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# The karanga as an expression of mana wahine in the reverberation of social work practice

Miriama Scott

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*Ko Papatuanuku raua ko Ranginui nga matua atua  
Ko Ngati Kahungunu raua ko Rangitane nga iwi  
Ko Takitimu raua ko Kurahaupo nga waka  
Ko Heketa Te Awe ratou ko Renata, ko Scott nga tangata  
Ko Miriama Scott te uri.*

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## The karanga as an entity

A teacher spoke to a young kotiro, who was around 13 years of age, indicating that she would be doing the karanga to welcome manuhiri, who were coming to the marae noho of their kura. The teacher gave her some words for the karanga. While the young kotiro was certainly nervous, she was not unused to te reo rangatira because that was the language of the kura. She stepped out and began, but in the middle of the first rarangi, her voice quivered, tears started to fall and she could no longer continue. Afterwards a kuia who had been watching, went up to the teacher and said we need to hui what has just happened. The kuia asked that the mother and the elder sister be present at the hui.

The kuia referred to the place of the mother and the elder sister in relation to the kotiro. The whaea and tuakana status had been ignored by the kaiako. Secondly, the young kotiro was kai te tokerau o te Ika ā Māui and the marae was within the rohe of Tainui, so there was an issue around hau kainga. Thirdly the kaiako had failed to appreciate the enormity of the task that this kotiro had to endure, particularly given that the other factors had not been realised. The tears were those of the kotiro's tūpuna kuia, expressing their deep sadness for the mokopuna but more importantly, they prevented their mokopuna from continuing, thereby stopping the error of the action.

This pū rakau was told to me by whaea Helen of Tainui as a way to explain the importance of karanga and the manu tioriori.<sup>1</sup> They are never to be underestimated either in form or role. To elaborate on the importance, whaea Helen discussed the karanga as she has been raised to realise.

As one whaea from Kahungunu explained your waewae are firmly planted on Papa-tū-ā-nuku, so feel the essence of the Earth Mother as your karanga pierces the heavens travelling towards Ranginui, the Sky Father [and reverberates back].<sup>2</sup> Whaea Helen points out that the karanga must not forget the tūpuna of us all, without whom we would not be here.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Discussion with Whaea Helen Rawiri: Te Whare Takiura o Manukau: Otara: 2007

<sup>2</sup> Discussion with Whaea Helen Rawiri: Te Whare Takiura o Manukau: Otara: 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Discussion with Whaea Raina Ferris: Rongomaraeroa Marae: Porangahau: 2005.

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Whaea Helen then goes on to share that for her, any karanga must be mindful of the rohe, the marae and the kaupapa. These three considerations frame the reference points for a karanga. The rohe sets the tūranga for the karanga, establishing the tikanga around roles as manuhiri and tangata whenua. The marae is the place where the intersection of roles and responsibilities occurs and relationships are defined. Where manaaki is evident and koha remembered. These are woven into the karanga in recognition of ngā taonga tuku iho, te wā tawhito. Finally the kaupapa establishes the reason for the coming together and sets the tenor of the karanga, whether it be he rā whānau, he moenga or he tangi. The kaupapa drives the karanga.<sup>4</sup>

But the most important factor with any karanga is the engagement of te hinengaro with te whatumanawa and together, they initiate te ngākau. The representation of these three human characteristics is evident in how the words are fashioned. The hanga of the kupu as Koka Manu of Ngāti Porou states.<sup>5</sup>

### **The karanga as a social work practice**

The karanga, regarded by some as the whaikōrero of women, is being suggested as a social work practice for women, by women and of women. This does not mean that it is to the exclusion of tane, but rather as a practice that takes cognisance of the attributes of wahine, just as the whaikōrero could be seen as a practice (in most tribal rohe) that extols the attributes of tane in speechmaking. It is suggested that they are complementary to one another not exclusive of one another.

The karanga is therefore being depicted as a series of relationships, each carrying their own unique composition but nonetheless essential to the whole. For example as Whaea Helen and Koka Manu support, the marae generates the thought, which may be governed by the event, but nonetheless influences how the event is expressed in the karanga and both are mindful of time. The time in this context is not according to a watch or clock but always considering the place of the past within the situation of the present.

Therefore it is suggested that thought reverberates between the marae and time. Each aspect takes consideration of particular contexts. However reverberation is the connection that consolidates the relationship.

**Te Ao:**

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<sup>4</sup> Whaea Helen Rawiri and Koka Manu Collier: Te Whare Takiura o Manukau: Otara: 2007.  
Discussion with Koka Manu Collier: Te Whare Takiura o Manukau: Otara: 2007.

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In te ao the kaikaranga considers firstly her role as either tangata whenua / hau kainga or as manuhiri. The identification of these roles is indicative of the event and representative of affiliation to both marae and tipuna.

The tomokanga makes the delineation between the two roles both in a physical sense and in tikanga, signifying the threshold where one tikanga begins to take precedence.

It is suggested therefore that the reverberation occurs between the roles and contexts. The kaikaranga reflect off one another, their ha weaving a turanga upon which the whaikorero can rest. But the tipuna and marae provide the context, the physical land is the connection to tipuna. The land is therefore a reverberation of the tipuna. This is te ao, the world of connected concentric circles, each reflecting a different context but indicative of inherent relationships.

**Te Wheorotanga:**

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Te wheorotanga epitomises in absolute terms the karanga. The reverberation of thought against word and sound against breath. Each of these are unique within their own domain but together, signify the power in being as one. As whaea Helen reflects this is the domain where the heart, mind and emotions are engaged in bringing to life the verbalisation of mana wahine.

However balance is essential between all four aspects and this requires being prepared and congruent with the kaupapa. Recognising the responsibility that comes with the tikanga of karanga not only as the first voice but as well, the last voice to poroporoaki the tūpāpaku and so sound, tone, ha, thought and kupu convey the kaupapa in its entirety. This is where the skill of the wahine is most evident.

I remember going to a graduation ceremony of te Wānanga o Raukawa and for 20 minutes the karanga of kuia and whaea reverberated backwards and forwards between the hau kainga and manuhiri, skillfully enveloping the gathering of people into te kaupapa o te wa.

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Te wa is the meeting place of time in space. This provides the coming together of the past in the present as yesterday rolls into tomorrow. But more importantly te wa is the opportunity for the karanga to travel through time to greet the tipuna and reverberate against the realm of Ranginui to once again descend upon Papa-tū-ā-nuku. It is the connection that builds a relationship with time in all its dimensions.

The karanga therefore holds the moment, prompting each person to make their respective connections with what has gone before and what is yet to come. But in that moment, the person is immersed in the experience of mana atua, mana tipuna, mana tangata and mana whenua, which culminate in mana motuhake.

Te wa is therefore not only actual time but also a moment to reflect, feel and absorb.

### **The reverberation of social work practice**

If we translate the karanga into te mahi tauwhiro hapori social work practice then the points of intersection, it is suggested, are the domains of: te ao, te wheorotanga and te wa.

Te ao is about the issue that has brought together practitioner and whānau under the auspices of the agency. This engagement establishes the roles and responsibilities as articulated between tipuna, hau kainga, manuhiri and marae. Instead the agency is the marae providing the place for the meeting of whānau and practitioner. The context of the karanga now becomes the context of the take or issue.

However the argument is presented that it is not just the tangata whaiora or client that is engaged, it is recognising the place of te whānau as an integral part of the whole engagement. Just as the kaikaranga represents whānau, so both the kaitauwhiro and tangata whaiora are members of whānau. The emphasis is not on the individual but on the collective, where both issue and resolution are apparent.

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If te wheorotanga is about the reverberation of the karanga then in practice, it is reflected in te mātauranga, which is guided by the kaupapa and these in turn are connected by te mohiotanga and te tikanga.

This is not about either the kaitauwhiro or te whānau, it is about how the place of engagement facilitates the development of knowledge, which emanates from the kaupapa guided by mohiotanga and tikanga. These are life forces in their own right, creating their own dynamic, which transcend generations and time.

The reverberation is where all these aspects meet, creating the content of the engagement. They are not the possession of tāngata rather the gifts of atua and as such are imbued with tapu.

In the Maori way, knowledge is a taonga. The person who has the knowledge is a storehouse for the people. To pass it out as they need it, to pass it on to future generations. (Awatere, 1984: 94).

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The final domain, which is te wa is reflected in the journey through hurt to well-being. If oranga is the ultimate objective of any engagement between whānau and kaitauwhiro, then competency and self care are necessary considerations of te wa.

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This domain is about ensuring the outcome of well-being, not focused on the present. Te wa is about facilitating a journey, which transcends time because it is the journey that counts not the destination.

But it is also important to take cognisance of how competency and self-care are essential elements, not only to cross generations, but also to facilitate the space of the engagement. Competency is not just about the professional practice of the kaitauwhiro but also about ensuring the competency of whānau so that oranga is secured. Embodied in competency is the notion of self-care. Without self-care there is a high possibility that practice could become incompetent or of even more concern, unsafe. Similarly the self-care of whānau is about achieving the state of oranga and in this is healing the mamae, breaking the cycle of abuse, for example.

As the young kotiro was unable to proceed with the karanga, so in te wa are the considerations of oranga, where the time in front may influence the time yet to come and where the present is simply a moment between the two. Therefore te wa is about achieving and sustaining the state of oranga.

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**The synthesis**

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The suggestion being made in te ao is that any organisation, profession, practice, issue and whānau always sits within a world view, they are never devoid of this context. Therefore just as the karanga is indicative of a tradition that clearly articulates the context of engagement, the coming together of points of identity, so social work must not be seen just in its own context, separated from the influences of a worldview. Underpinning its very existence is the convergence of worldview.

Whilst the marae clearly establishes kaupapa and tikanga, an agency may not necessarily be so definitive. The kaupapa of an agency, for example, may shift in emphasis according to funding criteria and therefore challenge the very ūkaipō of the social work practitioner or constrain the service delivery to whānau. Therefore just as the pu kōrero of the kotiro demonstrates, we need to be very clear of context. The karanga has a context reflecting a specific worldview, which adapts to the kaupapa of the day. So to tauwhiro hapori or social work, it is a discipline that originated in a specific worldview but has been applied to other worldviews in its professional capacity. We therefore cannot ignore the constant challenge as the concentric circles meet, for a professional worldview to dominate an indigenous worldview. Identity and work are suddenly in contention.

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It is in te wheerotanga or the domain of reverberation where the content is most potent. In this, action and practice are closely aligned. It is contended that one is reflective of the other and by doing so, forms the pivotal point of this pu kōrero. This is the absolute nexus of a worldview.

As social work practitioners this is a constant challenge: are we tangata whenua social work practitioners or social work practitioners who are tangata whenua? Each shift in emphasis alters the thought and ultimately the kaupapa. The complementarity between action (of karanga) and practice (of social work) can either reverberate harmoniously or discordantly. The congruency is for us to choose. But it must be informed choice and not simply governed by currency (of theory or practice) or indeed by cultural competency, for word

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reflects knowledge as thought gives breath to kaupapa. It is the articulation of worldview and the relationship to this that informs action and practice.

Mana atua, mana tīpuna, mana tangata, mana whenua and ultimately mana motuhake are absolutely inherent in social work practice. But the wero is always to be mindful of the reverberation.

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In the final domain of te wa the state of oranga is influenced by the perception of time. ‘One more whānau is okay’, ‘one more week without supervision’ and ‘I will take leave next week’, are frequent statements of tangata whenua social work practitioners, who are not being mindful of te wa, their competency and self care. But of even more interest is when the mamae of tangata whaiora and their whānau is governed by a process of practice, as though addressing the issue is the emphasis, not necessarily achieving oranga. The journey (as reflected in practice) is governed by the destination, which is of now not of empowering oranga i muri.

Time is either a constraint or simply a process to pass through, but it always acts as a platform for determining safe practice and the attainment of oranga. We can either learn from the mamae i mua so that the oranga i muri is determined, or we can solely focus on the yesterday and today kōrero, which then holds the potential to define competency and self care. Is it only the mamae or is it through the mamae to oranga? Are our actions simply of the moment, or is the reverberation more profound than that and as a consequence, realises social workers as agents of social change?

In this dilemma of time, it is suggested, we wrestle with the oranga of ourselves as social work practitioners and the oranga of whānau. If time dictates what takes precedence, then oranga no longer becomes the focus, rather mamae and practice are now in view.



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The karanga is about preserving the state of oranga through the exercising of rangati-ratanga. The balance that is evident in this action is how time is recognised as an important consideration. As tangata whenua social work practitioners we are so often simply instruments of time, but what is necessary to inform who we are, either as women, as kaitauwhiro or as tangata whenua, is the defining of te wa.

This world as I see it, is a world of paradoxes. On the one hand individual rights are glorified, and on the other we are told we should care more for others...

Paradoxes can also create conflict in a world of differing cultural obligations – Māori or Western. Often the choice is not easy... Also, what about the conflict between what I want to take into the future with me and what I will be allowed to take? At what point do I make a stand? How far do I allow myself to be compromised?...

Today the women in Māori society must speak up and reach out to touch and influence other groups, other organisations, and other people....

What is it to be a Māori woman in New Zealand society today? Well, whatever it is, we should never allow ourselves to be token gestures – token women, token Māori. We are only as token as we allow ourselves to be... we have something special to contribute not only to the Māori world but to New Zealand society generally..." (Reedy, 1979: 43-44).

Just as the karanga is the domain of wahine, so to can social work practice reflect tu tama wahine, the choice is ours. However we remain ever mindful that the manu tioriori are complemented by the manu kōrero and in this, is the balance of difference.

## References

- Awatere, D. (1984), Maori Sovereignty. *Broadsheet Aotearoa*.  
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