Toitū te Mātauranga: Valuing culturally inclusive research in contemporary times

A position paper prepared under the auspices of the Māori Research Laboratory, Te Rū Rangahau, at the University of Canterbury

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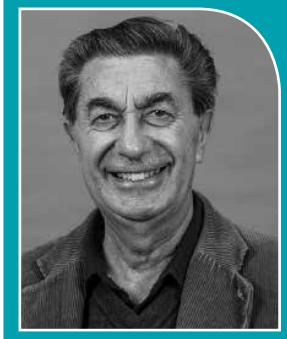

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Aim

This position paper presents a discussion about the importance of cultural competence and cultural safety in research endeavours, their significance in terms of a national guiding policy (Vision Mātauranga), and the place these imperatives have within the Aotearoa New Zealand research landscape.

The purpose of a position paper is to explain and contribute to potential courses of action. On that basis, an extensive and detailed explanation of the deeper theoretical positionings or philosophical understandings is not included here. Rather, the impetus is geared toward the axiom 'toitū te mātauranga', sustaining Māori knowledge.

Background

Developing research and researcher cultural competence involves growing an awareness, knowledge and understanding of the cultural values, beliefs, traditions, and customs of those with whom we work - in this case Māori, the tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand. Key to the development of cultural competence is the notion of cultural safety, which requires researchers to know their cultural self, including their cultural power, privilege and positionality, before engaging in research with those whose culture is different to their own. Cultural safety is pivotal to cultural competence and the ability to grow one's skills, knowledge and understanding to work effectively in a quest for better outcomes. Understanding Vision Mātauranga is the degree to which researchers can access, respect, and responsibly apply mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) and its associated protocols and systems. Cultural competence, cultural safety and understanding Vision Mātauranga are directly related to facilitating culturally responsive and effective approaches in carrying out research activities.

Data Sources

Many of the seminal works which underpin the domains of cultural competence, cultural safety and mātauranga Māori were primary references in providing a platform for this position paper - one that offers some guidance for better practice. Selected journals from the last 50 years were deemed relevant, and books and other supporting scholarly sources were also used. For the purposes of guiding research practice, three key frameworks are introduced in this position paper: *Braided Rivers/He Awa Whiria* (Macfarlane, Macfarlane & Gillon, 2015), *The IBRLA Framework* (Bishop, 1996) and *He Poutama Whakamana* (Macfarlane, 2018). These frameworks provide a platform from which researchers (or a group of researchers) may respond to issues associated with the requirements for better (and safer) research practices.

No one researcher, or group of researchers, is compelled to follow this guidance, as the paper is meant to be taken as a contribution to a broader discourse on cultural competence, cultural safety, and mātauranga Māori.

Challenges

It is important for researchers to grow an awareness that Māori culture, knowledge and understanding, are dynamic and evolving realities. Research therefore will often combine traditional concepts and understandings from within a contemporary context. Māori knowledge rarely, if ever, starts from the here and now. In recent decades, numerous discussions and written records relating to Indigenous cultures worldwide indicate that Indigenous peoples globally appear to have a common experience, and a common cause. They collectively share a history of domination, injustice and prejudice, despite extensive diversity between them. Regardless of different geographic locations, they reflect universal chronicles that provide accounts of the confiscation of their lands, the demise of their languages, knowledge systems and practices, the loss of autonomy, disproportionate poverty, over-representation in poor health and educational outcomes, incarceration, and marginalisation. Throughout the world's history, Indigenous cultures have continually fought for the recognition of their identities, practices and traditions, including their right to retain their languages and resources and their ways of proposing educational practices and research methodologies.

A consistent failure to understand a Māori worldview has often been reflected in the absence of culturally-appropriate forms of responsivity. Traditional Māori society valued high-level thinking and analytical skills, exemplified in compellingly clear understandings of cosmology, geography and industry. These skills might be exemplified in quite different ways. For example, Māori practices of producing resources made from flax required a precise knowledge of the physical properties of raw materials, their source, the details regarding tikanga (customary practices) surrounding the collection and processing, their sustainability and so on. A second example shows that as a result of successive generations of purposeful voyaging across the oceans, an intensive knowledge of navigation was carefully acquired.

Such knowledge was not just happened upon. It was acquired through active participation within culturally-responsive and authentic learning contexts, and research. Māori did not just instantly and instinctively know about the qualities, properties and habits of birds, plants and other natural resources. They had to work all this out systematically, and their scientific endeavours were recorded and transmitted through song, symbol, story, dance and everyday practices. Good research practice, one might assume. However, it is clear that the scientific endeavours and knowledge of Māori and other Indigenous people, as well as their ways of transmitting this knowledge are seldom recognised as ways of knowing, and ways of researching (see Macfarlane et al., 2008).

Responses

The declinations to accept Indigenous ways of knowing may prove to be the catalyst for new opportunities to innovatively reshape and reorganise our theoretical and empirical positionings, of what it means for research communities to be accepting, in the 21st century, of renewed approaches. It seems it is more urgent than ever before to ask: who is influencing these renewed approaches and how do, and can, Māori researchers participate in them, and indeed, lead them? At stake is the need to rethink the meanings and practices associated with the changing face of research conventions. There is a need to carefully assess some of the major research elements such as structure, rationality, managing, and leading, because simply giving the appearance of acceptance of renewed approaches is not enough. Assessment of these elements leads to a response and this often means venturing into research spaces that may push boundaries and test others' views. And this takes courage. However, if the creation of new thinking and practices will lead to improved outcomes, then the benefits outweigh the costs.

The trials and tribulations of the past have marred the research landscape, but today increasing numbers of researchers are proclaiming that it is time to re-engage in a dialogue that

would liberate a need for change that must go beyond the 'add-on' attempts that have characterised the tokenistic gestures of past practices. The move toward encompassing genuinely transformative approaches has arrived. In more recent years, it would seem fair to assume that there has been reasonable indigenisation of the research sector whereby cultural epistemology is a salient rather than an obscure reality. Vision Mātauranga (Ministry for Research, Science and Technology, 2007), a framework that was developed in consultation with researchers, funders and users, including Māori communities, is expressing itself more acutely. This guiding policy for the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), has been integrated across MBIE's investment priority areas and is also referred to in the Request for Proposals (RFPs) for science investment rounds, including those for the National Science Challenges. There has been an upswing in the use of Māori terminology, consultation with Māori tribal communities is largely a more galvanised process, and greater numbers of Māori scholars are participating or taking leading roles in research programs. What began as a cathartic and liberating epistemological revolution might now be described as an embedded and rightful entitlement. A repositioning of the emphasis in the research realm is beginning to occur. But, we're not there yet, essentially because Vision Mātauranga tells us the 'what' with regard to carrying out culturally-responsive research, not the 'how'. It is argued, therefore, that we need culturally-grounded models and frameworks to guide us, and systems for tracking progress. We acknowledge that many such tools are now available to support researchers. For the purposes of this position paper, it is to a small selection of these that we now turn.

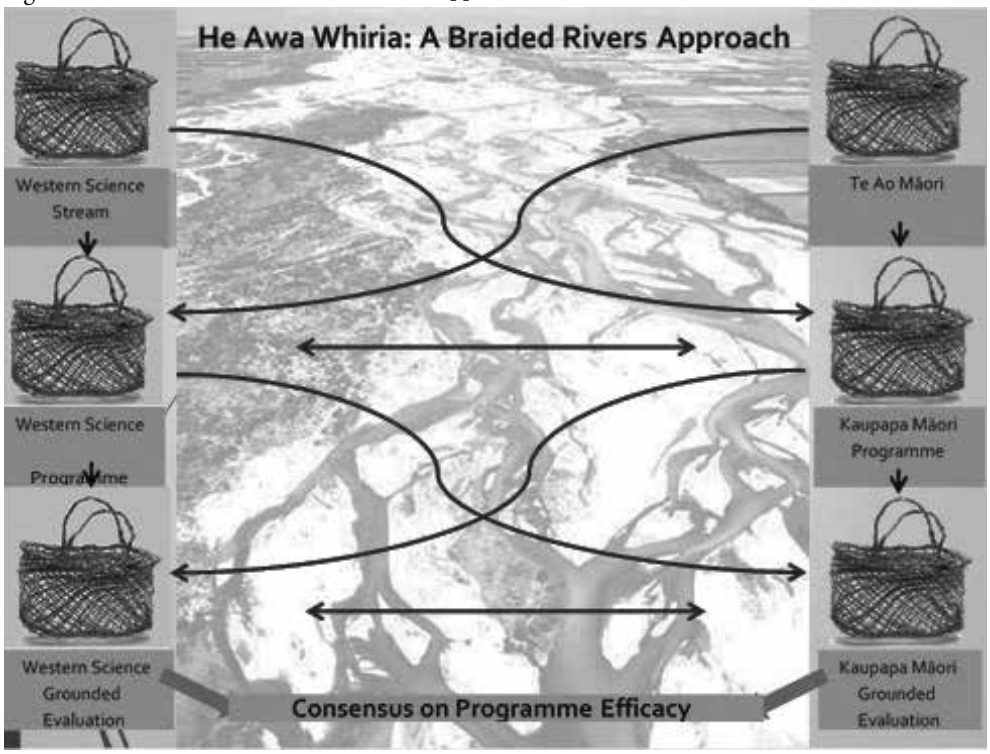
He Awa Whiria

He Awa Whiria is an innovative framework that draws inspiration from Indigenous and Western streams of knowledge, while maintaining a consciousness of Māori data sovereignty. Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Gillon (2015) propose that:

> Western knowledge and theory, although fundamentally sound, are culturally bound (Durie, 2006), and are therefore not able to be transferred directly into another (Indigenous Māori) culture. It is therefore necessary to make a plea for an interdependent and innovative theoretical space where the two streams of knowledge are able to blend and interact, and in doing so, facilitate greater sociocultural understanding and better outcomes for Indigenous individuals or groups. (p. 52)

Two key suggestions are evident in this extract. First, Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Gillon (2015) suggest that it is inappropriate to seek solutions to Indigenous challenges solely from within Western knowledge streams, and second, they propose that a blending of Indigenous and Western bodies of knowledge creates an approach that is potentially more powerful than either knowledge stream is able to produce unilaterally (see Figure 1). Figure 1 also illustrates that inherent within the He Awa Whiria framework, there is the recognition of Indigenous knowledges and a space for Kaupapa Māori research as a distinct stream. In this autonomous stream, where some tensions in blending Kaupapa Māori theory and practice may arise, Kaupapa Māori researchers can engage with critical issues in ways intended to impact on Māori advancement. It is important to acknowledge historical bias in the research environment toward 'one-only' stream of knowledge approach. He Awa Whiria encourages researchers to recognise the value that resides in both streams of knowledge, and to adopt an

Figure 1: He Awa Whiria: A Braided Rivers Approach (Macfarlane, Macfarlane & Gillon, 2015)



approach that has relevance to the research context.

A Steering Group of the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (2018) made some astute observations of the braided rivers metaphor, noting that both streams start at the same place and run beside each other in equal strength. They come together on the riverbed and they move away from one another. Each stream spends more time apart than together.

When they do converge, the space created is one of learning, not assimilating. This indicates the potential for research projects to create new knowledge that can be used to progress understandings in both worlds, in order to represent better outcomes for all.

IBRLA Framework

Research initiatives that involve and impact on Māori need to be guided by members of the Māori community, with the opportunity to determine, from the outset, if benefits will accrue for Māori should the initiative proceed. To that end Bishop's (1996) IBRLA framework (Initiation, Benefits, Representation, Legitimation, Accountability) is able to guide how power-sharing relationships are established, even before the initiative begins. Drawing on this concept and applying it to research paradigms, Macfarlane (2018) has built on Bishop's

framework in order to create a template to guide the planning of research activities wherever (and however) Māori feature in the process. A set of reflective questions accompany each of the five IBRLA components and are presented so as to encourage researcher reflection during the conceptual-design research planning phase, as well as to support researchers to monitor and evaluate their progress, both during and at the conclusion of the research activities.

Kaupapa Māori approaches to social change initiatives must include Māori thinking and Māori voice (Bishop, 1996; Moewaka Barnes, 2013). It is important to recognise that many researchers use the nomenclature of Kaupapa Māori in a number of ways and express a variety of standpoints within the Kaupapa Māori space. However, it is generally accepted that Kaupapa Māori approaches can be seen as reflecting the elements of social change that are common to both revitalisation and resistance activities for Māori. Further these signal that there is a need for change initiatives that are targeted towards Māori to be based within distinctly Māori-oriented frameworks. The Treaty of Waitangi (specifically the principles of partnership, protection, and participation, highlighted in black in Table 1) provides a moral, ethical and strategic impetus for enabling an authentic Māori presence to become more widely premised in the research endeavours.

Table 1: IBRLA Framework (Adapted from Bishop, 1996)

	Component	Considerations to reflect upon
I	Initiation	• Who conceptualised and initiated this research project? • How did Māori participate in the conceptualisation and initiation process? • How was the agreement to proceed with the research achieved?
B	Benefits	• How will the research (process and outcomes) accrue benefits for Māori? • How has information been shared with Māori about the intended benefits? • How will these benefits be determined and measured – and by whom?
R	Representation	• Whose ideas will be represented in the methodology, design and approach? • How will Māori thinking and knowledge be represented at all research phases? • How will this be monitored so that ongoing agreement/partnership is maintained?
L	Legitimation	• Who will legitimate the analysis and interpretation of information/ research data? • How will Māori understandings be legitimately represented? • How will this be structured so that research fidelity is achieved/protected?
A	Accountability	• Who is accountable to whom – and in what ways? • How will on-going and mutual accountability be built into the research process? • How will this be monitored and evaluated to ensure safety for all stakeholders?

He Poutama Whakamana

In traditional Māori meeting houses (known as 'wharenui'), walls are frequently adorned with mirror-imaged panels – referred to as Poutama Tukutuku – stepped patterns (see Figure 2) that depict a series of steps that climb upwards from both sides to reach the top at the centre.

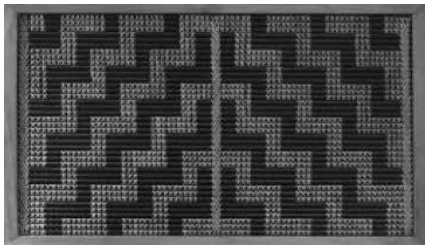


Figure 2: Poutama Tukutuku

A poutama has the potential to offer both spiritual and educational meanings. Māori regularly draw on this classical metaphor to encapsulate ways of knowing, being and doing; consequently, the poutama represents a journey of growth and development in order to attain greater knowledge and understanding. The steps symbolise levels of attainment, learning, advancement and insightfulness. So how might a poutama framework be used to guide and inform culturally-responsive research planning that is focused on envisioning the potential of Māori, as espoused in the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology's (2007) Vision Mātauranga policy document? He Poutama Whakamana is to be applied as an aspirational tool for tracking researcher and research progress (see Figure 3). It was developed as a means of drawing on the threads of information presented previously, by identifying four imperatives that are deemed to be of significance to preparing research proposals and carrying out plans that seek to encapsulate the intent of Vision Mātauranga:

- Kaitiakitanga (K): Guardianship: Ensuring that the Treaty principles are upheld
- Mātauranga (M): Knowledge: Envisioning the innovative potential of Māori knowledge
- Tikanga (T): Protocols: Employing culturally-responsive research methodologies
- Rangatiratanga (R): Leadership: Embodying an equitable leadership approach

At each of the three levels of He Poutama Whakamana (see Figure 3), it is proposed that these four imperatives be addressed when planning research activities that include Māori phenomena – for example people, perspectives, and sites. The Poutama starts at step one (mōhiotanga), with researchers needing to have an open mind and a desire to explore new learning and knowledge as a prerequisite to embarking on research that involves Māori phenomena. Step two requires researchers to actively explore new knowledge (mātauranga) and enhance their own understandings about how the research planning needs to progress.

Step three is the stage of enlightenment (māramatanga), and it is where researchers integrate and apply their new knowledge and understanding into the planning.

Figure 3: He Poutama Whakamana (Macfarlane, 2018)

Māramatanga – Integrating and applying Vision Mātauranga

Integrating and applying culturally-responsive principles and practices in research planning

- (K): apply the three Treaty of Waitangi principles (partnership, protection, participation) throughout research proposals
- (M): demonstrate how and why the innovation potential of Māori knowledge will be actualised throughout the research proposal
- (T): adopt and embed kaupapa Māori methodology and methods throughout the research proposal
- (R): address how Māori leadership and participation will be authentically incorporated throughout the research proposal

Māramatanga | Application

Mātauranga – Exploring and enhancing understandings of Vision Mātauranga

Identifying and interacting with culturally-appropriate ideas, concepts and knowledge to inform research planning

- (K): understand how the three Treaty of Waitangi principles (partnership, protection, participation) are able to guide research planning
- (M): identify and articulate the 'new knowledge' benefits that are intended to accrue for Māori as a result of the research activities
- (T): adopt kaupapa Māori methodology and methods in research design to ensure power-sharing approaches are utilised
- (R): ensure that equitable and adequate resourcing is allocated to facilitate authentic Māori leadership and participation at all stages

Mātauranga | Understanding

Mōhiotanga – Acknowledging and respecting the aspirations of Vision Mātauranga

Co-constructing research planning in partnership from the beginning

- (K): acknowledge the centrality of the three Treaty of Waitangi principles (partnership, protection, participation) in guiding research processes
- (M): accept the innovation potential of Māori knowledge, aspirations and worldview perspectives in research objectives
- (T): appreciate the relevance of kaupapa Māori research methodology and methods in research design
- (R): recognise the importance of engaging Māori leadership, participation, advice and guidance in all research planning, processes and activities

Mōhiotanga | Awareness

When researchers have attained māramatanga they are aware of the impact that the three Treaty of Waitangi principles have on the research process; they understand that Māori knowledge and ways of knowing, being and doing are critical to the research objectives, they insist on implementing a research design that embodies and employs approaches that are culturally-responsive to Māori, and they ensure that Māori leadership is palpable throughout the entire research process.

Conclusion

Pursuing cultural competence and cultural safety in research planning, activities, and monitoring is more important than ever before, given the projected increases in diversity and disparity across the world, and the growing prominence of Māori phenomena in the many and varied research opportunities that are present in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the goal of becoming culturally competent and culturally safe in all research activities that involve Māori may be perceived by some as being too great a challenge to overcome, commitment to the goal – by way of the aspirational tenets of Vision Mātauranga – must never waver.

The inclusive approaches and frameworks that have been offered in this position paper are intended to assist researchers to become more confident in enhancing their awareness and knowledge bases as they prepare to adopt culturally-adept research practices in the field.

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Advances in suicide assessment and treatment

John Sommers-Flanagan

John Sommers-Flanagan is a clinical psychologist and Professor of Counselor Education at the University of Montana. He is author or coauthor of over 60 professional publications and eight books. His books, co-written with his wife Rita, include Tough Kids, Cool Counseling (2nd ed., 2007), How to Listen so Parents will Talk and Talk so Parents will Listen (2011), Clinical Interviewing (6th ed., 2017), and Counseling and Psychotherapy Theories in Context and Practice (3rd ed., 2018). Dr. Sommers-Flanagan has been publishing articles, book chapters, and videos on suicide since 1995 and is a sought out keynote speaker and professional workshop trainer in the areas of (a) counseling youth, (b) working with parents, and (c) suicide assessment/intervention. He is also co-host of the Practically Perfect Parenting Podcast. In his wild and precious spare time, John loves to run (slowly), dance (poorly), laugh (loudly) and produce home-made family music videos.