Reflection

Reflecting on Service Part I: Te Tiriti o Waitangi in university ethics

Georgina Tuari Stewart

ABSTRACT

This article presents a reflective commentary or thinkpiece written as a Māori member of an internal committee established to review the ethics ecosystem of my employer university. There could be few better contexts for considering how university policy and practice might be guided by Māori ethical concepts. I present brief introductions to the concepts that make up the generalised Māori worldview, and end with a practical suggestion for the ethics application form. To conduct meaningful discussions it is necessary to be specific, but this work is still worth publishing since others may find it a useful example, both in its substance and in its approach.

KEYWORDS

Academic citizenship (service), Aroha, Māori, Pono, Research ethics, Tika

Introduction

As an academic climbs the ladder of seniority within their university, their academic service (citizenship) roles often expand to take up more and more of their energy and time. For any academic, and in the current milieu, perhaps especially for Māori and Pacific academics, these citizenship roles can involve some serious thinking and educative work. These roles can therefore lead to writing for publication, as also can our teaching work. Teaching and service roles are embedded within the institution, whereas research collaborations happen

irrespective of space, in terms of location and embodied encounters with each other. Writing for publication is often a matter of theorising our own experiences; by writing about the topics and problematics that arise in our teaching and service roles, the three dimensions of an academic job can better support and reinforce one other.

This article is the first of two based on my experience as a Māori member of multiple internal AUT committees convened for specific purposes, including review of the ethics ecosystem (see below) and the science school (see second paper). Both articles concern issues of Māori knowledge in these embedded university contexts. Māori knowledge in the university is not a challenge that can be addressed in a free-floating, hypothetical way, but must be engaged with, inside the diverse operational contexts that, taken together, make up the business of a university. These thinkpieces present my attempts to think about the role of Māori knowledge in specific academic contexts. I wrote them to be read by my fellow panel members and anyone else, and to support the overall mission for which the committee had been convened. The task of such a group is expressed in its Terms of Reference, which these days invariably includes a statement about Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

The challenge of Māori knowledge in the university has become urgent as one of the most relevant Treaty issues facing universities in the current rush to become 'tiriti-led' institutions (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2018). The managerialism introduced with neoliberal economics in the 1980s has finally worked through the system to reach the university curriculum. Universities are now being expected to change their programmes and support systems to meet the expectations of the central funders, and the same trends are clear in the national policies for science and research funding (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2022). Our digitised academy records educational inequity with increasing accuracy and sophistication, and neoliberal funding principles expect to be able to hold universities accountable for their own performance. My own teaching experience tells me that the only way to overcome educational inequity is to provide more time and support for unsuccessful learners, in order to allow them to become successful. For some reason, this simple answer has never found favour with official systems.

I encounter little understanding among my academic colleagues of the fact that the success of the university has come about at the expense of the relative failure of Māori as a sub-population within New Zealand society, since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (Consedine & Consedine, 2012). If more were known of our country's actual history among the so-called educated classes in this country, the shallow and futile nature of the current direction of policy to become a 'tiriti-led university' would become more apparent to more people in the sector. All that is lacking is knowledge; but as Orwell, Foucault and many others have pointed out, propaganda is more powerful than truth (Giroux, 2021).

Writing about my service work responds to this conundrum from 'below' – from the perspective of one Māori person, working within one such institution, being asked repeatedly in diverse rooms to provide the solution for my university. The underlying methodology I use involves putting writing to work as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018; Stewart, 2021c). The discussions and the approach may be of interest to other academics, each navigating the academic ocean in their own roles and institutions.

Māori concepts for university ethics

AUT is currently reviewing its research ethics system, which involves various groups in the university community: academic staff researchers, and postgraduate research students and their supervisors. The AUT Secretariat and Ethics Committee (AUTEC) manage formal ethics approval processes, which form part of larger systems for managing all forms of research done under the umbrella of AUT, including postgraduate research qualifications, as well as research supported by internal and external funding, and all research involving human participants.

As a senior Māori academic at AUT, who has previously published on Māori values (Stewart et al., 2021; Stewart, 2022), my aim is to use my existing background knowledge and the tools of scholarship to write this commentary on Māori ethical concepts in relation to the ecosystem of AUT research ethics, and offer some suggestions. This commentary paper is intended as an academic koha (gift, contribution) towards the current process of internal review.

One important local influence on research ethics is the Treaty of Waitangi discourse. The Treaty of Waitangi – te Tiriti o Waitangi – is the founding national document signed in 1840 to establish New Zealand as a British creation in Aotearoa in 1840. The Treaty established (at least in the British mind) the terms of trade, marine traffic, settlement and occupation, military strategy for political annexation, and socioeconomic colonisation through assimilation of the 'natives' i.e. Māori. It would be risky to promote any one of these aims above the others – they were all advanced together, overlapping, and in mutual support for allowing the British/European/White version of everything to dominate, seen as superior to everything Māori/Aotearoa/Indigenous (Jackson, 1992; Orange, 1987).

The Vision Mātauranga policy aspires to ameliorate the effects of historical exclusion of Māori people and their knowledge from national systems, but without acknowledging the existence of that racist historical process of exclusion. Vision Mātauranga is an aspirational policy document that opens space for revolutionary changes in practice, but its achievements in terms of its stated aims have been modest. A majority of non-Māori researchers approach Vision Mātauranga compliance in tokenistic ways. They often expect a Māori colleague to write that section of their proposal/application, or to be named on their project team hence

'assuring' compliance, or demand that their university research office supply the expertise to complete that section, or get 'a' Māori in a relevant community or sector organisation to supply a letter in support. Illogically, a process of 'consultation' with Māori has given the relevant authorities reason to believe that the limited success of Vision Mātauranga is because it does not go far enough. The outcome is that Vision Mātauranga is being overtaken by larger national research policy developments, such as Te Ara Paerangi. Given the entrenched power imbalances built into the system at every level, it is difficult to support a view that stronger compliance measures will make a difference. More and more is being expected of the small number of Māori academics currently in the system, and this trend is likely to continue, given such illogical policy directions.

Widespread lack of 'Te Tiriti' knowledge in the university

Looking across the landscape of current commentary about incorporating Māori knowledge in the university, one common limitation is the assumption that Māori concepts can be treated as if they were scientific concepts. Scientific concepts are distinct, have precise, stable definitions and relationships with each other, and work in ways amenable to scientific (empirical and quantitative) methods of inquiry. But Māori concepts do not work like science concepts. The published explanations and definitions of Māori concepts found in the usual reference works cannot adequately convey their full meanings. Māori concepts do not exist in isolation, but rather in relationship with each other, as part of an overall paradigm or worldview (Kearney, 1984). To take Māori concepts seriously highlights the weakness and over-simplification of the belief that a policy, strategy or framework can be written that will, in and of itself, 'include' Māori knowledge or Mātauranga Māori in academic teaching and research.

More generally, the assumption that there is a solution to the problem of Māori inclusion in research, amenable to standard university policies and processes, uncovers a lack of understanding of the context of academic research in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The university and the academy are Eurocentrist social institutions, as is also the very concept of a curriculum (Stewart, 2021b). The disciplines of the university developed by establishing their boundaries that separate them from other forms of knowledge. Indigenous forms of knowledge such as Mātauranga Māori are used to establish and maintain those boundaries through binary concepts of discipline and not-discipline. In such ways, Mātauranga Māori is excluded from, and thereby helps to define, the disciplines of the academy, research and science.

To recognise this linkage also helps explain why most non-Māori scientists and other academics vigorously reject and resist the idea of incorporating Mātauranga Māori into their teaching and research, whether or not they are fully aware of these intellectual histories and processes. But unless an academic or scientist has an unusually extensive knowledge of the history and philosophy of their discipline,

they tend towards a belief that the current moves to more fairly represent Maori interests in the academy, including te reo and Mātauranga Māori, are merely political, 'PC gone mad,' or based on a ludicrous lack of knowledge.

The general state of 'ignorance' (Proctor, 2008) of even well-meaning scientists, and their fraught space in the debate, was demonstrated by the stunning response to the infamous *Listener* letter in July 2021. Only 2-3 days after the *Listener* issue appeared, an online letter was e-signed by about 2000 scientists and others, attesting to their opinion that Mātauranga Māori definitely IS science (Stewart, 2021a). Some have since told me they signed that counter letter as an act of solidarity and protest against the *Listener* letter. As the old adage goes, "my enemy's enemy is my friend."

In such a climate, characterised by widespread lack of understanding among academics of the intellectual histories of their own disciplines, let alone those of Māori knowledge, and given the larger history of Māori experience in the local university sector, the sincerest efforts of small panels and committees to review and respond to these complex, embedded challenges could best be described as aspirational. All too often, the responsibility for these matters is handed to the 1-2 Māori member(s) of the group, who may not be well qualified for the task, possibly lacking mastery of the mainstream knowledge context, in this case, the ecosystem of research ethics at AUT. The weaknesses of such measures seldom seem to be openly discussed or even acknowledged in official levels of discourse.

Māori ethical concepts

Māori worldviews are built on the basic ontological concepts of whakapapa, tapu and mana, which are entrenched in the cosmogonic narratives. Beyond these major divisions of reality sit the triadic Māori values of pono, tika and aroha, which work together to direct ethical human interactions with other people, and other living and non-living elements of our worlds. It is widely acknowledged that English words do not map one-to-one onto Māori words, and this principle applies more strongly, the larger and more philosophic/metaphoric the word in question. As might be expected, word-for-word translations of Māori words are the most inadequate for these large, basic, ontological key concepts of the elements of reality and ethics in the Māori worldview.

The following paragraphs briefly describe these concepts, though there is much more to be said; the reader ought not to confuse these synopses with adequate delineations. Māori concepts must be considered with appreciation of holistic Māori conceptions of reality. The history of academic scholarship on Māori thought clearly shows how prevalent distortions become embedded when concepts are separated from each other, and from the cosmogonic narratives.

Whakapapa

Whakapapa is a master concept of the Māori worldview; key to understanding the nature and ethics of indigenous Māori views of the natural and social worlds. The meaning of whakapapa is approximated by the word 'genealogy' but its full range of meanings extends far beyond the everyday understandings of genealogy as 'family tree'. The word whakapapa literally means something like 'layer-upon-layer' – made up of the causative prefix 'whaka-' and the stem word 'papa' meaning ground or layer, giving the meaning of 'to make layers' (Barlow, 1991).

Whakapapa is fundamental in guiding right ethical relationships between people, and between humans and other living and non-living things. The nature narratives of the Māori creation story are a model for how the concept of whakapapa works for organising arrays of complex information. In traditional Māori society, whakapapa knowledge was of both economic and social value: a basis for an individual's identity in terms of rights, residence, status, occupation and companions.

Mana, Tapu

Mana is approximated by power, authority or prestige, while tapu is equated to sacred, or set apart. Mana and tapu are impossible to understand without an overall appreciation of the indigenous Māori worldview. Indicating their ancient origins, these two words (or their cognates) are also found in related Pacific languages, including those of Hawai'i, Samoa, Tonga and Rarotonga. Tapu (in Tongan, tabu) was appropriated into English as 'taboo', a concept taken to England by Captain James Cook, showing how the voyages of the Age of Discovery harvested cognitive resources, in addition to biological and geological resources, to extend European knowledge bases. Today, both mana and tapu are words in New Zealand English, borrowed intact from te reo Māori.

According to widely-accepted meanings, mana and tapu seem like distinct concepts, but in fact both relate to the 'power of the gods' (Barlow, 1991) and how this power influences people and the world around us. Mana refers to the ability to hold the atua, or primordial forces of the cosmos, in balance (utu). Tapu refers to practices for keeping those forces in balance, and navigating situations when they are unbalanced. Soon after contact, the concept of tapu was assimilated to the Christian sense of sacred or holy, and the 'power' aspect of its meaning lost in dominant understandings. These historical distortion processes are part of the reason why even short, simple definitions such as 'power of the gods' run up against the limits of translation and the resulting misleading overtones (of religion, power and all the rest).

I find it helpful to think of whakapapa at the base of the Māori worldview, and mana and tapu together acting on whakapapa to produce the reality of the world around us. The third layer of this very simple model of te ao Māori is occupied by the triadic Māori ethical values, tika, pono, aroha.

Tika, Pono, Aroha

Tika is a central principle of ethical behaviour towards other people and the world. Pono is closest in meaning to truth, with which a university is centrally concerned. Aroha is a supreme power and the essence of humanity. Taken together, these three concepts form a simple but robust framework of Māori ethics, in the everyday sense of right behaviour towards others with whom we interact, and in the world at large. The literature on these Māori concepts agrees that they work together and are facets of one process.

> *When considered together, tika, pono, and aroha encompass a concept which in translation means* doing the right thing with integrity and love. *This term, which is an aspect of whanaungatanga, may be described as central to a Māori sense of self and community. (Peters, 2000, p. 1, original emphasis)*

Pā Henare Tate (2010, 2012) made an extended study of Indigenous Māori cultural concepts and values. Tate names tapu as the fundamental principle, without which nothing else would exist. Mana is the second foundational concept, closely related to tapu, and both are seen as underlying all the other concepts. Next come the principles of pono, tika and aroha, which are dealt with together, as principles directing the proper exercise of mana. 'Each of them addresses, manifests, enhances, sustains and restores tapu and mana' (Tate, 2010, p. 114). In describing the entanglements between these three concepts, Tate's description is echoed by that of Hirini Moko Mead: 'Tapu is inseparable from mana, from our identity as Māori and from our cultural practices' (Mead, 2016, p. 33). Tate varies the received order in treating pono first, on the grounds that pono concerns knowledge of reality, which precedes and is presupposed by tika (right response to reality) and aroha (loving response to reality). Tate defines pono as:

- A principle of truth by which we address tapu and mana;

- An ethical principle of action that qualifies *how* we address tapu and exercise mana;

- The basis of tika and aroha. (Tate, 2010, p. 116).

Next, Tate considers the range of meanings of tika, which include straight, direct, just, fair, right and correct. Tika also means justice, and authority, in which case it is synonymous with mana (Tate, 2010, p. 125). Tika consists in right

acknowledgement of tapu and mana, right ordering of relationships among atua, tangata and whenua, and appropriate response to tapu by the right exercise of mana. Tika presupposes pono, and is the basis for aroha (Tate, 2010, p. 126). Finally, Tate examines aroha, which according to authoritative sources includes the meanings of love, yearning for an absent friend, pity, compassion, affectionate regard, mercy, sorrow, generosity and sacrifice (p. 133). Aroha is 'the essential element in interpersonal relationships' and Tate notes 'there is no single English word that covers all the perspectives of aroha' (p. 134).

In terms of the relationship between these three concepts, aroha is based on pono and tika. Pono can be exercised with tika, and tika must be exercised with pono, but both can be superseded by aroha. Tate seems to be saying that aroha is the essence of being human and essential to the fullness of our encounter with reality. Together with the notions of 'all-encompassing goodness' and 'supreme, creative power' these accounts clarify the full range of meaning of aroha.

AUT has formally adopted tika, pono, aroha as its 'university values'—a topic of interest that my co-authors and I recently investigated (Stewart et al., 2021). Nowhere in AUT is it more fitting to use these Māori concepts than in the research ethics ecosystem. In formal human participant research ethics, the key dynamic of ethical behaviour concerns how the researchers approach and think about their research participants. Taken together, these three key values bring with them te ao Māori, the Māori worldview, more so than if considered individually, as is the style of the EA1. In this way, the predisposition of 'mainstream' ways of doing things, which is to break the application into separate sections for each 'separate' ethical principle, is shown to be anathemic to Māori sensibilities arising from underlying principles of te ao Māori.

There is, of course, much more to be said about these concepts and how they relate to each other, and a wealth of literature to investigate, but the above statements at least make a place to start.

A suggestion for the ethics application form

Even very small changes within the ethics system can make an enormous difference for Māori researcher applicants. Mindful of this principle, and the limitations outlined above, the main practical suggestion made by this commentary is to consider introducing two parallel, alternate versions of the section of the ethics application form relating to Māori: one, similar to the current format, based on the 'principles' of the Treaty of Waitangi, and worded for completion by a non-Māori applicant researcher; and a second parallel version of that section, based on the Māori ethical principles of pono, tika, aroha, and oriented towards being completed by a Māori applicant, with a welcoming attitude towards te reo Māori. I think this step would

make a powerful response to the values professed by AUT, and its commitment to be led by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Conclusion

I have reflected on my role as a Māori member of several university level review committees of specific academic units and functions and on the significance of thinking through writing about the issues involved. I summarised, from a Kaupapa Māori perspective, the current ethics review taking place at AUT, and its context in the current national research policy milieu. I introduced the key Māori ethical concepts, thinking about how they relate to the formal human participant research ethics process. Finally, I made a suggestion for introducing a two-way parallel section on Māori ethics (based on the triadic AUT values of tika, pono, aroha) in the ethics application form.

While this commentary paper is intended to make a constructive and practical contribution to the current process of ethics review, I have also pointed to some tensions and questions raised by the topic and process of introducing Māori knowledge into the national research system framework. Repairing the damage done by past practices begins with acknowledging the mistakes, blindspots and myths of New Zealand that have long since become commonsense truth and part of the ground we walk on. The work required to take seriously what it would mean to honour te Tiriti is not completed in one review, article, framework or policy, but is part of an ongoing relationship between Māori and Pākehā. The work of intercultural healing is ongoing and relational, and could take as long as the time it took for imperialist colonisation to bring us to here, to this point in time and space. Ka haere whakatōmua, ka anga whakatōmuri (We walk backwards into the future, looking towards and learning from the past).

About the Author

Georgina Tuari Stewart (Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu, Pare Hauraki) is Professor of Māori Philosophy of Education in Te Ara Poutama, Auckland University of Technology. A former school teacher of Pūtaiao/Science and Pāngarau/Mathematics, she is a double Marsden researcher and currently leads a project investigating how ILE/FLS can support Māori aspirations in schooling. Author of *Māori Philosophy: Indigenous thinking from Aotearoa* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

References

Barlow, C. (1991). *Tikanga whakaaro: key concepts in Māori culture*. Oxford University Press.

Consedine, R., & Consedine, J. (2012). *Healing our history: the challenge of the Treaty Of Waitangi* (Updated ed.). Penguin NZ.

Giroux, H. A. (2021). The Plague of Historical Amnesia in the Age of Fascist Politics. *CounterPunch*. https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/04/05/the-plague-of-historical-amnesia-in-the-age-of-fascist-politics/

Jackson, M. (1992). The Treaty and the word: the colonization of Māori philosophy. In G. Oddie & R. Perrett (Eds.), *Justice, ethics and New Zealand society* (pp. 1-10). Oxford University Press.

Kearney, M. (1984). *World view*. Chandler & Sharp Publishers, Inc.

Mead, H. M. (2016). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values* (Rev. ed.). Huia Publishers. (2003)

Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment. (2018). *Vision Mātauranga*. https://www.mbie.govt.nz/science-and-technology/science-and-innovation/agencies-policies-and-budget-initiatives/vision-matauranga-policy/

Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment. (2022). *Te Ara Paerangi*. https://www.mbie.govt.nz/science-and-technology/science-and-innovation/research-and-data/te-ara-paerangi-future-pathways/

Orange, C. (1987). *The Treaty of Waitangi*. Allen & Unwin, Port Nicholson Press.

Peters, R. J. (2000). *Tika, Pono and Aroha in three novels by Patricia Grace [MA thesis]* Massey University].

Proctor, R. (2008). Agnotology: A Missing Term to Describe the Cultural Production of Ignorance (and Its Study). In R. Proctor & L. L. Schiebinger (Eds.), *Agnotology: The making and unmaking of ignorance* (pp. 1-33). Stanford University Press.

Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2018). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed., pp. 818-838). Sage.

Stewart, G., Smith, V., Diamond, P., Paul, N., & Hogg, R. (2021). Ko te Tika, ko te Pono, ko te Aroha: Exploring Māori values in the university. *Te Kaharoa, 17*(1). https://doi.org/10.24135/tekaharoa.v17i1.344

Stewart, G. T. (2021a). Defending science from what? *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1-5. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2021.1966415

Stewart, G. T. (2021b). Smoke and Mirrors: Indigenous Knowledge in the School Curriculum. In B. Green, P. Roberts, & M. Brennan (Eds.), *Curriculum Challenges and Opportunities in a Changing World: Transnational Perspectives in Curriculum Inquiry* (pp. 41-56). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-61667-0_3

Stewart, G. T. (2021c). Writing as a Māori/Indigenous method of inquiry. In G. T. Stewart, N. Devine, & L. Benade (Eds.), *Writing for publication: liminal reflections for academics* (pp. 41-54). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4439-6_4

Stewart, G. T. (2022). *Aroha as critique: Exploring Māori values in the university*. https://pesaagora.com/columns/aroha-as-critique/

Tate, H. A. (2010). *Towards Some Foundations of a Systematic Māori Theology (PhD thesis)*. University of Melbourne.

Tate, H. A. (2012). *He Puna Iti i te Ao Marama: A Little Spring in the World of Light*. Libro International.