KAUPAPA MĀORI MEETS RETROSPECTIVE COHORT

Vera Keefe, Clint Ormsby, Bridget Robson, Dr Papaarangi Reid, Fiona Cram, Gordon Purdie, Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Authority Incorporated.

Whakarāpopoto Kōrero

Ko te kaupapa o tēnei tuhinga, he āta tātari i ngā āhuatanga Māori i whai wāhi atu ki te rangahautanga tirotiro i te pānga mai o te noho kore mahi ki te hauora o te tangata. Koia nei tētahi wāhanga o te kaupapa matua a Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pomare, i tapaia te ingoa Mauri Mahi Mauri Ora, Mauri Noho Mauri Mate. Te pānga mai o te kore mahi me te whakamutua o te mahi ki te hauora o te tangata. Ahakoia he matakiti ngā tikanga rangahau, ko te kaupapa Māori te tuāpapa. Ka tirohia te whaihua o tēnei huarahi rangahau me te mōhio anō, kāore i tutuki pai te mahi, mehemea kāore i whāia tēnei huarahi e tuāpapa mai ana i te ao Māori me ōna tikanga.

Abstract

This paper discusses the Māori processes and methodology that have surrounded a seemingly typical epidemiological cohort study of the health effects of redundancy. Kaupapa Māori is the central paradigm that underlies this research. Kaupapa Māori is a strategy for selecting research topics and themes. This strategy can facilitate a positive difference for Māori training and mentoring Māori researchers and assist in developing more appropriate methods for working with Māori communities.

"Mauri Mahi, Mauri Ora, Mauri Noho, Mauri Mate: The health effects of unemployment and redundancy" is a major research programme for Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare. The programme takes a multiresearch approach to this research topic. The retrospective cohort study is a project within this programme. While this study uses a standard research tool, the research reflects Māori processes. These are examined in terms of enhancing research outcomes by decreasing the risk of scientific colonialism. It is unlikely that these processes would normally be reported. However, it is our contention that the study would not have been possible if the researchers and the research were not centered in te Ao Māori. It is the impact of this centering that we explore here.

Background

The attitude that Māori could be the subjects of research has persisted for many years. Despite the amount of research conducted, there remains relatively little published research on Māori health (Rolleston, 1989) and even fewer investigations have been carried out by Māori.

Some Māori feel that there has been little research that has directly benefited Māori. Issues of participation, ownership, accountability and definition are emerging as more Māori are trained in research. Māori researchers are challenging standards of ethical frameworks and research methodologies. The need for Māori methodologies that permeate modern Māori realities and reflect a Māori world view (Smith, 1996) has been signalled. Such methodologies are essential to ensure research is not colonising.

Jones (1980) parallels scientific colonialism to political colonialism and notes that colonisation is typified by three factors: the removal of resources which may generate wealth/prestige, the belief in one’s right of access to these resources, and the focus of power is held external to the community.

Part of this scientific colonialism is the researching of topics devoid of their historical, social, cultural and political context. Communities have often been taken for granted. They have been expected to participate in research, be sympathetic to the researchers’ needs and give of themselves and their knowledge. Over the past two to three decades, some researchers have become more aware of this debate. However, disciplines within arts and humanities seem to have moved with more commitment than the sciences.

Kaupapa Māori Research

As Māori health researchers, or perhaps more accurately, Māori researchers of Māori health, we seek to undertake research that is consistent with our view of the world and with who we are. Kaupapa Māori research is an attempt to retrieve space for Māori voices and perspectives, whereby Māori realities are seen as legitimate (Smith,
When we apply this view to our research process, Māori tikanga and processes are incorporated throughout the research. In this way we capture our position predominantly as ‘insiders’. That is, we are part of the community we seek to study. We are not ‘outsiders’ looking in. By acknowledging this we are refusing to reduce either ourselves or the research participants to ‘other’. This is important as the dominance of Pākehā 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).

Positioning ourselves as insiders is in direct contrast to approaches that insist that the self be submerged so that the social scientist is unbiased and objective (Collins, 1991). Instead we make use of and trust our own “personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge” (Collins, 1991). However, this does not mean that we are unable to carry out research ethically, systematically and scientifically (Smith, 1995).

Setting a Research Agenda

... intrinsic to Kaupapa Māori theory is an analysis of existing power structures and societal inequalities... exposing underlying assumptions that serve to conceal the power relations that exist within society and the ways in which dominant groups construct conceptions of ‘common sense’ and ‘facts’ to provide ad hoc justification for the maintenance of inequalities and the continued oppression of Māori” (Pihama, 1993).

Given the New Zealand economic restructuring of the past two decades, it is not surprising that Māori researchers would want to study the effects of unemployment. Job loss and industry closures have been a feature of the economic restructuring. Māori have been particularly affected, experiencing high rates of redundancy and unemployment (Te Puni Kōkiri, 1998).

Before the economy changed radically in the 1980s, Māori had higher levels of participation in the labour market than non-Māori (Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Employment, 1994). With changes in the economy however, many of the industries in which Māori were heavily represented, for example the freezing works industry, were subject to major downsizing. Closures and redundancies in these industries therefore affected large numbers of Māori workers (Department of Statistics & Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 1990).

Provincial regions in the North Island were hardest hit and the Hawkes Bay region experienced one of the highest rates of unemployment (Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Employment, 1994). The economic restructuring process has taken little account of the health burden incurred and where the bulk of that burden lies.
The Health Effects of Unemployment and Redundancy

"Mauri Mahi, Mauri Ora, Mauri Noho, Mauri Mate: The health effects of unemployment and redundancy" is a major research programme for Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmāre. This programme takes a multimethods approach to this research topic.

The impact on the individual workers was assessed using a retrospective cohort study to examine the effect of a large industry closure on their risk of mortality and morbidity. A qualitative study of ex-workers and their families aimed to add a more human face of redundancy and unemployment to the programme. A third study attempted to explore the community impact by examining changes to the communities’ relative "levels of deprivation" using the NZDep91 and NZDep96 scales (Crampton, Salmond & Sutton, 1997; Salmond, Crampton & Sutton, In Press). A further study evaluated an intervention when another industry closure occurred in the same locality.

The retrospective cohort study is the focus of this paper. This study aims to examine the health effects of the closure of the Hawai Bay Farmers Meat Company, Whakatu on workers made redundant in October 1986. In particular, whether there was an increased risk of death or hospital admission among the ex-Whakatu workforce during 1986-1994.

The death rate and hospital admission rate of workers, employed during the 1986 season, from the Hawai Bay Farmers Meat Company Whakatu (Whakatu) was compared with the rates of the workforce in a nearby freezing works, Weddel Tomaona Meat Processing Company (Weddel Tomaona), which remained in operation during 1986-1994.

The study seeks to quantify the health effects of large scale redundancies and thus inform communities, policy makers, workers and industries of the likely effects of industry closures.

The Freezing Works

Whakatu Freezing Works

Whakatu, the largest freezing works in New Zealand, was established in 1912. Its business involved the slaughter and processing of both sheep and beef. Most of its operation was seasonal, commencing around September of each year and winding down around June the following year.

Whilst the turangawaewae for Māori workers varied considerably, there were a number of local marae which provided a great deal of labour over the decades. In the case of Kohupatiki all of the breadwinners from every house in the pā were employed at Whakatu. In October 1986 Whakatu closed and around 2,000 people were made redundant, approximately half of whom were Māori. The impact of the closure of Whakatu was felt by large family and kin networks, and the wider community.

Weddel Tomaona Freezing Works

It has been said that Weddel Tomaona made Hastings, and whether we agree or not, it is an undeniable fact that the presence of the works in the town has contributed a lot to its history (Heretaunga Intermediate School, 1961).

On Friday, August 19, 1994, Weddel New Zealand went into receivership and forced the closure of the Weddel Tomaona plant in Hastings and other operations. Weddel owned around the North Island (The Daily Telegraph, 1995). At that time, Weddel Tomaona was Hawkes Bay’s single largest employer, some families having worked there for four and five generations. For many Hawkes Bay people the Weddel Tomaona closure had followed the demise of the Whakatu Freezing Works in 1986. This was another blow for the province (The Daily Telegraph, 1995).

Like Whakatu before it, the sudden closure and loss of jobs had and will continue to have a profound effect on the workers, mainly Māori, and the Ngāti Kahungunu and Hawkes Bay communities.

The Research Journey

The method of a cohort study is a standard research tool that we have adopted to explore the impact of job loss on Māori. Our journey has, however, reflected Māori processes. Examples of these processes are outlined in terms of the concept of whānau, consultation, the role of whakapapa, and reciprocity.

The Concept of Whānau

It is argued that whānau, in precolonial times, was the core social unit, rather than the individual (Smith, 1996). It can also be argued that the whānau remains as a persistent way of living and organising the social world. In terms of research, the concept of whānau is a central part of Kaupapa Māori. For the cohort study, it has been a way of organising the research group, a way of incorporating ethical procedures and reporting back to the community. Also, it has been a way of giving ‘voice’ to the different sections of the Māori communities, and debating ideas and issues which impact on the study. Whānau has a pragmatic function, in that the whānau is a way of distributing and sharing tasks; of incorporating people with particular expertise; and, of keeping Māori values central to the project (Smith, 1996).
For example a number of kaumātua in Ngāti Kahungunu are former workers of the Whakatu Freezing Works. They provided mentorship to the researchers and sanctioned the cohort study, reminding the researchers that the Whakatu freezing works was not just a place of employment, it was a physical embodiment of social networks and context. Therefore, the personnel records of the former workforce, while in one sense belonged to the Company, on the other hand, they were providing personal details about workers’ lives and were regarded as “being an important part of one’s life”. This led us to perform a ritual to whakanoa and to pay respects to deceased workers, before we accessed the personnel records.

Whānau has also been central to the follow-up for the cohort study. Both freezing works were major employers within the Ngāti Kahungunu and Hawkes Bay communities with about 50% of the workforce being Māori. Fundamental to both works was the notion of camaraderie or whanaungatanga among the freezing workers. In this context, whanaungatanga refers to the social relationships and networks developed at the works, such as workers who worked in the same department like the fellmongery or on the chain. These relationships and networks led to the development of strong ties extending beyond the hours of work into leisure activities. It was quite common for fathers, brothers and husbands, wives and daughters at both works to arrange jobs for other members and even distant relatives, so that several generations could claim a work history at both works (Cram, Keefe, Ormsby & Ormsby, 1997).

It seems that management at both works encouraged this practice and it certainly created a stable workforce. One consequence was that very strong family and kin networks had grown and extended throughout the works, so that social contact in the communities was reflected and reinforced in the workplaces and vice versa.

After each closure a number of the networks remained intact, in particular, the whānau and some of the departmental networks. These networks have continued to be utilised by workers for various reasons such as support and information. They have also been used as a means of gaining employment, especially within the meat industry or if workers have migrated out of the area in search of employment opportunities. The researchers were privileged to have access to these various networks that have contributed subsequently towards the achievement of a follow-up rate of 96% for the study.

Consultation
Consultation is not only important to the Māori community, but also to the wider community. The purpose of consultation between the Māori community and researchers is two-fold. The first is to ensure that research practices and outcomes contribute to Māori development and wellbeing and the second is to recognise mana whenua. However an outcome of the process of consultation should be the development of a working relationship and/or partnership between the Māori community and the researchers.

The initial stages of this project involved consultation with kaumātua, local iwi organisations including marae, Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated (tribal authority), Taiwhenua, local Māori health workers, unions representing workers from both freezing works, the district council, and management of Weddel Crown Tamaona Freezing Works. A community steering group was established comprising of individuals and representatives of various organisations. At certain intervals community hui were held with the steering group and other interested people on the progress of the unemployment programme. These hui provided the opportunity to seek assistance with information regarding the follow-up of study participants, training of community workers and the prioritising of research projects.

Opinion was also sought from the Privacy Commissioner to ensure that the study procedures were consistent with the 1993 Privacy Act. Approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the regional health authority.

The status of Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated as co-principal investigator of this project and the companion qualitative study, reflects their status as consultants and partners in this research endeavour.

The Role of Whakapapa
A number of Māori have identified whakapapa as the most fundamental aspect of the way we think about and come to know the world (Rangihau, 1981). Whakapapa is a way of thinking, a way of learning, a way of storing knowledge and a way of debating knowledge. In terms of kaupapa Māori research, whakapapa is embedded in Māori knowledge and is essential to what becomes taken for ‘granted.’ Whakapapa intersects with research in a number of different ways. Furthermore, the shape it takes varies according to the context, the time, the people and the actual project (Smith, 1996).

In this study the majority of the research team comprised of researchers that affiliated to the iwi of Ngāti Kahungunu. The researchers’ whakapapa links have contributed towards the working relationship between the community and the researchers. Underpinning this
relationship are the values of trust and respect. It has been these values that have created and sanctioned the Research Centre’s entry points into the community within the tribal area of Ngāti Kahungunu (Cram, Keefe, Ormsby & Ormsby, 1997).

Networking through whakapapa is a process that the researchers have used effectively to build relationships and disseminate knowledge and information.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the equitable exchange of skills, knowledge, time, that we believe should occur within the context of our research. The best assurance of community reciprocity is to establish an ongoing relationship with the whānau, hapū and iwi that allows a relationship of trust and respect to develop through performance.

The reciprocal relationship developed between the researchers and the researched community has been greatly facilitated through whakapapa and whanaungatanga. Within this community reciprocity is linked to accountability. This means that the researchers have to reciprocate in some way for the time, effort, information and support given by participants. Therefore the researcher’s obligations may extend beyond the immediate project and may also revisit the researcher at any time.

“The invisible obligatory contract one signs with the community involved extends through the dimensions of time and beyond that of the individual” (McCarthy, 1995).

In this study, this has meant employing and training local people when possible, assisting with developing research projects, contributing to local research workshops, providing resources including information, advocating on behalf of the community when necessary and ensuring appropriate koha is provided. All symbolise an ongoing relationship and a commitment to more than a fleeting academic relationship. The significance of doing this is reflected in the regard Māori people have for whanaungatanga (Rangihau, 1975).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to map out some parameters of what is referred to as Kaupapa Māori Research. This has included a discussion on the concept and context of Kaupapa Māori and then a discussion on its application to the retrospective cohort study. Also discussed is the connection between some Māori cultural values and principles that are seen by those who write in this area as a significant component of Kaupapa Māori research.

Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare operates from a platform of research with Māori, by Māori, for Māori. Our agenda is to promote, facilitate and undertake health research as an integral part of Māori and iwi development, and also to contribute to the development of a Māori health research workforce skilled in all areas of health research and with the capacity to pass these skills on to others. As well as that the outcome for the unemployment portfolio is to optimise policy and to advocate for social change by giving a ‘voice’ to the different sections of the Māori communities affected by the major industrial closures.

The legacy of the practices of past researchers in Māori communities is that many Māori are hesitant about any involvement in research. In addition, research has often misrepresented Māori realities as non-Māori researchers have been unable to move beyond their own world view. This is not surprising as research has been very good at identifying Māori deficits but poor at facilitating social change. As well as the expectation that research should facilitate change, the research journey should also be safe and provide some benefits for those researched.

The cohort study within this multimethods research programme on unemployment demonstrates how a standard research tool, a retrospective cohort, can be used within a Kaupapa Māori methodology. It is our experience that not only does this methodology produce robust quantitative data, but it also provides benefits to the community involved. Hence Kaupapa Māori Research has been a way of organising such processes that has led to successful outcomes for the study, the researchers and the community. The Centre believes that the use of Māori processes has enhanced the research outcomes by decreasing the risk of scientific colonialism.

Endnotes
1 This research was supported by the Health Research Council of New Zealand. Special thanks to former freezing workers of Whakatū and Tōrōmāi meat plants, to the whānau, ngā tawhenua o Ngāti Kahungunu, Te Punī Kōkiri Hastings branch and the Meatworkers Union for their ongoing support for unemployment portfolio.
2 Correspondence can be sent to Vera Keefe, Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare, Wellington School of Medicine, PO Box 7343, Wellington South. Email: tmhivko@wnmeds.ac.nz
3 Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare (Eru Pōmare Māori Health Research Centre), Wellington School of Medicine, University of Otago
4 International Research Institute for Māori & Indigenous Education, University of Auckland
5 Department of Public Health, Wellington School of Medicine, University of Otago
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