemorate the life and personality, the essence of the person who has died. Although these rituals are for the benefit of the living, the women's stories indicate that to achieve this they must also show relevance, connection and respect for the dead.

In contemporary society respect in death has so often been translated to mean a formal, reserved and controlled behaviour, shielding people from the realities of death, literally "tip toeing" around death (and this is particularly the approach that has been fostered by Pakeha funeral directors and the other Pakeha professionals and institutions involved with death). Not one of the women interviewed went along with this interpretation of "respect" in relation to death. Zarah in her story explicitly challenged this approach when she posed the question "well what is respect?" and answered this by saying that talking about death and including it as part of life is respect. A very different definition of respect underlies the women's stories. The Maori concept of aroha (love) is also about respect; respect means sensitivity yet also honesty; respect involves honouring a person (and this includes how we treat the body of a person after their death, as well as their memory); it involves sincerity and concern, but also refraining from imposing our own views on to others — a particularly important issue when considering the needs of close mourners.

The women's stories illustrate the importance of empowerment and respect (the women's definition's of respect, that is) from the professional and institutions involved with death. This concern for empowerment and respect also extends to the actions of other individuals, family and communities involved. As already mentioned it is important not to impose views

on to those closest to the dead person. What people require is the information and support to make the choices right for them. This is not always easy to achieve due to family and other differences, but even in difficult circumstances we can work for an outcome which considers the needs of all those involved.

The women advocated an honest approach to death, both in terms of openly expressing thoughts and feelings, but also in creating death practices which do not mystify and hide death. The women also wanted to retain and foster a sense of community in relation to death, to provide support to those who are grieving, and to show recognition for the life and death of the person who has died and the significance their death has for the whole community.

The women want to experience for themselves and others, after-death practices and rituals which are personally meaningful and not alienating. Their stories provide guidelines for achieving this. The experience and insights contained in the women's stories of their death experiences, and the recommendations implicit in these, are both a challenge and a gift to those who read this. The women's stories also provide me with a personal challenge — that of working to share this women's wisdom with a much wider audience.

PART SIX:

**Analysis, Conclusions and
Implications**

This ecofeminist research has been concerned with exploring, documenting, analysing, reconceptualizing and decolonizing after-death practices and beliefs. I have worked to explain and deconstruct the dualistic Euro-Western patriarchal mindset which sees life as good and death (which is seen as in opposition to life) as bad, or as the failure of life. Instead death is conceptualized as the partner of life, as part of life.

This concept of death as the partner of life has been supported predominantly through historical/social policy evidence and analysis which draws on both the Maori and European heritage contained in the literature, by the research findings from eighteen women's stories, and via lessons gained from the feminist action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group. Support for conceptualizing death as part of the cycle of life also occurs through making additional links with other indigenous and old cultural teachings which are now gaining credence in contemporary Euro-Western societies, and through simple lessons that can be observed in nature. I have developed ecofeminist theory to provide the theoretical framework to integrate these various strands of knowledge which can work to reconceptualize death as a natural part of life, and as the important and revered partner to life.

Bridging the birth/death dualism is also part of this deconstructing and bridging of the life/death dualism. Connections between birth and death are also evident in this thesis. The life/death/life concept of interconnection in this thesis also carries within it a birth/death/birth cycle. Papatuanuku, the Maori Earth mother Goddess, brings symbolism which connects birth and death. Papatuanuku is the first deity to give birth in Maori myth. Her body and her instruction were also important in the creation of Hine-ahu-one, the first human being (Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991:28). The presence of Papatuanuku is also particularly significant when the dead return to her embrace at burial (Batten, 1995:188; Ihimaera, 1989:206; Te Wiata, 1987:17). Her red ochre "blood" (Kahukiwa and Grace, 1991:66) was traditionally used to decorate the dead for the tangihanga, and the exhumed bones at the hahunga (Oppenheim, 1973:44,74). Documentation about the European lay women who traditionally laid out the dead shows that they often acted as birth attendants also (Chamberlain, 1981:1; Donnison, 1977:8; Richardson, 1987:17-19). The analysis of the women's stories makes connections between homebirth and homedead to define the concepts of "home"

evident in, and relevant to, the women's stories. My own background in the homebirth movement has greatly influenced my work in the area of homedead, as well as the wider topic of after-death policy, practices and beliefs. The significance of this is particularly evident in the 'feminist after-death research in action' part of the thesis.

Decolonization has also been an important theme. I have outlined and analysed how, why, and to what extent our after-death practices have been colonized, both for Maori and Pakeha. Evidence of forced change rather than, or as well as, chosen cultural adaptation has been provided. I have used my research to examine this change, to provide full information about contemporary after-death options, and to encourage people to thoughtfully consider their after-death choices. I am advocating that after-death policy and practices need to respond to people's informed decisions about what they want and not force, mislead, manipulate, undermine, intimidate or scare people into conforming to something that they do not really want. Many examples of such domination have been described in the results of each of the three research components in the triangulation of methods used. Providing alternative after-death information, concepts, policy, service options and practice models is part of a decolonization process. An ecofeminist theory of colonization/decolonization both informs and explains this approach.

This final part of the thesis provides a general analysis of the research findings and their implications. Chapter 11 examines and integrates the research findings with the ecofeminist theoretical framework and research process developed in this thesis. Chapter 12, the last chapter of this thesis, marks the final transition. In this chapter reflection on the overall research findings evolves into recommendations for after-death policy and practice, and also suggestions for further research in this field.

CHAPTER 11

AN ANALYSIS AND INTEGRATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS AND THE ECOFEMINIST FRAMEWORK

It is important to consider the relevance of the ecofeminist theoretical framework to the findings of both the fieldwork and the public records research into after-death policy, practices and beliefs. This chapter examines in more depth the links between the theoretical approach, the research process and the research findings of the public records literature research and the fieldwork. It describes how the theory emerges from, as well as informs, the research process and results.

An ecofeminist colonization/decolonization theory is the most significant theoretical framework involved with the analysis of the public records research. It both originates from and informs this research which is documented in Part Three of the thesis. The public records research was the first research area that I concentrated on as I began my doctoral studies. In the midst of this research I awoke one night with the research findings prominent in my thoughts and had the sudden "illumination" that colonization processes were significant to the forced change to after-death practices which occurred for Pakeha as well as Maori. This was the first key theoretical link that I had made apart from the general feminist approach I had brought to the topic. I realized that the patterns I was observing when examining the British material about after-death practices, the women who laid out the dead, and women healers in general, had definite similarities to colonization processes that had occurred for Maori. I felt decisively that a broad research approach to, and analysis of, colonization patterns for both Maori and British/Pakeha was required. This has involved a broad approach to social policy research and analysis, and this is defined, developed and explained in the introduction to Part Three of the thesis. This broad approach to social policy has become an important aspect of the general theoretical framework underpinning the public records research.

The development of a conscious ecofeminist framework began after I had neared the completion of the public records research and was involved in both aspects of the fieldwork. Although I had not earlier been aware of ecofeminist theory I had in fact already been fairly consistently following the principles I later identified as I drafted the ecofeminist framework in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Just as I had once discovered (in my mid-twenties) that I was a

feminist because of how "at home" I felt with feminists I had encountered, I discovered through my doctoral studies (in my mid thirties) that I was an ecofeminist after discovering how "at home" I felt with ecofeminist literature and theory. It was more a matter of finding where I fitted rather than finding a body of theory or theories I wanted to fit with. I also realized that a number of the influential feminist writers I had been drawing from were contributing to this ecofeminist movement within feminism. As I sought out ecofeminist writing a further important discovery occurred. I found that other ecofeminists had developed a colonization/decolonization theoretical approach as a key aspect of their work (Mies and Shiva, 1993).

The Significance of the Ecofeminist Framework Principles to the Public Records Research

The public records research chapters begin by documenting and analysing general colonization processes that have occurred both in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Britain. I consider this to be an important introduction to understanding the patterns of forced change, adaptation and continuation of after-death practices and beliefs. As part of the analysis of the impacts of colonization forces on after-death practices, the colonization of traditional Maori healers and women's healing work (including laying-out the dead), and women's general position in society is examined. Colonization theory is central to the way I have drawn from the public records in order to understand Maori and Pakeha after-death practices and beliefs, and how these have changed. The significance of the principles of the ecofeminist framework (as developed in Chapter 1) to the public records research findings is less obvious. I will now examine these principles in relation to the colonization and after-death material documented and analysed in Part Three of this thesis.

A combining of feminisms has been part of my approach. A socialist feminist perspective is evident in the discussion of the appropriation of land and resources for capital that occurred both for Maori and Pakeha British forebears, and the related disruption of cultural practices, including after-death practices. The discussion of the dead body as a commodity that was used for profit in the British grave-robbing era that accompanied the beginning of medicine as a male exclusive capitalist profession also draws from a socialist as well as a feminist perspective. A socialist feminist critique is also involved in the examination of the rise of the business of undertaker in Britain which appropriated the service performed by women who laid out the dead in the home, and the doctor who colonized women's healing work,

including the traditional women's role of laying-out, certifying and determining the cause of death (Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:37; Litten, 1991:143).

Radical (cultural) feminist approaches have inspired the importance I have placed on reclaiming women's culture in relation to after-death practices, my interest in the witch burning era, and the consideration I have given to the spiritual realm, women's spirituality, and the role of ritual in relation to after-death practices and beliefs. The radical feminist approach has also prompted me to look beyond the capitalist face of patriarchy to consider precapitalist origins of patriarchal domination.

Recognition has been given to the connection between attitudes and practices of dominion over nature, and colonization processes which attempted, and to a large extent succeeded, in undermining and destroying the earth respecting and revering cultures/spiritualities of the tangata whenua/people of the land and their rural communities in both Aotearoa/New Zealand and Britain. Struggles for dominion over nature's resources have been central to the colonization processes examined in this thesis.

Indigenous and ancient consciousnesses are incorporated into this part of the research through an in-depth documentation of traditional Maori after-death beliefs and practices. "Old culture" is also examined in relation to earlier British after-death culture. Significant links are established between these Maori and Pakeha "old" beliefs and practices.

Attention has been given to the "nonrational" realm which is generally an avoided or neglected area in research carried out in academic institutions. This is particularly evident in the women's stories, and also the attention given to spirituality as a site of colonization and the significance of this to changing after-death practices. I have also sought to incorporate an understanding of the inner and outer dimensions of colonization processes by examining the individual personal and emotional implications of colonization experiences as well as the physical, family and community, social, religious, political and economic dimensions.

Issues of diversity and relationship are apparent in the analysis of the public records findings. The ecofeminist concept of diversity amidst relationship (Adams, 1993b:4-5,8) is evident as I have compared and contrasted the processes and results of the historical forces which have changed after-death practices for Maori and Pakeha. The colonized and displaced people of the North colonized the people of Aotearoa in the South. The British colonization processes which happened within a society in Britain and displaced so many

from their lands and communities was a significant prelude to the colonization of Aotearoa by British people. The experiences of colonization were different yet also related. Capitalism displaced the largely communal economics of village life before enclosure in Britain (although feudalism existed alongside this), just as it displaced Maori tribal communalism (collective economy) in Aotearoa. Maori after-death beliefs and practices were different to traditional British customs, yet the old British/Pakeha customs of watching over the dead in the home and the shared community ritual practices, show a similarity to Maori after-death practices which is not evident in the mainstream Pakeha funeral of more recent times. Although the forced change to death practices for Maori and British/Pakeha was different, there are also connections. For example both Maori and the rural peoples of Britain were considered to be pagans and devil worshippers, lesser beings in need of conversion to the civilised Christian beliefs and practices of the dominant wealthy classes and their harsh Christian institutions; both suffered land confiscation and disruption to the whole social fabric of their rural communities.

The analysis of the public records literature relating to colonization and after-death practices and beliefs involves an historical critique which goes beyond capitalism. The information generated from this research about the traditions of women laying-out the dead and the associated popular home and community based after-death culture, that has been overridden by the rise of the initially male exclusive professions and their associated institutions, has provided important insights and impetus for action. The historical critique that I have developed through examining the literature has both contributed to my "need" to take action, and informed that action (as a founding member of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group). This is seen for example in the historical overview of death as women's work and women's ritual included in the first few pages of the booklet produced by the homedead group (see Appendices 2 and 3), and in our philosophy statement which states that we are reclaiming the traditional women's knowledge and skills of caring for the dead at home (see Appendix 1).

The Significance of the Ecofeminist Framework Principles to the Fieldwork

A Combination of Feminisms

I am aware that many of the women who participated in the women's stories research identify as feminists. Others indicate through their stories that they are influenced by

feminist and/or mana wahine perspectives. There is no one strand of feminism however which is representative of all the women or their stories. I argue that the broad approach of ecofeminism which combines and integrates different schools of feminism is therefore appropriate in this sense.

The Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group is explicitly feminist but does not (and does not want to) adhere to any specific feminist school of thought. The group is not concerned with advocating feminist theory in this sense but rather is seeking to understand why and how death was taken out of women's hands, the home and community, and to promote choices which reverse this trend. The group is committed to self-help information and practical lay person's knowledge which enables people to make fully informed choices regarding after-death practices. The feminist theory which informs the group's approach and the perspectives of group members draws on a range of feminisms. For example the cultural (radical) approach is evident in the reclaiming of old women's culture — women's ritual and caring work of laying-out the dead in the home and community. The socialist perspective is evident in the challenge to the capitalist death industry and in the promotion of self-help, home and community-based alternatives to this. The liberal approach of reform, as well as the radical and socialist approach of challenging and providing alternatives to existing services, is also evident. The group is very much influenced by the holistic approach of the women's health movement and is also developing an environmental as well as a women-centred and people's agenda. Through my knowledge of ecofeminism I am aware that the work of the group can be described as an ecofeminist initiative, but we have never labelled ourselves as such, and had no awareness of ecofeminism as we began our work.

Addressing the Domination of Nature

The domination of nature and the links between the domination of women and the domination of nature are a central consideration in ecofeminist research. The significance of this in terms of the fieldwork findings particularly concerns the emphasis placed on the need for death to be conceptualized and experienced as a natural part of life rather than hidden from the living. This challenges the devaluing Euro-Western approach to death, which is fostered by the life/death dualism which represents death as the enemy and as the failure of life.

Many of the women's stories (both Maori and Pakeha) expressed the view that death should be accepted as a normal part of life and not hidden away or talked about in hushed tones.

Maori women drew from their traditional cultural beliefs and experiences which taught them to accept death as part of life from childhood. A number of the women (particularly Pakeha) were critical of the socialization they experienced that removed death from life. Death then became something that was not talked about, and something that children were often excluded from. Most of the women raised the issue that they believed that children should be included in family death experiences and that this was an important part of a person's learning about life. This belief that death needs to be experienced as a normal part of life is linked to perspectives that work to respect and accept death as part of nature's cycles. Many of the women expressed the belief that we should prepare for death and participate in after-death arrangements and rituals. The women's stories support the idea of bridging the life/death dualism which in turn teaches us to respect nature and nature's life/death/life cycles.

Some of the women expressed connections with, and reverence for, nature in their stories. Traditional Maori symbolism and associated beliefs portray burial as returning to Papatuanuku, the Earth mother (Batten, 1995:188; Ihimaera, 1989:206; Te Wiata, 1987:17). This was a theme that often emerged when women considered how they would like to have their bodies or ashes returned to the earth. Some women talked about feeling connections with the sea, mountains or specific geographic localities and related this to making a decision about their final resting place. Maria specifically pointed out the growing influence of creation spirituality in her experience of Christianity which connects people with the earth (and moves away from the dominion over nature mindset).

The homedeath group's aim to "care for our dead at home" and share the knowledge and skills relating to this, challenges the life/death dualism. Death becomes a part of life, of family and community rather than separate and hidden away. This is consistent with ecofeminist theory which rejects dualistic thinking and is particularly important to the ecofeminist assertion that people are part of nature and that we need to recognize this (Adams, 1993b:4-8; Christ, 1990:60; Diamond and Orenstein, 1990:xv; Griffin, 1978; Kaza, 1993:59-64; King, 1990:120; Merchant, 1992:74-80; Mies and Shiva, 1993:6; Sanchez, 1993:210-213; Starhawk, 1989:174; Starhawk, 1990:74). Recognizing that we are part of nature and that it is important to live harmoniously within nature's cycles involves feeling at ease with natural death.

The importance of an awareness of, and action for, environmental protection and restoration is implicit although not particularly explicit in the work of the Palmerston North Women's

Homedeath Support Group. Evidence of this can be seen in our promotion of information about nonchemical embalming methods of preserving a dead person's body for the period before burial/cremation. This is also significant in relation to our international networking with individuals and groups such as John Bradfield, English researcher and writer of *Green Burial*, and the Natural Death Centre in London which promotes this book along with other natural death literature and workshops. The environmental protection and restoration dimension of our work is increasing as we are now beginning to recognize, research and lobby for "green" burial options. The promotion of natural self-help methods to delay decomposition of the dead person's body before burial/cremation, which is included in both editions of our booklet, has environmental significance. Consideration of environmental issues becomes more evident in the second edition of the booklet, with the inclusion of "green" burial initiatives, which are discussed in the sections of the booklet relating to coffins and burial (see Appendices 2 and 3).

Influence from Indigenous/First Nation and Ancient Consciousnesses

Maori approaches to death have conflicted with the European colonizers of Aotearoa/New Zealand yet also influenced them. The women's stories (Pakeha as well as Maori) included learning and wisdom gained from experiencing Maori death culture. The decision to specifically seek Maori women participants in the women's stories has also helped the research results to illustrate the influence of Maori death beliefs and practices. This is consistent with the ecofeminist principle of respecting and learning from indigenous and ancient teachings.

An holistic approach to life and death is old as well as new wisdom, central to indigenous and many ancient teachings (Badone, 1989; Dansey, 1975:129-130; De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:43-44; Estes, 1993:135-136,139; Teish, 1989:87). The women of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group have been influenced by Maori death beliefs and practices although we are a predominantly Pakeha group. An awareness of, and respect for, Maori death culture has perhaps made it easier for us to see the need for our after-death work in the community, as well as have the ability to do it. This may not be the case for other feminists in European and Euro-Western dominated countries who do not have indigenous or first nation people's death culture such as this prominent in their midst. The philosophy of the homedeath group embraces the concept of reclaiming the knowledge and skills of our foremothers who laid out and cared for the dead at home. This shows an awareness, respect and learning from old death practices. Women laying-out the dead at

home in their communities is an old tradition. Death experienced as part of life in the community (rather than in an institution), is central to indigenous and "old" cultures.

The Inclusion of "Nonrational" Forms of Experience and Knowing

"Nonrational" experiences, beliefs and practices were included in many of the women's stories of their death experiences. This inclusion of the "nonrational" has also occurred in many of the other after-death experiences shared with me, throughout my doctoral studies. Many of the women's stories included what women felt were significant "nonrational" incidents and feelings just before a death, at the time of death, just after or even a long time after the death. Sometimes this was a specific "spiritual" or "magical" experience such as seeing a spirit/ghost or a prophetic dream, but more often it related to how an incident was interpreted, a feeling, or a behaviour. Expressions of feeling were very evident throughout the women's stories. Women's spiritualities were also evident in the stories. Very often spirituality intermingled with women's emotions. These are also important aspects of this "nonrational" realm.

The discussion in the women's stories about the importance of being with the dead body, touching, caring for and cherishing her/him can also be seen as entering the realms of the "nonrational". There is a growing recognition by grief/death "experts" of the importance of seeing the dead person to accepting and actualizing the reality of the death and loss, and to saying goodbye (Rando, 1984:180-181; Raphael, 1983:35-37; Worden, 1991:61). Spending a significant period of time with the dead person, and actually physically caring for the dead person in a loving way, is not however generally recognized as important. The women's stories provide evidence to indicate that this is significant, for Pakeha as well as Maori.

The importance of the "nonrational" has been recognized by the homedeath group. What happens to the dead body and how he or she is cared for before burial/cremation has been a central consideration of the homedeath group. Although we recognize that this is an area for people to choose what feels right to them (preferably with a full awareness of the choices), all the women who have participated in this group prefer homedeath options of being with and caring for our dead. Although information is given about after-death options in general, the group has chosen to promote homedeath options.

Spirituality has also been a central issue of consideration for the group and many of the past and present members are interested and involved in the women's spirituality dimension of

feminism. There has been the recognition that we want to participate in and plan rituals for our dead. For many of us a Christian ritual may not feel appropriate or acceptable. What is seen as important is that death requires a special ritual time and that we need to decide what we would want and prepare for this. This has happened within the homedeath group. The homedeath booklet encourages readers to also think about what feels right to them in a funeral/memorial ritual and in other after-death practices, and provides information and ideas about choices that can be made.

Incorporating Both Inner and Outer Dimensions of Experience and Analysis

An understanding of the need for change inside and outside "the system" and inside and outside of ourselves, in relation to after-death practices and beliefs, is evident in both the action research and the women's stories research. The women's stories about their after-death experiences involved inner reflections as well as outer analysis to provide insights into what they had experienced and what they felt was/is helpful and empowering and what was/is not. The women in their stories created bridges between inner and outer forces as they interwove personal experience, their views on "the system" and of society, experiences other people had shared with them, their feelings and beliefs, and the way they made sense of all of this. This bridging of inner and outer influences illustrates the relevance of this ecofeminist principle to the women's stories.

The work of the homedeath group has also very much involved inner as well as outer processes. For quite some time the group had a very low profile as we shared our feelings, our fears, as we searched for the sorts of choices we wanted when faced with caring for our dead. A lot of inner reflection went on. This was then linked with what information we needed and what questions we needed to ask, and then following up on this. Alongside these developments was a structural analysis of the "medicalization" and mystification of death, of "power over" by the predominantly male professionals involved after a death, and the taking of death out of women's hands and out of the community, particularly for Pakeha. As the group progressed, group visits were organized to research death; media coverage and promotion of our booklet occurred; and lobbying for alternative after-death choices began. An outer public profile started to develop. This did not mean that the inner reflective dimension of our work declined however, but rather that more of a balance between this and the outer public aspects of our work had developed.

Addressing Both Diversity and Connection

Research which uses in-depth qualitative methods such as I have adopted for the women's stories requires small numbers of research participants. This restricts the capacity for diversity. The women's stories research involved Maori and Pakeha participants. This begins to address diversity in terms of culture in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The group of women who participated in the women's stories are in some ways a diverse group and in other ways not (see the analysis of this in Chapter 5).

As I studied the transcripts of the women's stories I discovered that there were definite connections as well as differences and that the connections extended across the Maori and Pakeha women's stories. This was so prominent in the research results that it prompted me to structure most of the results in the form of cross-cultural themes that the women had raised in regard to what was considered important for a "good" after-death experience. This structuring of the research findings is consistent with the ecofeminist recognition of relationship in the midst of diversity (Adams, 1993b:4-5,8).

The main project of the homedeath group, the self-help booklet, is aimed at assisting all types of people interested in considering their after death choices. Feedback has told us that it has been helpful and appropriate for men as well as women; for Christian and non-Christian; for lesbians and gays as well as heterosexuals; for professionals who deal with death, including mortuary workers, social and community workers, doctors, nurses and priests as well as lay people wanting to do things themselves. We were even told that one funeral director had commented that he had learnt from the booklet in relation to burial at sea.

An ecological feminist approach needs to recognize the diversity of people and their experiences, and the interconnection as well as difference of human and nonhuman oppression. The homedeath group has sought to be useful and sensitive to a wide range of people who have been disadvantaged and alienated by mystified and institutionalized after-death practices, and achieved this. Although a key theme in our work is reclaiming death as women's work and women's ritual we are also aware that this is at the same time a popular cultural heritage that belongs to all. We have been challenged about our "sexist" approach by one male doctor and by one woman on behalf of her family (although both also stated that our booklet was useful). The group has considered these accusations of sexism (in reverse). Members of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group hold very dear the women's cultural heritage of laying-out the dead. We also recognize the traditions associated with homedeath as popular culture, belonging to all, and have thought about the needs of

men as well as women. We are not asserting that laying-out or any other after-death practices should be an exclusive role of women nor are we telling people what they should do, but rather are offering information and choices for people to consider.

Another issue that has arisen is that the text on the cover of the first edition of the booklet was considered hard to read by one older person. We addressed this in the second edition by asking the artist designing the cover to use less stylized lettering. We are aware that the text inside the booklet is likely to be too small for some readers' needs. We have however been constrained by the need to balance this need with the needs of others for a low cost publication. It has come to our recent notice that a London based newsletter (put out by a small organization with limited funds) has included a large print paragraph that offers readers a large print version of the newsletter and the newsletter on audiotape, for those who want these options (Pagan Hospice & Funeral Trust, Lammas 1995:19). This is an initiative that others can learn from and an example we plan to follow in a future edition of our own booklet.

Evidence of Historical Critique Combined with Activism

The women's stories showed that the women were and are critically reflecting on their death experiences and society in relation to this. Change was something that Pakeha women emphasised (although this was sometimes seen as reclaiming old practices) whereas Maori women were often reflecting on the importance of continuing Maori death practices. Maori women did talk about change in relation to institutions and practices that undermined Maori needs, for example Leah's work to reform the mortuary. Challenges were also made by two of the Maori women relating to sexism they felt was evident in some of their experiences of Maori after-death practices.

The women's stories did not only include critique and calls for change, they also often involved action for change. This can be seen again in the example of Leah's work to improve mortuary services after experiencing them when her son was killed. It is also evident in the influence that Patricia and Zarah's personal after-death experiences have had on their nursing practices. Activism for social change informed by an historical as well as contemporary critique of after-death practices and beliefs is also central to the work of the homedeath group — so central that this needs no further explanation at this stage.

Linking Ecofeminist Colonization/Decolonization Theory with the Fieldwork Findings

The Women's Stories and Ecofeminist Colonization/Decolonization Theory

The Maori and Pakeha women's stories indicate a history of difference and tension between Maori and Pakeha after-death practices. The traditional Maori approach of including children in after-death rituals, for example, contrasted with the usual Pakeha experience of excluding children (although old culture and more recent Pakeha practices have included children). Also the Maori custom of being with their dead, whose body is an honoured taonga, contrasts with the general Pakeha removal of death from the home and of keeping it hidden in an institution and through a closed coffin at the funeral. As Lucy pointed out in her story, the mainstream Pakeha style funeral is seen as "cold" by Maori, however as Lucy also noted, Pakeha are beginning to change.

Barriers to traditional Maori death practices were identified by Maori women in their stories. These included urbanization and the associated movement away from the home marae, loss of elders knowledgeable in culture and protocol, and the expense of travel to return the dead person to their home marae. One of the Maori women indicated that her Pakeha mother would not allow Maori cultural practices in the family because society had "taught" her that Maori ways were inferior. These are all aspects of the European colonization of Aotearoa and its effects on Maori after-death practices.

There are however also decolonization processes at work. Although European socialization has alienated Maori from their Maori culture, the stories show that some Maori women grew up with the tangihanga experience which is central to the continuation of Maori culture while others have been reintroduced to Maori cultural beliefs and practices later in life through whanau, work and education. Also a number of Pakeha women talked about their experience of the tangihanga as a positive learning experience that influenced their attitudes to death. There is the realization that caring for our dead is old culture for Pakeha as well as for Maori, along with the awareness that we are in a time of developing innovations to mainstream Pakeha after-death practices in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This suggests that death and decolonization for Maori and Pakeha is inextricably intertwined.

Many of the women's stories expressed a sense of alienation and powerlessness for Pakeha, of not being able to stop professionals taking over, of not knowing another way. Many stories, Pakeha and some Maori, also expressed alienation due to family members taking

over and excluding children and young adults, and sometimes even older adult family members. Death was seen to have been removed from life by a number of the Pakeha women, and the Maori women who did not grow up with the marae experience. For Pakeha, death was not usually talked about, and many of the women identified that they were socialized as children not to be at ease with death. The stories show this is changing. This could be theorized as new developments in mainstream society but I prefer to express this as a revival of old culture, a decolonization process for both Maori and Pakeha with similarities as well as differences. The women's stories were in part a consciousness-raising process. Such processes also contribute to decolonization (Daly, 1973; Freire, 1968:31-34,169,185).

The Action Research and Ecofeminist Colonization/Decolonization Theory

Feminist colonization/decolonization theory has provided an important background understanding to the action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group to promote and support self-help and homedead choices within our communities and in the wider Aotearoa/New Zealand context. Right from the start we all identified that death had been removed from the home and the community and taken out of women's hands by male professionals and that we wanted to reclaim power in relation to after-death practices and beliefs (see Appendix 1).

A decolonization perspective is central to the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group's action to reclaim old self-help knowledge (and women's culture) relating to caring for our dead before burial/cremation. Being part of the homedead group has involved consciousness-raising for ourselves and others, and community action (Daly, 1973; Freire, 1968:31-34,169,185). The action of our group, and the action by individuals in the group, contains elements of working to understand how death was taken out of women's hands and out of the home/community. This involves seeking to understand the colonization processes involved.

Throughout the ongoing work of our group there has been a continual developing of our visions for homedead choices and the sorts of experience that this can involve. This has meant resisting the systems that have institutionalized and removed death from the home/community and mystified death, and alongside this resistance developing alternatives that put our visions into action, and building community networks to distribute this homedead information and support (Starhawk, 1990b:337-338). Through the publishing of our booklet we have networked homedead and self-help death information locally,

nationally and even made some international links. We are also seeking to continue our work. The current group members appear to be in it for the "long haul". All these aspects of our work fit the theoretical framework for decolonization that I developed in Chapter 3 and in fact helped to inform the creation of this framework.

Drawing on the Research Findings to Evaluate the Research Methods

The feminist research methods used in my doctoral studies have proven to be successful, both individually and as a triangulation of multiple methods. Although I have concentrated on qualitative methods, these methods have provided strength through difference as well as through their relationship to each other. Each research method has provided information which has either correlated with, or extended the research findings of the other methods.

The initial emphasis on the public records research provided a solid knowledge base regarding Maori and Pakeha after-death policy and practices with which to link the fieldwork. The public records research findings were very important to the knowledge base of the homedeath group and also extended my ability to answer (and ask) questions about after-death information, choices and requirements which arose from the women's stories. In addition to being important to contemporary after-death policy and practice, the women's stories have provided additional information of historical importance to that provided by the public records research. This has had significance to a social policy analysis of death. For example, Moana's story pointed out that earlier this century confiscation of the dead body of a person who had committed suicide in a psychiatric institution had occurred without the consent of next of kin; Jane's story raised the issue of the link between children being excluded from visiting people in hospital when she was a child, and their subsequent exclusion after a death.

The action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group has played an important role in connecting and acting on the findings of the public records research and the women's stories, in relation to after-death information, choices and requirements. The homedeath group has also generated additional research findings which have significance to a social policy analysis of after-death practices, for example providing evidence of funeral director pressure to prevent coffin/casket makers selling direct to the public. The action research of the homedeath group also provided the women participating

in the women's stories research with a resource (the self-help booklet) that they can refer to regarding after-death information, choices and requirements.

Incorporating a recycling process of returning the results of the women's stories research to the participants for verification, feedback and for their own use, was received favourably by the women involved. It also proved very affirming to me personally as the researcher/writer to hear the women's positive responses to my work. This process enhanced the general research findings as well as the validity of this part of the research project. Some important extra information and networking occurred. This was particularly so in regard to one of the participants, a nurse who is involved in evaluating health services. The additional information that I received from this research participant has contributed to the analysis contained in the final chapter of the thesis, and also added to the knowledge of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group.

The research methods adopted have contributed to a holistic and integrated ecofeminist process of combining theory, research and action which has significance for nonhuman as well as human nature. I recommend this approach to future researchers.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: REFORMING AND RE-FORMING AFTER-DEATH POLICY AND SERVICE PROVISION

A greater knowledge of our choices makes more meaningful and personally satisfying decisions concerning death possible (De Spelder and Strickland, 1987:488).

This chapter considers contemporary after-death policy and practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand and draws on the conclusions and implications of the research findings to provide ideas and recommendations for reforming, re-forming and further researching this significant area of our lives. I have integrated the research findings with the ecofeminist theoretical perspective which I have developed in order to draft a social change agenda for after-death policy, planning and practice. This is of significance to not only community based action for change, but also pertinent to reform from within institutional settings.

An Alternative Model for After-death Care and Funerary Services

The research findings in this thesis inform and shape an alternative model of after-death care which contrasts with the privately operated business model that is followed and promoted by most funeral directors and other professionals who work in the area of death, and the institutional (public as well as private) model which accompanies this. The alternative model evident in this thesis is women and people centred and also integrates environmental concerns. It has a home and community emphasis, and involves promoting self-help knowledge and choices which can be understood, accessed and shared by lay people. It is a model which places a high priority on listening to, encouraging, learning from and responding to the differing after-death needs and preferences that people have. It looks at how these needs can be accommodated within the existing choices and requirements of today, and considers ways to extend these options in ways which are beneficial to people and the natural environment. It is a model of relevance to Maori, Pakeha and other Tauwiwi, and one which recognizes and values the after-death care that was traditionally performed as

an unpaid or paid community service in many cultures by women with family or community connections to the dead person. The literature regarding women laying-out the dead in Britain shows that the women who performed this role considered it to be a neighbourhood duty (Adams, 1993:149-151,157; Chamberlain, 1981:1; Chamberlain and Richardson, 1983:40-41; Richardson, 1987:17-21; Roberts, 1989:194). This was a home-based service as opposed to today's norm of the institutional setting. It was service rather than business oriented and involved women being prepared to be called out at any hour to assist with this after-death caring work in the home, in close co-operation with the family and friends of the dead person. This approach correlates more closely with traditional Maori community after-death practices than the market model which dominates contemporary funerary arrangements.

Before beginning work on this thesis I was already envisioning the establishment of an alternative domiciliary service for those who want to be assisted to lay-out their dead at home (Hera, 1991:225-226). This is a position that I still hold. Similarly the Natural Death Centre in London have a long term plan of establishing midwives for the dying (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:8). Through my doctoral research I have however developed a broadened vision in terms of community action which includes advocating access to after-death merchandise — simple low cost (and environmentally sound) self-help merchandise which can be purchased, borrowed or hired; developing nature reserve burial ground options and alternatives to the usual wooden coffin (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993; Bradfield, 1994); and the development of people's spiritual community centres/temples with gardens (and perhaps burial grounds) which are nondenominational, have no specific religious doctrine, and can be used for funerary as well as other rituals. For those in society on lower incomes and with fewer personal resources such community resources are even more important.

Policy and Practice: Reflecting on Death in Comparison to Birth

In Aotearoa/New Zealand midwifery (including hospital and domiciliary midwifery practices) and medical services for pregnancy, birth and postnatal care (except when electing to go to a private specialist) are encompassed by the public health system — paid for by our taxes. Over the last two to three decades homebirth, natural birth, patients' rights and other associated movements have worked to demystify the whole area surrounding pregnancy, birth and post natal care. These movements have also created increased pregnancy, birth and postnatal choices, knowledge and empowerment for women, their families, and their wider

support networks, within the public health system (Donley, 1992). A significant legislative recognition of these movements for change was seen in the passage of the 1990 Nurses Amendment Act which makes midwife only attendance now a legal option for women and correspondingly allows midwives to work as autonomous health practitioners and attend women antenatally, at the birth and postnatally without necessarily involving a doctor.

In contrast after-death facilities, services and merchandise are more a domain of the private business sector (funeral directors); and local authorities (councils) who administer cemeteries and crematoria (which also charge fees), although there are some denominational burial grounds, Maori wahi tapu/urupa and private cemeteries. The public health system is involved after a death through the doctors in hospitals who certify deaths, nurses and orderlies who are involved with initial after-death care and transportation to the mortuary (although occasionally a dead person is collected direct from the ward), and mortuary workers who liaise with the medical practitioners, ward staff, medical records personnel, funeral directors, the police and Coroner's office, and family and friends. This public health system involvement after a death is more concerned with the legal and hospital requirements rather than geared to provide quality after-death services and support to family and friends. Nursing practice is beginning to show a more proactive approach to supporting family and friends when a death occurs. Nurses are now contacting funeral directors with a greater awareness, confidence and commitment to helping their clients to get the services that they require. The recently introduced cultural safety elements of nursing education are making nurses more aware of the needs of people different from themselves and of action that nurses can take to provide culturally safe practice. Nurses for example have become more aware of Maori cultural after-death requirements and this in turn is making nurses more aware that all cultures, including Pakeha, may also want more after-death information and support (oral communication from a women's stories research participant, employed as a nurse, after discussing the research results 17/9/95).

Funeral directors are the main service provider in relation to after-death services and merchandise. It is currently the norm in this country to pay funeral directors to do the work of caring for the dead before burial or cremation, even when opting to bring our dead home or to the marae for the before burial/cremation period. For the poor and in the case of accidents there are certain benefits available to pay for some of the funeral costs. For the poor this may be stigmatized. Local authorities (councils) waive their fees when people do not have the money to pay them, but at the same time the customary memorial headstone is

not allowed until these fees are paid (Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group, 1993:14,15-16).

Funeral directors are basically free agents in terms of service provision as long as their costing formula is approved by the Commerce Commission, they provide the documentation required, meet health (burial) hygiene standards and comply with the Coroner's Act. Most funeral directors belong to the Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand Inc. This Association which began in 1936 states that there are stringent entry qualifications and a strict adherence to their code of ethics expected from members (Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand, no date:5). There is however no clear disciplinary body within this organization for people to complain to if they are not satisfied with services. There is not an established system of accountability to the public.

Pregnancy and birth has been a topic of extensive research and policy consideration over the last few decades. In contrast after-death service choices have received very little attention, and as yet very few voices are calling for this. This does not mean that there is not a need for this. Instead it is a reflection of historical patterns which have meant that death has become an area of our lives to be avoided in mainstream society. As such it has also been a largely overlooked area of research and policy consideration. The usual policy focus in regard to the topic of after-death practices has previously involved legal requirements for death documentation, burial and cremation, Coroner investigations and a few health (burial) regulations in relation to death. In this country it is generally Maori who have lobbied in regard to contemporary after-death policy, particularly in relation to the Coroner's Act and mortuary practices. This has had some success for example prompting the revision of the Coroner's Act in 1988 to attempt to speed up the release of the dead who are Coroner's cases (*New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1988:3412), and also to some extent influencing mortuary staff and funeral directors in relation to the return of the dead complete with all their organs, and with the brain retained inside the skull (as the head is particularly tapu to Maori). Lobbying by Maori has also led to the provision of hospital space (such as Te Whare Rapuora in Palmerston North) which can be used by family and friends who want to be with their dead.

An Organized Natural Death Movement for Aotearoa/New Zealand?

The research has indicated that an organized national homedeath/natural death and more general after-death rights movement is needed to empower people to make informed decisions about after-death choices, to develop alternative options and services, and to lobby for the choices and changes that people want.

There are a number of after-death change initiatives apparent in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As I have already discussed, Maori have lobbied for change in institutional practices in relation to their cultural requirements. Marion Barnes has pioneered the funeral celebrant option in this country (Barnes, 1991) and there is now a growing demand for such alternative facilitators of funeral/memorial services. Funeral Choice of the Christchurch/Lyttleton area and the Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group are sharing and promoting self-help after-death information. The Palmerston North Women's Homedeath Support Group has also followed Elizabeth Francke's example in Waitakere, Auckland, of lobbying council to establish the option of a memorial park/nature reserve burial ground where tree memorials are planted on graves instead of the usual memorial headstones. Individual and group initiatives in this whole area of after-death policy/practice are gathering momentum.

Such initiatives are evident in other countries and these are made stronger through the creation of national organizations. A Natural Death Movement is now evident in Britain with a central co-ordinating London office, The Natural Death Centre (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:7-13). The nonprofit Continental Association of Funeral and Memorial Societies of Canada and the United States which has roots that go back over fifty years is also concerned with death education and simple funeral options (Morgan, 1988:67-70). Funeral/memorial societies based on this American/Canadian model have also been established in parts of this country, for example the (in recess) Manawatu Memorial Society.

A national natural death/home death organization could be established similar to the network of homebirth associations that have established in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Alternatively a central city base could be established similar to the Natural Death Centre in London that interested groups and individuals can link in with. Such an organization could provide and promote information about after-death choices, act as a lobbying network, and be actively involved in the development of alternative after-death service provision. There are active and interested groups and individuals in this country that could be contacted with the view of

forming a national movement. The experience of the Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group indicates that natural death networks, such as the London based Natural Death Centre would be keen to provide support for such an initiative in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Reforming Existing Services

The research findings indicate that reform to all existing areas of institutional after-death service provision is needed. Services in general need to be centred just as much (if not more) on the requirements of the family and friends of a dead person who are involved with the after-death care, as well as the statutory and institutional requirements. Admittedly many people just want to hand this role over to the institution and funeral director with little involvement on their part, and this choice needs to be respected. People do however need to have the opportunity to be actively involved and empowered if this is what they want (Parker, 1987:69-70).

The after-death research that I have been involved in has shown me that the business and service practices of funeral directors tend to be highly mystified and hidden from public scrutiny. Funeral directors do not generally have itemised written costings available nor do they provide this information by phone. If you phone for information about costs and options it is likely to be suggested that you make an appointment to see the funeral director in person. The London based Natural Death Centre is researching recommendations to take to the Office of Fair Trading and the Department of Trade and Industry in Britain for regulations similar to those made in the United States in 1984 which require all funeral directors to give fully itemised price lists and estimates in written form and to provide information over the phone (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:9, 201-204). This is also an important area for consideration in this country.

Clients are generally charged a set professional service fee by funeral directors (which does not make allowances for people who do not use all the services available), as well as the cost of the casket and disbursements such as newspaper notices and cemetery fees. People who opt to do more of the after-death arrangements themselves, but still involve a funeral director, should be able to have this recognized in the fees that they are expected to pay. This is another matter that could be addressed by a national organization concerned with after-death services and choices.

The research carried out by the Palmerston North Women's Homedead group has shown that people who approach a funeral director with the view of just buying a coffin, may have this request refused. People may find themselves not only queried, but also reprimanded, for requesting this (as has been experienced in our region from more than one funeral director). Funeral directors do not see themselves as "coffin shops" and if the funeral directors do agree to sell just a coffin it is likely to be grudgingly and at greatly inflated prices (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:153,201-204; Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group, 1993:14). Funeral directors undermine alternative public access to purchasing coffins (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:201-204; Bradfield, 20/9/1994). Casket/coffin manufacturers may be under threat of losing funeral director's business if they provide coffins direct to the public, which means that they are likely to decide against doing this. The Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group was told of an instance of such pressure applied by a funeral director locally. This shows evidence of a monopoly situation, not because there is only one business and therefore no competition, but because funeral directors can and do exert pressure to control what merchandise and what vendors the public have access to. This is not fair trade by funeral directors (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:201-204) nor does it live up to the Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand's code of ethics statements "to maintain in all matters the highest standard of business, professional and personal conduct" and "to preserve, within the bounds of dignity, good taste and practicality, the right of personal choice and decision-making for the families they serve" (Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand, no date:16).

Reform is occurring within existing institutions in response to pressures for change. As already stated Maori have continued to pressure for changes that better meet their cultural requirements. Groups and individuals are bringing alternative ideas and service options to their communities and this is prompting changes to be made by funeral directors. Change is also occurring as women enter this, until recently, male controlled realm. In this country the first woman funeral director qualified in 1981 (Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand, 1984:16) and the first all women funeral business was recently established in Christchurch in 1995 (*Christchurch Mail*, 17/8/95:3). Women entering the funeral business are challenging the male dominance within this industry and also introducing new ways of working with death which encourage more active involvement from families (*Christchurch Mail*, 17/8/95:3).

The after-death service provision of the hospital ward, hospice, and mortuary also requires attention. This level of after-death care should also become more centred on the needs and

rights of those close to the dead person. As already stated, nursing practice is beginning to show improvement to services in this area. Evaluation of existing services and additional training should be used to ensure that this improvement to services is widespread. The work procedures of mortuary staff need also to be reviewed with action taken to improve the public aspects of these services. Staff should have a full awareness of all the after-death options relating to their work and be expected to meet public requests when possible. The proposed draft code of rights for consumers of health and disability services (which is presently being reworked after receiving updated submissions) could usefully be extended to cover the rights of next of kin who are in an associated sense using health services after a death. As discussed previously, the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group has presented a submission to the Health and Disability Commissioner regarding the importance of recognizing these after-death rights.

Developing Alternative After-death Services

Both the women's stories research and the findings of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group have established that it is important that people feel secure and supported when faced with a death and making decisions about after-death arrangements. It is my position that in a caring community and society this should be a social right, rather than dependent on the ability to pay. The maximum benefit of just over \$1000 available from New Zealand Income Support for those on the lowest incomes is not likely to even cover the usual professional service fee of a funeral director, let alone other costs such as the coffin, newspaper notices and so on. Most people are not aware of "do-it-yourself" low cost options and do not have support systems available to help them to access such options. Support services and low cost but dignified (refer to the definition of dignity drawn from the women's stories) options need to be established that allow people to feel they are providing a funeral time that expresses how important the dead person is to their family, friends and community. Often people spend more on funeral arrangements because they want and need to show their deep affection for the person who has died and this appears to them to be the only way that they can achieve this.

Lower cost and/or free options need to be developed in a way that enables those closest to symbolize the importance of the one who has died and show to the wider community the deep love and connection that is felt for that person. In Switzerland funerals are free, paid for by the government — there have been no private undertakers since 1890 (Mitford,

1980:287). A free coffin, grave and hearse transportation is the right of every person, regardless of their financial status. Municipal attendants are employed to provide these services.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand it would not be difficult or very expensive to gradually expand the work of some public health nurses to include assistance for those who want to lay-out their dead at home. Laying-out was an area that district health nurses once assisted with. It was considered essentially a nurses work. The work of district nurses even involved attending to the dead at the morgue (Maud, 1912:31). In the 1960s district nurses working in the Palmerston North area were still called in by families to lay-out a dead person before an undertaker became involved. District nurses considered it an honour to be asked to do this (Rodgers, 29/5/1995). It is my recommendation that a similar service again be made available (informed by the knowledge that people can choose whether or not to involve a funeral director). Hospices have developed home support services for those dying (usually of cancer) and their families and caregivers. Hospices in this country receive government funding via the public health system for their services. It is my recommendation that after-death care is also deserving of such government assistance.

As mentioned already, local authorities usually oversee cemeteries and crematoria. An easy extension to this role would be to also supply coffins and alternative containers as occurs in the United States (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:203-204). Providing after-death merchandise could also prove to be a lucrative private business as can be seen by Roc'Eclerc (and Fun'Eclerc), a "death supermarket" in Paris which has developed into forty branches in France, has moved into Belgium and Switzerland and has plans to extend into Britain (Albery, Elliot and Elliot, 1993:204). I am aware that promoting community nonprofit based after-death options is in conflict with considering the benefits of a "death supermarket" (although it could theoretically be a community nonprofit enterprise). However such an alternative model of business practice could prove to be a quick and effective way to reform the competition — currently a monopoly situation by funeral directors which makes it very difficult for the public to go direct to many of the makers of after-death merchandise. A similar evident example of local business initiatives improving services was the recent establishment of an alternative general practitioner (GP) service that introduced new services such as free transportation for clients. This soon led to another GP organization following this initiative so that clients now have a more general access to free transportation in Palmerston North without increased fees. This proved to be a significant local development in improving private sector medical services to the public.

Death Education

It has already been asserted in the women's stories that death needs to be a life long learning process. Positive after-death experiences within our family and wider community are important to achieving this. The inclusion of death education at all levels of our education system is also an important part of this educational process. At the primary level for example, if someone associated with a school, or class in a school dies, then recognition needs to be given to this. It should not be ignored or avoided. A simple ritual such as making a card with a picture and message and discussing this as well as the death, could prove to be an important and therapeutic learning process for young children. All levels of our education system need to develop the area of death studies, including universities. This is an area of life that we all experience yet it has been neglected in academic study. The United States has been developing specialized university courses about death and dying (Fundis and Cox, 1991). There is now interest and action to develop such university papers for Aotearoa/New Zealand. Dr. Mary Murray of the Sociology Department at Massey University is introducing a Masters level paper on the sociology of death beginning 1996, and hopes to make this a more accessible undergraduate paper in 1997. The planning for this paper is receiving input from a number of interested educationalists including Professor Mason Durie who has stated that staff from the Maori Studies Department at Massey University, including himself, would be prepared to contribute to lectures for this paper (Murray, 13/9/1995).

Most of the current after-death education and publications focus on grief and related feelings and experience. I argue for more recognition to be given to other aspects including the whole area of after-death education and counselling skills, which assists people to explore and develop knowledge about after-death requirements and choices, and the practicalities involved with these.

Extensive after-death education is particularly important for those whose work involves death, such as health practitioners and the clergy, to assist them to act as enablers rather than disablers after a death has occurred. This is a significant area in the women's stories; examples are given of both enabling and disabling behaviours from the professionals and institutions that the women had contact with after a death. A recent Christchurch study (Charlton, Ford and Manderson, 1995) has shown that nursing students are much better prepared to deal with death than medical students. The research also showed that medical students want more instruction and positive role models to improve their after-death practice

(Charlton, Ford and Manderson, 1995:16). This appears to be an area in need of particular attention in the curriculum of medical students and the in-service training for practising doctors. As already mentioned, the cultural safety elements recently introduced to nursing education are making nurses more aware of the needs of people different from themselves and of action that nurses can take to provide culturally safe practice. This is influencing all aspects of nursing practice including more knowledge, sensitivity and support in relation to after-death service provision. These developments in nursing education offer lessons to other health/death and welfare service providers.

Nurses, doctors, social workers and other professionals whose job includes working with death and dying, should have a good working knowledge of the whole area of after-death requirements, choices and experiences. Resources need to be available, as well as increased training in this area, to enable health/welfare professionals to be able to answer any enquiries regarding after-death options and experiences. It is important that professionals are also proactive in their work. If a comment such as "I suppose we call a funeral director now", "what happens now?" or "how long can we stay with her/him (the dead person)?" is made after a death has occurred, this needs to be recognized as a cue for information about choices and support available. Information sheets about how staff can assist family and friends after a death occurs would be a useful resource for staff as well as patients/clients and their families and friends.

Suggestions for Further Research in this Field

As I have researched after-death practices of, and relevant to, Aotearoa/New Zealand I have realized that there is very little documentation on the ritual work traditions of women laying-out the dead and in regard to women's after-death roles and experience in general. On the international level this is an area that has received little attention by feminist researchers (Walter, 1993:277-278). My research findings indicate that further feminist as well as general research into this after-death area is of herstorical/historical and practical importance. Documentation on European/Pakeha traditions of this women's activity are scarce and historical records on the developments of the originally male profession of the undertaker/funeral director is not well covered either. Further documentation and analysis of material from Aotearoa/New Zealand is important. Research into men's stories of their after-death experiences could also prove to be a useful contribution to the literature as well in

contrast to, or correlation with, the research into women's stories of their death experiences contained in this thesis.

AIDS is also a significant factor in contemporary changes to after-death practices¹⁰. This is an area that has not been covered in this thesis. It has not been evident to me in the literature and it has also not been a key finding in my Palmerston North based research, or through my own experience. The impact of AIDS is however an important area for future after-death research projects (particularly in areas/communities where frequent deaths from AIDS have occurred).

I suspect that traditional Maori practices to prepare the tupapaku for the before burial period may be a taonga which is at risk of being lost. This could prove to be an area of research importance (particularly for a Maori researcher). It may have a significance which goes beyond historical record and towards continuing or reclaiming traditions considered valuable in contemporary Maori communities.

I also recommend research into institutionalized death settings and practices, particularly funeral directors, hospital wards and mortuaries, and also relating to church and/or funeral/crematorium chapel practices and crematoriums and cemeteries. Comparative studies between the perspectives and practice styles of male and female funeral directors could, for example, provide interesting and useful material.

Another significant area for after-death research that I considered (but decided against) as part of the research for this thesis, is that of interviewing elders in our communities, so as to gain further insights into earlier aspects of our after-death practices, knowledge and beliefs. Although I decided against such research as I established manageable research boundaries for my doctoral studies, I regard this to be an important research area for Maori, Pakeha and the diversity of cultures in this country. It also has international significance. Roberts (1989) fascinating study into the after-death experiences of working class elders in Lancashire is a rare example of such a study. Similar interviews with elder women in Aotearoa/New Zealand could also be used as a method to gather data from women still living who did the work of laying-out the dead in their communities. Three of the women who took part in the women's stories research expressed regret that they had not had the opportunity or insight to find out more about the laying-out work that women members of

¹⁰ Thanks to Ngahua Te Awekotuku for making me aware of this point.

their family (now dead) had been involved in. There will be some women still living who could provide important information on this topic. Prompt attention to such research could gather a significant herstorical and historical record on an as yet sparsely covered area, before it is too late.

Reclaiming the Last Rites (Rights): In Conclusion

This thesis provides an examination of historical, policy and practice aspects of the changing after-death experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It provides a women-centred, yet at the same time, broader community-oriented and environmentally aware approach and vision for the future, which others can act on, debate, draw from and/or dispute. It marks a beginning of research into the social policy of death in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and initiates research, analysis and action which links after-death policy with the reform of institutional practices, and community work initiatives for change. What is most important is that research, debate and action continues so that people establish the after-death choices that they want, rather than merely accept without question what is being delivered. I argue that this should occur in an environment of recognition and respect for Maori as tangata whenua, and first nation peoples of this country. As we increasingly come to terms with this bicultural heritage, we also need to increasingly recognize and respect the diversity of the cultural requirements of people in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

This thesis reclaims and also works to revalue and resacralize death as women's work and women's ritual in the home and the community. Each component of the research has drawn from the knowledge of (and about) lay women as "experts" on their experience and what they perceive as important to positive after-death experiences and the choices involved with this. This is clearly evident in the action research of the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group and the women's stories of their death experiences. It is also part of the historical social policy analysis of the roles of lay women in the home and on the marae, in the neighbourhood and the wider community.

As I reflect on the central focus of this thesis, I feel that I can now claim to have attained an extensive understanding of after-death policy, practices and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand and women's changing roles in relation to this. The research that I have completed for this thesis, and the community work which is still on-going, also shows that I have been part of

a process which has influenced social change movements concerned with after-death policy, practices and beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

In this thesis I have worked to bridge the life/death dualism. I would like to see death increasingly become experienced as a natural part of life. I hope and trust, that there will always be an Earth where natural life/death/life processes continue to sustain and protect the diversity of life forms of this planet, and that human beings will increasingly know a reverence for, and enjoy lives in harmony with these processes.

GLOSSARY OF MAORI WORDS

(either present in, or significant to, this thesis)

Some of the words included in this Maori glossary are combinations of Maori and English used in contemporary "English" language in Aotearoa/New Zealand. An example of this is Maoridom — the "dom" part of this word being derived from English language, as it is used in words such as kingdom. Maori words do not use an "s" for the plural, although this often happens when Maori words are used in English sentences, and this is evident in this thesis. Maori words which include a long rather than short vowel sound, may not have this emphasised when written (particularly in an English text) or have this indicated by the use of a double vowel or a macron above the vowel. For example the word for the first nation peoples of Aotearoa may be written as Maori, Maaori or Māori. Plural and singular aspects within Maori language may be indicated by using either short or long vowel sounds, for example wahine (singular) and waahine (plural). I have not indicated long vowel sounds in this glossary as these have not been used in this thesis¹¹.

Aitua: a personification of death who came to Aotearoa in his own canoe, Karamurauriki, which was decked in white albatross feathers; this is the canoe of death in which the souls of the dead are taken back to the ancestors

aitua: misfortune, death; this ill-luck could come about through some disorder of the relationship of a person (or people) with nature; protected against by ritual and purification.

Akakitereinga (Aka): the pohutukawa Root to the Underworld at Te Reinga Wairua

ake ake: (*Dodonaea viscosa*, *Olearia traversii* and other species) a small tree native to Aotearoa

ana: cave; caves often served as a burial vault and when this was the case they were named toma or rua koiwi

Aotearoa: original Maori name for New Zealand

ara atua: a pathway for the spirit of the dead made more easy by suspending a piece of flax above the dying person

ara whanui a Tane (i te Muri-wai-hou ki te Po-Tiwaha); aratiatia a Tane; Arawhanui; Taheke-roa: spirit path from the earth to the Po (the Underworld); spirit path to the Rangi sky underworld region

¹¹ This glossary was created alongside the development of the material in Chapter 6 of this thesis and draws from most of the references cited in this chapter. I have referred to the Williams (1985) dictionary for definitions, and the glossary in Te Awekotuku (1991) is also a major source. An important acknowledgement needs to go to Ngahuia Te Awekotuku for her advice which led to significant changes to this glossary.

aroarowhaki: the giving up of the body to grief (in mourning)

aroha: a concept of love which includes respect, sadness, empathy and compassion; the people gather to mourn at the tangihanga drawn by the bonds of love, respect and sorrow; love unites the descendants living and dead

arohanui: much love (aroha)

atamira: a platform erected for the dead body to lie in full length with the head raised

Ati Haunui a Paparangi: one of the tribes of the Whanganui River area

aue: a wail

awa: river

awa tapu: sacred river; a term used for menstruation

haehae: shedding of blood as a sign of grief; self-laceration by women and sometimes men which was considered emotionally satisfying; cuts were from the wrist to the shoulder, downward across the upper breast and also on the cheeks; dye was sometimes rubbed into the cuts so that when they healed the lines would still be evident

haere mai: welcome

haere mai ki o tatou mate e: the words of a karanga (chant of welcome) to manuhiri coming to the tangihanga

hahu: exhumed

hahunga: a pre-European exhumation ritual for highborn Maori (no longer practised); the bones of the dead were exhumed a year or two after death, scraped and painted with red ochre, wept over again, perhaps carried from settlement to settlement, placed in a wooden burial chest (waka tupapaku) or flax mat and buried a second time by a tohunga in a secret cave dwelling (away from any potential enemies who might defile them); hahunga excited more grief than the tangihanga

haka: a fierce Maori dance with chant

hakari: feast; the feast that traditionally follows the burial of the dead person, may now be held on the night before burial; this has largely replaced the pure-whakanoa at a tangi

hapu: a term for subtribe(s) and also means pregnant

hara: a breach of tapu, an offence or misdeed

hau: breath, wind, air

Haumu (Taumataihaumu): a summit which spirits ascend on the spirit journey and look back to farewell the land

hautapu: malevolent spirits

Hawaiki: homeland of the ancestors, the homeland of the spirits of the dead

Hine-ahu-one (Hineahuone): first human being according to Maori myth, was shaped and brought to life by the God Tane on the instructions of Papatuanuku from the earth at

Kurawaka, the pubic area of Papatuanuku — this earth contained uha, the female element; Hine-titama became the wife of Tane not knowing that he was also her father and when she discovered who her father was she fled to the Underworld in anger and shame and named herself Hine-nui-te-Po; she told Tane to remain with their children and not to follow her; in the Po she prepared an after life for their children, here she welcomed them when their earthly life ended and was once again a loving mother to them

Hine-i-tapeka: sister of Mahuika (who gave Maui fire); has the fires of the underworld in her care; these fires sometimes break out in volcanic eruptions

Hine-nui-te-Po: Goddess of death and guardian of the Underworld realm of Te Po; she is a friend to the Maori dead who are her descendants

Hine-titama: the dawn maiden, first daughter of Tane and Hine-ahu-one

hirihihi: a Tuhoe rite which involved holding a piece of flax above the mouth of the dying person with the purpose of sending the spirit upon its ara atua (its proper path)

hongiri: a pressing of noses and shared breath, a greeting ritual, a sharing of personal mana, mauri and tapu; manuhiri hongiri with tangata whenua and become common with (or one with) the tangata whenua, this is part of the kawa to remove a tapu; at a tangi the visitors hongiri with the mourners and the dead person

horoi ringa: the washing of hands when mourners leave the cemetery (to remove the tapu), this is important after any cemetery visit

hui: a gathering of people, a meeting

hupe: nose mucus; a long pendant of mucus from the nose as a sign of grief

hura kohatu; hurahanga pohatu; whakara: unveiling ceremony of memorial stone (tombstone), usually 1-5 years after burial; a Maori adaptation of the Pakeha unveiling of important monuments which replaced hahunga, the traditional exhumation ritual

ika: fish

ika koangaumu: sacrificial fish; this refers to slave killing that used to occur at the tangihanga of a chief

Io: Supreme Creator, foundation of all things, contains all that is positive and negative, active and passive

iwi: tribe(s), nation(s); both tribes and first nation peoples have been used as terms for iwi in this thesis — there is ongoing debate among Maori concerning a preferred translation for iwi

kahukahu: the spirits of dead ancestors or still-born children

kai: food

kairarawa: replenishing ones own powers, a form of cannibalism that was practised on a conquered enemy to gain the mana of the person without degrading them or their tribe

kaitangata: cannibalism

kaitiaki: guardians

kaitoa: eating the strength and courage of another, a form of cannibalism that was practised to degrade and take mana from a conquered tribe

kakaho roimata; watu tangi: mat of sorrow woven with tears for the bones of a dead person

kanohi kitea: the seen face of the dying person, it is very important to visit the dying person while they are still alive; this term can occur in other contexts as a living person

karakia: incantations, prayer

karakia Takutaku: if premature birth or late miscarriage occurred (which was very unusual), a tohunga had to perform a karakia Takutaku over the woman to send away the wairua of the unformed child, it was believed that this could fly around in space or perhaps enter a lizard (mokomoko) and do harm to living people; it was thought that the unformed wairua would not know any feeling of affection or love and would only do harm

karamea; kokowai: red ochre associated with ritual including decoration of the dead

karanga: ceremonial chant of welcome at the start of a hui; only performed by women — singly or chanting simultaneously with their voices threading one over the other; women (usually of the marae) karanga to the manuhiri and women representatives of the manuhiri karanga a greeting to the tangata whenua; one karanga from the manuhiri should be an acknowledgement of the dead of the marae they are visiting as well as the dead they bring on their "shoulders"; remembers and farewells the dead and is particularly loud and long at a tangihanga because death is immediate

kaumatua: Maori elder (male)

kaupapa: basic idea, topic, plan, scheme, proposal

kawa: etiquette, protocol, this is different for different maraes and it is important that the kawa of the tangata whenua is observed

kawakawa: (*Macropiper excelsum*) traditional green leaves of mourning worn at the tangi and placed at the foot of the tupapaku (also wharawhara leaves for some iwi)

kawe mate: carry the death — a ritual carrying of the spirit of the dead person from marae to marae (but not the body); this may take place several months or even a year later and has a kawa similar to that of the tangihanga

kehua; kahukahu: spirits of the dead who linger on earth after death; ghosts who haunt the living

kete: a woven flax basket, kit

kia ora: an informal Maori greeting; also used as an expression of thanks

Kingitanga: a Maori movement to establish a Maori equivalent to the sovereign of England; commonly known as the King Movement

kiri mate: the close mourners, usually the immediate whanau of the dead person; kiri (person, self), mate (death)

koha: gifts of money or food etc given by the manuhiri to the tangata whenua; the cost of death and a hui is shared in this way

kohanga: nest

kohanga reo: language nest for teaching preschoolers and their whanau Maori language

kohatu: unveiling ceremony of the memorial headstone for the dead person

koiwi: bones

kokowai; karamea: red ochre; used to paint the exhumed bones of the dead and also dead bodies; this red earth is the blood of Papatuanuku

konehu: (*Typha augustifolia*) native kidney fern, a plant symbol of death

kopaki: valuable death gifts brought by manuhiri and returned to them on similar occasions; are used to drape over the tupapaku to keep them "warm"

kopikopi: a hula type dance performed by the old women; this is often one of the humorous forms of entertainment to cheer up the mourners at the tangi

kuia: Maori woman elder; grandmother

kura: school

kura kaupapa Maori: school based on Maori language and culture

Kurawaka: a place in Aotearoa known as the pubic region of Papatuanuku

mairihau: Io's assistants in the night realm of te Po

maitu: spirits that may be invoked as familiar spirits and become kaitiaki (guardians), their counterpart in the natural world are taniwha, some of which act as tribal guardians

mamaku; maku: (*Cyathea medullaris*) silver-backed tree fern, used for death to symbolize peace and welcome

mana: power, status and influence

mana tane: male authority, prestige, power and influence

mana wahine: female authority, prestige, power and influence

manawa: heart

manawa wera: expression of appreciation/warmth; a type of chant; specific ones for tangi

Manawatu: a lower central North Island region of Aotearoa, the name of which comes from the major river of the area which Maori named Manawatu

manuhiri: visitors

Maori: indigenous people of Aotearoa; person of the native race

Maoridom: a word combining Maori and English language usage which encompasses all of the domains of Maori people

marae: plaza or forecourt of meeting house — ritual space; this term is now often used to refer to a Maori meeting house and associated buildings and land

Maru: divine assistant (male) in the Underworld, invoked to receive spirits (Marsden, 1975:213); war God who came in the Aotea canoe (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:461)

maru: the jurisdiction of the Gods/Goddesses of the Po

Matariki: the Pleiades grouping of seven stars, heralds the Maori New Year (the first new moon after the rising of Matariki) close to winter solstice; these stars were seen as homes of the Gods, a place where souls returned after death — often mentioned in speeches and karanga at the tangihanga

mate: death (can refer to sickness also); past tense means death and present tense means sick

mate aitu; mate tara whare: death as the result of sickness

mate Atua: sickness attributed to evil spirits/forces; psychological cause of illness

mate Maori: sickness due to Maori causes, now often used instead of mate Atua or mate wairua

mate Pakeha: sickness due to diseases introduced by the Pakeha

mate taua: death in battle

mate wairua: spiritual sickness (can result in death)

mate whaiwhaia: death from "witchcraft"

Maui: a demi-God of Maori myth

Maui-tikitiki-a-Taranga: one of the names for Maui meaning Maui of the topknot of Taranga

mauri: life spark, life principle, essence; people, animate and inanimate objects all have a mauri

Maurianuku; Morianuku: entrance cave to the Underworld

mere: nephrite (greenstone) single-hand weapon, also of ceremonial significance

Miru: legendary Goddess of the underworld through which all souls must pass for Ngati Toa and Ngati Raukawa people (Cowan, 1930:105-106); also described as a male ruler of the Po (Oppenheim, 1973:91) and treacherous spirit (Hiroa [Buck], 1987:517)

moko; mokomoko: a general term for lizards; it was believed that the spirit of an unformed child could perhaps enter a mokomoko (lizard) and do harm to living people

moko kakariki: (*Naultinus elegans*) green gecko; an omen of death

mokopuna: grandchild; grandchildren

Motatau: the door from the Reinga and into the underworld

mua: sacred place

Muriwhenua: an area encompassing the North Cape of the North Island of Aotearoa

murū: customary payment for some offence such as when a person or family was blamed for causing a death by accident; the muru custom involved raiding to get payment for the offence; muru is now usually only through the law courts

nga: the (plural)

Nga Puhi: one of the Northern tribes of Aotearoa; in the region beyond Auckland

Nga Rauru: a tribe on the edge of Whanganui and into Taranaki

ngati; ngai; ati: tribal prefix

Ngati Apa: a tribe of the Rangitikei region of Aotearoa

Ngati Hauiti: one of the tribes of the East Coast of the North Island

Ngati Kahungunu: a tribe mostly from the Hawkes Bay region but also along much of the Eastern lower North Island

Ngati Mutunga: a North Taranaki tribe

Ngati Porou: a tribe of the East Coast region (most eastern coast) of the middle North Island of Aotearoa

Ngati Raukawa: a tribe centred in Otaki and extending to Feilding

Ngati Toa: a tribe of the Porirua, in the north west of Wellington region

Ngati Tuwharetoa: a tribe of the middle North Island, Taupo region

ngeri: rhythmic chant with actions; specific ones for tangi

nikau: (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) native palm

noa: a Maori concept meaning safe, common, free from tapu

o matenga: death journey food, final requests for food or water from the dying; o (provisions for a journey) matenga (death)

oha: last words and property left by the dying person

ohaki; oha a ki; whakatau oha: final speech by a dying person (particularly a chief), contains final instructions, advice or messages for the well-being of individuals, the family or tribe, may sometimes be a prophecy; oha (greeting) ki (speech)

Ohau: An island which is part of Three Kings where the spirit ascends after entering the underworld realm; here the spirits turn to look back at the land they will never see again and to bid farewell; o (provisions for a journey), hau (wind, air, breath)

Oneirehia: Twilight Sands; name of a beach which is passed over on the spirit journey

oriori: lullaby songs, some of these express the grief of parents over the death of children

pa: traditionally a fortified Maori hilltop village; sometimes used interchangeably with marae to mean the land and buildings around a Maori meeting house

pae arahi: leader over the threshold; usually a host person (a local who accompanies the visitor(s), or a person well known to the local people) who leads the manuhiri in

pae mate; pani; kiri mate; whare mate: mourners, they remain tapu until the dead person is interred, they do not make or reply to ceremonial speeches throughout the tangi

Pakeha: a term for non-Maori, in particular Europeans (white people) of Aotearoa/New Zealand

pani: a bereaved person, orphan

papa tupapaku: special mortuary house for the high ranking dead

papa whakairo: carved box for the burial of bones or a dead body

Papatuanuku; Papa: the Earth, Earth mother and wife/partner of the sky father Ranginui (Rangi)

parekawakawa o te whenua; rau wharawhara o te aroha: garland of compassion, leaves of compassion

pihe: chant at funeral rituals which is associated with warfare

piwaiwaka; piwakawaka; tirairaka; tiwaiwaka: (*Rhipidura flabellifera* and *R. fuliginosa*) the fantail, a native bird of Aotearoa

Po : the underworld realm of Hine-nui-te-Po to which the spirits of the dead journey

po : the night

po whakamoemoe: the night after burial traditionally known as night causing sleep or night causing marriage, a time of merriment and matchmaking

po whakamutunga: the last night before burial, includes entertainment, singing and storytelling, helps the family to be reconciled with the real world

pohutukawa: (*Metrosideros excelsa*) a native tree of Aotearoa

pokeka : a kind of chant, specific ones for tangi

ponga: (*Cyathea dealbata*) a tree fern native to Aotearoa

popoa: sacred food eaten by priests and a potion of this was offered to the dead

poroaki: request made by a dying chief

poroporoaki: a time of farewell; a farewell speech; a farewell call by men as they enter a bereaved marae; farewell messages (by spokespeople) to the dead person (whose wairua still lingers) at the tangi; may also refer to a final speech of farewell by a dying person such as a chief to the assembled tribe

potae taua: a cap of dry seaweed or other material worn by widows during the mourning period

powhiri: welcome, an action chant of welcome with the waving of branches at the tangi, may include a waving of garments

Puapua taua: wreath worn as a sign of mourning

- puawananga; pikiarero:** (*Clematis paniculata*) the native clematis, a plant/flower symbol associated with death
- puha; puwha:** (*Sonchus oleraceus*) sow-thistle, a small leafy plant (weed) native to Aotearoa which is eaten as a vegetable
- pure:** purification rites, neutralizing the tapu
- pure hahu:** exhumation or disinterment rites
- pure koiwi:** interment of human bones
- pure tupapaku:** funeral rites
- pure whakanoa (pure-whakanoa):** to neutralize or ward off the effects of a powerful opposing mana, performed where a tupapaku has been lying before burial by reciting karakia and a ritual eating of cooked food at this spot
- ra:** day; sun
- Ra Nehu; Ra Tapuke:** day of interment, the grave is dug early on this day
- rangi:** sky
- Ranginui (Rangi):** the Sky Father, husband/partner of Papatuanuku; Rangi is also a name for a sky underworld region
- Rangitane:** a tribe of the Palmerston North and Dannevirke regions; also still inhabits a small area at the top of the South Island; tangata whenua of Palmerston North
- Rarohenga:** underworld, night region, te Po
- Ratana:** multi-tribal Maori spiritual and political movement
- raupatu:** land confiscation; conquest; to conquer, to fight
- Reinga; Cape Reinga:** northern most point of Aotearoa
- Reinga Wairua (Rerengawairua):** the Leaping-Off Place of the Spirits
- reo:** language (may be used specifically to mean the Maori language); voice
- Rimuimotau:** the floating seaweed which fringes the entrance to the Underworld in the sea at Rerengawairua
- rimurimu (rimu):** seaweed, sometimes used as a symbol of mourning; used also for taking the tapu off persons or places connected with death
- Ringatu:** multi-tribal Maori spiritual and political movement
- Rohe:** the ferryman in Rarohenga, the realm of the dead, who ferries dead spirits in his canoe
- roimata:** tears; a term used for a gift at a tangi which may be an heirloom — if it is placed with its handle, head or border towards the dead body it means the gift is permanent and if it is placed towards those who have given it, it is to be returned at the end of the tangi; these gifts pay tribute to the mana of the dead person and are received with great ceremony; a famous heirloom may be wept over and greeted as a long-lost friend

rua koiwi; toma: burial cave

Ruapehu: a mountain in the central North Island

Ruamoko: last child of Papatuanuku and Ranginui who was still at the breast/in the womb of Papa when Tane separated Rangi and Papa and ended the time of darkness; became the God of earthquakes and in his underground realm he was in close proximity to Hine-nui-te-Po whom he wooed and who accepted him as her husband

rukutanga tupapaku: body exhumed

taha Maori: relating to Maori

taha wairua: realm of the spirit, spirituality; taha (side), wairua (spirit)

tahuaroa (tahua roa): a ceremony that frequently followed the burials of important chiefs and chieftainesses; each tribe who attended the tangihanga in turn was ceremonially presented with a gift by the family of the dead person; individual well known chiefs were also presented with a gift in this way; the gift was often of food but cloaks were also given, these material gifts were in recognition of the social importance of the recipients; this ceremony formed the climax of the tangihanga but is now no longer practised; tahua (heap of food), roa (long)

taiaha: staff, long-hand weapon, also of ceremonial significance

takahi whare; takahi: trample the house ceremony — a ritual performed after the tangihanga at the home of the dead person to lift the tapu and send off a lingering spirit; begins at the gate of the property, varies from tribe to tribe

tama: son, male child

Tama Ngakau Marie: Son Of Peace (a popular Maori hymn)

Tane; Tane Mahuta: Maori God of fertility, of the forest and forest birds and animals

tangata: person, people; long vowel sound indicates the plural form

tangata whenua: local people, people of the land, people belonging to the marae

tangi: tears, weeping, wailing, mourning, emotional pain openly expressed, keening; often used to mean tangihanga

tangi atahu; tangi korero: talking wail, a female mourner tells of her grief in a spontaneous chant, talking through her tears

tangi whakahuahua: tears and mourning laments which are also messages of grief and farewell, farewell speech

tangihanga (tangi); uhanga: Maori funeral, mourning ritual

taniwha: a dragon-like monster usually residing in deep water; may be a helpful guardian or a dangerous enemy

taonga: precious belonging or gift; the tupapaku (dead body) is a most treasured and sacred taonga at the tangihanga

tapu: sacred; forbidden; untouchable; associated with traditional laws of behaviour which if breached can result in illness or death; death is surrounded by powerful tapu

Taranga: demi-Goddess, both of this world and not of this world; mother of Maui

Tatau o te Po: portal of the Underworld; the courtyard in front of Wharaurangi, the house of Hine-nui-te-Po; also the name of the house of the treacherous spirit Miru of the Underworld

Tauwi: non-Maori

Taumataihaumu; Haumu: a summit which spirits ascend on the spirit journey and from which they look back to farewell the land

tauparapara; tau patere: a class of chants used at the beginning or end of a speech by an orator — conveys the mana of the speaker; there are specific tauparapara for a tangi

tauwhiri: waving of garments as welcome

te: the (singular)

Te Ao Maori: the Maori world, where a person is in harmony with the natural, physical and spiritual world through maintaining customary practices and the laws of tapu

Te Arai: a lone hill which is on the spirit path travelled by the spirits of the dead; it is believed that the spirits place a plant emblem from their homeland on this hill such as bracken from Taranaki, nikau (native palm) from inland areas and seaweed from the coast; the veil between the heavens, the space between the next spiritual dimension

Te Atiawa: a tribe from the Taranaki and Wellington regions

Te Tiriti o Waitangi: The Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document which allowed the British to govern British subjects (all Tauwi) and promised Maori sovereignty (tino rangitiratanga) in the Maori translation as well as citizen rights as British subjects

Te Whanau-a-Apanui: a tribe of the East Cape of the North Island

tino rangitiratanga: sovereignty, chieftainship

tiwaiwaka: (*Rhipidura flabellifera* and *R. fuliginosa*) fantail, a native bird of Aotearoa

tohunga: a Maori expert; he or she may be a practitioner of health and knowledgeable in matters of the laws of tapu, can advise on how to make amends for a hara (breach of tapu), uses karakia and other methods of spiritual cleansing

toma: burial cave

Tuhoe: a Maori tribe from the Ureweras; a region of the upper central North Island

tuhua: obsidian piece used for self-mutilation in showing grief for a dead person

tuku i te wairua (tuku): a karakia to free the spirit from the body and assist it on its way to the spirit world; purifies and cleanses the spirit, encourages the living to let go of the dead person

tupapaku: dead body, must never be left unattended at the tangihanga

tupoupou: chief mourner(s)

tupuna; tipuna: ancestor(s); a long vowel sound indicates the plural form

turoro: the seriously/terminally ill person

uha; uwha: the female element

uru mahora: snippings of the long tresses of women, usually of women most closely associated to the dead person (often the widow's hair), which are placed in the coffin as a last sign of love

urupa: burial ground

utu: a traditional attitude that a death must be avenged, particularly a death in battle; the revenge may not be taken for many years after the death but is well remembered and constantly referred to; today the tears that are cast on the marae are usually the only utu

wahi tapu: sacred place, cemetery

wahine: woman or women; a long vowel sound indicates the plural and a short vowel sound indicates the singular

wai: water

waiata: chants, songs, hymns; dance may be a component

waiata tangi: songs of mourning

Waingunguru: Waters-of-lamentation; one of the streams that is crossed by spirits on the spirit journey to the Po

Waioraropo (Waioraropoo): Water of the Underworld, a stream crossed on the spirit journey; if the spirit drinks from this it means there is no longer any possibility of returning to the world of the living

Waiorata; Waiora-a-Tane (Taane): the final stream to be crossed on the spirit journey, named so because of its reddish water; it flows to the pohutukawa tree with the root to the Underworld

wairua: spirit, ghost; believed to linger by the body for a period of 3 days after death

Waitangi: A landmark in the very north of the North Island of Aotearoa known for the historic signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi), the founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand which provided for British governorship and settlement rights, and Maori tribal sovereignty and rights as British citizens

waka: canoe; box

Waka o Aitua: the canoe of death; a term used for the coffin

waka tupapaku; waka whakanoa: burial chest elaborately carved from wood, for the bones of highborn Maori following the exhumation ritual; these were then ritually interred in a secret cave dwelling by a tohunga; waka (canoe, box), tupapaku (body of dead person), whakanoa (making free from tapu)

watu tangi: this translates as weaving crying; this is the name of a mat a widow made for the bones of her dead husband in the days of the ritual of hahunga; tears are woven in with this mat

whaikorero: ceremonial speeches performed on the marae usually only by men (women may whaikorero in some iwi)

whakahemohemo: the act of dying

whakakotahi whakaaro: unity of effort and support from tangata whenua and manuhiri; the work is shared

whakamomori: suicide; wives (particularly the older wives of chiefs) frequently did this out of grief, after the death of their husband; also a profound depression that can lead to suicide

whakanoa: lifting a tapu

whakanoatanga tuarua: the second removal of the tapu associated with death

whakaoriori potaka: a lament

whakapapa: ancestry; genealogy and lines of seniority

whakara: unveiling ceremony for the memorial stone for a dead person

whakara kohatu: erect a funerary memorial stone

whakatake: miscarriage

whakataumiro: drying and preserving of bodies which occurred to some extent in the South Island

whakawhanaungatanga: gathering of family and friends

whanau: family/families (extended family/families); a death of a relation, even if not known well, has a deep affect — the sharing of the same genealogy is an important dimension for Maori

whanau pani; whanau piri; kiri mate; pae mate; whare mate: the grieving family, the close family of the dead person

wharawhara; whara: (*Astelia banksii*) traditional green leaves of mourning worn at the tangi and placed at the foot of the tupapaku (kawakawa leaves also used for this purpose)

Wharaurangi: the house of Hine-nui-te-Po

whare: house

whare-a-apakura: house of lamentation; the dead body is often housed in a separate area to the meeting house in a shelter or tent which has room for the mourners to stay with the dead; this is a very tapu area

whare mate: house of death

whare o aitua; whare o te mate: house of misfortune, house of death; the name given to the female sex organs in memory of the Goddess and ancestress Hine-nui-te-Po who

defeated the trickster Maui; Maui attempted to defeat death and win immortality for people by conquering Hine-nui-te-Po — to achieve this he tried to gain living entry to the gateway for the dead in her vagina while she slept but she closed her legs and he was destroyed by the obsidian teeth in her vagina

whare potae; whare taua: house of mourning — used in the figurative sense, refers to the state of mourning rather than an actual house

whare tangata: house of the people; a metaphoric term for woman (which pays tribute to women as the bearers of humankind); uterus.

whare taua: small house where a widow laments her husband

whare wananga; whare kura: house of learning; on completion of the building a sacrifice of a dog, man, woman, child or slave was made and the blood only presented to the mua (sacred place)

whata; whatarangi: traditional Maori platform on a tree or isolated rock where the dead body was suspended; stage for the corpse or a carved box with the corpse in it

Whiro: divine assistant (female) in the Underworld, connected with mourning rites and symbolized by the greenery at the tangihanga (traditionally kawakawa or wharawhara leaves) (Marsden, 1975:213); others describe Whiro as a male God of the underworld (Oppenheim, 1973:91), or as a killer of men (Alpers, 1986:75); Hiroa [Buck] (1987) describes Whiro as an opponent of Tane who retired to the Underworld where he continues to nurse his animosity to Tane and his descendents and represents darkness and evil

Whitianga: a town in the Coromandel region

APPENDIX 1:
THE PALMERSTON NORTH WOMEN'S HOMEDeATH SUPPORT GROUP
PHILOSOPHY AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

palmerston north
women's homedeath
support group.

We believe that we have been socialised into fearing death and into handing it over to the male dominated professions of doctors, funeral directors and the clergy.

Consequently death is now usually hidden away in mortuaries and funeral parlours and treated with detachment.

We are committed to changing this for ourselves and others.

We are reclaiming our women's death culture, the knowledge and the skills of our foremothers who laid out and cared for the dead at home.

We want to again show respect and love for the bodies of our dead.

We are going to do this by:

- ♀ - gathering the information, knowledge and skills that we need and sharing these with others.
- ♀ - empowering ourselves and others to find the death rituals that feel right for each of us.
- ♀ - offering support for people who choose to care for their dead at home.
- ♀ - promoting these death choices in the community.

APPENDIX 2:

HOMEDeATH CARING FOR OUR DEAD BEFORE BURIAL/CREMATION

HOMEDeATH
CARING FOR OUR DEAD BEFORE
BURIAL/CREMATION



A SELF HELP GUIDE

Palmerston North Womens
HomeDeath Support Group
P.O. Box 4253
Palmerston North
(06) 358 7139

Research: Jean Hera with the PN Women's Homedeath Support Group

Cover Logo: Dyan Prujean

Cover Text: Rebekah Coogan

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Our Philosophy

We believe that we have been socialised into fearing death and into handing it over to the male dominated professions of doctors, funeral directors and the clergy. Consequently death is now usually hidden away in mortuaries and funeral parlours and treated with detachment.

We are committed to changing this for ourselves and others. We are reclaiming our women's death culture, the knowledge and skills of our foremothers who laid out and cared for the dead at home. We want to again show respect and love for the bodies of our dead.

Remembering Death as Women's Work and Women's Ritual – a Home Experience

In Aotearoa, Maori society had its own skilled people and its own methods for preparing the tupapaku (dead body) for the duration of the tangihanga (funeral). Methods appear to have differed depending on the tribe and their tribal region. Some used daily salt water washes of the tupapaku and others used shark oil. The tangihanga traditionally often lasted 2 or 3 weeks as the body was not buried while mourners were still arriving. The tangihanga now usually lasts 3 days.

Traditionally women performed the preparation of the tupapaku in Maori society but it is not clear to us as yet if this was exclusively a women's domain. One written account by a Maori woman states that because of the tapu of death, laying out the dead was exclusively women's work in her whanau. Another, relating the experience of a kuia at a hui in Whitianga, states that her father (a Ringatu minister) blessed her and showed her what to do when she began this work.

Maori women (particularly older women) have traditional roles at the tangihanga that are still practiced today and these show their prominent role in caring for the dead. Only women perform the death wail at the time of death. This was the traditional way of communicating the news of the death which was then networked around the community. The karanga (ceremonial call of welcome)

which calls the tupapaku and the people onto the marae for the tangihanga is also the role of women. It is women who perform the tangi (ritual wailing) throughout the duration of the tangihanga and it is women who act as chief mourners to keep the vigil watch over the dead body before burial. There are also specific customs for lifting the tapu of death which are the responsibility of Maori women.

Pakeha are increasingly recognising that we can learn much from the traditional Maori ways of death. The Maori way of death involves continually keeping the body of the dead person company before burial. It is a time for honouring and cherishing the tupapaku over several days in a ritual time which involves an honest sharing of emotion about that person and the grief felt at their death. It is a time of emotional release and renewal.

It is less recognised, however, that the present mainstream Pakeha experience that sees death treated with detachment and hidden away from life as much as possible is not our death culture as Pakeha. It was not handed down to us over many generations by our ancestors but has been a recent intervention. Watching over and caring for our dead, as is the Maori custom, is also our culture as Pakeha, and we need only go back less than a hundred years to discover this.

In Britain, for example, women known as old wives or handywomen traditionally laid out the dead. These skilled women often combined the work of midwifery with caring for the dead. Laying out involved a knowledge of ritual as well as the practical skills of preparing the dead body. The body was washed (and salt water washes was one traditional method to delay decomposition before burial), the eyes and mouth closed and the body positioned with the face left uncovered until burial. The body was shown respect and love. The women doing this work would likely have had family or community connections with the dead person.

British custom demanded that a dead person be cared for at home until burial. "Watching the dead" was a very important part of this as it was considered unthinkable to leave a dead person alone even for a single minute before burial. There was always someone to keep the dead company and to watch over them. Family, friends and neighbours came to offer support to the family and farewell the dead person. Prior to influences stemming from the Victorian era, children were always included in the death rituals.

Laying Out and Caring For the Body of the Dead Person

Initial After Death Care

It is important to 'lay out' the dead body relatively soon after death has occurred. The use of a plastic undersheet will help you protect a mattress. Urine should be emptied from the bladder. This can be done by putting pressure on the bladder (the area just above the pubic bone). Bowels are likely to seep also. Old nursing texts discuss the use of nonabsorbant cotton wool to plug the body orifices when laying out a body. You may feel this is an unnecessary invasion of the person's body and prefer to use incontinence pads (or something similar) that can be replaced when necessary.

Wash the dead person's body, clean the teeth and mouth, clothe them and comb their hair etc. The head can be turned gently to one side to allow any fluid in the mouth to escape. Shut the eyes by gently closing the eyelids – if they reopen they can be held closed for a few minutes and then should remain closed. An old method to keep the eyes closed was to place pennies on the closed eyelids. Putting pads of moist cotton-wool on the closed eyelids is another method. The mouth may need to be held shut by placing a rolled bandage or other item of the right width under the chin. An old practice was to use a bandage or cloth tied under the chin and around the head to keep the jaw in place until rigor mortis has set in. The arms and legs can be positioned as you feel is appropriate. An old way was to bind the ankles together to hold the legs in position. It is a good idea to prop the dead person's head up a little on a pillow and to place the hands on top of the body to help the blood drain and so improve the look of the face and hands which are prominent body areas to view and touch.

Rigor mortis will set in for a period beginning a few hours after death. Rigor mortis is a term used to refer to the stiffening of the dead body that occurs soon after death. The average onset of this is about six hours after death and this stiffness continues for about 24 hours. Rigor mortis affects the face first so it is important to close the eyelids and jaw in the first 3 hours. During the period of rigor mortis you will not be able to change the position of the person's body

as it will remain stiffly in the position it was in when rigor mortis first occurred.

Delaying Decomposition and Continuing the Care of the Body

There are methods of preservation that can be used other than the chemical embalming methods used by funeral directors. In warm conditions this is more of an issue. Frozen slicker (cooler) pads or bags of ice can be used to delay decomposition. These will need to be replaced as they thaw. The body rather than the head or arms and legs is the more important area to keep cool. It is important to remember that for Maori and some other cultures it would be very inappropriate to place items such as slicker pads that have been used to cool a dead person's body in a freezer used for food.

Daily washing of the body will also help preservation. Salt water washes is an old method used by many cultures – salt being a natural preservative. We as yet have no recipe of how much salt to water is used. Perfumed oils could also be used to freshen the body.

Hair and nails continue to grow after death. A man may therefore need to be shaved to maintain a usual clean shaven appearance. Fluid may seep from the tissues out through the skin - particularly from large people. You may need to mop this up or change a sheet or clothing which is next to the body. It seems that a dead person was often not dressed in their burial clothes until just before the funeral. Draping the dead person's body in a sheet or similar, which allowed for easier access in the washing and other maintenance needed, would have been of practical importance in the daily care of the body. The traditional winding sheet or shroud that was used would also have allowed for this continuing care of the dead body before burial.

Requirements and Choices When a Death Occurs

Dispelling Common Misconceptions

You don't need to involve a funeral director or priest.
A dead body doesn't need to be embalmed [unless flying the dead body internationally]. Ashes may be transported anywhere.

Forms/certificates Required by Law

Death Registry

You are legally required to hand in 3 forms/certificates to your Births and Deaths Registry (at your local court house/Department of Justice) within 3 days after burial/cremation. If the death is not a coroner's case these forms are:

1. The 'Medical Certificate of Causes of Death' (form R.G. 50) signed by the doctor, which the doctor will supply and fill out.
2. A death registration form (form R.G. 28). You need to fill out this form and sign it where it says signature of funeral director, if doing this yourself. This form can be obtained from your local Births and Deaths Registry.
3. The 'Burial Certificate' (form R.G. 38). You need to fill this in and sign it. Two different signatures are involved – one from the person in charge of the burial and one from the person officiating at the burial or the minister. This form is also available from your local Births and Deaths Registry.

If the death is a coroner's case a coroner's burial order is required and this replaces the death certificate signed by the doctor that you would otherwise hand in to the Births and Deaths Registry. The coroner's burial order authorises the release of the dead person's body. This completed form is collected from the hospital mortuary along with the body when release has been authorised.

Life Extinct Form

If a duty doctor rather than the person's usual doctor attends after a death then he or she will fill out a life extinct form. This form should be kept until burial or cremation but does not have to be lodged anywhere. The dead person's doctor uses this form to help with details on the cause of death certificate and may not need to examine the dead person's body. If a cremation is involved then the doctor filling out the cause of death certificate has to see the body. If the death is a coroner's case then the police uplift the life extinct form.

Cemetery/Crematorium

Arranging a burial or cremation usually involves meeting with the cemetery overseer (sexton) at the council cemetery of your choice and/or where the crematorium is situated to fill out the form(s) required (as well as to make other arrangements such as appointment times for the burial/cremation and purchasing a plot etc). Exceptions to this include when using a private or church owned cemetery or waahi tapu (urupaa) [Maori burial ground] for a burial. If

you want to make these arrangements yourself rather than through a funeral director remember that you will need to pay in advance. Also take along the three forms as above (or photocopies) – you will be asked for a copy of the death certificate or coroner's burial order.

- For a Burial at a Council Cemetery:

This involves filling out one form which includes a few details about the dead person and the name of a person in charge of the arrangements (in the place provided for the funeral director's name). This form also includes the location of the plot and the depth of the grave.

- For a Cremation at a Council Crematorium:

If a cremation is chosen then four additional forms are required. (If you are not using a funeral director then you will need to do this with the help of the cemetery/crematorium overseer. He or she may also want to see you have the other forms required.)

1. 'Certificate of Medical Practitioner'

This is another form to be filled in by the doctor who fills out the death certificate or on behalf of the coroner if the death is a coroner's case. If the death is a coroner's case then this completed form is made available for collection along with the coroner's burial order which allows the release of the dead person's body (these forms are collected when the dead person's body is collected from the mortuary).

2. 'Permission to Cremate'

This form is to be filled out by one of the designated doctors to take on this role (Medical Referees or deputies or Medical Officer of Health). The cemetery overseer will know how to contact these people in your area. (This may be paid for as part of the cremation fees or paid separately, so check on this with the cemetery overseer.)

3. 'Register of Cremations'

This form gives a few details about the dead person, the name of one of the people in charge of the arrangements and states what is to be done with the ashes after cremation, for example, taken away by (name of person) or scattered in garden.

4. 'Application For Cremation'

This includes the name, address, and occupation of the person making the application for the cremation, their relationship to the dead person and details about the death. It includes the signature of the applicant and a witness.

When the Death is a Coroner's Case and Autopsy/postmortem

If the death is made a coroner's case [in the case of accidental death, suspicious death, murder, suicide or unknown cause of death or even if the person hadn't been to a doctor for 28 days before death (though doctors can use their own discretion in terms of this last instance)] then the body of the dead person is kept at the mortuary and access to this (other than supervised viewing of the body) may be denied until the coroner releases the body. If a coroner requires an autopsy/postmortem of the body, the next of kin have no right to refuse this.

If the death is not a coroner's case and hospital staff request permission to do an autopsy, it is your right as next of kin to decide whether or not to agree to this.

The Hospital Mortuary

If a person dies in (or on the way to) hospital or if a death is a coroner's case then the dead person's body will go to a hospital mortuary. The nursing staff involved can assist family and friends with personal needs associated with a death. They will liaise with the mortuary staff (the mortuary supervisor or assistant) on your behalf.

The mortuary supervisor or assistant acts as a liaison person with all those involved when a death occurs - the medical practitioners, ward staff, medical records personnel, friends and family, funeral directors, the police and the coroner's office. Delays in releasing a body are usually due to the paper work required from the various workers involved. In some cases investigation procedures also cause delays.

If you are collecting your relative or friend's dead body from the mortuary it is likely that hospital ward staff will have helped you to arrange this. Take identification to show who you are. If you want to see the dead person or collect them and you don't have ward staff to help you arrange this, then the hospital operator can help you make contact with the mortuary staff.

Transport

You can transport a dead body yourself. People may use stretchers, coffins or mattresses to pick up the dead person from the mortuary. A van or station wagon etc is likely to be required for transport. The main concern of regulations

on this is sensitivity to the public. There is an expectation of dignity, good taste and non-offence. A dead body going from a hospital ward to the mortuary will be covered from view. Similarly you will be expected to have the dead person's body you are transporting covered from public view. A blanket or other cover could be used to achieve this.

Coffin/casket

You can go to a funeral director to purchase a coffin only (though some funeral directors may discourage this choice or refuse your request outright). Some local cabinet makers or specialised casket companies may supply coffins to you direct (again some are likely to refuse your requests). You will need to know the height and build of the dead person when purchasing a coffin.

If you want to make a coffin yourself, you may need to line it with plastic or heavy duty paper to ensure there will be no seepage. We understand that coffins purchased from funeral directors are often lined with coarse paper similar to building paper. Council workers at the crematorium or cemetery as well as funeral directors may tell you that a homemade coffin does not meet requirements so this needs to be checked out in advance. Our local cemetery overseer accepts standard size wooden coffins up to 24 inches wide at the shoulders (26 inches wide is the absolute most that can fit in the crematorium furnace). This can be made with nails and/or screws and be of any colour. Some coffins have been accepted that do not have handles although this is not a preferred option. A compromise for people unable to build a coffin but wanting to create a special final resting place for a loved friend or family member could be to buy the cheapest plain chip board coffin available from a casket/coffin maker or funeral director and then line the interior and paint or varnish the coffin yourself.

Additional Health/Burial Regulations

The Health (Burial) Regulations 1964 give additional requirements for cases of death due to contagious disease and in the area of death causing a public nuisance.

Newspaper Death Notices

Placing death notices in newspapers is not always straight forward. Newspaper staff involved are likely to require proof of the death (past experience with hoax death notices is the reason given for this). Our local paper will accept

death notices not done by funeral directors if they can see the death certificate signed by a doctor or be given the name of the doctor who signed the death certificate so they can contact him/her (this enables the death notice to be done over the phone). If a death notice has been published previously by another newspaper this is also acceptable evidence. If you still have problems (despite having some of the above evidence) ask to speak to someone more senior.

Burial

Burial is regulated by government legislation and council by-laws. It is very difficult to avoid being buried in a recognised cemetery. The 1964 Burial and Cremation Act states that it is unlawful to bury the body of a dead person in any land not being a cemetery, denominational burial ground, private burial ground or Maori burial ground if there is a cemetery or burial ground within 32 kilometres of the place of death. If you plan to bury the person's body on private land that is not a recognised burial ground then you will require the local council's permission. This is likely to be very difficult to achieve. We have however heard stories of people who have done this, sought permission afterwards and got away with it.

Many cemeteries (particularly in cities) will not allow you to dig the grave yourself but you should be able to fill in the grave if this is what you want - but again you would need to arrange this beforehand. You may use your own shovels or arrange to use those belonging to the cemetery. You should also be able to arrange to see the grave after its dug but prior to the time of the burial if this is what you want.

Burial At Sea

It is possible (yet very difficult) to arrange a burial at sea for a person who dies in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

A legal burial at sea requires:

1. Authority in writing from a coroner to permit this, and the coroner is likely to want a significant reason for allowing a burial at sea (eg. the dead person having dedicated their life to work on the sea).
2. An application in writing to the local Superintendent of Mercantile Marine with the name of the dead person and the written permission from the coroner. The burial at sea is then required to take place within one of the 7 specified locations for this. The coffin must not be airtight and is to be weighted so that it cannot float. Burial at sea can also become very difficult due to rough and changeable weather conditions.

Cremation

The actual cremation takes one and a half hours but a number of further hours for the ashes to cool, be sifted for metal and ground. The crematorium workers then put the ashes into a simple plastic container. You can discuss getting all the remains, including metal nails and screws from the coffin with the cemetery overseer. If you want the nails and screws also then this would require two containers. Check that you will be getting all the ashes back (if this is what you want) as we have had recent reports that it has been common practice to only return some of the ashes. A reason we were given for this is that all the ashes may not fit into the standard container used!!! This practice no longer happens in our area but the charcoal ash left from the coffin, as well as the metal, is usually removed from the ashes that are returned or scattered.

Our local cemetery overseer has allowed people (3 people maximum) to watch the coffin enter the crematorium furnace. One woman has also arranged to sit for the hour and a half that it takes for the actual cremation. We were advised that the coffin must be closed and remain closed when arriving at the crematorium and when entering the furnace. If it is a time when a number of cremations are happening in close proximity then the closed coffin may have to be kept in cool storage until a furnace is free. It is attempted, however, to avoid such delays.

It is illegal to cremate a dead human body in other than an approved crematorium. It is interesting to note however that the fine for illegal cremation is less than the cost of paying for a legal cremation!!!

Cremated ashes can be scattered or buried anywhere really. Putting human remains in the sea or other waterway where food is gathered is however against Maori cultural requirements.

Funeral or Memorial Services/Rituals

Location of Memorial or Funeral Service/Ritual

You can basically have a memorial service/ritual (ie. without the dead body present) in any public or private place. Funerals (with the dead body present) however do not allow as much scope. Some halls may allow this or you could choose a private garden or home/garage etc rather than the usual church or

chapel service.

Organising the Memorial or Funeral Service/Ritual

The most usual person to perform a funeral or memorial service/ritual is a priest or funeral director. Involving a funeral celebrant rather than a priest or funeral director to facilitate a funeral or memorial service/ritual is a newer option which is now growing in popularity. The larger centres particularly, now have people doing this work and any person can take on this role for family, friends or acquaintances (see Marian Barnes's book). In each case the planning of the funeral is usually done in consultation with the family. You may instead prefer to have a group of people contributing to the planning and presentation of a funeral or memorial ritual/service.

The Importance of Ritual

Death rituals play an important part in the process of acknowledging and working through our grief. Rituals can provide us with powerful experiences that symbolize transition, healing and continuity. The death of someone close to us is one of the hardest times of transition in our lives. Death rituals can help us to mark and share the reality of this difficult time with others and work to provide an environment of support and community. Rituals are often a repeated act, a cultural norm that guides what we do. Rituals feel good when they are personally meaningful and we feel a connected part of them.

Too often the death rituals/services of today don't provide for this meaningful experience. This may be because the priest, funeral director or funeral celebrant does not know the dead person or those close to them (and it is important to remember that anyone close to the dead person may be suitable to speak about their life). The funeral or other death ritual may also not feel 'right' because our culture, spirituality or our way of being does not relate to the words said or the symbols used etc.

There are a number of different types of death rituals. As well as the time of the tangihanga, funeral or memorial ritual/service, these may include a blessing to the person at the time of death and a cleansing of the house after the dead body has been removed. A death ritual may be as simple as lighting a candle of remembrance, planting a tree in memory of the person or placing flowers on a grave or in a vase. Sometimes simple gestures such as these done individually or collectively can feel meaningful and healing.

Personal experiences and ideas concerning alternative memorial or funeral services and other death rituals can be obtained from the P.N Women's Homedead Support Group, Marian Barnes (funeral celebrant) in her book and the Funeral Choice Collective (see our recommended reading list).

Legal Next of Kin

Next of kin has a legal definition – husband/wife or family of birth/adoption. This is an issue of particular significance for gay and lesbian people and bisexuals (in same sex relationships) who can be denied access to the dying process, the dead body and the funeral of their long time partner by family members who will not accept them. Gays, lesbians or bisexuals in long term same sex relationships can however jointly fill out power of attorney forms with their solicitor to make each other next of kin. Not all solicitors are aware of this option and a greater access to this information is likely through gay, lesbian and/or bisexual rights/support groups. This is also a potential issue for heterosexual couples living in a defacto relationship but not legally considered next of kin.

The final decision concerning after death arrangements is granted to the trustees named in a dead person's will. It is important then, when naming trustees in your will, to feel confident that these people know what your after death wishes are, and that they agree to these.

Costs You May Encounter

Death can be very costly and for this reason also very stressful - ie. also a financial crisis. It can easily come to \$3,000-\$4,000 for a basic funeral using a funeral director (and the cost of a memorial stone is in addition to this). The following list provides estimates of costs you may encounter and also discusses issues we feel are important in relation to these costs.

Funeral Directors Professional Services Fee - \$1,000 - \$1,500

This service fee includes the cost of the embalming process, the stay of the dead body at the funeral directors premises (if you want this) and covers the co-ordinating work that funeral directors perform such as the filling out and delivery of the various forms required.

It should be noted however that some funeral directors will waive their fee in the case of a stillbirth. If a funeral director is required for a stillbirth, it may pay to ask local firms if this is their policy.

Transport Charges - transport charges are in addition to a funeral director's professional service fee and can be very expensive if long distance travel is involved.

Casket/Coffin - Usual lower cost range \$350 - \$1,100 (Our research in the Manawatu area found that the cheapest casket costs for a reasonably tall adult are over \$700 from a funeral directors and \$300 direct from a manufacturer.)

Casket Wreath - \$65-\$100 (If funeral directors are arranging this they may receive a commission from the florist which increases the price you pay for the casket wreath.)

Donations - to priest or funeral celebrant etc - \$50-\$100

Newspaper Notices - \$30 - \$200

Council Charges for Burial or Cremation - Burial - \$600 - \$1,600, Cremation - \$200 - \$500. There are additional charges for weekends, public holidays and out of town etc.

Charitable Aid Funeral

The council can waive the cost of a plot and interment etc if there is no money to pay for it. A headstone however is not permissible until family or friends pay the council costs. There can be a grave marker with the person's name on it, however, either supplied by a funeral director or made by a friend or family member.

Memorial Headstone/Plaque - If you go direct to the makers of memorial stones and plaques you can bypass funeral director commissions (of up to 20%) which increase the price you pay.

There is a lot of variation in cost depending, for example, on what type and size of stone or plaque you require and what colour lettering, whether you choose rough rock top and sides or if all are to be polished, whether you choose a stone or plaster base, how many words you require, if you want vases, the particular cemetery requirements and choices etc. When choosing a plot in a cemetery it is important to check out what choices of stone or plaque are allowable in the cemetery (and the particular part of the cemetery you are considering) and if this meets your needs in relation to the type of memorial stone/plaque you are likely to want.

When you are considering a memorial stone or plaque to purchase, don't sign anything until you've made your final decision. There have been instances of people who have mistakenly signed an order form for a stone they didn't want and couldn't afford, but were then forced to purchase. It may be a good idea to have a look at the range of designs you can choose from and then get a number of quotes for the particular memorial stone or plaque you decide on. Be sure to check that your quotes include GST.

Extra issues of significance may include whether the lettering is hand crafted or computer set; if you want a photo (standard size ceramic photos should be no more than \$250 for a single or \$300 for a double); if you require matching with another stone; designs you want crafted on the stone (small designs are complimentary from some monumental masons and sculptors); if the type of stone or plaque stains and how well the stone or plaque will last. Some of the new glass set in resin memorials, for example, are cracking and splitting soon after they have been erected.

A low cost alternative memorial is to leave a grave marker (instead of a permanent memorial stone/plaque) on the grave. This can also be a special memorial, particularly if made by a friend or family member. You could discuss this possibility with the cemetery overseer.

Other

There can also be additional costs of thank you cards, postage, catering etc.

Benefits/Entitlements

Accident Compensation Corporation - ACC provides payments in the case of accidental deaths. There is a survivors grant of \$1900 [at the time of writing this booklet] towards funeral costs. A surviving spouse/partner may be entitled to a lump sum payment of up to \$4000. This is reduced if that spouse/partner is earning. Each surviving child is entitled to a lump sum payment of up to \$2000 if fully dependent on the parent who died. There are also entitlements of weekly payments to spouses which are a percentage of their dead partner/spouse's earnings.

NZ Income Support Service (Department of Social Welfare) - Lump sum

survivors funeral grants are available from the NZ Income Support Service for superannuitants, other beneficiaries and low income people who are the next of kin. The maximum [at the time of writing this booklet] is \$1,016 but this is means tested. This grant may need to be applied for before paying the funeral expenses to ensure you receive it. Also if the death means that the partner/spouse has to apply for a benefit to live on this should be done straight away as the benefit is not back paid.

There is another payment called an estate grant for single persons without money or family to pay for their funeral - the maximum payment of this is now [at the time of writing] also \$1,016. This is usually applied for by funeral directors but could also be applied for by any person organising and paying for the funeral expenses.

The Importance of Support Networks

Networks of friends and family are important in providing us with the practical and emotional support we need after a death occurs. A support network is even more important when we ourselves decide to take on the roles and responsibilities that are today usually the domain of funeral directors. There is a lot involved. We really need more than the ability to make the arrangements ourselves – we need a network of people who are willing to assist us. When faced with the death of someone close to us, we are likely to be in too much shock and grief to feel able to deal with all the practicalities. It could be really helpful (and perhaps necessary) to have friends we know and trust (who know a lot about what we want and don't want) to come in and take on a key role in making the after death arrangements. This importance of support networks, then, is also something to be aware of.

Conclusion:

Our group has as yet had very little personal experience in caring for our dead before burial or cremation, or supporting others to do this. The information in this booklet has developed through a lot of reading about death, through writing letters requesting information, making phone calls and talking to the various people who work in the area of death. Much information has also come from the many people who have spoken to us about their death experiences and also through the sharing that has gone on within our group concerning our

own death experiences and what we want to happen when faced with death again. We are finding out more and more information all the time.

It is likely that other regions may have some different issues that we haven't experienced and so haven't covered in our Palmerston North based research. We would like to hear about any issues you have. We would also like your feedback on this booklet. Are there questions or issues that you think we could or should cover? Is there information you know of that you think would be good to include in a future booklet or information sheet? For example one issue our group has identified that we haven't as yet covered is the need for an information sheet on how to make a coffin.

We have included some pages at the end of this booklet for your own notes. You may, for example, discover information through your own local networks that you want to write on these pages.

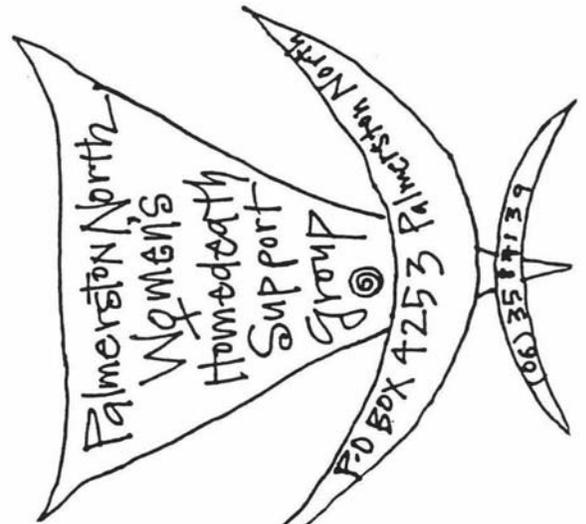
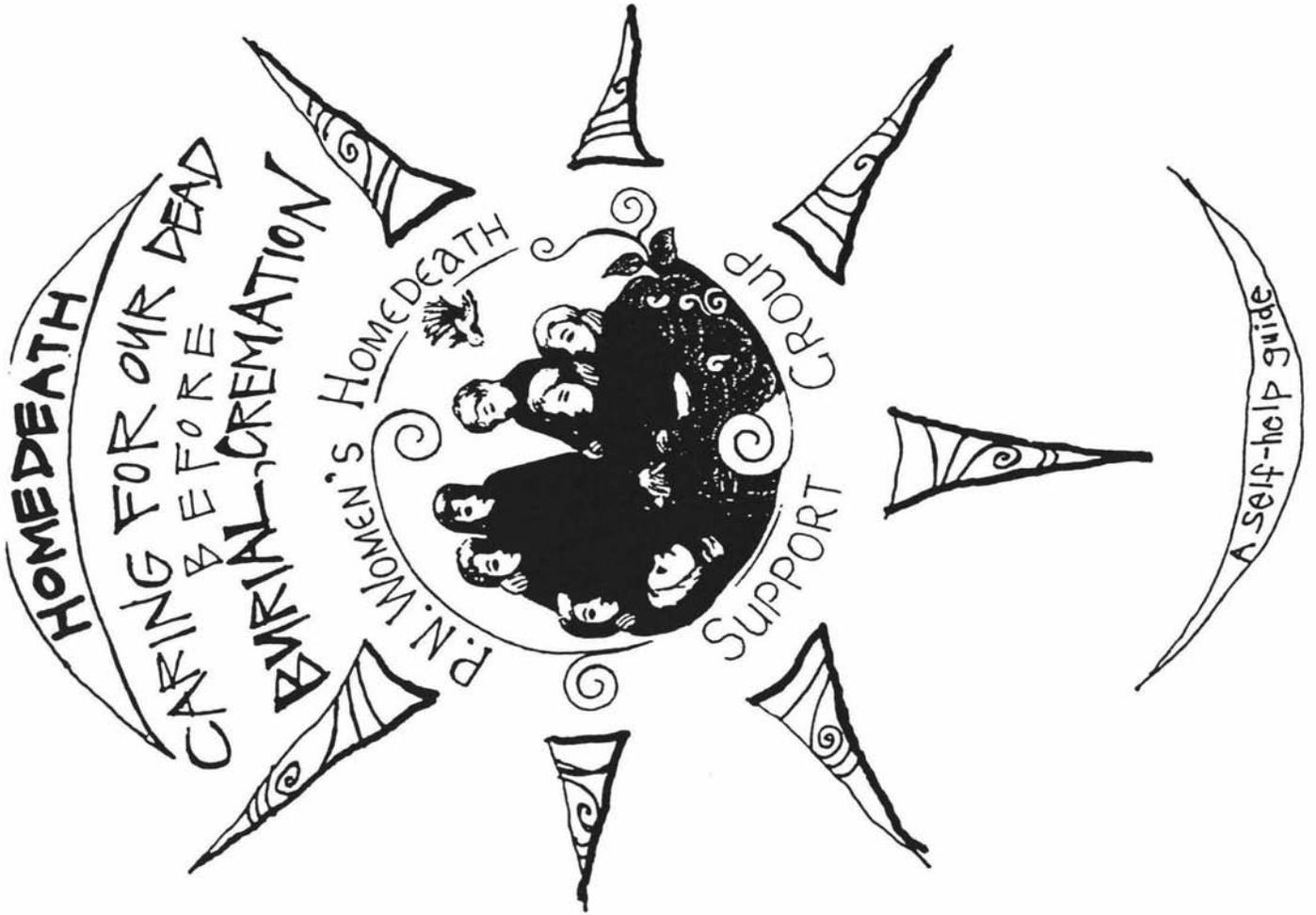
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APPENDIX 3:

HOMEDeATH CARING FOR OUR DEAD BEFORE BURIAL, CREMATION

(2nd Edition)



Writing and Research: Jean Hera with the Palmerston North
Women's Homedearth Support Group

Cover Logo: Dyan Prujean
Cover Text: Rebekah Coogan

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\$3 incl p&p from the publishers:
The Palmerston North Women's Homedearth Support Group
PO Box 4253
Palmerston North
ph (06) 358 7139

Our Philosophy

We believe that we have been socialised into fearing death and into handing it over to the male dominated professions of doctors, funeral directors and the clergy. Consequently death is now usually hidden away in mortuaries and funeral parlours and treated with detachment.

We are committed to changing this for ourselves and others. We are reclaiming our women's death culture, the knowledge and skills of our foremothers who laid out and cared for the dead at home. We want to again show respect and love for the bodies of our dead.

Remembering Death as Women's Work and Women's Ritual – a Home Experience

In Aotearoa, Maori society had its own skilled people and its own methods for preparing the tupapaku (dead body) for the duration of the tangihanga (funeral). Methods appear to have differed depending on the tribe and their tribal region. Some used daily salt water washes of the tupapaku and others used shark oil. The tangihanga (or "tangi" as it is commonly known) traditionally often lasted 2 or 3 weeks as the body was not buried while mourners were still arriving. The tangihanga now usually lasts 3 days.

Traditionally women performed the preparation of the tupapaku in Maori society but it is not clear to us as yet if this was exclusively a women's domain. One written account by a Maori woman states that because of the tapu of death, laying out the dead was exclusively women's work in her whanau. Another, relating the experience of a kuia at a hui in Whilianga, states that her father (a Ringatu minister) blessed her and showed her what to do when she began this work.

Maori women (particularly older women) have traditional roles at the tangihanga that are still practiced today and these show their prominent role in caring for the dead. Only women perform the death wail at the time of death. This was the traditional way of communicating the news of the death which was then networked around the community. The karanga (ceremonial call of welcome) which calls the tupapaku and the people onto the marae for the tangihanga is

which calls the tupapaku and the people onto the marae for the tangihanga is also the role of women. It is women who perform the tangi (ritual wailing) throughout the duration of the tangihanga and it is women who act as chief mourners to keep the vigil watch over the dead body before burial. There are also specific customs for lifting the tapu of death which are the responsibility of Maori women.

Pakeha are increasingly recognising that we can learn much from the traditional Maori ways of death. The tangihanga involves continually keeping the body of the dead person company before burial. It is a community ritual time for honouring and cherishing the tupapaku. The tangi fosters an honest sharing of both thought and emotion, about the person who has died, and the grief felt at their death. It is a time of emotional release and renewal.

It is less recognised, however, that the present mainstream Pakeha experience that sees death treated with detachment and hidden away from life as much as possible is not our death culture as Pakeha. It was not handed down to us over many generations by our ancestors but has been a recent intervention. Watching over and caring for our dead, as is the Maori custom, is also our culture as Pakeha, and we need only go back less than a hundred years to discover this.

In Britain, for example, women known as midwives, old wives or handywomen traditionally laid out the dead. These skilled women often combined the work of midwifery with caring for the dead. Laying out involved a knowledge of ritual as well as the practical skills of preparing the dead body. The body was washed (and salt water washes was one traditional method to delay decomposition before burial), the eyes and mouth closed and the body positioned with the face left uncovered until burial. The body was shown respect and love. The women doing this work would likely have had family or community connections with the dead person.

British custom demanded that a dead person be cared for at home until burial. "Watching the dead" was a very important part of this as it was considered unthinkable to leave a dead person alone even for a single minute before burial. There was always someone to keep the dead company and to watch over them. Family, friends and neighbours came to offer support to the family and farewell the dead person. Prior to influences stemming from the Victorian era, children were always included in the death rituals.

Laying Out and Caring For the Body of the Dead Person

Initial After Death Care

It is important to "lay out" the dead body relatively soon after death has occurred. The use of a plastic undersheet will help you protect a mattress. Urine should be emptied from the bladder. This can be done by putting pressure on the bladder (the area just above the pubic bone). Bowels are likely to seep also. Old nursing texts discuss the use of nonabsorbant cotton wool to plug the body orifices when laying out a body. You may feel this is an unnecessary invasion of the person's body and prefer to use incontinence pads, nappies (or something similar) that can be replaced when necessary. If you decide to plug the orifices (rectum, vagina, nasal passages, throat) with cotton wool, a lubricant such as KY jelly or soap can be used to assist this. You may know a nurse who is available to advise and help you with the laying out process.

Wash the dead person's body, clean the teeth and mouth, clothe them and comb their hair etc. The head can be turned gently to one side to allow any fluid in the mouth to escape. Shut the eyes by gently closing the eyelids – if they reopen they can be held closed for a few minutes and then should remain closed. An old method to keep the eyes closed was to place pennies on the closed eyelids. Putting pads of moist cotton-wool on the closed eyelids is another method. The mouth may need to be held shut by placing a rolled bandage, pillow or other item of the right width under the chin. An old practice was to use a bandage or cloth tied under the chin and around the head to keep the jaw in place until rigor mortis had set in. It is a good idea to prop the dead person's head up a little on a pillow and to place the hands on top of the body to help the blood drain and so improve the look of the face and hands which are prominent body areas to view and touch. The arms and legs can be positioned as you feel is appropriate. An old method was to bind the ankles together to hold the legs in position. We have heard that a muscle spasm has occasionally occurred after a person has died and that this can cause the dead person's body to move, for example a leg or arm changing its position, and perhaps this was the reason behind the traditional binding of a dead person's body into the desired position.

Rigor mortis will set in for a period beginning a few hours after death. Rigor mortis is a term used to refer to the stiffening of the dead body that occurs soon after death. The average onset of this is about six hours after death and this stiffness continues for about 24 hours. Rigor mortis affects the face first so it is important to close the eyelids and jaw in the first 3 hours. During the period of rigor mortis you will not be able to change the position of the person's body as it will remain stiffly in the position it was in when rigor mortis first occurred.

Delaying Decomposition and Continuing the Care of the Body

When a funeral director is in charge of the dead person's body, embalming is usually an automatic occurrence (permission is not usually sought). Embalming involves draining the blood from the dead person's body and pumping a formaldehyde chemical in to replace this. This embalming fluid is also injected into the abdominal cavity. Embalming is a disinfecting and preserving process which can change the appearance of the dead body. The face can become fuller and firmer and this can make the dead person look different (which can be upsetting to family and friends) while on the other hand a person who has lost weight may seem to look more like their old self. (The lines of age and expression on a person's face naturally smooth after death and this can make people appear younger.)

One funeral director in our region has said that people can arrange to accompany a dead person going to be embalmed, including being present during the embalming process (although this is unusual). Other things are done to the body, at the funeral directors, such as suturing the mouth to keep it shut, using an adhesive to keep the eyes closed, and plugging the body orifices. If you don't want this done you will need to say so. You can decide against chemical embalming and if you do be sure to clearly inform any funeral director of this as soon as they become involved.

There are methods of preservation that can be used other than the chemical embalming methods used by funeral directors. In warm conditions this is more of an issue. It will help to keep the dead person in a shaded room. Remember to use a waterproof cover on a mattress or in the coffin. Frozen coolant (slicker) pads or bags of ice can be used (under the body) to delay decomposition. These will need to be replaced as they thaw. The body rather than the head or arms and legs is the more important area to keep cool. If dry ice is available you might choose to use this as it avoids moisture problems and takes longer to melt. It is important to remember that for Maori and some other cultures it

would be very inappropriate to place items such as beer cans that
been used to cool a dead person's body in a freezer used for food.

Daily washing of the body is important to help preservation. Keeping the body washed may be all that is necessary to keep it in good condition for several days before burial or cremation. Salt water washes is an old method that was/ is used by many cultures – salt being a natural preservative. We as yet have no recipe of how much salt to water is used. Fragrant oils could also be used to freshen the body.

Hair and nails continue to grow after death (or as experts assert, skin shrinkage may make this seem so). A man may therefore need to be shaved to maintain a usual clean shaven appearance. Fluid may seep from the tissues out through the skin — particularly from large people. You may need to mop this up or change a sheet or clothing which is next to the body. It seems that a dead person was often not dressed in their burial clothes until just before the funeral. Draping the dead person's body in a sheet or similar, which allowed for easier access in the washing and other maintenance needed, would have been of practical importance in the daily care of the body. The traditional winding sheet or shroud that was used would also have allowed for this continuing care of the dead body before burial.

Requirements and Choices When a Death Occurs

Dispelling Common Misconceptions

You don't need to involve a funeral director or priest.

A dead body doesn't need to be embalmed (unless flying the dead body internationally; ashes may be transported anywhere).

Forms/certificates Required by Law

Death Registry

You are legally required to hand in 3 forms/certificates to your Births and Deaths Registry (at your local court house/Department of Justice) within 3 days after burial/cremation. If the death is not a coroner's case these forms are:

1. The "Medical Certificate of Causes of Death" (form R.G. 36) signed by the doctor, which the doctor will supply and fill out.
2. A death registration form (form R.G. 28). You need to fill out this form and sign it where it says signature of funeral director, if doing this yourself. This form can be obtained from your local Births and Deaths Registry.
3. The "Burial Certificate" (form R.G. 38). You need to fill this in and sign it. Two different signatures are involved – one from the person in charge of the burial and one from the person officiating at the burial or the minister. This form is also available from your local Births and Deaths Registry.

If the death is a coroner's case a coroner's burial order is required and this replaces the death certificate signed by the doctor that you would otherwise hand in to the Births and Deaths Registry. The coroner's burial order authorises the release of the dead person's body. This completed form is collected from the hospital mortuary along with the body when release has been authorised.

Life Extinct Form

If a duty doctor rather than the person's usual doctor attends after a death then he or she will fill out a life extinct form. This form should be kept until burial or cremation but does not have to be lodged anywhere. The dead person's doctor uses this form to help with details on the cause of death certificate and may not need to examine the dead person's body. If a cremation is involved then the doctor filling out the cause of death certificate has to see the body. If the death is a coroner's case then the police uplift the life extinct form.

Cemetery/Crematorium

Arranging a burial or cremation usually involves meeting with the cemetery overseer (sexton) at the council cemetery of your choice and/or where the crematorium is situated to fill out the form(s) required (as well as to make other arrangements such as appointment times for the burial/cremation and purchasing a plot etc). Exceptions to this include when using a private or church owned cemetery or waahi tapu/urupaa (Maori burial ground) for a burial. If you want to make these arrangements yourself rather than through a funeral director remember that you will need to pay in advance. Also take along the three forms as above (or photocopies) – you will be asked for a copy of the death certificate or coroner's burial order.

• *For a Burial at a Council Cemetery:*

This involves filling out one form which includes a few details about the dead person and the name of a person in charge of the arrangements (in the place provided for the funeral director's name). This form also includes the location of the plot and the depth of the grave.

• *For a Cremation at a Council Crematorium:*

If a cremation is chosen then four additional forms are required. (If you are not using a funeral director then you will need to do this with the help of the cemetery/crematorium overseer. He or she may also want to see you have the other forms required.)

1. "Certificate of Medical Practitioner"

This is another form to be filled in by the doctor who fills out the death certificate or on behalf of the coroner if the death is a coroner's case. If the death is a coroner's case then this completed form is made available for collection along with the coroner's burial order which allows the release of the dead person's body (these forms are collected when the dead person's body is collected from the mortuary).

2. "Permission to Cremate"

This form is to be filled out by one of the designated doctors to take on this role (Medical Referees or deputies or Medical Officer of Health). The cemetery overseer will know how to contact these people in your area. (This may be paid for as part of the cremation fees or paid separately, so check on this with the cemetery overseer.)

3. "Register of Cremations"

This form gives a few details about the dead person, the name of one of the people in charge of the arrangements and states what is to be done with the ashes after cremation, for example, taken away by (name of person) or scattered in garden.

4. "Application For Cremation"

This includes the name, address, and occupation of the person making the application for the cremation, their relationship to the dead person and details about the death. It includes the signature of the applicant and a witness.

When the Death is a Coroner's Case and Autopsy/Post-mortem

If the death is made a coroner's case (in the case of accidental death, suspicious death, murder, suicide or unknown cause of death or even if the person hadn't been to a doctor for 28 days before death (though doctors can use their own discretion in terms of this last instance)) then the body of the dead person is kept at the mortuary and access to this (other than supervised viewing of the body) may be denied until the coroner releases the body. If a coroner requires an autopsy/post-mortem of the body, the next of kin have no right to refuse this.

If the death is not a coroner's case and hospital staff request permission to do an autopsy, it is your right as next of kin to decide whether or not to agree to this.

The Hospital Mortuary

If a person dies in (or on the way to) hospital or if a death is a coroner's case then the dead person's body will go to a hospital mortuary. The nursing staff involved can assist family and friends with personal needs associated with a death. They will liaise with the mortuary staff (the mortuary supervisor or assistant) on your behalf.

The mortuary supervisor or assistant acts as a liaison person with all those involved when a death occurs — the medical practitioners, ward staff, medical records personnel, friends and family, funeral directors, the police and the coroner's office. Delays in releasing a body are usually due to the paper work required from the various workers involved. In some cases investigation procedures also cause delays.

If you are collecting your relative or friend's dead body from the mortuary it is likely that hospital ward staff will have helped you to arrange this. Take identification to show who you are. If you want to see the dead person or collect them and you don't have ward staff to help you arrange this, then the hospital operator can help you make contact with the mortuary staff.

Transport

You can transport a dead body yourself. People may use stretchers, coffins or mattresses to pick up the dead person from the mortuary. A van or station wagon etc is likely to be required for transport. The main concern of hospital requirements on this is sensitivity to the public. There is an expectation of

dignity, good taste and non-offence. A dead body going from a hospital ward to the mortuary will be covered from view. Similarly it is likely that you will be expected to have the dead person's body you are transporting covered from public view. A blanket or other cover could be used to achieve this.

Coffin/Casket

You can go to a funeral director to purchase a coffin only (though some funeral directors may discourage this choice or refuse your request outright). Some local cabinet makers or specialised casket companies may supply coffins to you direct (again some are likely to refuse your requests). You will need to know the height and build of the dead person when purchasing a coffin.

If you want to make a coffin yourself, you may need to line it with plastic or heavy duty paper to ensure there will be no seepage. Coffins purchased from funeral directors are often lined with plastic or coarse paper similar to building paper although the cheapest plain board coffin that can be purchased is likely to be unlined. Council workers at the crematorium or cemetery, as well as funeral directors, may tell you that a homemade coffin does not meet requirements so this needs to be checked out in advance. Our local cemetery overseer accepts standard size wooden coffins up to 24 inches wide at the shoulders (26 inches wide is the absolute maximum that can fit in the crematorium furnace). This can be made with nails and/or screws and be of any colour. Some coffins have been accepted that do not have handles although this is not a preferred option. A compromise for people unable to build a coffin but wanting to create a special final resting place for a loved friend or family member could be to buy the cheapest plain chip board coffin available from a casket/coffin maker or funeral director and then line the interior and paint or varnish the coffin yourself.

There is no law or health regulation in this country that makes a coffin a legal requirement. We are not however aware of any contemporary instances of people not using a coffin for burial or cremation. It is highly likely that the overseers of cemeteries and crematoriums would find a request to not use a coffin totally unacceptable. This is a choice that could be lobbied for however. A few cemeteries and crematoriums in Britain, for example, now accept alternative containers or body wraps. There is potential environmental and cost significance in having such alternatives to a coffin available.

Additional Health (Burial) Regulations

The Health (Burial) Regulations 1946 (amended 1954) give additional requirements for cases of death due to an infectious disease and in the area of death causing a public nuisance. It should be noted however that in situations of a dead person who is HIV positive or has hepatitis, they are no more (and potentially less) infectious than they are when alive.

Newspaper Death Notices

Placing death notices in newspapers is not always straight forward. Newspaper staff involved are likely to require proof of the death (past experience with hoax death notices is the reason given for this). Our local paper will accept death notices not done by funeral directors if they can see the death certificate signed by a doctor or be given the name of the doctor who signed the death certificate so they can contact him/her (this enables the death notice to be done over the phone). If a death notice has been published previously by another newspaper this is also acceptable evidence. If you still have problems (despite having some of the above evidence) ask to speak to someone more senior.

Burial

Burial is regulated by government legislation and council by-laws. It is very difficult to be buried in other than a recognised cemetery. The 1964 Burial and Cremation Act states that it is unlawful to bury the body of a dead person in any land not being a cemetery, denominational burial ground, private burial ground or Maori burial ground if there is a cemetery or burial ground within 32 kilometres of the place of death. If you plan to bury the person's body on private land that is not a recognised burial ground then you will require the local council's permission. This is likely to be very difficult to achieve. We have heard of people who have done this on rural land, sought permission afterwards, and got away with it.

Many cemeteries (particularly in cities) will not allow you to dig the grave yourself but you should be able to fill in the grave if this is what you want — but again you would need to arrange this beforehand. You may want to use your own shovels or arrange to use those belonging to the cemetery. You should also be able to arrange to see the grave after its dug but prior to the time of the burial if this is what you want.

You will be expected to conform to cemetery regulations regarding the grave surface and headstone (cemetery sextons/overseers can advise you regard-

ing this). Usually you are not able to plant on the grave surface which is generally mowed lawn. There are some moves towards alternative nature reserve burial grounds where trees are planted on graves as an alternative to memorial headstones. This is beginning to be lobbied for (and we know of one city council in this country researching this option). Community or privately owned nature reserve/woodland reserve burial grounds have successfully been established in parts of Britain.

Burial At Sea

It is possible (yet very difficult) to arrange a burial at sea for a person who dies in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

A legal burial at sea requires:

1. Authority in writing from a coroner to permit this, and the coroner is likely to want a significant reason for allowing a burial at sea (eg. the dead person having dedicated their life to work on the sea).
2. An application in writing to the local Superintendent of Mercantile Marine with the name of the dead person and the written permission from the coroner.

The burial at sea is then required to take place within one of the 7 specified locations for this. The coffin must not be airtight and is to be weighted so that it cannot float. Burial at sea can also become very difficult due to rough and changeable weather conditions.

Cremation

The actual cremation takes one and a half hours but a number of further hours for the ashes to cool, be sifted for metal and ground. The crematorium workers then put the ashes into a simple plastic container. You can discuss getting all the remains, including metal nails and screws from the coffin with the cemetery overseer. If you want the nails and screws also then this would require two containers. Check that you will be getting all the ashes back (if this is what you want) as we have had reports that it has been common practice to only return some of the ashes. A reason we were given for this is that all the ashes may not fit into the standard container used!!! This practice no longer happens in our area but the charcoal ash left from the coffin, as well as the metal, is usually removed from the ashes that are returned or scattered.

Our local cemetery overseer has allowed people (3 people maximum) to watch the coffin enter the crematorium furnace. One woman has also arranged to sit for the hour and a half that it takes for the actual cremation. We were advised

crematorium and when entering the furnace. If it is a time when a number of cremations are happening in close proximity then the closed coffin may have to be kept in cool storage until a furnace is free. It is attempted, however, to avoid such delays.

It is illegal to cremate a dead human body in other than an approved crematorium. It is interesting to note however that the fine for illegal cremation is less than the cost of paying for a legal cremation!!!

Cremated ashes can be scattered or buried anywhere really. Putting human remains in the sea or other waterway where food is gathered is however against Maori cultural requirements.

Funeral or Memorial Services/Rituals

Location of Memorial or Funeral Service/Ritual

You can basically have a memorial service/ritual (ie. without the dead body present) in any public or private place. Funerals (with the dead body present) however do not allow as much scope. Some halls may allow this or you could choose a private garden or home/garage etc rather than the usual church or chapel service.

Organising the Memorial or Funeral Service/Ritual

The most usual person to perform a funeral or memorial service/ritual is a priest or funeral director. Involving a funeral celebrant rather than a priest or funeral director to facilitate a funeral or memorial service/ritual is a newer option which is now growing in popularity. The larger centres particularly, now have people doing this work and any person can take on this role for family, friends or acquaintances (see Marian Barnes's book). In each case the planning of the funeral is usually done in consultation with the family. You may instead prefer to have a group of people contributing to the planning and presentation of a funeral or memorial ritual/service.

The Importance of Ritual

Death rituals play an important part in the process of acknowledging and working through our grief. Rituals can provide us with powerful experiences that symbolize transition, healing and continuity. The death of someone close

to us is one of the hardest times or transition in our lives. Death rituals can help us to mark and share the reality of this difficult time with others and work to provide an environment of support and community. Rituals are often a repeated act, a cultural norm that guides what we do. Rituals feel good when they are personally meaningful and we feel a connected part of them.

Too often the death rituals/services of today don't provide for this meaningful experience. This may be because the priest, funeral director or funeral celebrant does not know the dead person or those close to them (and it is important to remember that anyone close to the dead person may be suitable to speak about their life). The funeral or other death ritual may also not feel "right" because our culture, spirituality or our way of being does not relate to the words said or the symbols used etc.

There are a number of different types of death rituals. As well as the time of the tangihanga, funeral or memorial ritual/service, these may include a blessing to the person at the time of death and a cleansing of the house after the dead body has been removed. A death ritual may be as simple as lighting a candle of remembrance, planting a tree in memory of the person or placing flowers on a grave or in a vase. Sometimes simple gestures such as these done individually or collectively can feel meaningful and healing.

Personal experiences and ideas concerning alternative memorial or funeral services and other death rituals can be obtained from the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group, Marian Barnes (funeral celebrant) in her book and the Funeral Choice Collective (see our recommended reading list).

Legal Next of Kin

Next of kin has a legal definition – husband/wife or family of birth/adoption. This is an issue of particular significance for gay and lesbian people and bisexuals (in same sex relationships) who can be denied access to the dying process, the dead body and the funeral of their long time partner by family members who will not accept them. Gays, lesbians or bisexuals in long term same sex relationships can however jointly fill out power of attorney forms with their solicitor to make each other next of kin. Not all solicitors are aware of this option and a greater access to this information is likely through gay, lesbian

heterosexual couples living in a de facto relationship but not legally considered next of kin.

The final decision concerning after death arrangements is granted to the trustees named in a dead person's will. It is important then, when naming trustees in your will, to feel confident that these people know what your after death wishes are, and that they agree to these.

Costs You May Encounter

Death can be very costly and for this reason also very stressful — i.e. also a financial crisis. It can easily come to \$3,000-\$4,000 for a basic funeral using a funeral director (and the cost of a memorial stone is in addition to this). The following list provides estimates of costs you may encounter and also discusses issues we feel are important in relation to these costs.

Funeral Directors Professional Services Fee - \$1,000 - \$1,500

This service fee includes the cost of the embalming process, the stay of the dead body at the funeral directors premises (if you want this) and covers the co-ordinating work that funeral directors perform such as the filling out and delivery of the various forms required.

It should be noted however that some funeral directors will waive their fee in the case of a stillbirth. If a funeral director is required for a stillbirth, it may pay to ask local firms if this is their policy.

Transport Charges - transport charges are in addition to a funeral director's professional service fee and can be very expensive if long distance travel is involved.

Casket/Coffin - Usual lower cost range is \$350-\$1,100 (Our research in the Manawatu area found that the cheapest plain chipboard casket, for a reasonably tall adult, costs over \$600 from a funeral directors and \$300 direct from a manufacturer.)

Casket Wreath - \$65-\$100 (If funeral directors are arranging this they may receive a commission from the florist which increases the price you pay for the casket wreath.)

Donations - to priest or funeral celebrant etc — \$50-\$100

Newspaper Notices - \$30-\$200

Council Charges for Burial or Cremation - the cost of burial is \$600-\$1,600; cremation costs between \$200-\$500. There may be additional charges for weekends, public holidays and out of town etc.

Charitable Aid Funeral

The council can waive the cost of a plot and interment etc if there is no money to pay for it. A headstone however is not permissible until family or friends pay the council costs. There can be a grave marker with the person's name on it, however, either supplied by a funeral director or made by a friend or family member.

Memorial Headstone/Plaque - If you go direct to the makers of memorial stones and plaques you can bypass funeral director commissions (of up to 20%) which increase the price you pay.

There is a lot of variation in cost depending, for example, on what type and size of stone or plaque you require and what colour lettering, whether you choose rough rock top and sides or if all are to be polished, whether you choose a stone or plaster base, how many words you require, if you want vases, the particular cemetery requirements and choices etc. When choosing a plot in a cemetery it is important to check out what choices of stone or plaque are allowable in the cemetery (and the particular part of the cemetery you are considering) and if this meets your needs in relation to the type of memorial stone/plaque you are likely to want.

When you are considering a memorial stone or plaque to purchase, don't sign anything until you've made your final decision. There have been instances of people who have mistakenly signed an order form for a stone they didn't want and couldn't afford, but were then forced to purchase. It may be a good idea to have a look at the range of designs you can choose from and then get a number of quotes for the particular memorial stone or plaque you decide on. Be sure to check that your quotes include GST.

Extra issues of significance may include whether the lettering is hand crafted or computer set; if you want a photo (standard size ceramic photos should be no more than \$250 for a single or \$300 for a double); if you require matching with another stone; designs you want crafted on the stone (small designs are complimentary from some monumental masons and sculptors); if the type of

new glass set in resin memorials, for example, are cracking and splitting soon after they have been erected.

A low cost alternative memorial is to leave a grave marker (instead of a permanent memorial stone/plaque) on the grave. This can also be a special memorial, particularly if made by a friend or family member. You could discuss this possibility with the cemetery overseer.

Other

There can also be additional costs of thank you cards, postage, catering etc.

Benefits/Entitlements

Accident Compensation Corporation - ACC provides payments in the case of accidental deaths. There is a funeral grant of \$1951.23 (at the time of writing this booklet) towards funeral costs. A surviving spouse/partner may be entitled to a lump sum payment (survivors grant) of up to \$4107.90. This is reduced if that spouse/partner is earning. Each surviving child or other dependent is entitled to a lump sum payment (survivors grant) of up to \$2053.95 if fully dependent on the parent who died. There are also entitlements of weekly payments to spouses which are a percentage of their dead partner/spouse's earnings.

NZ Income Support Service (Department of Social Welfare) - Lump sum survivors funeral grants are available from the NZ Income Support Service for superannuitants, other beneficiaries and low income people who are the next of kin. The maximum (at the time of writing this booklet) is \$1,030 but this is means tested. This grant may need to be applied for before paying the funeral expenses to ensure you receive it. Also if the death means that the partner/spouse has to apply for a benefit to live on this should be done straight away as the benefit is not back paid.

There is another payment called an estate grant for single persons without money or family to pay for their funeral — the maximum payment of this is now (at the time of writing) also \$1,030. This is usually applied for by funeral directors but could also be applied for by any person organising and paying for the funeral expenses.

Preparing For Death

It is helpful when people have talked with family and close friends about what their after-death wishes are before they die. This should alleviate worries about whether the arrangements chosen are what the dead person would have wanted, disagreements about what this is, and unresolved conflict due to differences in what those closest to the person want. If death is prepared for, family and friends can avoid the very real stresses of not knowing what practicalities and financial steps are required. It can also feel satisfying to be fulfilling the after-death wishes of those we love.

The Importance of Support Networks

Networks of friends and family are important in providing us with the practical and emotional support we need after a death occurs. A support network is even more important when we ourselves decide to take on the roles and responsibilities that are today usually the domain of funeral directors. There is a lot involved. We really need more than the ability to make the arrangements ourselves – we need a network of people who are willing to assist us. When faced with the death of someone close to us, we are likely to be in too much shock and grief to feel able to deal with all the practicalities. It could be really helpful (and perhaps necessary) to have friends we know and trust (who know a lot about what we want and don't want) who are able to come in and take on a key role in assisting with the after-death arrangements.

Conclusion:

Our group has as yet had very little personal experience in caring for our dead before burial or cremation, or supporting others to do this. The information in this booklet has developed through a lot of reading about death, through writing letters requesting information, making phone calls, watching educational television programmes/videos and talking to the various people who work in the area of death. Much information has also come from the many people who have spoken to us about their death experiences and also through the sharing that has gone on within our group concerning our own death experiences and what we want to happen when faced with death again. We are finding out more and more information all the time.

experienced and so haven't covered in our Palmerston North based research. We would like to hear about any issues you have. We would also like your feedback on this booklet. Are there questions or issues that you think we could or should cover? Is there information you know of that you think would be good to include in a future booklet or information sheet? We are aware that making a coffin is not an area we have covered; we can however send you a selection of additional material on how to make a coffin for \$2.50 (incl. p&p).

We have included some space at the end of this booklet for your own notes. You may, for example, discover information through your own local networks that you want to write here.

Recommended Reading:

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