TALKING OUR SELVES UP

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature of talk and its place within kaupapa Māori research. Just as many Māori occasions rely on talk to define context and kaupapa, so do research and principles often seek to represent the talk of participants as defining their context and their kaupapa. Within these research processes there are ample opportunities for participants to be both marginalised and/or (re)victimised. The care taken within what has become a popular way of gathering research data, talking to people, rests on a researcher’s skills as an interviewer as well as their intrinsic interest in people. This paper therefore examines some of the issues both researchers and participants need to be aware of, with a particular focus on qualitative research that is conducted within a kaupapa Māori framework.

Introduction

This paper tackles an issue that has continued to perplex this author, both as a Māori women native to New Zealand and as a social science researcher trained within the disciplines of social and developmental psychology. In the late 1980s and early 1990s I was captivated by the post-positivist and feminist movements within the social sciences that seemed responsive to the concerns I had that quantitative research was only able to address some of the research questions I wanted to ask. Those questions quantitative research did address, it did so very well, so I was not necessarily looking to abandon ‘numbers’. What I needed, in addition, was a rigorous way to undertake qualitative research that would allow me to sit and talk with people, to enquire a little more about the intimacies of their day-to-day lives, and to represent these lives in a trustworthy way that honoured the participants.

At this time, other researchers, many of them students, were also using ‘talk’ as the medium for their data collection. They were, however, hesitant to apply any form of analysis to this data, preferring instead to let the participants’ words stand alone. To me, this seemed both dangerous—as it provided no guidelines to the audience about how to ‘read’ participants’ talk and could therefore result in misinterpretation and mis-reading—and misleading, in that it hid the researcher’s analytical framework. A researcher’s role is that of an inquisitive enquirer and analyst, piecing together the evidence in order to argue the value of new knowledge and new theory. To merely let the participants’ words go uncommented on is a denial of this role.

This was the beginning of my search for an approach to talk that would make sense within kaupapa Māori research. This paper therefore touches first on the nature of talk and knowledge within Māori contexts. Kaupapa Māori theory is then briefly described, followed by an exploration of talk as a research method. Next the notion of representation is explored as a precursor to a discussion of the analysis of research talk. Finally, some comments are made about how we might assess the worthiness of this type of research.
Mātauranga Māori

About a Māori view of knowledge

The role of talk within Māori society is linked with the transmission of knowledge and with the establishment of identity and a place to stand. Within this the marae is the physical place of our culture (Ihimaera et al., 1993). Walker (1992) describes the protocol of the marae and the role of whaikorero (oratory) and waiata (song) in establishing links between the peoples coming together on the marae. According to Walker, these links are made on the basis of whakapapa (genealogy) and kaupapa (guiding principles). Those with the knowledge to make such links play a central part in this process.

Such knowledge, therefore, underpins the functioning of the group and serves the community. However, traditionally knowledge was never universally available and it was thought of as highly specialised (Te Awekotuku, 1992). Linda Smith (1999) writes that one of the first ‘research projects’ was the journey of Tāne-nui-a-rangi to the twelfth ‘universe’ to gain knowledge. Two main features of this story are noted by Smith: first, Tāne sought the knowledge on behalf of everyone, and second, the knowledge came in three separate kits (te kete tuauri, te kete tuatea, te kete aronui) and was therefore seen as specialised.

From the journey of Tāne, we therefore gain an understanding that some knowledge is essential for day-to-day living and available to all. Other knowledge may not have been universally available; rather, it was entrusted to those with skills or gifts who then used this knowledge for the benefit of the community as a whole.

John Rangihau (1992) writes that growing up Māori within a Māori community is a form of ‘apprenticeship for group living’. In other words, knowledge of how to live together is gained through immersion in a community, bound by kinship ties, and the gradual taking on of tasks and roles as skill and age dictate. Thus, there is the participatory nurturing and mentoring of the young and middle-aged until they are ready to take their place on the marae as the elders die.

A Māori epistemology, or theory of knowledge, therefore centres around the guardianship of knowledge so that it can be used for the good of the community. The community, in turn, is the group of people held together by whakawhanaungatanga (kinship ties). This is emphasised by Makareti (1938): ‘The Māori did not think of himself, or anything to do with his own gain. He thought only of his people, and was absorbed in his whānau (extended family), just as the whānau was absorbed in the hapū, and the hapū in the iwi’.
Māori theories of knowledge encompass empirical traditions for enumeration, measurement and comparison, yet the historical storage, retrieval and transmission of knowledge through oral culture means that there is an ongoing orientation toward talk as data. The everyday understanding of knowledge as constructed/enacted is cemented in immersion in the institutions and practices of Māori societies such as karanga, whakapapa, waiata, haka, whakataukī and many others (Karetu, 1992).

Colonisation has not necessarily eroded our view of knowledge. In the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the following recommendations are made to states, national and international agencies:

- Recognise that indigenous peoples are the guardians of their customary knowledge and have the right to protect and control dissemination of that knowledge.
- Recognise that indigenous peoples also have the right to create new knowledge based on cultural traditions.

Our right to create new knowledge through research methods sourced within our own cultural understandings is therefore embedded with the Mataatua Declaration. This right was reiterated by Moana Jackson in his address to Māori health researchers in 1996. He stated that ‘the Treaty reaffirmed our right to develop the processes of research which are appropriate for our people ... sourced in tikanga philosophies and the ideas of who we are’ (1996).

Thus, Māori research that is for Māori and carried out by Māori is premised on an epistemological tradition that frames the way we see the world, the way we organise ourselves in it, the questions we ask and the solutions we seek. This framing will also reflect our commitment to social change. Presently, however, the dominance of Pākehā (people of european descent) history and culture means that Māori forms of knowledge are often seen to lack ‘mainstream’ legitimacy, being positioned as ‘non-scientific’ and ‘other’ (Waipara-Panapa, 1995). This issue is discussed next, along with kaupapa Māori as a form of resistance within research.

**Colonising knowledge: about research as a colonising agent**

Research by Māori for Māori is often about creating a space for Māori voices to be heard. At its heart, research—any research—is about power; not so much the power to undertake research but the power to have the knowledge generated by research considered legitimate. What is considered legitimate knowledge is, in turn, protected by the powerful within society as it is this ‘legitimate knowledge’ that underpins and maintains their position of power (Smith, 1990). Within this context, the knowledge of other, often indigenous and minority groups, is considered illegitimate (if considered at all).
The strongest legitimating drive within social science research is the experimental or hypothetico-deductive approach to knowledge generation. This research philosophy is based on at least four assumptions (Fee, 1981; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992):

1. The assumption that universal relationships of cause and effect can be found within a world of objective facts.
2. The assumption that knowledge is cumulative and progressive. In other words, that eventually all the little ‘facts’ we have about people from studying isolated variables within very controlled settings will give us the ‘big picture’ of human nature. The aim of this research has therefore been the creation of universal laws of behaviour.
3. The assumption that reality is based in the immediate, the here and now so that social, historical, and cultural factors can be ignored.
4. The assumption that it is not only possible to measure and quantify social behaviour, but that the researcher can do so objectively. That is, the researcher can remove themselves from their research as a ‘value-free’ objective, rational scientist.

This epistemological approach, or theory of knowledge, sets up goal posts that must be achieved before knowledge is considered legitimate. It also ordains who can know. The scientist is viewed as the expert ‘knower’, someone who has been trained within the scientific ethos to discover knowledge.

This imposition of this view of reality onto other groups has been described as scientific colonialism (see Table 1). In scientific colonialism, the right of the scientist to discover knowledge goes unchallenged as s/he gathers information from a community and processes it away from that community. The outputs of this processing are often goods that build the scientist’s reputation and status (for example, books, patents, etc.). However, the result is that the knowledge about the community comes to be located outside its boundaries with local people being told that they cannot ‘know’, as this is the role of the scientific experts.

Dell Small (1989) identifies the limitations of this dominant paradigm, namely,

The oppressed are identified, measured, dissected and programmed from the outside by the oppressor or the oppressor’s representatives. It is the oppressors with the help of their sciences who decide what are the goals of the research and how it will be carried out. The research is done on the oppressed. The problems studied are not the problems of the oppressed.
Table 1. Comparative colonialisms (from Nobles, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLONIALISM MANIFESTED BY</th>
<th>POLITICAL COLONIALISM</th>
<th>SCIENTIFIC COLONIALISM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Removal of wealth</td>
<td>Exportation of raw materials wealth from colonies for the purpose of ‘processing’ it into manufactured wealth and/or goods.</td>
<td>Exporting raw and data from a community for the purpose of ‘processing’ it into manufactured goods (i.e., books, articles, wealth, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Right of access and claim</td>
<td>Colonial power believes it has the right of access and use for its own benefit anything belonging to the colonised people.</td>
<td>Scientist believes s/he has unlimited right of access to any data source and any information belonging to the subject population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. External power base</td>
<td>The centre of power and control over the colonised is located outside the colony itself.</td>
<td>The centre of knowledge and information about a people or community located outside of the community or people themselves.</td>
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The ‘universal’ knowledge that is generated in this process is defined within the rules of the dominant group and reinforces the social structures within which they, as a group, are considered to be the norm or normal. Thus, within this scientific approach, Māori have been compared with ‘universal norms’ that are invariably irrelevant within our cultural context. Our differences from these universal norms have then been constructed as deficits which have, in turn, justified social policies and institutional interventions that have assimilatory or integrationist agendas. We have become the ‘other’ in this process; a process that incorporates a mix of science, cultural arrogance and political power (cf. Smith, 1999). In this way, social inequalities and racism are concealed and the position of the dominant group secured.

Kaupapa Māori : about the role of kaupapa Māori in the reclaiming of Aotearoa New Zealand

Kaupapa Māori is an emancipatory theory and has grown up alongside the theories of other groups who have sought a better deal from mainstream society; for example, feminist, African-American and indigenous peoples worldwide. At a high level, these theories have
commonalities and similar concerns, including the displacement of oppressive knowledges produced by the dominant paradigm described above and a social change agenda. At a local level, kaupapa Māori addresses the oppression of Māori in our own land and the breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi guarantees of tino rangatiratanga (tribal or Māori self determination). In this way it is unique.

Kaupapa Māori is, therefore, a response to the colonisation of our lands and the imposition of ways of being that are not our own. It is a way of turning our gaze back onto the coloniser when, for so long, their gaze has been on us in an attempt to make us more like them. In this way, kaupapa Māori is an attempt to retrieve space for Māori voices and perspectives, methodologies and analyses, whereby Māori realities and knowledge are seen as legitimate. This means centering te ao Māori (Pihama, 1993).

Graham Smith summarises contemporary expressions of kaupapa Māori theory in the following way. A kaupapa Māori base is a local, theoretical positioning related to being Māori. Such a position presupposes that:

- The validity and legitimacy of Māori is taken for granted
- The survival and revival of Māori language and culture is imperative
- The struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well-being and over our own lives is vital to Māori survival (Smith, 1990).

Kaupapa Māori takes for granted the legitimacy of being Māori and the validity of Māori world views. Māori language and culture are therefore seen as central. In addition, kaupapa Māori acknowledges, and is underpinned by, Māori struggles for autonomy and self-determination (Smith, 1997). An integral part of kaupapa Māori theory is also the critique of societal ‘common sense’ understandings of what it is to be Māori. These understandings have invariably been built up over the decades of colonisation, are based on deficit models, and provide justifications for policies and practices that oppress Māori (Pihama, 1993). Kaupapa Māori therefore seeks to displace oppressive knowledge.

Within kaupapa Māori research, the role of researchers is twofold (Collins, 1991; Pihama, 1993). First, researchers need to affirm the importance of Māori self-definitions and self-valuations. Second, researchers need to critique Pākehā/colonial constructions and definitions of Māori and articulate solutions to Māori concerns in terms of Māori knowledge. These dual agendas are intertwined; for example, the critique of Pākehā ‘common sense’ makes space for the expression of an alternate Māori common sense.

Within this, we also need to be aware that the colonial society in which we reside is not a passive entity. The promotion of Māori interests that are strengths-focused rather than
deficit-based will undoubtedly encounter political, economic and cultural backlash as essentially what we are attempting to do is reclaim Aotearoa and reposition ourselves within our land. This will not be without repercussions and we need to be astute in both recognising and resisting this.

Rangahau kōrero: about the rationale for research that involves talking to people.

Kaupapa Māori approaches to carrying out research have been developed particularly in education, health and management by Māori researchers. As a broad approach to research kaupapa Māori is a strategy for selecting research topics and themes that can facilitate a positive difference for Māori, training and mentoring Māori researchers, and developing more appropriate methodologies for working with Māori communities. Within this, the arbitrary distinction often made between qualitative and quantitative research methods falls by the wayside as we seek out the method that is right for the research question we are asking.

Regardless of the method we choose, our process for engaging with research participants is often the same. The first element in this process is whakawhanaungatanga (making connections or links), whereby connections between the researcher(s) and the participant(s) are established. Thus, the research context becomes more than a meeting place for researcher and researched; it is a place where relations, friends and people who know the same people or who were brought up in the same place, meet. These connections wrap a larger, relationship-based context around the research moment.

Within qualitative research, the data gathering is often done within an interview context. Patton writes that ‘we interview to find out what is in and on someone’s mind, to gather their stories’ (2002). Interviewing as a research method is generally about the researcher asking questions and the participant providing answers. However, the way this is done can range from highly structured to quite unstructured. In a structured interview, questions are asked in a pre-determined order, with the wording being the same for all those interviewed. In addition, the participant may be asked to respond to the question by selecting from a list of options provided by the interviewer (Robson, 2002).

The less structured an interview is, the more freedom a participant will have in terms of how they respond. At the unstructured end the interviewer may only ask a few questions and these may be in response to what the participant is saying about a broad research topic (Robson, 2002). For example, in our research project about Māori health, participants responded to very broad enquiries from the interviewer along the lines of ‘what is Māori health?’ (Cram, Smith & Johnstone, 2002).
Our preference over the past ten to twelve years has been for semi-structured interviews. In this method, a schedule of research questions is developed and the participant may have an opportunity to view this schedule prior to the interview so that they can think through their ideas and responses. The interviewer then works through this schedule with the participants able to contribute when they want to and to skip questions they prefer not to answer or have nothing to say about. Often when we have engaged in this process for gathering research data from people, we have invested in mechanisms that help reduce the ‘gap’ between researcher and participants. For example, we try to put the participants in the ‘driver’s seat’ regarding the direction an interview takes, the areas that are open for discussion and the length of the interviews.

In doing so, we are seeking to de-power the researcher by reducing the amount of control he/she can potentially wield over the direction and scope of the research talk (Cram, 2001). In this way, we have attempted to make our interviews, although semi-structured, informant interviews where the primary focus is on participants’ interests and concerns rather than respondent interviews in which the interviewer remains in charge (Powney & Watts, 1987). This qualitative interview method is therefore compatible with kaupapa Māori as it allows participants to express their experiences fully and in their own terms (cf. Cram, Keefe, Ormsby & Ormsby, 1997).

This has also been our method of choice because often there is little, if any, written Māori knowledge about the topics we are researching. Semi-structured interviews allow the gathering of information when we are interested in exploring participants’ views on and understanding of a ‘new’ topic. Such a study may be a stand-alone piece of research or it may inform a more structured piece of research such as the design of a questionnaire for a larger population sample. For example, the study of Māori and genetic engineering explored both expert and lay understandings of and attitudes toward genetic engineering (Cram, Pihama & Philip-Barbara, 2000).

These interviews are usually tape-recorded because we are interested in gaining an accurate account of what the participants have talked about. Once an interview has been completed it will usually be transcribed and the transcript will be returned to the participant so that they can add, amend and/or delete comments.

The outcome of such interviews is invariably a wealth of information on a topic. There are opportunities within this method for the participants to make connections that they may not have made before and for the researcher to be surprised by the information from an interview. Without care and skill on the part of the researcher, there is, however, the risk that these ‘opportunities’ may be unsafe for the participants (and also for the researcher).
One project that we undertook with great care was the evaluation of a programme for children who had experience domestic violence (Cargo & Cram, 2001). As these children or their mothers might still be at risk from the men in their lives, it was important for us that the interviews be conducted by someone with clinical training. Thus, Tania Cargo, a clinical psychologist, interviewed both the children and their mothers, and on more than one occasion had to intervene in a situation that she recognised as dangerous. Another interviewer without training may well have overlooked this danger or may not reacted in a timely fashion.

Within this research, we also considered carefully how children could be in the driver’s seat during their interviews. Our solution was a hand-held microphone with an on/off switch that they held and controlled. Anything they wanted to say but did not want taped could therefore be said while the microphone was switched off.

In other situations, where sensitive topics may be raised or there is disclosure by the participants it is important that both participants and the researcher feel safe. Systems can be set in place prior to the research commencing for supporting participants: whānau can be present during the interview or called upon later (with the participant’s consent), and participants can make the decisions about what they want to talk about. Our experience has been that on many occasions the lives of our participants have been difficult and, at times, traumatic. This is the case even when we are not seeking out participants who have knowledge of a particular issue we are researching (for example, domestic violence), and we just want to talk with them about, for example, general health issues.

Within this context, it is imperative that participants are not re-victimised or re-traumatised by their participation in research. At the same time, however, participants have reported the value for them of having someone (namely the researcher) who is willing to sit and listen to their story. This is a fine line for a researcher to walk and it comes back to both the interest a researcher has in people as well as the skill they have as an interviewer. One of these characteristics is not enough—both are essential.

In addition, a degree of professionalism is desirable in interviewers so that they do not prejudice the interview. For example, kaiāwhina in the Rapuora study of Māori women’s health (1984) were instructed to be ‘objective’ in their interviewing:

You will also need to work hard to be an objective interviewer. This means that during the interview you need to let go of any prior history you have with the person being interviewed. So ask questions even though you may know the answer; don’t pass any judgements about what the person is saying; and don’t give your own version of events if you were involved in an occasion that they are describing.
This was necessary as the kaiāwhina (assistant) often interviewed women who were known and/or related to them. These prior relationships were a great asset to the rapport established during the interviews. However, there was a need to establish the context as an interview rather than as a shared recollection of events.

Another project on Māori and iwi provider success built on people’s prior connections and relationships to facilitate research (Pipi et al., 2003). In this project, regional coordinators interviewed successful providers. The local knowledge and understanding that regional coordinators brought to this project was pivotal to recruiting and interviewing providers, as well as and perhaps more importantly, interpreting findings and report writing.

This section is by no means a definitive guide to doing research interviews—many books have been written on this topic. Rather, the section has set the context of semi-structured research interviews and touched upon some of the issues that we have encountered in our use of this research method. Next we go from the interview to looking at what happens with the talk that is collected. The first part of the next section tackles the issue of representation, while the second looks more closely at analysis and some of the current questions being asked of qualitative analysts.

**Representation**

Representation is the art of telling our participants’ stories and lives in a way that is true to them. In this way, representation is about making Māori visible within research. This is different from objectification, which seeks to present a ‘real’ or objective truth about participants (cf. Ganguly, 1992). We are not merely holding up a mirror to reflect a reality. Rather, from the outset our research questions, our methods and our way of analysing data set the scene for a representation within which we, as researchers, are an intimate part.

In writing up our research into articles and reports, we are ultimately saying something about our research participants. While they have some control over this process—as exerted within the interview context and afterwards in their review of their interview transcript—when it comes down to the analysis of findings and the writing of the reports, this is often an exercise carried out by the researcher(s) alone. Participants may have a further opportunity to review draft analyses and reports; however, this is a time-consuming process that research timeframes and/or participant commitments may not fully allow.

And if participants do engage in this process there is a question around what happens if disagreements arise between them and the researcher(s). In some cases, disagreements can become part of the data with the conversation between researcher and participants being an explicit critique of the researcher’s analysis and representation (Kidder & Fine,
1986). The issue remains, however, that the researcher is again in charge of how this disagreement is represented and whose voice is privileged (Coyle, 1996). In addition, the exploration of disagreements at this level may not be appropriate within the type of report that is being written (Coyle, 1996).

The next best approach may be a method that facilitates analysis within the interview context. This can be done using interview methods such as Memorywork, where the drawing out of themes within, for example, a group’s experiences of an event is part of the group interview process (Cram et al., 1997). This can also work within a one-to-one interview when the researcher and the participant examine the themes coming from the participant’s talk about a topic. Again, however, this is time-consuming and the tension will be whether this is useful enough to warrant the extended request for participant involvement, especially as the researcher alone then has the opportunity to review all the interviews.

This issue should impact on the informed consent process that is carried out prior to the start of research. Participants need to know what will happen to the research results, whether they will be able to have a say in how they are interpreted, how interpretive disagreements between researcher and participants will be handled. If these are not discussed then participants and researchers themselves may end up feeling betrayed (Cram et al 1997).

**Analysis**

One of our roles as researchers is to listen to and document Māori experiences and meanings. As researchers we carry the responsibility of representing the realities of our participants to wider audiences and we take this role very seriously. We therefore use the word ‘analysis’ cautiously. Our aim, within kaupapa Māori research, is to make space for Māori voices and realities to be heard and considered ‘valid’. At the same time, we want to be able to say something, as researchers and analysts, about the society that positions our participants within certain subjectivities. What does this then mean for our analysis of talk?

In a way, the analysis of interview data may end up where this paper began. The discursive and rhetorical skills of oratory and debate so manifest in Māori political and social actions and institutions lay a foundation for analysis used to interpret Māori talk. The naming and refinement of these techniques is an ongoing project that we signal here.

At the present time, an overriding responsibility within the analysis of talk is the relationship wrapping within which the research is conducted. As discussed above, research is more than a meeting of researcher and participants; people come together within relationships, within whanaungatanga. This relationship extends beyond the end of a single research
project and embodies accountabilities and respect that Māori researchers are usually very aware of. Our responsibility is, therefore, to analyse and report our findings fully and truthfully. This also involves the use of processes that are open and transparent.

And, once again, it is worth considering the value of discussing these processes with our participants as part of an informed consent procedure. In this way, we might avoid the trap that Russell Bishop has written about, that:

much qualitative research has also maintained a colonising discourse of the ‘other’ by seeking to hide the researcher/writer under a veil of neutrality or of objectivity, a situation where the interests, concerns, and power of the researcher to determine the outcome of the research remains hidden in the text (1996).

Our concern, therefore, within kaupapa Māori is to continue to question whether how we are analysing our data and representing our participants is strengths-focused, rather than deficit-based and, therefore, re-colonising. The theoretical framework of kaupapa Māori strongly shapes our approach to analysis (cf. Patton, 2002). The first stage of our qualitative analysis is usually the development of rich descriptions of what our participants have said. Within this initial organising of our data (be it, for example, within themes, narratives or case studies), our participants’ voices are privileged in the sense that they are the source of knowledge about their own context and their kaupapa. It is not up to the researchers to question the ‘truth’ of these views; rather, we treat them as valid and discuss them in this light.

Analysis is often done using the database of interview transcripts and any interview notes written by the researcher. A process of reading and re-reading this database, listening to the audiotapes, and discussions among the researchers (if there is a research team) will reveal common themes, as well as points of contradiction, disagreement and agreement both within and between participants. This in-depth understanding of what participants have both said and left unsaid can underpin many of the 25 indigenous research projects identified by Linda Smith (1999). These projects—claiming, storytelling, celebrating survival, to name just a few—can be sourced from a database of indigenous talk.

The second stage of a qualitative analysis is also important. In this stage rich description leads to interpretation: in other words, from knowing to understanding why. Often the notion of explaining and looking for causation is captured by postivist, Western researchers working with quantitative data. Here we claim it for qualitative data and, in particular, for indigenous talk (cf. Patton, 2002; Yin, 2002). Looking for causation is about looking for how things are linked to and appear to lead to other things. It is this step that not only gives voice to Māori, it also leads to evidence-based claims about how this voice is uplifted.
as well as stifled and within what contexts. And, thus, our kaupapa Māori agenda is met by our analytical framework.

**Worthiness**

The worthiness of this analytical work can be judged in many different ways. In terms of assessing the rigour of qualitative research we can look for transparency in the analysis process, generalisability of the findings, and the face validity of the findings (that is, do the findings look right?). One way to assess all of the above is to take the research findings back to participants for validation (but see the above discussion of this under representation). A second way is to take the findings to a wider audience of stakeholders for discussion and debate. In any assessment of worthiness, we favour the three characteristics coined by Lee (2003) in her theorising of the pūrakau method; that is, the work should be engaging, authentic and thought-provoking. Ultimately, research is also about the people, about being accountable in the production of knowledge that is for the good of the community and informs how we live our lives.

**Conclusion**

Any research endeavour is political—whether it supports or challenges the status quo within our society. Unfortunately it is often when research challenges the status quo, and thereby has resource *implications*, that it is most likely to be challenged in terms of its ‘science’ and, therefore, the ‘legitimacy’ of its findings. Thus, kaupapa Māori research, with its explicit research agenda of giving voice to Māori and challenging deficit-based thinking, is often seen as somehow ‘off-beat’ and ‘radical’. This marginalisation of kaupapa Māori research as ‘non-scientific’ and/or somehow biased also marginalises the voices of Māori research participants and denies their strengths and their flax-root solutions to the issues facing Māori. Given that these issues are life-threatening (in terms of the disparity in Māori and non-Māori life expectancy), we should be very impatient with this attitude.

By incorporating the importance of talk within kaupapa Māori research, we are acknowledging our own traditions and ways of being, providing an avenue for Māori voices, and challenging those who continue to colonise us and who fear a productive and healthy Māori population.
References


Endnotes

1. ‘Talk’ is used here to refer to speeches and conversations as well as karanga, waiata, haka, etc. These are all forms of communication used within both formal and informal gatherings.
2. This project also incorporated brief written surveys that participants were asked to complete.