

Translating the Code of Ethics – Part II

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Notwithstanding the obligation for all health practitioners under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and psychologists in particular because of our Code of Ethics (Nairn, 2010), there are a number of compelling reasons why a translation of the Code of Ethics into Māori could be considered a necessary step for psychologists in Aotearoa/New Zealand to take. Translating the Code of Ethics – Part Two expands into and explores ideas arising in discussions about this important decision. It also intends to reassure the way that the translation will not lead to the ongoing difficulties associated with the two language versions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi.

As ratified by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Aotearoa is founded on a partnership between two peoples. However, Māori in modern times are over-represented in many negative health statistics, including psychological health (Durie, 2003a; Harris et al, 2006; Paradies et al, 2008). This alone seems to indicate that the partnership is not working for Māori in the same way that it is benefiting non-Māori. This discrepancy in well-being and health between the partnership peoples indicates a need to examine why the discrepancy is occurring and, in many cases, becoming worse. Many fine researchers have attempted to address this need (Durie, 2003b; Nikora, 2001; Royal, 2007; Turia, 2001; Walker, 1990) and among the causes they have identified is the impact of colonisation from early contact into the present. These authors conclude that the way in which the Māori language has been actively attacked and legislated against since colonisation began (outlined in Part 1; Nairn, 2010) is an important reason for the decline of Māori health and well-being. That process has been experienced by many other indigenous cultures throughout the world making it a universal issue (Wilkinson, 2005). At times Aotearoa has been a trail blazer for indigenous, minority, and gender issues and the move to translate the Code of Ethics into te reo Māori is another such moment in our history.

A culture's language and this includes English, encapsulates the beliefs, cultural practices and attitudes of the culture. Indeed, the very mauri or 'essence' of a culture is expressed through and preserved in its language (Marsden, 1975). For Māori traditionally the environment infused every aspect of their lives and this was reflected in the language. Another vital aspect of Māori world-views was the acknowledged presence of multiple spiritual guardians and the firm belief in the spiritual world (Royal, 2006). Such beliefs were encoded within and infused the Māori language and it is important to recognise that the English language offers considerably less support for such world-views. That lack of support for key elements of Māori beliefs raises questions about the adequacy and appropriateness of psychology – the discipline and its practice – for Māori.

Commitment to Māori Culture, Te Reo and People

The history of colonisation underpins the experience of psychology for Māori, many of whom express a distrust, dislike, or avoidance of psychology in general

and psychologists in particular! This attitude towards psychology has developed over many years from experiences of Māori with the discipline; as individuals and communities, or as students and practitioners, their experiences with psychology reflected little of their life experiences, beliefs and culture (Milne, 2005). In extreme instances, psychology pathologised, invalidated, or simply opposed Māori belief, culture and practice (Milne, 2005) creating negative attitudes towards the discipline. Where negative experiences compounded across generations, such attitudes have become ingrained within Māori families. While psychology has contributed to this outcome, it must be noted that the practice of psychology occurs within a wider social milieu that is fundamentally non-Māori in orientation and practice and that milieu encourages Māori to adopt negative attitudes toward non-Māori practices, as in research (Smith, 1999).

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To date, initiatives undertaken by psychologists, such as McFarlane-Nathan (1996) have demonstrated the need for a different approach with Māori, and there have been well-intentioned efforts to act upon that understanding. However, these efforts are fundamentally flawed by the inability of English to convey the mauri 'essence' and wairua, 'spirit' of te Ao Māori (Durie, 2001). These initiatives risk failure because the programmes may merely put Māori labels on a little changed, non-Māori practice at the practical therapeutic level. Further, practitioners with little understanding of te Ao Māori are less likely to be able to implement the programme as intended (Love & Waitoki, 2007).

The Code of Ethics stands at the heart of psychological practice and translating it into te reo Māori is an opportunity to bring the mauri, 'essence' of the Māori world into the heart of psychological practice in Aotearoa. A translation of the code also demonstrates a commitment to Māori people and Māori culture at the most fundamental level.

Translation promises to give te Ao Māori more than a token presence within psychology so the action could encourage and support Māori practitioners, students, communities, and clients to participate more fully in its practice. That would certainly be true for the growing numbers of native speakers of te reo and a consequence of Māori being able

to see themselves and their world-views reflected within the discipline and its practice. In turn, their participation

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will, hopefully, enhance the process of infusing this non-indigenous institution with indigenous energy and wisdom leading it to better serve Māori people and improve their wellbeing. This obvious and crucial action on the part of the three 'co-owners' of the Code (The Board, NZPSS, NZCCP) should do much to address the long-standing problem of Māori attitudes towards psychology. An increase in Māori health and well-being resulting from more engagement with a psychology that is appropriate and relevant for them will translate to better health and wellbeing for our whole society. Such improvements would not only reflect improvement in the negative health picture (Durie, 2003a; Harris et al, 2006; Paradies et al, 2008) but also the effect of Māori individuals, whanau and communities sharing their wellbeing with those around them.

Lost in translation...

One reservation psychologists may have about translating the Code of Ethics into te reo Māori arises from the difficulties associated with Te Tiriti o Waitangi. An accurate (or professional) translation of the Code of Ethics will provide a true reflection of the principles although, as it is not possible to capture the concepts of one system of knowledge in the language of another (Durie, 2003b), there will be differences in emphasis and implications. That situation is quite unlike the discrepancies and differences created between Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Hobson's draft, often called the English text (Nairn, 2007; Orange, 1987) where haste, deliberate obfuscation, and deliberate prioritising of Hobson's draft underpin confusions about the document. None of those factors are germane to the translation of our Code of Ethics as we have the time and ability to access the expertise necessary to accomplish the task professionally. However, should discrepancies or differences still occur, despite all efforts to avoid them, rather than regard that as a failure we should regard it as an opportunity to explore the differences between te Ao Māori psychology and non-Māori psychology. The resulting theoretical and/or ethical insights could inform practice and training, especially in relation to the 'what' and

'why' of cultural competencies. The next section explores the exciting possibilities arising in that 'interface' (Durie, 2003b) or the space between, which is akin to 'Te Kore' (Nikora, 2001).

The 'Interface' or 'Space' Between the Cultures

Fear is another reason why some do not embrace the opportunity offered by the translation. Many psychologists express a reluctance to work with Māori because they have experienced Māori reactions to psychology and the calls for only Māori to work with Māori. However, as Linda Nikora outlined in her 2000 keynote address to the NZ Psychological Society (Nikora, 2001), the existing need is much greater than can be met by the growing, but still small, number of Māori psychologists. She concluded that, if Māori are expected to address these problems alone, there is little chance of success. All of us need to be part of addressing the issues we face today as we work with the outcomes of decades of colonisation.

Accurate translation of the Code will underline the importance of te reo Māori and, if accompanied by appropriate explanation and education for all psychologists, should encourage practice with Māori. In addition, this translation provides a possible platform for a concerted effort to address current lack of knowledge about Te Ao Māori. This approach may also help soften reactionary attitudes toward Māori, and Māori culture still held by some psychologists and psychological institutions.

Hopefully this move will herald a change in the practice and theory of psychology within Aotearoa, a core purpose of our Society's National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (NSCBI). While people may feel threatened by the prospect of change, examination of the increasing levels of mental ill-health in Māori, show that change is necessary to effectively meet their growing needs in the psychological sector. Professor Mason Durie (2003b) named the space between cultures as an 'interface', where, rather than seeking to interpret one culture through the lens of another, the emphasis is on developing new knowledge and novel approaches by drawing equally from the knowledge systems of both cultures. Many Māori who are familiar with psychology, while distrustful of the discipline as a whole, still agree that the existence of and support for such a space is necessary for the development of robust kaupapa Māori psychology practices (Milne, 2005). However, the key word is equally and, as the two knowledge systems are not treated equally at present, there needs to be a concerted effort to make space for Māori culture and te reo within psychology before a true interface can be considered to exist.

Conclusion

This paper has further discussed the need and reasoning behind the move to translate the Code of Ethics into te reo Māori. The primary rationale for the translation is to improve the implementation and practice guided by this code, first by providing a standing place for Māori, especially native speakers of te reo, within the discipline and, second, a focus for improved knowledge of te Ao Māori for all psychologists.

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The problem for psychology in Aotearoa is not primarily an incompatibility between the cultures and their knowledge systems (Durie, 2003b), or lack of goodwill between the Treaty peoples, rather it rests primarily on the power imbalance that has been created and maintained between Māori and non-Māori through the history of the suppression and undermining of the Māori culture by the dominant, settler people, their rule-making institutions and discourses here (Turia, 2001). Those practices of assimilation silence the indigenous, and all 'other' cultures, ensuring that one people have more say in all matters affecting how **we all may choose to live**, resulting in a largely monocultural society. Both the dominance of English as the language spoken, written and understood within all levels of society and the health disparities between the indigenous people and those of the dominant culture are consequences of that power imbalance.

To reiterate, the presence of te reo Māori within the heart of psychological practice and theory in the form of a translation of our Code of Ethics is a strong indicator that:

1. Māori culture and voices are heard and do have a place within psychological theory and practice in Aotearoa
2. Psychological practices relevant to and informed by Māori exist and their use is encouraged
3. That psychologists, in Aotearoa at least, are addressing, and refusing to take part in, the continuing processes of colonisation in the power structures of our society (e.g. parliament).

No reira, ngā mihi aroha ki a koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou, kia ora koutou katoa!

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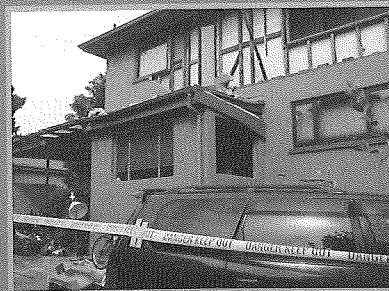
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