

Kaupapa Māori theory is critical and anti-colonial

Rangimarie Mahuika

Abstract: This paper was originally a response to a question posed by the late Dr Bella Graham to a small group of students, ‘Is Kaupapa Māori theory critical and anti-colonial?’ It explores the underlying theoretical frameworks of the Kaupapa Māori approach to research and some of the attendant issues arising out of it. The paper also considers both the foundational literature of this approach and some of the critiques that have attempted to deconstruct and question it.

Keywords: anti-colonialism; Kaupapa Māori theory.

We live in a time when many people who traditionally have occupied the role of ‘researched’ are in increasing numbers becoming ‘researchers’. As their minority voices are beginning to be heard they speak of their various but similar experiences of marginalization, cultural inferiority and immobilizing oppression. They speak of bearing the heavy burden of the “colonizing gaze” (hooks, 1992, p. 2). Nevertheless, they are not without hope as they speak also about resistance and liberation and the possibilities for transformation. Kaupapa Māori theory and practice contributes a unique indigenous perspective of these experiences.

Research on Māori began during the initial period of first contact with Pākehā and became an enduring feature of colonization. Linda Smith (1998) has written at length of the negative impact of colonial research on Māori within the context of Aotearoa and the resulting skepticism that remains for many Māori in their attitudes towards research. This has been a common complaint amongst indigenous peoples who have argued not only that “research has told [them] things they already knew” (Gibbs, 2001, p. 675), but that it implies through deficit theories that the positions they occupy are somehow their own fault, due to their inherent inferiority to their colonizer counterparts (Bishop, 1999). The experiences of many of the world’s indigenous peoples can attest to the devastating and dehumanizing impact seemingly ‘objective’ researchers have had on their traditional cultures (see Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Cram, 2001; Gibbs, 2001; L. Smith, 1998; Spoonley, 1999).

Even though approaches and understanding of the sensitive nature of cross-cultural research have improved significantly since first contact, the underlying notions of what counts as research remain the same. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1991, p. 13) has argued that “[r]esearch is the gathering of knowledge – more usually, not for its own sake, but for its use within a variety of applications. It is about control, resource allocation, information and equity. It is about power”. In this way research serves as a useful tool to maintain the status quo while disempowering minority interests.

Ranginui Walker (1985) succinctly describes this reality for Māori, being treated almost like guinea pigs at the hands of Pākehā researchers, in this particular instance within the field of education:

Māori education [has] become the hunting ground of academics as neophytes cut their research teeth on the hapless Māori. It has the advantage that Māori are in the subordinate position with little or no social power to keep out the prying Pākehās.

Furthermore, being marginal to the social mainstream, Māori are not in a position to challenge the findings of published research, let alone the esoteric findings of academic elites. (Walker, 1985, p. 231)

Māori, like other indigenous peoples have had first hand experiences of such disempowerment through researchers who have taken Māori knowledge and claimed it as their own, presuming to set themselves up as authorities on our culture yet discussing our lives and experiences in ways that are alien to our understanding. This is an experience common amongst indigenous and colonized peoples as explained by Albert Memmi (1965): “The memory which is assigned him is certainly not that of his people. The history which is taught him is not his own ... He and his lands are non-entities ... or referenced to what he is not” (pp. 190-191).

Fighting against the reality of their position as the colonized, and impassioned by the desire to prevent the further loss of our language, knowledge and culture, Māori began to fight back. In the 1970s many Māori began to claim that it was inappropriate for non-Māori researchers to continue to carry out research on Māori (L. Smith, 1999). Such a position was considered to be a necessary safeguard against the continued exploitation of Māori knowledge and materials and an effective means of ensuring greater accountability of researchers to their research participants (Bishop & Glynn, 1992). In the early 1980s, the first of several educational initiatives designed specifically to address issues of language and cultural revitalization emerged. As Kōhanga Reo were established and soon followed by Kura Kaupapa Māori, Whare Kura and other similar Māori cultural based institutions, they also created a context in which Māori language, cultural practices and values could be rejuvenated while kaupapa Māori was being refined and reshaped as a theory of liberation (G. Smith, 1995). In a recent paper, Anaru Eketone (2008) discusses this evolution and suggests that kaupapa Māori, as the theoretical construct developed and critiqued by academics, is somewhat removed from the kaupapa Māori envisioned and implemented in many community-based programmes and organizations. Eketone (2008) examines the theoretical foundations of kaupapa Māori practice, providing an informative and useful discussion of the influences of critical theory and constructivism on the development of kaupapa Māori as a theoretical framework.

Despite the relatively recent rise to popularity, it would be erroneous to suggest that kaupapa Māori is a new phenomenon. Nor is it a simple revamp of existing Western theories disguised in Māori culturally appropriate vocabulary and attire. Indeed, Nepe (1991) describes kaupapa Māori as a body of knowledge that has distinct epistemological and metaphysical foundations, which date back to the beginning of time and the creation of the universe. In this way kaupapa Māori is inherently intertwined in Māori language and culture, indeed a part of Māori identity. It has been defined as “the philosophy and practice of being Māori” (G. Smith, 1992, p. 1). Further descriptions have discussed kaupapa Māori as “a social project” (L. Smith, 2000, p. 233), and “a theory of change” (G. Smith, 1995, p. 21). Even these more recent uses of the phrase are able to find support, both in the more recent initiatives of Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori, but also in long-standing historical examples. Graham Smith (1995) cites the deeds of individuals such as Te Kooti Arikirangi and Sir Apirana Ngata as historical examples of kaupapa Māori resistance in action. Kaupapa Māori theory is seen as a philosophical framework that underpins these resistance initiatives.

Over the past decade, kaupapa Māori theory based approaches have grown rapidly as a preferred research methodology amongst Māori scholars across a range of disciplines. Its popularity lies perhaps in its ability to both acknowledge and accommodate Māori ways of being within an approach that remains academically rigorous (Irwin, 1994). However, kaupapa Māori approaches are not limited to use by Māori researchers or research participants alone. Beyond these shores,

indigenous scholars have also found significance in the ‘decolonizing’ and ‘empowering’ message inherent within the philosophies and principles espoused as part of a kaupapa Māori approach (Lopez, 1998; Tillman, 1998). It is perhaps one of Aotearoa’s most significant contributions to the paradigm proliferation occurring internationally, as indigenous and minority scholars seek ways and means of articulating their own truths and realities within the western dominant structures of the academy (see Dillard, 2006; Lather, 2006; Wright, 2006).

However, not all have agreed that kaupapa Māori is necessarily self-critical in its ‘liberative’ philosophy. Some commentators suggest that it creates a totalizing narrative of what it is to be Māori with scarce attention to the multiple intersections of iwi identity that many Māori lay claim to, and the diverse issues inherent in such an approach (Kana, 2007; Lopez, 1998; Tillman, 1998). Others have suggested that kaupapa Māori has been used to set up a ‘tribal elite’, guilty of creating oppressive structures similar to those within the Western world that they have so heavily critiqued (Rata, 2006). It also remains unclear where kaupapa Māori sits in relation to other post-colonial theories and approaches.

The present study explores the underlying theoretical frameworks that inform kaupapa Māori theory and practice and specifically seeks to discuss the position that kaupapa Māori theory is critical and anti-colonial. Indeed, is kaupapa Māori a conscience raising theory of liberation that empowers individuals with a critical consciousness, or does it simply critique the ‘norm’ or ‘oppressor’ without turning its own critical gaze inward? Moreover, if kaupapa Māori both rejects the epistemological frameworks of the colonizer yet draws on theoretical foundations beyond the Māori world then is it really anti-colonial?

This paper considers these issues, and argues that kaupapa Māori theory is both critical and anti-colonial and yet in other ways is not. Kaupapa Māori theory and practice has generated significant development for Māori research and education in its ability to critique mainstream attitudes and understandings towards issues of relevance for Māori. However, Anaru Eketone (2008) suggests that in theory if “kaupapa Māori is about critiquing unequal power relations that means it is possible to have an identifiable end to kaupapa Māori approaches in a New Zealand context” (p. 6). While its clearly resistant positioning against the status quo has been an essential component in facilitating opportunities and ‘space’ for Māori research and researchers (both figuratively and literally), perhaps kaupapa Māori’s greatest potential lies in its ability to both challenge and uncover the accepted but un-examined thoughts and practices that are advocated as kaupapa Māori theory and practice. Perhaps more important than a clear answer to whether or not kaupapa Māori theory is critical and anti-colonial, is this discussion of the potential to move beyond what is currently known as kaupapa Māori. Foucault (1981) taught that “as soon as people begin to have trouble thinking things in the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult, and entirely possible” (p. 457). This study focuses its attention on previously published sources in the field of kaupapa Māori, and through an examination of this literature provides brief snapshots of some of the issues introduced above. Subsequently, it is limited in its scope and data, but seeks to outline the progress made so far, and to consider the foundational potential that still exists within kaupapa Māori theory and beyond for sustained and significant transformation for Māori.

What is Kaupapa Māori Theory?

E kore koe e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiaātea

One translation for the whakatauaiki above suggests to Māori especially that ‘you can never be

lost; you are a seed sown at Rangiātea'. It speaks of a belief that we are directly descended from the Heavens and trace our whakapapa back to the beginning of time. Underlying views and principles such as these are articulated within a wide variety of kōrero tawhito, which in turn have often been used to frame the kaupapa Māori theoretical approach. In this way Linda Smith suggests that:

... there is more to kaupapa Māori than our history under colonialism or our desires to restore rangatiratanga. We have a different epistemological tradition that frames the way we see the world, the way we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask, and the solutions we seek. (L. Smith, 2000, p. 230)

However, it was this history 'under colonialism', and Māori discontent with the continued negative impact this colonial legacy was having on our unique Māori episteme, which created the context for transformation. Graham Smith (2003) has argued that one of the most significant factors in facilitating this transformation was a 'conscientization', a shift in mindset that occurred within large numbers of Māori:

a shift away from waiting for things to be done to them, to doing things for themselves; a shift away from an emphasis on reactive politics to an emphasis on being more proactive; a shift from negative motivation to positive motivation. (G. Smith, 2003, p. 2)

This emerging political consciousness among Māori communities in the 1980s provided the impetus for the resurgence and revitalization of kaupapa Māori through the establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo and later Kura Kaupapa Māori, Whare Kura, and Whare Wānanga. Out of these resistance initiatives kaupapa Māori theory has developed as a "new theory of change" and a critical factor underpinning both the success and emancipatory potential of these initiatives (G. Smith, 1992, p. 13). Kaupapa Māori provides a way to empower Māori to regain control of our lives, our culture and research related to those things (Bishop, 1994). In this sense kaupapa Māori can be viewed as an assertion of our cultural beliefs and practices, our ways of knowing and being and our right to both live and maintain them. Despite this assertion, Graham Smith (1993) maintains that kaupapa Māori:

... is not a rejection of Pākehā knowledge and or culture, however it does understand the critical factor of how knowledge can be controlled to the benefit of particular interest groups. Kaupapa Māori advocates excellence within Māori culture as well as Pākehā culture. It is not an either or choice – Māori parents want full access to both cultural frameworks for their children. (p. 5)

Unlike the dominant Western paradigms, kaupapa Māori does not make claims to universal truth or to superiority over other existing paradigms. Arguably the ultimate goal of kaupapa Māori research, like much of the scholarship from indigenous and minority peoples, is to challenge and disrupt the commonly accepted forms of research in order to privilege our own unique approaches and perspectives, our own ways of knowing and being. In this way "kaupapa Māori not only challenges 'legitimate' or 'certified' knowledge claims, but also questions the very process by which such knowledge is produced" (Lopez, 1998, p. 226). Kaupapa Māori theory then provides a platform from which Māori are striving to articulate their own reality and experience, their own personal truth as an alternative to the homogenization and silence that is required of them within mainstream New Zealand society. Inherent in this approach is an understanding that Māori have fundamentally different ways of seeing and thinking about the world and simply wish to be able to live in accordance with that specific and unique identity.

Despite the many writings and discussions on the nature of kaupapa Māori theory and practice, it remains surprisingly difficult to find a concise and definitive explanation of what kaupapa Māori theory actually is (Powick, 2003). Much of the discussion relates to what it may involve, the underlying principles and values inherent in the philosophy, and its various implications for research and researchers. Indeed, there seems to be an apprehension towards providing a definition, perhaps for fear of creating boundaries that may limit both the effectiveness and the widespread use and application of kaupapa Māori. This has been explained partly by the allusion to the heterogeneous nature of Māori as a people and the large variety of ways in which Māori are trying to utilize kaupapa Māori. The greater danger may also be that in defining and codifying kaupapa Māori theory and practice, Māori attitudes, understandings, and approaches to research may be reduced to “simple procedures”, which according to Linda Smith (2000) may be “helpful to outsiders, but masks the underlying issues and is a deeply cynical approach to a complex history of involvement as research objects” (p. 242). There are necessarily diverse ways of both interpreting and applying kaupapa Māori depending on the context and content of the research project. Differences in academic disciplines or tribal affiliations, both for researchers and research participants may impact on the way in which an individual may understand a cultural concept or practice, the way a project may be planned and/or carried out, or what may be appropriate to discuss and impart (Kana, 2007).

Further difficulties have been posed by the way in which the term itself has been used simultaneously to describe not only the theory of kaupapa Māori, but kaupapa Māori research methodologies, methods and culturally appropriate research ethics as well. This multi-faceted use of the term has made definition and discussion somewhat more complicated as it is not always clear how the term is being used in a particular context. However, this use of the term is indicative of the finely intertwined and interrelated nature of the many issues involved in kaupapa Māori theory and practice.

Is Kaupapa Māori theory critical?

Graham Smith (1992) has argued that there are three major assumptions that underlie the kaupapa Māori theoretical approach. Firstly, there is an assumption that for the majority of Māori, the institutional frameworks that exist in Aotearoa are culturally antagonistic, requiring Māori to conform to the ‘taken for granted’ structures and procedures that operate within these institutions. He further contends that this is often justified by arguments that Māori have chosen to enter the institution and should therefore be subject to the same regulations as everyone else:

What is problematic here is that most Māori do not come into the institution, secondly, if they do, it is often assumed that Māori have exercised freedom of choice ... the reality is of course, that the choices most Māori have are limited, to either participating in Pākehā dominant institutional frameworks, or not participating at all” (G. Smith, 1993, p. 18).

As such, the second point is that these biased institutional structures must not be taken for granted, or assumed to be impartial as those who are not from within the mainstream culture are at a distinct disadvantage. Finally, where such institutional structures are restrictive and interfere with the ability of Māori to fulfill our cultural aspirations, they must be challenged and engaged in order to create the necessary space for kaupapa Māori and realization of our cultural goals and aspirations. These assumptions and the issues that naturally flow on from this discussion are indicative of the critical nature of kaupapa Māori theory and practice.

Kaupapa Māori was in large part an initial response to these continued power imbalances and the insistent use of cultural deficit theory as seemingly logical explanations for the position that Māori occupy within New Zealand society. Russell Bishop and Ted Glynn maintain that it is through “the reassertion of indigenous Māori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices ... termed kaupapa Māori theory and practice ... that historical and ongoing power imbalances will be addressed” (Bishop & Glynn, 2003, p. 223). In developing an understanding of kaupapa Māori theory it is important to realize that kaupapa Māori is more than just Māori knowledge and beliefs, but a way of framing how we think about these ideas and practices. Nepe (1991) asserts that kaupapa Māori is a “conceptualization of Māori knowledge” (p. 15). Linda Smith (2006) takes this idea further and suggests that:

... it is a way of abstracting that knowledge, reflecting on it, engaging with it, taking it for granted sometimes, making assumptions based upon it, and at times critically engaging in the way that it has been and is being constructed. (p. 231).

The process of criticism, however, is not without its problems. Indeed, the challenge for Māori to be necessarily self-critical in the development of theory and practice has different implications than for their non-Māori counterparts. Linda Mead (1996) comments on this idea, stating that “writing can be dangerous because sometimes we reveal ourselves in ways which get misappropriated and used against us” (p. 45). Elizabeth Rata, who is a strong critic of kaupapa Māori, provides one example of why the practice of self-criticism has different implications for Māori. Rata (2006) describes the kaupapa Māori movement as an ideologically driven “retribalised culture, with prescribed gender roles, religious politics and hierarchical birth-status, [that] has demonstrated the irresolvable conflict between traditionalism and New Zealand’s universalist, secular culture” (p. 43). Moreover, Rata (2006) claims that kaupapa Māori is undemocratic and has supported the emergence of a neo-tribal elite, and uses a quote from Leonie Pihama to highlight this “class-ethnic tension evident in the New Zealand experience” (p. 45). Pihama’s quote was critical of so-called ‘Māori leaders’ “the corporate warrior elite many of whom would struggle to recall their last visit to the poverty stricken realities of almost half our people” (Pihama, as cited in Rata, 2006, p. 46). While Pihama’s criticism was no doubt deserved, its use to support a point of view so far removed from her own is unfortunate. While comments such as Pihama’s provide necessary self-reflexivity to progressing our own initiatives and theories, Māori remain legitimately wary of being too openly critical, and need to exercise caution as often comments can be taken out of context and used inappropriately.

Such oppositional attitudes and experiences perhaps make it much easier for kaupapa Māori theory and practice to assume a strong critical position on “the politics of Pākehā dominance in New Zealand” (G. Smith, 1995, p. 22). Numerous studies, reports, books and articles testify to the detrimental impact culturally arrogant researchers have had on Māori. However, in casting Pākehā in the critiqued position of the ‘norm’, by default kaupapa Māori then affirms the position of Māori as ‘other’. Several commentators have argued that Māori need to move away from this relationship of interdependence with the Crown, toward measures that focus on our needs and aspirations first, in turn developing our tino rangatiratanga (see G. Smith, 2000a; O’Sullivan, 2005, 2007).

This binary characteristic of Māori and Pākehā is also problematic in that it critiques the role of Pākehā as the dominant and the oppressor with little critical consideration of self. The way in which ‘Māori’ is interpreted in kaupapa Māori raises a range of significant issues especially when viewed in light of the theory’s aim for empowerment and liberation. This can be seen in the way ‘crucial change elements’ and other principles identified as embedded within kaupapa Māori theory and practice are discussed and explained. Their universal application and significance is

assumed and considered to be apparently unproblematic. Several authors have identified similar sets of principles or frameworks, which they consider to be significant in gaining an understanding of kaupapa Māori.

Graham Smith (1992) has identified six factors or crucial change elements that he draws out of the successful initiatives of Te Kōhanga Reo, and Kura Kaupapa Māori. He argues that these elements form part of the culturally specific framework that underpins kaupapa Māori as an approach, and has influenced the success of these specific educational programmes. These elements are:

1. *Tino Rangatiratanga*: the relative autonomy principle
2. *Taonga tuku iho*: the cultural aspirations principle
3. *Ako Māori*: culturally preferred pedagogy
4. *Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kainga*: the mediation of socio-economic factors
5. *Whānau*: the extended family management principle
6. *Kaupapa*: the collective vision principle. (G. Smith, 1992, pp. 13-14)

These principles have obvious potential for addressing the educational crises facing Māori students within schools in Aotearoa. While it is pointed out that these principles do not constitute an exhaustive list, Graham Smith (1992) suggests that they provide a useful starting point to highlight the potential of culturally based imperatives for educational advancement for Māori.

The recurrence of similar concepts and principles throughout the literature may show the widespread relevance of these notions, and points towards the foundational aspects of kaupapa Māori as a theory. Alternatively the use of these ‘principles’ may also be seen as cliché and detracting from the true cultural significance of the underlying concept as they can be interpreted in many differing ways and often within the literature discussed and applied to justify or explain a variety of approaches or ideas. Whānau and whakapapa provide two examples of this.

The term whānau means the extended family including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and other members. In this way the term whānau and all that it refers to is significantly more than a mere ‘principle’. It is a concept, and a basic building block of traditional Māori society. It has its own set of cultural values and practices, and while there may be general similarities there will also be variations, influenced by the tikanga of different tribal affiliations as well as individual whānau differences. Within his analysis Graham Smith (1992) discusses the whānau as a social and economic support structure with inherent collective and individual reciprocal responsibilities. In her discussion Linda Mead (1996), now Smith, mentions whānau as an effective means of organizing and supervising research. Whānau is also the principle she uses to discuss issues of mana wahine, mana tane, or gender, and the role of kaumatua and kuia in providing guidance and expert advice within the whānau and the relevance of this in kaupapa Māori research. Linda Smith (2000) also makes an interesting qualification of kaumatua and kuia, noting that not all older Māori can be considered kaumatua or kuia in the sense referred to here. Who then is qualified to define whether or not an individual is old enough, or has accumulated sufficient knowledge and expertise or mana to qualify to be a kaumatua? It is an interesting point in the context of critiquing kaupapa Māori as a theory of empowerment. Evidently given the relevance of issues such as tuakana/teina, age, gender, and even holding sufficient or specific expertise, the notion of whānau is hardly an uncomplicated site that is free from the taint of power and struggle.

Russell Bishop (1996) uses the term ‘whakawhanaungatanga’ to refer to his “culturally constituted metaphor for conducting kaupapa Māori research” (p. 215). Based around the word

whānau, a whānaunga is a relation or whānau member, and whakawhanaungatanga is the process of establishing family relationships. Bishop's (1996) approach relates to a type of whānau relationship which he argues has a significant impact on the sharing of power and control throughout the research process as well as the nature of the interactions between researchers and research participants. In his discussion, Bishop also describes the term whakapapa as "the mechanism used by Māori people to establish familial relationships" (Bishop, 1996, p. 215).

More than simple genealogy, Joseph Te Rito (2007a, 2007b) discusses whakapapa as a framework for understanding one's identity while sharing an example of how whakapapa provides not just familial connections, but also connects us to the land and the stories and histories. Linda Smith (2000) describes whakapapa as "a way of thinking, a way of learning, a way of storing knowledge, and a way of debating knowledge. It is inscribed in virtually every aspect of our worldview" (p. 234). Maintaining one's identity within the whānau, hapū, and iwi, and establishing one's relationship both to people and places, are all reliant on knowledge and understanding of whakapapa. As such whakapapa is held to be sacred, and again as with the example of whānau above, whakapapa is not really a principle but has had principles imposed upon it to justify or explain underlying cultural conflicts or potential research tools and approaches in a way that has specific cultural implications (see Royal, 1998). For example Mead (1996) argues that issues of whakapapa may be of great significance when selecting both Māori research participants and researchers. Kiri Powick (2003) notes that "the desire to have more Māori researchers involved in various projects leads to the assumption that simply assigning a researcher who happens to be Māori would be enough to satisfy the need to be culturally sensitive" (pp. 14-15). Such an attitude fails to recognize that both the research participants and the researchers have their own whakapapa links. Tribal differences in tikanga, for example, may mean that both parties have different interpretations of the same practice. Also one's whakapapa may impact on what knowledge others feel comfortable sharing. This may be because one is from another iwi, the ranking of a person's whakapapa within the same iwi, or because of past disagreements between iwi, hapū or whānau.

Another sensitive issue that is presented in a seemingly unproblematic way is that of te reo Māori. It is widely argued that the maintenance of te reo Māori is integral to the survival of Māori culture (Powick, 2003, p. 15). Initiatives such as Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori have started part of the essential task of protecting the language for future generations. However, there are significant implications of this principle for kaupapa Māori theory and research beyond the survival of the language. It has been suggested that the language is also embedded with cultural beliefs, practices and understandings (G. Smith, 1993; L. Smith, 2000). Such values and beliefs are unique to Māori, and as such a full explanation is impossible in another language belonging to an alien culture lacking in similar words, beliefs and practices to parallel those of Māori. In this sense the argument follows that if a researcher lacks the ability to speak in and understand te reo Māori, it may limit the information a participant is able to communicate effectively in the research process. This argument may seem logical. However, it raises issues of authenticity and challenges the identity claims and authority of those Māori who are unable to speak the language. Moreover, these views hold the potential to dis-empower and dis-enfranchise those who may already be marginalized within the mainstream because they are Māori, yet struggle to find acceptance from within their own culture because they are not Māori enough. This is not to say that the maintenance of the language is unimportant, but that it is important to acknowledge and unearth the complex issues that are made invisible when discussing aspects of kaupapa Māori in a simplified and uncritical manner.

Such simplistic discussion of the issues related to kaupapa Māori links to another common criticism, namely that kaupapa Māori essentialises both the Māori people and our culture

“ignoring the fluidity of boundaries and possibly creating a ‘romanticized’ Māori past and present” (Bishop, 2003, p. 224). Gerardo Lopez (1998) raises similar issues in his critique of Russell Bishop’s work:

There is an assumption that you make between being an insider and having access to the truth, the Māori truth. Your push for process – to work collaboratively with Māori by establishing one’s positionality and by following an elaborate practice that is grounded in Māori cultural traditions – subscribes to a logic that not only assumes that insiders can speak, but that they all speak in the same voice. (Lopez, 1998, p. 228)

The illusion of an uncomplicated and homogenous Māori people is a common criticism of kaupapa Māori. While this totalizing narrative of ‘Māoriness’ makes claims for legitimacy and authenticity more authoritative, it binds us into the dichotomy of Māori/Pākehā, or insider/outsider. Such binaries not only fail to problematize notions of insider and outsider, Māori and Pākehā, but they prevent us from truly articulating ourselves, of sharing our ways of knowing and being and experiencing the world, with all their inherent contradictions.

That is not to say that kaupapa Māori theory and its proponents do not acknowledge the shortcomings and failings of the approach. Hine Waitere-Ang (1998) for instance, asks: “How much is cloaked and diffused when we, as Māori researchers, ignore our own level of institutionalization particularly when we choose to write about ourselves?” (p. 224). Graham Smith (2000a) has also alluded to this danger of ‘our stories’ becoming overly generalized. He writes:

There is a need to sort out what is romanticized and what is real and to engage in a genuine critique of where we really are. Having said that, I think the point also needs to be made that it is all very well being engaged in deconstruction and going through an exercise of self-flagellation, but at the end of the day there must be room for change (pp. 212-213).

In this way critique is necessary, not for critique’s sake, but for the opportunities and potential for greater progress and transformation it may provide.

Is Kaupapa Māori theory anti-colonial?

In the same way that Māori cultural practices are validated within Māori cultural contexts, kaupapa Māori theory is validated and legitimated within the understandings of a Māori worldview. Much of the early literature based around kaupapa Māori theory has focused on identifying culturally based elements with emancipatory potential. These concepts as discussed earlier are identifiable within the successful initiatives of Te Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori and other Māori cultural based education initiatives and research approaches. The literature has provided numerous examples of the use of these cultural concepts as metaphors, operating within a cultural framework that not only makes sense for Māori, but holds meaning and significance that is not easily found in the current mainstream structures (see Bishop, 1994; Kana & Tamatea, 2006; G. Smith, 1992; L. Smith, 2000; Royal, 1998). Furthermore, these elements have proven effective in developing alternative and authentically different ways of thinking about and addressing many of the issues Māori face in a range of contexts including in these specific examples, education and research. It is in this consistent generation of alternatives that we continue to challenge the status quo and maintain our resistance to colonization. But does this

mean that kaupapa Māori is anti-colonial? To assess this question further requires an understanding of what it means to be anti-colonial. This term is best comprehended in its relation to the term post-colonial, and the attendant issues which illuminate both the discourse of anti-colonialism and the positioning of kaupapa Māori theory and practice within it.

Much discussion has taken place both nationally and internationally over the contested meanings and interpretations of the term 'post-colonial'. It has been argued that the prefix 'post' attached to the term colonial refers to a framework that can be used to move beyond imperialist colonial models. Accordingly, it is suggested that this moving beyond colonialism provides space for colonized and marginalized peoples to share their own unique perspectives and understandings. Despite this interpretation the common usage of the prefix 'post' seems to imply completion or following on from and infers the idea of chronological progression (Pihama, 1997). Such an interpretation is obviously problematic in the New Zealand context as highlighted by Linda Smith (1998):

Naming the world as 'post-colonial' is, from indigenous perspectives, to name colonization as 'finished business'. According to many indigenous perspectives the term post-colonial can only mean one thing; the colonizers have left. There is rather compelling evidence that this has not in fact occurred. (p. 14)

In spite of these objections some academics maintain that the term post-colonial can be of some practical use in understanding many of the issues facing New Zealand society. Paul Spoonley (1995) is one such academic who states that post-colonialism should be used "to mark a critical engagement with colonialism, not claim that colonialism is overturned ... post-colonialism is used here to signal a project by those who want to critique and replace the institutions and practices of colonialism" (p. 49). Spoonley (1995) is suggesting then that post-colonialism should not be confused with claiming that the act of colonizing is no longer practiced, "that somehow the 'white' world now understands this phenomenon and is able to desist from it" (G. Smith, 2000a, p. 215). Instead he claims post-colonialism is a framework to be used to challenge and critique colonialism.

Some Māori and Indigenous scholars dispute these apparently helpful interpretations labeling post-colonialism as a Pākehā-centred theoretical framework as it reinforces the oppositional binaries of Māori/Pākehā, colonized/colonizer that Spoonley suggests it can be used to critique (see Pihama, 1997; S. Walker, 1996). It seems somewhat contrary that those who argue the potential for post-colonialism to provide a space and voice for the westernized 'other', continue to ignore the voice of Māori as they point out: "how can we possibly refer to Aotearoa as 'post-colonial' when every aspect of our lives is touched and imposed upon by the colonizers? Whose interests are served by such a position?" (Pihama, 1997, p. 9).

To avoid the inherent problems of the term post-colonial, some Māori have chosen to use an alternative term truer to their own desires and aspirations, as articulated by Merata Mita (1993): "I have dismantled the frame of reference further, and in my construct – post-colonialism, which denotes passivity has become anti-colonialism, which is a truer description of what influences the arts and politic in the Māori world" (p. 37). The term anti-colonial then is used to describe the active and proactive resistance to both old and new forms of colonization that Māori and Indigenous peoples should adopt (G. Smith, 2000a):

Within the New Zealand context of contested power relations between dominant Pākehā and subordinate Māori interests the state is not neutral. The state is essentially Pākehā and it works to reproduce the interests of Pākehā. In such

circumstances, relative autonomy from the monocultural agents and institutions of the state is necessary if change is to result from struggle. (G. Smith, 2000a, p. 185)

Statements such as the quotation above illuminate the obvious anti-colonial undercurrents within kaupapa Māori theory and practice. In its assertion of Māori cultural aspirations, values and beliefs, kaupapa Māori continues to work both against and beyond the struggles and strife created as a consequence of colonization, past and present. In this way kaupapa Māori is very much anti-colonial, its focus no longer consumed by a reactive relationship with the Crown, motivated instead by a proactive focus on issues of relevance and concern for Māori.

However, there have been arguments advanced to suggest that kaupapa Māori is not anti-colonial. Bishop (1994) has discussed the relevance of the fact that kaupapa Māori “is not a further paradigmatic shift within a Western dominated cosmology” (p. 183). Instead he maintains that kaupapa Māori is located within a uniquely Māori world view, and from this position is able to generate solutions from that alternative framework. Others would argue that kaupapa Māori is heavily influenced by theories drawn from outside of this unique Māori epistemology. Indeed the works of notable non-Māori theorists such as Paulo Freire, Edward Said, Franz Fanon and Patti Lather can all be found referenced by the seminal proponents of kaupapa Māori theory and their influence is clear to those who are familiar with their works (see Bishop, 1994, pp. 179-181; G. Smith, 2000a, p. 210; L. Smith, 1999, pp. 2, 28). This may constitute an internal contradiction. How can kaupapa Māori be an anti-colonial theory based in specifically Māori ways of seeing and knowing the world, and yet draw on western theories and theorists for inspiration and support?

Graham Smith (2000a) specifically addresses this issue and laments the fact that Indigenous peoples are often anti-theory because of the perception that “theory is considered part of the Western colonizing agenda that serves to keep us oppressed” (p. 214). Smith argues that while it is important to be conscious of the western oriented nature of much of these theories, we similarly need to be aware of the ways in which these theories may support us in developing our own theoretical understandings by drawing on our own Indigenous knowledge. In this sense the origins of the theory are not the deciding factor, but “we ought to be open to using any theory and practice with emancipatory relevance to our Indigenous struggle” (p. 214). In this way theory can be drawn on for inspiration and guidance, it can support us to consider alternative ways of developing and organizing our own critical and anti-colonial initiatives within the context of Aotearoa. Indeed drawing on theories in this way, to augment and supplement our own framework of ideas, may mean that we are able to use those aspects of a particular theory which further our cause and discard those aspects that do not. In this we overcome potential issues raised by commentators regarding the conflicting nature of theories that have influenced the development of kaupapa Māori (see Eketone, 2008).

Conclusion

It is clear, we must look. Not simply in order to understand, but in order to resist. In order that we might recognise the workings of power upon us, and at the same time grasp the spaces of freedom those workings allow us. (May, 2005, pp. 89-90)

Kaupapa Māori theory and practice have manifested significant development for Māori research in its ability to both challenge mainstream attitudes and understandings towards issues of relevance for Māori and make space for the articulation of Māori ways of knowing and being. Its greatest potential may lie in its ability to challenge Māori to develop a greater awareness of who we are, what it is we really want, and how we want to go about achieving that.

The purpose of this paper was to discuss whether or not kaupapa Māori theory is critical and anti-colonial. It has argued that while kaupapa Māori is highly critical of external constraints and opposition, there remains room for more rigorous internal evaluation if it is to meet the lofty goals of empowerment and emancipation for Māori. Indeed, even defining what empowerment and emancipation for Māori might look like is a monumental task as we are a heterogeneous and diverse group. Commentators and proponents of kaupapa Māori themselves are aware of some of these frailties. However, while no-one suggests that kaupapa Māori is perfect, for many it is perceived to be a huge improvement on the options that existed previously. The task that remains is to continue to develop further possibilities to better cater to the diverse range of needs that can be classified as Māori.

The paper has also argued that understandings of post-colonialism and anti-colonialism are inextricably linked in both the past and future of colonization. As much as Kaupapa Māori theory and practice has developed to deal initially with the problems we face as part of our colonial legacy, it has further potential to deal with matters of importance for Māori beyond colonization. While globalization may have been coined neo-colonization, issues involving mana wahine, hapū and iwi self-determination, among others based within Māori culture remain to be dealt with. They require a philosophy and framework that is culturally legitimate.

This study has shown that kaupapa Māori is a theory and practice of active resistance to the continued colonization of Māori people and culture, and in many ways is anti-colonial. However, it has argued that the modification and adaptation of ideas and theories from outside does not mean that kaupapa Māori is entirely devoid of colonial imprints, mechanisms, and opportunities. Subsequently, the resistance to colonialism as Graham Smith and others have noted, requires a deeper understanding and ‘dismantling’ of the ‘masters house’, a re-programming of the ‘oppressors’ tools, so that revitalization and resistance might be made more effective in the ever evolving present and future. Indeed, after two hundred or more years of colonization to suggest that Māori are capable of existing without being influenced by western ways of thinking is unrealistic. Kaupapa Māori is not about rejecting Pākehā knowledge. Instead, it is about empowering Māori, hapū and iwi to carve out new possibilities, and to determine in their own ways, their past, present and future identities and lives. Finding the correct balance and configuration within which iwi, hapū, Māori and even non-Māori knowledges and influences might be harnessed most effectively remains one of the major challenges for Māori and Māori scholars. In contemplating this pathway, Māori scholars might yet reconsider more closely the often cited whakataukī of Sir Apirana Ngata. It still offers thoughts about how this intertwining might occur:

*E tipu, e rea, mō ngā rā o tōu ao.
Ko tō ringa ki ngā rākau a te Pākehā hei ara mō tō tinana.
Ko tō ngākau ki ngā tāonga a ō tūpuna Māori hei tikitiki mō tō mahuna.
Ko tō wairua ki tō atua, nāna nei ngā mea katoa.*

Grow up and thrive for the days destined to you.
Your hand to the tools of the Pākehā to provide physical sustenance.
Your heart to the treasures of your Māori ancestors as a crown for your brow.
Your soul to your God, to whom all things belong.
(Brougham & Reed, 1999, p. 89)

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Author Notes

Rangimarie Mahuika (Ngāti Rangiwewehi) is a part-time research assistant in the Te Kotahitanga Research Unit and is currently completing a Masters degree in the School of Education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand.

E-mail: rmarie@waikato.ac.nz