Kaupapa Māori Theory: Transforming Theory in Aotearoa

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Kupu Whakataki

E whakaaturia ana tētehi whakarāpopotoranga o te whanaketanga o te Kaupapa Māori hei anga ariā Māori, ko tōna tūāpapa ko Te Reo me ōna Tikanga Māori. E tohea ana ko te pūtaketanga o te Kaupapa Māori ko te kaupapa e whai wāhi ana ki ngā āhuatanga Taketake, ā, nā te Māori i whakatau, nā te Māori i whakahaere. Nā wai rā, nā te Kaupapa Māori i huri ai te āhua o tēnei mea te ariā i Aotearoa.

An overview of the development of Kaupapa Māori Theory as a Māori theoretical framework that is grounded within te reo and tikanga Māori is presented. It is argued that Kaupapa Māori theory is informed by its indigenous underpinnings and is defined and controlled by Māori. As such, Kaupapa Māori theory has transformed theory in Aotearoa.

Introduction

The development of Kaupapa Māori as a foundation for theory and research has grown from Māori struggles for tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. As such there isaclearculturalandpoliticalintent. Theideathattheorists and researchers are a-cultural is directly challenged by the assertion of indigenous theories, such as Kaupapa Māori, that are grounded within cultural frameworks and epistemologies. Thus, Kaupapa Māori is transforming the way in which theory and research is being shaped in this country. Despite attempts by some academics and researchers to stifle the development, there is a growing awareness and practice of Kaupapa Māori frameworks. I, alongside others, have for the past 15 years asserted that Kaupapa Māori theory is a part of a wider struggle against colonisation:

As a part of the wider struggle against colonialism Māori people have engaged multiple forms of intervention and resistance. Our histories remind us of many acts of resistance to colonial imperialism and struggles of resistance against the forced cultural genocide imposed in our lands. In the history of Taranaki, where my own tribal links hold firmly, we have many examples of the approaches taken by our tūpuna, our ancestors, in the struggle against the confiscation of our land, the imprisonment and death of many of our people and the denial of our language, culture and knowledge bases. As such our people have always been theorists.

We have for generations engaged with our world and constructed theories as a part of our own knowledge and ways of understanding our experiences. The denial of our knowledge and theorising has been an integral part of the colonising agenda. (Pihama, 2005: 191)

Over the past five years there has been a growth inthe development of Kaupapa Māori theory and research methodologies. As a part of that growth has come an engagement with Kaupapa Māori across all sectors within our community and also within the academy. Where Māori students used to approach our team[2] to discuss how dismissive their lecturers or supervisors were of their use of Kaupapa Māori theory and of the work of Māori theorists, there is now a body of literature and research on which students can draw to support their arguments.

The point that we have always been theorists is important to this discussion. Our ancestors have always theorised about our world. The navigational expertise of our people highlights a deep understanding of a range of sciences related to building waka, tides and sea movement, distance navigation, cosmology and much more. Each of these skill and knowledge areas requires the development of frameworks for understanding and explaining the knowledge base that informs Kaupapa Māori. As such, Kaupapa Māori theory is based upon and informed by mātauranga Māori that provides a cultural template, a philosophy that asserts that the theoretical framework being employed is culturally defined and determined. This has been argued consistently by Kaupapa Māori theorists as the organic nature of Kaupapa Māori theory (Mane, 2009; Mead, 1996; Pihama, 1993, 2001; Smith, G.H., 1997). In other words, Kaupapa Māori theory is shaped by the knowledge and experiences of Māori. It is a theoretical framework that has grown from both mātauranga Māori and from within Māori movements for change.

Tuakana Nepe (1991) emphasised that kaupapa Māori knowledge is distinctive to Māori society and has its origins in the metaphysical. Kaupapa Māori, she states, is a "body of knowledge accumulated by the experiences through history, of the Māori people" (Nepe, 1991: 4). For Nepe, this knowledge form is distinctive to Māori in that it derives fundamentally from Māori epistemologies that include complex relationships and ways of organising society. She argues that this distinctive nature of kaupapa Māori is seen in the ways in which Māori conceptualise relationships.

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the concept of the relationship between the living and the dead; life and death; the Māori concept of time, history and development; the relationships between male and female; individual and group; and the implication of such relationships for social power relations. These knowledge types and their functions are the content and product of the interconnection of the purely Māori metaphysical base and Māori societal relationships. (Nepe, 1991: 5)

Nepe (1991) argues that kaupapa Māori is the conceptualisation of Māori knowledge transmitted through te reo Māori. In regard to Kaupapa Māori within the Māori education sector this is defined by the Māori Education Commission as distinct in that its basis is within mātauranga Māori and the philosophical underpinnings are Māori (Māori Education Commission, 1998). Mereana Taki (1996) argues that Kaupapa Māori derives from a networking of iwi knowledge frameworks. This position identifies the diversities that are a part of Kaupapa Māori and which must be maintained if we are to ensure the recognition of whānau, hapū, and iwi complexities, which are essential to Kaupapa Māori theory.

For many Māori who have actively sought theoretical explanations for our experiences, Kaupapa Māori theory provides a culturally defined theoretical space. Māori students and academics have struggled within universities across the country because there is resistance from many sectors of the university and from some educationalists to Māori asserting our right to argue for Kaupapa Māori theory. In the process of this ongoing struggle, the historical dominance of Western theorising is being challenged at a very fundamental level; that is, at the level of relevance to the indigenous people of this land. For many Pākehā academics this challenge is viewed as a threat. The possibility of Māori taking control of our own theoretical frameworks is a threat to the survival of many who have spent the best part of their academic lives theorising *about* and *on* Māori. However, in spite of these challenges, Kaupapa Māori theory continues to thrive. Kaupapa Māori theory is presented as an indigenous theoretical framework that challenges the oppressive social order within which Māori people are currently located and does so from a distinctive Māori cultural base.

The drive for tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake in this country is based within historical and cultural precedents set by many of our tūpuna. In my own iwi area of Taranaki the struggle against colonial imperialism is one that was multifaceted, the message however was consistently that of Taranaki people maintaining our own autonomy and sovereignty over all things (Waitangi Tribunal, 1996). The commitment of our people to philosophies of resistance against colonial power acts is, for me, an example of the expectations of our people to regain our fundamental rights as people of the land. The affirmation of being Māori is central to our struggles. That affirmation is also central to Kaupapa Māori theory.

Kaupapa relates to notions of foundation; plan; philosophy and strategies. Kaupapa Māori, therefore, indicates a Māori view of those things. It relates to Māori philosophies of the world, to Māori understandings on which our beliefs and values are based, Māori worldviews and ways of operating. While the theoretical assertion of Kaupapa Māori theory is relatively new, Kaupapa Māori as foundation is not. Kaupapa Māori is extremely old – ancient, in fact. It predates any and all of us in living years and is embedded in our cultural being. The naming of Kaupapa Māori theory indicates an explicit acknowledgement of the theoretical approach being undertaken. The multiple layers of meaning within te reo Māori means that the term Kaupapa has many possibilities. Tracing further the origins of Kaupapa Māori knowledge Tuakana Nepe (1991) places its origins in Rangiātea, which she states makes it exclusively Māori. Rangiātea is the first known Whare Wānanga (Higher house of learning) located in Te Toi-o-ngā-Rangi (this refers to the upper level of the spiritual realm), the home of Io-Matua-Kore (the creator). What is clear in her writing is that Kaupapa Māori is grounded in Māori knowledge. Knowledge has always had a central place within Māori society and the complexities of knowledge and knowledge transmission are recognised in the structures of the Whare Wānanga.

Kaupapa Māori is transformative. To think and act in terms of Kaupapa Māori while experiencing colonisation is to resist dominance. This is not something in which Māori alone are engaging. It is the experience of vast numbers of indigenous peoples across the world. Native woman writer Rayna Green, reflecting on Indian notions of leadership in their communities, writes, "In Indian country, maybe the most radical change we will ever have is a return to tradition" (1990:62). Being grounded in Māori knowledge, Kaupapa Māori cannot be understood without knowledge of mātauranga Māori and the ways Māori engage knowledge and forms of knowing. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (1998) outlines mātauranga Māori as theory and whakapapa as research methodology. In posing a number of possibilities in what he refers to as theory in embryonic form, Te Ahukaramū gives the following working definition:

He mea hanga te mātauranga Māori nā te Māori. E hangaia ana tēnei mātauranga i roto i te whare o Te Ao Mārama, i runga anō hoki i ngā whakaaturanga o te whakapapa kia mārama ai te tangata ki tōna Ao.

Mātauranga Māori is created by Māori humans according to a worldview entitled 'Te Ao Mārama' and by the employment of methodologies derived from this worldview to explain the Māori experience of the world. (Royal, 1998: 83)

Mātauranga Māori is created by the use of whakapapa. Whakapapa is regarded as an analytical tool that has been employed by our people as a means to understand our world and relationships. In such a framework it appears that whakapapa is both vehicle and expression of mātauranga Māori. The assertion through whakapapa of the origins of mātauranga Māori returns us to Papatūānuku and Ranginui (Royal, 1998). Rapata Wiri (2001) also locates mātauranga Māori as essential to the construction of what he refers to as a mana Māori model. Mātauranga Māori provides a distinct Māori epistemology and way of knowing and draws upon a range of both verbal and non-verbal forms for its expression. Wiri (2001) highlights the complexity of definitions of mātauranga Māori and its multiple elements as follows:

Māori epistemology; the Māori way; the Māori worldview; the Māori style of thought; Māori ideology; Māori knowledge base; Māori perspective; to understand or to be acquainted with the Māori world; to be knowledgeable in things Māori; to be a graduate of the Māori schools of learning; Māori tradition and history; Māori experience of history; Māori enlightenment; Māori scholarship; Māori intellectual tradition. (Wiri, 2011:25)

Defining 'Theory' and its Place in Indigenous Movements

The appending of the term theory to Kaupapa Māori may, for some, be literally a contradiction in terms. Kaupapa Māori is conceptually based within Māori cultural and philosophical traditions. Theory, however, may be said to be conceptually based within European philosophical traditions. To query the relationships between Māori traditions and Western traditions is not unfamiliar to Māori. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has given in-depth analysis of the impact of Western research forms on indigenous peoples. In '*Decolonizing Methodologies: Indigenous Peoples and Research*' Linda Smith (1999) argues that Western research has been instrumental in the marginalisation of indigenous peoples' knowledge and as such has contributed in key ways to the maintenance and perpetuation of colonisation.

Theory, like research, has rarely been Māori friendly. In fact theory often provided the justification for the ongoing perpetuation of violence against Māori. Theories of racial inferiority, deficiencies and cultural disadvantage have been central in the denial of Māori people's access to our land, language and culture (Mead, 1996). It is clear that theories can be used both for and against Māori. Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) maintains that Māori, as a subordinate group, must critically engage theory as a site of struggle. As a tool, theory is not inherently oppressive just as it is not inherently transformative. As African-American intellectual bell hooks writes, "Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory or revolutionary. It fulfils this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end" (1994:61).

All theories are socially constructed and therefore the worldviews and philosophies of those who participate in their construction inform all theories. In terms of Kaupapa Māori theory, Graham Smith (1997) argues that the deliberate cooption of the term 'theory' has been an attempt to challenge dominant Pākehā notions of theory and provide "counter-hegemonic practice and understandings" (1997:455) in terms of how theory is constructed, defined, selected, interpreted and applied. Thomas J. Ward (1974) in his article '*Definitions of Theory in Sociology*' gives an extensive overview of the use of the term theory by a range of sociologists. The complexities of attempting to provide a definition of theory are highlighted most significantly in Ward's attempt to answer the question, what is theory?

Using language that reflects at least some areas of consensus, a theory is a logical deductive-inductive system of concepts, more selected aspects of phenomena and from which testable hypotheses can be derived. Theories in sociology are intended to be descriptive, explanatory, and predictive of phenomena of interest to the discipline and to its individual practitioners. (Ward, 1974: 39)

Abbott and Wallace (1997) note that, given all people engage in acts of thinking and having ideas, we are all theorists. We are all able to theorise and analyse what is happening around us; in fact we all participate in common-sense notions that are a part of our engaging with processes of theorising. There is, however, a need to distinguish between common-sense notions and sociological theorising. Abbott and Wallace identify that in the social sciences theories are expected to be, "openended, open to new evidence, capable of modification and improvement, and clear about the way its concepts are formed" (1997: 25).

Social theories are expected to be more systematic in their explanations and ideas, taking account of the facts presented, providing coherent explanations, and being open to refutation. These expectations make social theories quite distinct from common-sense assumptions. As such, the possibilities of theory are multiple.

Theories are not solely descriptive or explanatory or predictive, but can be all of these simultaneously. Focusing on the explanatory nature of theory, Coxon, Marshall and Massey (1994) note that theories may be viewed fundamentally as collections of general principles that provide explanations for events and experiences. Theories can provide ways of explaining the world through the use of given understandings. Given the diversity of worldviews, of cultural ways of seeing, understanding and therefore explaining the world, it is expected that a range of theories may exist simultaneously for any given event or to explain experiences. Theories are, and must be, more.

Having looked at some of the literature that presents theory as prescription, description, explanation and analysis, it is clear to me that theory can not only be about these things but must be rooted in practice. To use a term from the work of Paulo Freire (1985), theory and practice must exist in dialectical unity. Dialectical unity acknowledges the interdependence of theory to practice and vice versa. One cannot act fully without the other but rather there is a process of constant reflection and reshaping as each part of the unity informs the other. Theory and practice are not closed entities, they are open to each other and therefore, in our practice and our theorising, we need to be open to the possibilities that come with such a process of reflection.

The shifting of a definition of theory from the descriptive mode within which it is positioned by Ward (1974) to one that is related explicably to practice and therefore is informed by the politics and social realities within which the practice is located, makes theory worthwhile for Māori. Without the unity of theory with practice, theory has little to offer. The idea of theory as a means of describing and explaining what is happening around and, more often than not, to us, and its relationship to transformative practice, is explored in some depth by bell hooks (1994) in her piece *'Theory as Liberatory Practice'*. Coming to theory was for Hooks, "because I was hurting – the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend – to grasp what was happening around and within me" (1994: 59).

Bell Hooks' (1994) exploration of theory as liberatory practice is helpful in that her discussion engages with some issues that are central for African-Americans, many of which also have direct relevance for Māori. Where theory has on the whole been imposed on Māori experiences and events, there has emerged an often deep resentment and dismissal of the idea that theory could be at all transformative. Reflecting on similar responses within her own community, hooks identifies the difficulties that such responses pose for the black intellectual, in particular the ways that dismissal of intellectuals and theory can silence the black academic. The silencing noted by hooks can equally be felt by Māori academics in this country. It is a process that I have felt and seen on many occasions. The dismissal of Māori academics and any notion of theory, through utilising anti-theory discourses, has become a means of silencing or of capturing ground within a debate.

Barbara Christian (1990), an African-American woman literary critic, offers much to this discussion. Christian gives an articulate and powerful critique of the developments in literary theory. A key point of concern is what she considers the race for theory and the ways in which new literary criticism is being constructed. While it is important to engage and develop theory, she states, it must be grounded in experiences and practice, without which theory becomes prescriptive and elitist (1990). Further, she challenges the notion that new theoretical developments will make change for black women writers:

These writers did announce their dissatisfaction with some of the cornerstone ideas of their own tradition, a dissatisfaction with which I was born. But in their attempt to change the orientation of Western scholarship, they, as usual, concentrated on themselves and were not in the slightest interested in the worlds they ignored or controlled. (Christian, 1990: 339)

For theory to be invented in ways that have little or no relevance to people's lives because of its prescriptive, exclusive and elitist foundations, is of no use to Māori. Any theoretical framework must be located within our experiences and practices. Equally, I would argue a strong Kaupapa Māori theoretical framework must be cognisant of our historical and cultural realities, in all their complexities.

A further source of rejection of theory is related to accessibility. Many theoretical frameworks that espouse a focus on transformation are themselves inaccessible. If theory is inaccessible because of the language chosen by academics then the potential for that theory to transform the lived realities of oppressed groups becomes limited. A common complaint by Māori students is regarding the inaccessibility of some theoretical discussions. Bell hooks (1994) expresses her amazement at the limited number of feminist theoretical texts that actually speak to women, men and children about transforming our lives. By speak, she is referring to the meanings and theories being accessible. The academy does little to support the development of accessible texts.

Māori academics often speak of being caught in the bind between our communities and the academy. Māori thesis students often voice the position that their thesis must be able to be read by their whānau and the wider Māori community, if it cannot then its potential for offering information and knowledge is, in their minds, diminished (Pahiri, 1997; Taki, 1996). This can create a dilemma for Māori students in that the expectations of the university, and what constitutes a thesis and theory, can differ significantly from the expectations of the Māori student and their priority audience.

Struggling with and over the notion of theory is a part of Kaupapa Māori theory. The process of decolonising theory is a crucial element of a Kaupapa Māori theoretical approach. Developing analyses that can both engage the underpinning assumptions of a range of theoretical approaches and providing critique is key to identifying whose interests are served and how power relationships are being constructed. What I am arguing is for a need to be able to name the dominant theories that form the basis for much of the analysis of indigenous peoples experiences and issues. Theory is constructed by groups of people through their own cultural and political understandings. Theory is as with other social constructions, both socially and culturally bound. In Aotearoa we have a history of theoretical frameworks imposed on our people. Assimilation and integration were the focus of early colonial contact (Johnston & Pihama, 1995; Simon, 1998), since then biological and environmental deficit theories have dominated the ways in which Māori issues are analysed. Western psychological theories that focus on the individual, have consistently placed Māori as requiring change (Hohepa, 1999; Stewart, 1995). A deficit approach imported from the States in the 1960s has held currency in most sectors since that time.[3] As such, Māori continue to be viewed as deficient, culturally disadvantaged, environmentally lacking and through a process of biological/genetic reductionism Māori health issues are being presented as genetically deficient (Cram, Pihama & Philip-Barbara, 2000; Reynolds & Smith, 2003). However, we should not delude ourselves that it is only the more conservative theoretical constructions that require challenge. There are also more recent theories that posit notions that have the potential to further disturb and disrupt Māori epistemologies.

Post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-feminism have all emerged as the new forms of analysis that lay claim to opening the debate to issues of difference and otherness. There is little acknowledgement that Māori people have struggled to have our voices heard over the past 200 years of colonial imperialism on our lands. Furthermore, the assumption of the existence of the Western individual self as central to analysis acts to marginalise Māori assertions of whakapapa and collective relationships. The imposition of theoretical frameworks that deny Māori knowledge, culture and society merely maintain the dominance of Western theoretical imperialism over indigenous theories.

As in other areas of our existence in the academy, as both teachers and students, the use of theory, and how we use theory, are sites of contestation. There are ways to present theory in understandable language and this is something that many Māori academics seek in their own writings. This is especially relevant to Kaupapa Māori theory as its sustainability is dependent on its reproduction by Māori for Māori. To write in ways that deny access to the majority of Māori people is in my opinion bringing closure rather that ensuring ongoing debate and evolution. I agree with Graham Hingangaroa Smith's contention that theory is a central problem in the development of liberatory processes which Smith refers to as "transformative action in the interests of subordinated groups" (1997: 131).

However, the development and assertion of liberatory theory can only derive from a political positioning that acknowledges that injustices and oppression exist. Without that acknowledgement the need for liberatory theory would not be evident. Bell hooks calls for the recognition of the potential for theory to be liberatory, and that such recognition is realised through active critical reflection that is located in an understanding of oppression, of pain, of struggle. Theories that develop from these concrete and known experiences bring possibilities for transformation (Hook, 1994: 70).

For Graham Smith (1997), theory is a definite site of struggle between interest groups and the struggle for theoretical space, to support Māori to critically analyse our experiences, is a worthwhile struggle. This struggle is about contesting theoretical space. As with all forms of contestation, the underpinning power relations require challenge. This is a threat to those who argue the dominance of Western theories. It is also about Māori constituting theory within our own terms. Sheilagh Walker argues that Māori academics engage in theory because of our engagement in the struggle for Kaupapa Māori. In her terms "our struggle becomes our Theory" (1996: 119). Furthermore, she suggests that Kaupapa Māori theory is not defined within Western philosophical traditions but through Kaupapa Māori praxis.

It is worth outlining this argument more fully by referring directly to a statement made in her Masters research:

I conclude that Kaupapa Māori is not a Theory in the Western sense; it does not subsume itself within European philosophical endeavours which construct and privilege one Theory over another Theory, one rationality over another rationality, one philosophical paradigm over another paradigm, one knowledge over another knowledge, one World view over another World view of the Other. Kaupapa Māori Theory is rather Kaupapa Māori Praxis. My problematic continues. I de-construct the title further; what remains is simply KAUPAPA Māori. (1996:119)

This raises again the necessity or otherwise of appending the word theory to Kaupapa Māori and dealing with the problem of the dominant conceptualisation of theory in Western terms. I would argue that the use of the term theory, when applied in resistance terms, is one that can serve to validate the underpinning intentions of Kaupapa Māori theory, but as with any concept that derives from a Western base the issues raised by Sheilagh Walker (1996) must be continually present and be central to our ongoing reflection on the terms that we choose to use. As both Bell Hooks (1994) and Lee Maracle (1996) would say, that would be absurd, as it would deny that there are theories of Western origin that can be of use for oppressed groups.

Kaupapa Māori Theory

Kaupapa Māori theory is a theoretical framework that ensures a cultural integrity is maintained when analysing Māori issues. It provides both tools of analysis and ways of understanding the cultural, political and historical context of Aotearoa. A fundamental premise on which Kaupapa Māori theory is argued is that in order to understand, explain and respond to issues for Māori, there must be a theoretical foundation that has been built from Papatūānuku, not from the building blocks of imported theories. Kaupapa Māori theory provides such a foundation. There has been some assertion that Kaupapa Māori theory is grounded on Critical theory (Eketone, 2008; Wiri, 2001). Where it is clearly argued that Kaupapa Māori theory may be viewed as a localised form of Critical Theory (Smith, 1997), this does not mean that Kaupapa Māori theory is grounded on such theoretical frameworks but rather it asserts that the key elements of Critical theory as a theory that challenges dominant systems of power may also be seen within Kaupapa Māori theory (Pihama, 2001, 2010). This should not be surprising, given that Kaupapa Māori theory engages with the fundamental power relationships that are inherent in our history of colonisation in Aotearoa. However, it must be clearly stated that Critical theory is grounded on western notions, primarily that of the Frankfurt School (Gibson, 1986), whereas Kaupapa Māori is grounded on mātauranga Māori as it derives from te reo and tikanga Māori (Mane, 2009; Pihama, 2001).

It is necessary to acknowledge that Kaupapa Māori theory is not a theoretical framework that provides answers by following a set recipe. Where there are recognisable elements within Kaupapa Māori theory, as is presently being defined, these are not seen to be deterministic or exclusive. This is not an attempt to close or define the parameters of Kaupapa Māori theory in a way that would prevent those who draw on Kaupapa Māori theory the ability to be flexible and in fact adaptable to the ever changing contexts of Māori collectively and whānau, hapū and iwi as distinct units. To promote closure would in my mind be the antithesis of what is proposed within Kaupapa Māori theory. The term theory itself is multiple in the definitions associated with it and some exploration of that provides some understanding of the need to ensure against a closure of Kaupapa Māori theory.

Much of the strength of Kaupapa Māori theory comes from the ability of many Māori to see the relevance of such theoretical engagement, and to recognise much of what is said in their own practices. What is also important is the recognition that Kaupapa Māori theory is not set in concrete; in fact it is very much a fluid and evolving theoretical framework (IRI & Te Rōpu Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare, 2000; Smith, 1997). In a wider sense this is a part of a recognition that dominance seeks to set cultures in concrete, to hold us in a construction that is static and unchanging and that is often relentless in its denial of growth and change. We cannot afford for this to be the case. Therefore, in developing, drawing on and refining Kaupapa Māori theory, as indigenous theory, we need to be a part of a process that is accessible and fluid, not something that is controlled by a few or static and unchanging. The evolving of Kaupapa Māori theory is long-term and requires intense reflection. The process itself is as important, if not more so, as the outcome. It is through the process that we are able to engage more deeply with Māori knowledge, with te reo and tikanga Māori in ways that can reveal culturally based frameworks and structures that will provide a foundation of indigenous Māori analyses.

In identifying the evolving nature of Kaupapa Māori theory it is also important to acknowledge those who have been instrumental in its articulation. Much is owed to the foundational work done by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1996) and Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) in providing key elements for exploration in terms of what Kaupapa Māori theory might look like.

This is also indicated in the area of research where Kaupapa Māori research has been carefully developed alongside Kaupapa Māori theory (L.T. Smith, 1999). What is most impressive in the works of both these writers is their desire to be a part of collective and open development of Kaupapa Māori theory withother Māori academics such as myself. More recent works by a range of Māori writers highlight the expansiveness that is Kaupapa Māori theory (Bishop, 1996; Hohepa, 1999; Mane, 2009; Mead, 1996; Nepe, 1991; Pihama, 2001, 2010; Pohatu, 1996; Smith, 1997; Waitere-Ang, 1999).

Kaupapa Māori Theory as an Evolving and Organic Theoretical Development

As a theoretical framework Kaupapa Māori theory is still developing. However, we can be assured that development comes from a philosophical tradition that is as longstanding as any Western philosophical tradition. The idea that Kaupapa Māori theory is still growing is an important aspect to consider, as it would be easy to stay with what has been written and not build on, critique and reshape Kaupapa Māori theory. To ensure the diversities of Māori experiences and an inclusion of whānau, hapū and iwi knowledge, Kaupapa Māori theory must be reflective, and we as its proponents open to an evolving process. In one of the most in-depth discussions of Kaupapa Māori theory, Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) establishes Kaupapa Māori theory as an evolving theory of transformation that can be understood through an analysis of Kaupapa Māori intervention initiative. He locates the genesis of Kaupapa Māori theory very securely within the political initiatives driven by Māori. This is critical, as Kaupapa Māori theory is not constructed in the competitive, hierarchical nature that is often the case in the assertion of Western theories.

Kaupapa Māori theory is not dualistic or constructed within simplistic binaries. It is not about asserting the superiority of one set of knowledge over another or one worldview over another. It is not about denying the rights of any peoples to their philosophical traditions, culture or language. It is an assertion of the right for Māori to be Māori on our own terms and to draw from our own base to provide understandings and explanations of the world. Kaupapa Māori theory is a theoretical movement that has its foundation in Māori community developments. These developments are epitomised in the Māori education initiatives Te Kōhanga Reo[4] and Kura Kaupapa Māori (Hohepa, 1990). Both Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori are initiatives that originated from Māori communities. They were, and are, driven primarily by the motivation of Māori for initiatives through which te reo Māori could be regenerated for our people and which would intervene in the crisis of Māori educational underachievement that had been the experience of generations of Māori children and whānau. The development of these initiatives brought a need for Māori people to reflect on and draw upon our own cultural knowledge. Te Kōhanga Reo, the first of the Māori education initiatives to develop, is a prime example.

The history of the development of Te Kōhanga Reo has been well documented by Māori people involved in the movement, as too has its role in the revitalisation of te reo Māori (Hohepa, 1990; Irwin, 1990; Ka'ai, 1990; Royal-Tangaere, 1992; White, 1995).

Māori students across the country have been told by Pākehā supervisors it is not sufficient to reference Kaupapa Māori theory as their theoretical framework, or to rely solely on the writings of Māori academics when discussing issues regarding Māori education. It is clear that those Pākehā academics, some of whom are supervising Māori students at Graduate level, are unable to accept that Kaupapa Māori theory is a valid theoretical framework or that Māori are able to develop theoretical frameworks that have origins in te reo and tikanga Māori. This is a particularly ethnocentric notion, yet it continues to pervade the academy in ways that can seriously disadvantage Māori staff and students. Such dilemmas for Māori academics and Māori students have been documented over the past twenty years as a means of continuing to challenge the institutional racism that underpins that ongoing marginalisation of Māori knowledge (Irwin, 1988; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1992).

In spite of the resistance to the assertion of Kaupapa Māori theory, we continue seeking ways to claim ground in the framing of our own theories. We do this with the knowledge that theory is not in itself transformative, that it is a site of struggle, and that it must be located in direct relationship with practice. Theory is a term that has a tenuous relationship to Māori. It is my hope that Kaupapa Māori theory will bring to the fore the possibility that we no longer have to adhere to an idea that theory belongs only to the coloniser, but rather that we can as indigenous people once again acknowledge that we have always theorised about our world and that our theories, which are grounded historically on this land, are valid. Kaupapa Māori theory is a theoretical framework that is organically Māori (Mane, 2009; Pihama, 1993; Smith, 1997).

The organic development and nature of Kaupapa Māori theory is perhaps one of its strongest aspects. Having already noted that the coining of the phrase came within a university context it is vital that we do not then assume that Kaupapa Māori theory is only about academia, as that is not the case. Kaupapa Māori theory has in very real terms developed from Māori.

Given that te reo and tikanga Māori are central to Kaupapa Māori theory, we have an established foundation that can be described as nothing other than organic.

Kaupapa Māori theory is a part of a wider resurgence for Māori; it is a part of what is often termed the Māori Renaissance. That renaissance is an outcome of the struggles by many Māori to regain the fundamental Indigenous rights. From these struggles have emerged the Māori educational initiatives of Te Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, Whare Kura and Whare Wānanga. The political and historical development of these initiatives has been recorded by those involved directly with these initiatives (Hohepa, 1990; Hohepa & Ratapu, 1992; Nepe, 1991; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1990). It may be stated in more general terms that the development of these initiatives has come about from a basis of the need for Māori to take control of our own educational processes and in doing so of our own destinies. Fundamental to this is the revival, maintenance and development of te reo and tikanga Māori for present and future generations of Māori. Discussion surrounding the context within which Te Kōhanga Reo emerged highlights these general intentions.

Margie Hohepa (1990) describes the development of Te Kōhanga Reo as having emerged as part of wider concerns in regard to te reo Māori. The concern for the potential loss of te reo Māori has been located with various movements and petitions of the 1970s (Brown & Carlin, 1994). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Mead, 1996) also identifies the significance of the 1970s period in the revitalisation of te reo Māori. It was a time when significant actions were being undertaken in regard to land issues, including actions such as the 1975 Land March, the reoccupation of Bastion Point by Ngāti Whātua, the occupation of the Raglan Golf course by Eva Rickard and her whānau, and the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal (Greensill, Sykes & Pihama, 1998). Māori movements of the time were not `removed from wider international movements (Greensill, Sykes & Pihama, 1998). Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1991) places the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s as a key influence in Māori politics at the time. Equally, the American Indian Movement was also gathering momentum struggling for Indigenous rights in their lands (Mead, 1996).

Kaupapa Māori theory, having derived from organic Māori movements, provides us with a theoretical process that ensures those struggles and the inherent power relationships within those struggles are a conscious part of our analysis. Given the unequal power relations that exist between Māori and the State, the recognition that the organic developments are the outcome of Māori aspirations and a subsequent struggle for the realisation of those aspirations means that there is a clearly articulated political agenda that sits alongside cultural aspirations for te reo and tikanga Māori. The organic nature of Kaupapa Māori theory also means that there are many ways in which it can be and is articulated. Kaupapa Māori theory is not singular.

Kaupapa Māori theory is, by nature of its development, multiple. There is no set formula that we can use to say here this is what it looks like, rather Kaupapa Māori theory has a range of expressions that are influenced by things such as whānau, hapū, iwi, urban experiences, gender, geography, to name a few. The multiple possibilities of Kaupapa Māori theory also enables a range of potential forms of transformation to occur.

Bell hooks (1994) reminds us that theory can be liberatory if we seek to use it in that way. Transformation is one of the driving elements of Kaupapa Māori theory.

How that transformation is defined and brought about is determined by how the issues are understood, theorised and engaged. Therefore it is necessary, while avoiding a formulaic development, to indicate what may be considered some specific elements inherent in Kaupapa Māori theory and the ways in which a range of Māori people are articulating methods of analysis. The transformation or emancipatory intent of Kaupapa Māori theory may be viewed as a decolonisation process; however, it is not solely about the theorising for transformation but is also directly related to the development of practical interventions. Again, Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori are clear examples of the emancipatory intent of Kaupapa Māori theory. Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) takes this aspect of Kaupapa Māori theory a step forward in arguing for a need to include a utopian vision within the development of Kaupapa Māori theory, which serves to highlight its transformative potential.

Summary

This article has opened a discussion of Kaupapa Māori theory as an indigenous theory of change. The key intention was to outline some of the broader philosophical contexts within which Kaupapa Māori theory needs to be considered. What is important is the understanding that Kaupapa Māori theory is founded within knowledge that derives from learning, experiences, understandings, worldviews, values and beliefs that are ancient. These forms have been handed down through generations, and although disrupted and disregarded through colonial impositions they have survived to continue to inform how we are in the world. Kaupapa Māori theory is developed from a foundation of Kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori. Its base is firmly entrenched on Māori land, on Papatūānuku, and that holds Kaupapa Māori theory as a distinctive framework.

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Theory is considered to hold possibilities from liberation; however, a wariness remains in Māori communities as a result of the imposition of theories that have historically worked against our interests. Within the academy Western theories have been privileged.

Indigenous peoples' theoretical voices have been rarely heard, let alone engaged in with the same status as those of the West. This is not a surprise to Māori academics, given the ongoing marginalisation of Māori knowledge. Māori knowledge has been under attack since the arrival of colonial settlers to our lands. Within the colonial education system Māori knowledge has been through processes that have denied the validity of our own knowledge and worldviews. Kaupapa Māori theory, it is argued, provides us with the potential to continue a tradition of thinking about, explaining and understanding our world that is not the domain of the colonising forces, but has been a part of Indigenous peoples worlds since creation. Kaupapa Māori theory is an evolving theoretical framework. It is evolving from a base of being Māori, from whānau, hapü, iwi and from collective Māori movements. As a theoretical framework Kaupapa Māori theory is engaged in a site of struggle within the academy. It struggles for the recognition, the validation and affirmation of our cultural worldviews as Māori. It asserts that we have always been researchers, have always engaged in theorising our lives, our experiences, our context. The organic and multiple nature of Kaupapa Māori theory is a powerful force in the future creation of a range of Kaupapa Māori theoretical expression. To position ourselves clearly as Kaupapa Māori theorists is to identify ourselves, to place before others where we are coming from, so that there is no guise of neutrality or assumed objectivity (Smith, L.T., 1999). The resurgence of Māori language and culture over the past thirty years and the continued assertion of tino rangatiratanga indicate that as the indigenous people of Aotearoa we will continue to struggle for our fundamental rights on our lands.

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Endnotes

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2 I am referring here to the Māori Education team at the University of Auckland, during the 1990s who were instrumental in the development of Kaupapa Māori theory and research methodologies.

3 For a critique of deficit theories and a discussion of education programmes influenced by American programmes such as Head Start refer Pihama, (1993).

4 In 1979 a gathering of elders at the Wānanga kaumātua affirmed te reo Māori "Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori" the language is the life principle of Māori mana. This was followed in 1981 with a resolution from another hui Wānanga Whakatauira for the development of bilingual education at pre-school level. These were taken further to a proposal for immersion pre-school programmes. In April 1982 the first Te Kōhanga Reo opened at Pukeatua Kōkiri Centre Wainuiomata. The overriding goal being the fluency of te reo Māori which would address the priority concern for the revitalisation of te reo.

5 In this publication Hana Jackson discusses the instigation of the Māori Language petition in 1970 which was instrumental in the resistance movements that have seen the growth of Māori Language initiatives in Aotearoa. The petition was presented to parliament on September 14, 1972 and consisted of 44,000 signatures.