Reasearching Our Relations: Reflections on Ethics and Marginalisation

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Research in a Māori sense seeks to expand knowledge outwards (te whānuitanga), in depth (te h honutanga) and towards light (te māramatanga). (Mead, 2003: 318)
Abstract

Marginalisation occurs when a group of people are pushed to the periphery of a society. Many Māori reside at the margins of ‘mainstream’ society, while others are at the margins of Māori society. The present paper explores how ‘by Māori, for Māori’ research and evaluation can create spaces for voices from the margins to be heard. The paper arose out of a series of hui in which papers on the notion of marginalisation and Māori were presented and discussed, along with the broader topic of research ethics and protocols. Three themes that emerged from these hui are considered in this paper: relationships between researchers and participants/communities, researchers knowing themselves, and the safety aspects inherent within tikanga. The discussion of these themes draws upon the papers that were written for this project, the feedback from hui participants (researchers, students, health professionals, government workers, community providers), and local and international literature on research ‘by and with’ indigenous peoples. In making the ‘knowing’ we hold about these issues more explicit, this paper aims to generate more discussion as well as providing some small guidance for those who may be new to this thing called ‘research’.

Introduction

A people’s heritage really lives or dies in their hearts. Centuries of foreign occupation and oppression cannot destroy a people’s heritage, if they continue to cherish and believe in it. Daes, 2000.

When newcomers arrived on the shores of Aotearoa, our ancestors looked positively on the opportunities created by the sharing of this land with them (Mead, 1999). In those times Māori were ‘ordinary’, and the newcomers were ‘different’. Even though we entered into a Treaty in 1840 that set the scene for a partnering relationship between Māori and Tāuiwi (non-Māori) in this land, this agreement was not honoured and within a few short decades Māori were the ones who were ‘different’ (Orange, 1987; Walker, 1990). We were de-centred and pushed to the margins (cf. McIntosh, 2004).

The loss of our land, the disruption of our family structures and tribal relationships, and the suppression of our languages are some of the key elements often quoted as underpinning our marginalised status (Durie, 1994; Walker, 1990). What is often overlooked is the role that research has played as a tool of colonisation (Cram, 1997; Smith, 1999).

We have been measured, observed and/or interviewed by non-Māori who have then interpreted our reality within their own world view and have found us to be wanting. As a result of this deficit-based research, we have been labelled as: bad or absent parents, juvenile delinquents, lazy and dumb, a drain on the state and in need of constant
supervision (Cram, 1997). This experience has not been unique to Māori; the experiences of other indigenous peoples have been similar (Harry, 2001). For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have also been subjected to research that has sought ‘solutions’ to Aboriginal ‘problems’, with these being defined by non-Aboriginals (Janke, 1988).

Such research has justified the theft of our land and the marginalisation of us as a people. In addition, it has often resulted in the undermining of our own, Māori world views, beliefs and values (Cram, 2004).

Some of us have come to believe our own bad press. This can make us turn on one another as we blame others for what we think we recognise as personal deficits, rather than structural conditions (cf. Smith, C. 2004). In this way, we can be both marginalised from ‘mainstream’ society and further marginalised by our own people through what Tracey McIntosh calls ‘horizontal marginalisation’ (Wellington Hui, 31 May 2004).

For those who are in power in this country, deficit-based research findings have become an accepted common sense about us; the ‘truth’ (Apple, 1982). Even when we refuse to resign ourselves to this ‘truth’, it still intrudes upon our realities. Resisting such ‘common sense’ requires courage and more often than not sees us labelled as radical (Reid & Cram, in press). Furthermore, resistance is often exhausting, sapping energy that should rightly be invested in whänau (nuclear or extended family), hapū (sub tribe), iwi (tribe) and Māori community development.

This ‘truth’ has, therefore, marginalised us in multiple and complex ways (McIntosh, 2004). We have found ourselves in what Laguerre (1999) describes as ‘minoritised spaces’; dislocated from ‘white’, ‘normalised’, ‘majoritised space’.

The difficulty for researchers in the majoritised space has been one of ‘translation’ or ‘interpretation’ of the ‘cultural differences’ they associate with those in minoritised spaces (Myers, 2004). Guidebooks have been written for these researchers recommending that they, for example, be culturally sensitive and develop research partnerships with participant groups (an example is the HRC, 1998). While these guidebooks may have raised awareness among non-indigenous researchers, these researchers are often still ‘operating in (and ironically maintaining) that majority space’ (Myers, 2004: 8).

Perhaps the questions that these researchers ask about ‘translation’ and ‘interpretation’ are the wrong ones. These questions do not undermine a status quo that ensures the continued marginalisation of the least powerful groups in society. Rather, research with those in ‘minoritised spaces’ should foreground issues of inequality and social justice (Smith, 2004). In addition, the researcher’s gaze should also be turned to those in
‘majoritised spaces’ who are privileged by the status quo (Fine, 1997; McCleanor & Nairn, 2002). After all, at the heart of the Nuremberg Code is a concern that research ethics, and therefore research, should be an instrument of social justice (Smith, 2004).

A dissatisfaction and impatience with ‘mainstream’ researchers seeking out and often misinterpreting our knowledge has also led to a growth in both the desire and the capacity for ‘by Māori, for Māori, with Māori’ research (Cram, 2001). We seek to use research as one tool for re-centering ourselves as ‘ordinary’, with a world view that is as valid as that of our Treaty partner’s (cf. hooks, 1984). Research in Māori hands, therefore, has the potential to be a tool that can ‘facilitate the expression of marginalised voices and … attempt to represent the experience of marginalisation in genuine and authentic ways’ (Smith, 2004: 9).

We stand on our right, embodied in the Treaty of Waitangi, to develop our own research tools, processes and ethics (Jackson, 1994). Our own research has already shown our margins to be spaces of ‘radical possibility’ (Boler, 1999: 5). In exploring such possibility we should also be mindful of the following questions (Smith, 2004):

- How can we decolonise research so that it serves us better?
- How do we create research spaces that allow our stories to be told and heard?
- How do we use research to destabilise existing power structures that hold us in the margins?

These questions, and others like them, allow us to critically reflect on our own research practice so that the resulting research is well-placed to be transformative for participants, for ourselves as researchers, and for our society as a whole.

The critical reflection process that gave fruition to the remainder of the present paper often resembled a loud and enthusiastic conversation about ‘by Māori, for Māori’ research and the research protocols that guide us. Before reporting back on this, however, we briefly discuss the project that initiated this conversation.

**Protocols for research with vulnerable and marginalised Māori**

Researchers are knowledge brokers, people who have the power to construct legitimating arguments for or against ideas, theories or practices. They are collectors of information and producers of meaning which can be used for, or against Indigenous interests. University of Victoria, 2003.

This project, sponsored by Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, University of Auckland, explores possibilities for social transformation through:
The examination of the processes and conditions by which some individuals and groups are excluded from ‘mainstream’ and/or Māori society; and
The exploration of protocols for research with these groups.

The development of protocols builds upon the ‘knowing’ that the authors and those we consulted with hold about how to do research that is ‘tika’ or right. Mead writes that ‘a researcher should always to guided by the principle of tika which is the very basis of the word tikanga’ (2003: 318).

In the first stage of the project, seven authors wrote papers about various aspects of marginalisation and/or research ethics (Carter, 2004; Clarke, 2004; Cram, 2004; McIntosh, 2004; Ormond, 2004; Smith, C., 2004; Smith, 2004). In the second stage of the project, three consultative hui (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch) were held in April—June 2004, with a range of interested parties (researchers, students, health professionals, government workers and community providers) invited to read the papers and then spend a day with the authors discussing ideas around marginalisation and research protocols.

Feedback on these hui was the topic of a presentation at the Mātauranga Tuku Iho Tikanga Rangahau, Traditional Knowledge and Research Ethics Conference, in June 2004. The audience at this presentation also gave valuable feedback on research ethics.

In the remainder of this paper we discuss three ‘by Māori, for Māori’ ethics themes that emerged out of this project, namely:

• Relationships between researchers and research participants/communities;
• Researchers knowing themselves; and
• The safety aspects inherent within tikanga.

The discussion of these themes draws upon the papers that were written for the project, the feedback from hui participants and the conference audience, and the local and international literature on researching with indigenous peoples.

‘By Māori, for Māori’ research: emerging protocols

[Research] processes, procedures and consultation need to be correct so that in the end everyone who is connected with the research project is enriched, empowered, enlightened and glad to have been part of it. Mead, (2003: 318).

Relationships: building, maintaining, furthering

In research protocols, often developed to guide non-indigenous researchers wanting to undertake research with indigenous peoples, the term ‘partnership ethic’ has been coined. For example, ‘the new partnership ethic ... emphasises the need to create meaningful
relationships with the people and communities affected by research’ (ACUNS Council, 1997). The call for a ‘partnership ethic’ is in response to the experiences of indigenous peoples of having research conducted on us, with the findings interpreted within others’ world views (Cram, 1997).² Linda Smith described this mis-interpretation as partially resulting from a clash of cultural world views about what ‘respect’ means (see ‘Hui tuatahi. Respect’ box below).

**Hui tuatahi: Respect**

Internationally the indigenous critique or response to ethics is really starting to develop and it’s occurring at lots of different sites and [people are] coming at it from different perspectives. For example in Australia there are a number of studies where they’re starting to critique institutional practices and the way they are impacting on Aboriginal communities. By far, in a way, the discomfort that indigenous communities are feeling is really around what counts as ethical principals. So when you read the indigenous literature there are two words that keep coming up: one is ‘respect’ and one is ‘relationships’ .... You go and read any ethical code and imbedded in there is this principal of respect. So then the question I asked [in my paper] is, ‘How come, if respect is a principal, we’ve never been respected?’ or maybe what we understand as respect is different from someone else’s understanding.

But when you read the history on this, ‘respect’ is a new American practice. The concept of what counts as respect and it’s a respect for the individual, the autonomy of an individual to make decisions. It’s not respect in terms of how you might greet someone, how you might dress, how you might spend a few months establishing a relationship. That respect has kind of got a specific term and because it’s imbedded in moral philosophy and various other things, it’s able to be raised up here as a principle that’s somehow distant from the reality of how people really interact. Because in real life there are multiple principles at work and what any group of people do together socially is a way of balancing principles and values and developing pragmatic relationships. In the literature about respect and ethics there’s the assumption that it’s not being interpreted on the ground. I would say that researchers do a lot of the decision-making about what counts as a respectful relationship and govern the concept of respect in the practices, and those are international practices. They are trained through your disciplines and through your institutional experiences. Linda Smith, Auckland Hui, (30 April 2004).

More so than a ‘partnership ethic’, a ‘relationship ethic’ can speak to those who are doing ‘by Māori, for Māori, with Māori’ research (cf. Hongoeka Declaration, 1996). Whereas ‘partnerships ... must be founded on mutual understanding and trust’ (ACUNS Council, 1997); the essence of a relationship ethic is whakapapa (Smith, 1995). The question ‘No hea koe?’ connects us together at multiple levels—where we are from, who our people are—while acknowledging both similarities and differences. Russell Bishop describes this as ‘identifying, through culturally appropriate means, your bodily linkage, your engagement, your connectedness, and therefore unspoken but implicit connectedness to other people, (1996: 152).
These connections have a fluidity that is responsive to time, place, peoples and kaupapa. This fluidity makes for a diversity of possibilities within this connectivity, some of which people may have a choice over and others that they may not. Lyn Carter has stressed the importance of recognising the complexity of whakapapa relationships that this can impart.

*Hui tuatahi: Diversity of whakapapa*

There needs to be recognition of the complexity of whakapapa relationships so that all the needs can be met, but there needs to be recognition too of the different levels of participation that are now open; [alongside awareness]... that some people aren’t going to choose to fully participate. So iwi membership will continue to be diverse and complex because of the changes that have occurred and continue to occur in Māori society. I think researchers need to be aware of this dynamic nature whakapapa, because it’s not just about going to a little bounded group and they’re all going to be the same, and all going to have the same ideas. So people need to be aware of the way whakapapa is dynamic and the way that it challenges traditional notions of what makes up a Māori group, in particular what makes up an iwi, hapū or whānau group and that, of course, is made up now of very complex and diverse relationships. Lyn Carter, Auckland Hui, (30 April 2004).

At the start of any hui, the sharing of whakapapa can establish a safe and comfortable environment in which to speak, even if the sharing is debate or argumentation. Māori research (i.e. ‘by Māori, for Māori’ research) embodies these processes when people come together for the purpose of research. Behind every person, there is a whānau, and there is a whakapapa that places the research specifics, such as the research method (for example qualitative or quantitative), within a much broader, relationship context. As Kathy Irwin so succinctly put it: the Māori world leads and the research world follows (Irwin, 1994).

A relationship ethic also encompasses notions of researchers and participants journeying together with reciprocity, participant control over decisions and processes affecting them, and researcher accountability. In addition, relationships extend beyond humans. As Linda Smith explained at our Christchurch hui:

> When you talk about ethics, you talk about relationships and I think there are culturally different views of how far relationships extend. Relationships are with your relations and we have relations who are insects, birds. Animals are our relations and I think that a lot of indigenous communities share that. (3 June 2004)

So while we have begun a conversation about Māori research that is ‘by Māori, for Māori, with Māori’ research, we also need to keep in mind that our relations extend beyond a human border. For this reason, Te Wānanga o Awanuiārangī has not formulated separate research ethics codes for human and for animals. Rather, it has taken seriously the challenge of building a relationship ethic with all of our relations (Linda Smith, Christchurch Hui).
Knowing your research self

Whakapapa is about knowing where your roots are. Similarly a relationship ethic requires a researcher to be aware of the social, cultural and political context in which their research kaupapa is located. The hui participants described this as being about:

- Knowing and being clear about your expectations and assumptions;
- Having a thirst for knowledge and the courage to pursue it; and
- Seeking support for research endeavours.

Each of these aspects is discussed below.

*Expectations and assumptions*

An awareness of one’s own expectations and assumptions, and the ability to communicate these to research participants, are essential characteristics of knowing one’s research self. This encompasses an understanding of what a researcher role entails, the boundaries of that role, and developing the skills to negotiate the relationship ethics involved. As one participant stated: ‘Know who you are; know your audience’ (Conference audience, June 2004). Colleen Tuuta also puts the importance of this very succinctly in her self-reflections about ‘earning the right’ to be a researcher with her own people at Parihaka: lack of commitment, lack of clarity, lack of focus, a naïve perception of the history and current lives of the people that you have chosen to be a part of, can often be more detrimental to them and their situations (2004: 69).

Part of this is being realistic about research as a tool for knowledge production. Indigenous knowledge has become very attractive. However, it can only become part of the knowledge economy if we are prepared for it to be commoditised and traded (Smith, 2004). Harry, for example, writes that ‘indigenous peoples worldwide are now at the forefront of a new wave of scientific investigation: the quest for monopoly control of genetic resources’ (2001: 1). Once again, we need to resist a tide of a new form of colonialism while at the same time trying to put voice to our own concerns, within our own research models.

Linda Smith suggests that we embrace the tensions that this creates; that we ‘make an active choice that that’s where you are going to work and that takes away all of the guilt from trying to be something else’ (Wellington Hui, 31 May 2004). Smith also suggests that we return to some of the foundation of principles of kaupapa Māori research, which do address those tensions, which do argue that our role as Māori researchers is to deal with structural relations of power; is to attempt to address those. It is about trying to seek transformation and it is about being Māori as a given, and not having to apologise for that and being a Māori researcher’ (ibid).
Desires for social change usually have repercussions within a wider society and are often fought because they have resource implications. And so often it’s around multiple levels of why we do research, being very clear about what research can achieve and being honest about why we may be committed to social change. Sometimes it’s very difficult for research to achieve social change because when research challenges a power structure, it’s invariably looked at really, really closely and unpicked by those who want to dispute the findings and the [resulting] request for social change. We’ve seen that time and time again …. So I think that it’s a tricky thing that we do sometimes. I got over a long time ago ever promising anyone that research would result in change. Fiona Cram, Wellington Hui, 31 May 2004.

Hui participants also talked about the need for researchers to be comfortable with not knowing. This entails being able to ask for and/or accept guidance. As one participant stated: ‘Be prepared to change the channel’ (Conference audience, June 2004). In this way, the boundaries of a researcher’s role are negotiated within a relationship ethic. A clear communication of these perceived boundaries, then, places the decision-making power with the participant community as to whether the researcher is the right person for this kaupapa, these questions, and/or this research project. Once negotiated, the maintenance of this role becomes the researcher’s ethical and professional responsibility (also see Bevan-Brown, 1998).

The term ‘insider research’ is, therefore, something of a misnomer in these circumstances as even if the researcher belongs to the community they are researching, they are obliged, within a relationship ethic, to establish and maintain a role as a researcher (Smith, 2004). As Cram, Keefe, Ormsby, Ormsby and NKII (1997) noted, whakapapa links may make a research project plausible but it is the professional conduct of the researchers that will make it possible.

An issue discussed at length at one hui was the role of the researcher as an analyst of people’s ‘talk’ or ‘voices’ (also see Cram, 2004; Smith, 2004). For readers or listeners to be able to ‘hear’ what participants are saying, a researcher needs to give them a framework that guides their interpretation of participants’ kōrero. The failure to do so may mean that an important voice goes unheard or misinterpreted. After so much experience of having our words misinterpreted by researchers who are not our relations, why should we now tolerate a missed opportunity for our researcher relations to surround and protect participants’ words with an interpretive framework that holds tight to the normality of who we are as Māori?

Such an interpretive framework can also ensure that a diversity of voices are heard, rather than just the most articulate whose words can be left to stand on their own without analysis. At one hui, Tracey McIntosh described a situation that might arise whereby some research participants
Are very articulate but they are somewhat removed from the actual thing that you are looking at. But it’s just that they have been able to articulate some of the concerns or they are able to present a particular view that you find useful in regards to the way that you are going to present. And perhaps those who have got a real lived experience of that particular thing, they are living it, but they are not articulating it in a way that you find useful to get your point across.

In the absence of an interpretative framework, the voices of these less articulate participants might well be silenced.

**Thirst and courage**

Hui participants identified that carrying out research requires courage. In one sense, courage is about being unafraid to thirst for knowledge, perhaps in the face of doubts and challenging circumstances. This encompasses the politics of being at home as well as the politics of being away from home, and the differing impacts both have on the development of a relationship ethic (cf. Carter, 2004; Clarke, 2004; Ormond, 2004; Smith, C., 2004).

These challenges can occur at multiple levels and can shake a researcher’s sense of belonging. For example, when Adreanne Ormond returned home to carry out her doctoral research she was surprised about the effort she had to put in to reconnecting with people. In addition, her belongingness at home disrupted her sense of belonging in an academic context. It was as if the two worlds were incompatible and she could not occupy both spaces at the same time. Adreanne did, however, quickly adapt to being at home and rediscovered the language she needed to use in order to connect with people (cf. Conference audience, June 2004).

**Hui tuarua: Reconfiguring connections**

‘I still call it home but I had been away for years. Like I’d gone back for summer holidays and that but I’d really been away for at least eight years living there full time. So when I did decide to go back and take this research back there and get the focus groups out of there I saw myself as really just fitting in. Because I’d been away a lot I and overseas I had quite romanticised home. Like when I was overseas I used to think ‘well I belong somewhere’ and then I went home and I didn’t really belong because I was so different. I dressed different, and I had forgotten: I didn’t know who so and so’s baby was and I hadn’t attended this tangi [funeral]. So a lot had transpired as it does in communities. I went back without realising I had to win personal trust again because they saw me as a different person …. I had to go and see my Aunties and talk to a lot of people, and drink a lot of milo and eat cake and that. It took a long time like I thought ‘Okay, I’m just going to go home do this and get back to university and catch the next lecture!’ I was romantic in my notion of researching.
I think now that was a real effort to see myself as an outsider in a community that I took my identity and strength from and it’s really quite demoralising. So I faced that, managed to work through that by doing all those things and I think these are the research protocols that we inherently practise yet we don’t talk about. You know visiting people to let them know that I was still part of the whānau. I guess going to university was a big thing to my community and that can really make you very different, you become an outsider, they almost see you as Pākehā... I had to go home and just be home and I think I had to do it for me because I was writing in a very abstract way I had to go home and start seeing how things were and start feeling again, instead of just theorising it....

And it was in that two year period that I actually started becoming, I felt like I was part of the community again. I could see things like my language changed so that when I was first at home people would say ‘How are you? And I would say a very long elaborated answer, and I’d be saying things like ‘however’ and ‘therefore’. But now when people say how are you I go ‘yeah good’. But the trouble is now that I’m coming out people ask me questions and ‘uurgh’, I’m at home in my mind. So in that way I feel fine with home now and it won’t end ‘cause you know you’ve got the whole moral obligation, and thinking about people that are real, people that I know.’ Adreanne Ormond, Wellington Hui, (31 May 2004).

Even so, researcher courage can underpin and support community control and decision-making about their involvement in a research project. Linda Smith alluded to this when she stated at the Auckland hui that ‘at a community level, on an everyday basis, our communities make assessments [about] whether someone is ethical, or someone is a good person, and we’ve got all these expressions for describing that’. Communities are also able to communicate when things are not to their liking and/or researchers are not behaving well. Being able to hear these things also takes courage.

In another sense, courage is about Māori researchers themselves embracing the margins that they have found themselves occupying, including being marginal to mainstream research institutions and marginal because they are the arbiters of research findings that unsettle the status quo (Smith, 2004). However, it also takes courage when we are confronted by the day-to-day hardship that many of our people are experiencing, even if this is what makes us so determined that their voices should be heard and that any research ethic must be about social justice (McIntosh, 2004; Pomare et al., 95).

*Seeking support*

Linda Smith (1999) discusses the multiple levels at which researchers can be both insiders and outsiders with respect to research communities. When researchers are connected at a close whakapapa level with those they are doing research with, safety and support are often more accessible from within that community. (However, this is not to be overly romantic about this need for safety and support sometimes being created by those residing in the same community.)
A close companion of support is accountability (Smith, 2004). As one person succinctly put it: ‘You’re not the boss and you’re accountable for the rest of your life’ (Conference audience, June 2004).

Adreanne Ormond described this at the May 31 Hui:

It’s very hard working in your home community .... They really hold you to what you say and it’s not just that they hold you, you hold yourself because you just have this real sense of responsibility. To do what is right for them, represent them in a way that is fine with them and fine with the institution. It’s a lot of work in your mind to get that settled so that you’re at peace with it.

Hui participants also spoke of research contexts that required researchers to enter unfamiliar communities. At these times it is even more important that a researcher knows the community they are going in to and consults with the appropriate people (Conference audience, June 2004). Part of this is the seeking out of ‘trustworthy’ community people who can ease that entry, facilitate a relationship ethic, and safeguard the researcher. As Arawhetū Peretini points out, ‘the system of guardianship is an extremely old and cherished concept in Te Ao Māori, with many of the roles of guardians being to act as caretakers, mentors, teachers, protectors’ (1992: 12). It is only a short step to see the role that such guardians can play in Māori research.

**Tikanga and safety**

Māori research (including kaupapa Māori research theory based on Māori philosophy and principles) is about doing research the ‘Māori way’, guided by tikanga (Irwin, 1994). Similarly, Mead instructs researchers that ‘the values underpinning tikanga cannot be ignored’ (2003: 318). In speaking about a relationship ethic and researchers knowing themselves, we have been speaking to aspects of tikanga, even if we have not named it as such until now.

Perhaps one of the best illustrations in New Zealand of what happens when tikanga is not followed was evidenced in the Gisborne Enquiry into the ‘National Cervical Screen Programme’ (Ministry of Health, 1997). Much has been written about the negligent practises of Dr Bottrill in his mis-reading of women’s smear results. Yet when Māori women tell their stories, they focus on the cultural differences and their sense that tikanga was not recognised and respected. For example, ‘What they say about the sacredness of taking off your clothes in public is correct. When you are younger you go off to a secluded corner to take off your clothes. Children knew it was not a good thing to take off your clothing anywhere’ (Ehu-Thompson, 1993).
Hui participants talked about tikanga within research as:

- Whakapapa;
- Telling it like it is, to the right people;
- Underpinning decisions about the ownership, control and use of research data; and
- Being knowledgeable about the history of research in this country.

This list was added to by the conference audience as they stated that other things a ‘researcher needs to know’ are:

- The meaning of whakahīhi; and
- The importance of both ‘kanohi ki te kanohi’ and ‘kanohi kitea’.

These tikanga practices and processes are reflected in the discussion above of both a relationship ethic and ‘knowing your research self’. Both these elements are sourced within tikanga and encompass what Linda Smith (1999: 122) calls a ‘code of conduct’ for how we, as Māori, are to behave. Expanding on this ‘code of conduct’ in her discussion of research ethics, Linda Smith lists seven kaupapa Māori practices that guide Māori researchers, namely:

- Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people).
- Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face).
- Titiro, whakarongo ... korero (look, listen ... speak).
- Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous).
- Kia tūpato (be cautious).
- Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of the people).
- Kaua e mahaki (don’t flaunt your knowledge). (1999: 120)

Many of these practices have been reflected in different ways in the feedback from the hui and conference participants. For example, ‘Kia tūpato’ can be about both knowing your research self and knowing your research community.

These seven practices have been expanded upon by Cram (2001) in her discussion of the validity and legitimacy of kaupapa Māori research. This discussion was informed by what Māori had been writing about research practices and issues. Pipi et al. then took these same principles and applied them as a method for reflecting on their own research practices within a kaupapa Māori research project on Māori and iwi provider success. Such critical reflection is necessary because ‘in this way, we make the sub-conscious, conscious and the learnings we gain from doing so can add to the pool of knowledge about how research with Māori might be respectfully conducted’ (Pipi et al., 2003).
In her paper, Linda Smith (2004) goes on to discuss the five tests that can be applied to research to check for soundness of tikanga and further facilitate our critical reflection: our understanding of knowledge; genealogical stories; precedents in history; relationships; and our value system as a way of solving a dilemma. Application of these tests is not always possible because ‘we don’t have time, because things are happening so quickly that we don’t really have the time to work out a history or a case history because it is overwhelming’ (Linda Smith, Wellington hui, 31 May 2004).

In this way, we need to create space that facilitates the consideration and embedding of tikanga in our research practices. For some Māori researchers, such things come naturally and so only a small space may be needed. For other Māori researchers, more careful consideration, consultation and negotiation may require a larger space. Overall, what we need to remember is our right to claim this space.

Discussion

‘It’s not a rush job’; ‘Be patient’—Conference audience, June 2004

If marginalisation is about being pushed away from the centre, then it is timely that we pushed back. This reclaiming of our margins as the centre requires both self-belief and tools for pushing with. Research can be one of those tools. Often what we think of as ‘research’ is, in actuality, the re-examination of the way we are, the lives we lead, the things we treasure, the values that make us ‘us’ (Cram, 2004). In this way we are seeking to know the ‘authentic person’; that is, ‘... the real person, with all [their] history, very personal qualities, sensibilities, wishes, sentiments and so on within or behind the sometimes visible (for example, in social science writings), sometimes totally invisible (for example, in bio-medical-science writings) scholarly person’ (Sahin-Hodoglugil, 2003: 4).

By undertaking research that has a social justice agenda, Māori researchers are essentially seeking to decentre ‘whiteness as ownership of the world forever and ever’ (DuBois, 1920, cited in Myers, 2004: 8). This is not because we cannot accommodate many world views and cultures; our ancestors signatures on the Treaty of Waitangi was one very real demonstration of our tolerance and inclusiveness. Rather, it is because our experiences of the centering of whiteness in our own country suggests that there is not room for other world views when whiteness occupies the centre stage.

In advocating for research that is ‘by Māori, for Māori’, it is essential that we make explicit many of the research practices that we might otherwise take for granted. If these are not made explicit and theorised within our own world view, our own students and new
researchers may struggle to understand why we do the things we do, and why we instruct them to do the same. This is not to say that these new researchers will not take the tools we give them and make them their own in ways that we have not even begun to conceive of. This paper, is therefore, just part of a wider discussion, and is of its moment. What we are seeking to avoid in this moment are research processes and tools that recolonise us in the guise of being by us and for us.
References


Mead, A. Te P. (1999) Speaking to Question 6: How are the Values of Māori Going to be Considered and Integrated in the Use of Plant Biotechnology in New Zealand? At the Talking Technologies Conference on Plant Technology.


Endnotes

1 Aotearoa is used here as the Māori name for a land has become more commonly referred to as New Zealand. In using this name we must apologise to those, in Ngāi Tahu especially, who consider that ‘Aotearoa’ relates solely to the North Island.

2 A partnership ethic is a means by which, for example, health researchers can gain more understanding of indigenous health ethics. In this regard Ellerby, McKenzie, Mckay, Gariepy and Kaufert (2002) have written that ‘If health care providers ignore differences related to Aboriginal culture, they will not be able to understand the wide spectrum of beliefs and attitudes that Aboriginal people draw on in making ethical decisions’. These authors also argue that such understanding is a necessary starting point for beginning to understand a wide range of ethical decision making in diverse ethno-cultural communities.

3 In addition, many of our own initiatives and programmes have made space for others who want to commit to our kaupapa (for example, Te Kōhanga Reo; Māori language pre school).