

workingpaper

A Methodological Approach to Māori-focused Research

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About the Author

Ko Tararua te maunga

Ko Ōtaki te awa

Ko Kapiti te motu tapu

Ko Ngāti Raukawa ki te tonga te iwi, rātou ko Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai ko Ngāti Toarangatira ngā iwi

Nō Ōtaki āhau

Mahina-a-rangi is currently pursuing a Masters in Environmental Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, where she is researching the values her iwi and hapū hold around ngārara and insects, and how the risks to these values from genetically modified organisms are managed. She completed a Bachelor of Science in Ecology and Biodiversity and Environmental Studies, and a Bachelor of Arts in Māori Resource Management and Māori Studies in 2008, undertaking part of her undergraduate study at the University of Hawai'i in Mānoa. Mahina-a-rangi also tutors undergraduate courses in Māori culture and society and introductory te reo Māori, and a postgraduate course in Māori resource management.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this working paper is to explore the methodological approach to Māori-focused research, in order to assist the Sustainable Future Institute in progressing *Project 2058*.

The strategic aim of *Project 2058* is to promote integrated long-term thinking, leadership and capacity-building so that Aotearoa/New Zealand can effectively seek and create opportunities, and explore and manage risks, over the next 50 years. In order to achieve this aim, the *Project 2058* team will work to:

1. Develop a detailed understanding of the current national planning landscape, and in particular the government's ability to deliver long-term strategic thinking;
2. Develop a good working relationship with all parties that are working for and thinking about the 'long-term view';
3. Recognise the goals of iwi and hapū, and acknowledge te Tiriti o Waitangi;
4. Assess key aspects of New Zealand's society, asset base and economy in order to understand how they may shape the country's long-term future, such as government-funded science, natural and human-generated resources, the state sector and infrastructure;
5. Develop a set of four scenarios to explore and map possible futures;
6. Identify and analyse both New Zealand's future strengths and weaknesses, and potential international opportunities and threats;
7. Develop and describe a desirable sustainable future in detail, and
8. Prepare a *Project 2058* National Sustainable Development Strategy. (SFI, 2009: 3)

This working paper is designed to help progress the third point above: 'Recognise the goals of iwi and hapū, and acknowledge te Tiriti o Waitangi'. The development of a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) will involve research that includes Māori perspectives and subjects, consequently researchers will need to ensure they have a deep understanding of their rights and responsibilities. This working paper identifies a number of guiding principles that aim to identify and analyse the risks and opportunities inherent in research on Māori perspectives and subjects, with a particular focus on sustainability.

2. Terminology

The use of te reo Māori has been promoted throughout this working paper as a means of communicating Māori concepts appropriately. In order to avoid 'over-translating' particular concepts in an effort to ensure their meanings are not changed or lost, definitions have not been included within the text of the working paper. Terminology is instead explained in a glossary, which appears at the end of the working paper (see page 12).

3. Guiding Principles of Māori-focused Research

The history of Māori research recognises that Māori are left largely dissatisfied when they, their knowledge and their customs are researched by non-Māori using non-Māori methodologies (Barnes, 2000; Powick, 2003). If future researchers wish to operate within the intent of te Tiriti o Waitangi, they need to ensure their work does not oppress or colonise Māori. Many academics argue that it is critical that a new emancipatory and decolonising methodology of research is developed. This paper explores what such a methodology could look like.

Authors such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) have highlighted how the form of the methodology of a research project determines the way it frames questions, determines tools and methods, and analyses the results. Therefore any third parties undertaking research must be conscious of the effects of their questions, tools, methods and analysis in moving their research towards being emancipatory and decolonising, or alternatively, leading it to be oppressive and colonising, and supporting the status quo.

While not intending to imply exclusion, this paper identifies 12 methodological guidelines for approaching research where Māori people or perspectives are the subject (see Table 1). It is hoped that the following principles will be a useful tool both for Sustainable Future researchers and for others in the field of sustainability generally. Each of the 12 principles is further discussed in terms of decolonising research, cross-cultural research partnerships, and kaupapa Māori research.

Table 1 Guiding Principles of Māori-focused Research

A. Decolonising research:	
1.	Redistributes power to those who are marginalised
2.	Privileges indigenous knowledge
3.	Is varied in its approach
4.	Is performative
B. Cross-cultural research:	
5.	Serves the communities in which the research is conducted
6.	Respects the struggles of the past, the tensions in the present, and the potential challenges of the future
7.	Involves learning about difference
8.	Redistributes power to make space for those who are marginalised
C. Kaupapa Māori research:	
9.	Rangatiratanga (deeply respects the knowledge and authority of Māori scholars)
10.	Whakapapa (utilises Māori epistemology)
11.	Pūkengatanga (contributes to the revitalisation of Māori scholarship)
12.	Kotahitanga (creates a safe space)

4. Decolonising Research

Defining decolonising research is not easy, nor is its practice exact. There are varied perspectives on the relevance of a Western model of research to the long-term sustainability of Māori culture. As with the word 'sustainability', the term 'research' has no direct linguistic analogue in te reo Māori. However, within the last decade, discussion of this subject has become frequent and widespread. In 2000, Smith suggested eight questions for researchers to pose when developing decolonising research. She suggested that at a minimum these questions must be answered in what she describes as the affirmative – in a positive way for Māori:

1. What research do we want done?
2. Who is it for?
3. What difference will it make?
4. Who will carry it out?
5. How do we want the research done?
6. How will we know it is worthwhile?
7. Who will own the research?
8. Who will benefit? (Smith, 2000: 239)

Based on the work of Bishop (1998), and that recently published by Swadener and Mutua (2008), this paper suggests the use of four guiding principles to aid in decolonising methodology and research on Māori perspectives and subjects.

Guiding Principle 1: Decolonising research redistributes power to those who are marginalised

[Decolonising research] decentres the Western academy as the exclusive locus of authorising power that defines research agenda (Swadener & Mutua, 2008: 38).

Decolonising research is a response to the positioning of certain participants as more 'valid', and instead redistributes power to enable those who are marginalised to set the research agenda. In the context of sustainable development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, researchers are encouraged to make space for Māori to generate the questions to be answered.

Guiding Principle 2: Decolonising research privileges indigenous knowledge

Decolonisation is the process in research of valuing, reclaiming and foregrounding indigenous voices and epistemologies (Swadener & Mutua, 2008: 31).

Researchers of sustainable development in Aotearoa/New Zealand should pursue and privilege mātauranga Māori as providing ways of knowing and interpreting the world and of seeking solutions to the challenges posed by sustainability.

Guiding Principle 3: Decolonising research is varied in its approach

Decolonising research does not adhere to a specific research method or methodology ... it does not constitute a single agreed-upon set of guidelines, it does not have a common definition (Swadener & Mutua, 2008: 33).

While decolonising research is vague in its definition, concerns about the hegemony of the Western academy and motives for reclaiming space for indigenous epistemologies are commonly brought to a decolonising research process. Themes around emancipation, social justice, sovereignty and self-determination tend to arise from this process. And while there is a lack of uniformity of approach, the exciting diversity that results allows for creativity, innovation and a dynamic landscape of research methods. Researchers of sustainable development are required to adapt to the implementation of a variety of methods to meet the common goals that may be held by various iwi and Māori groups. Similarly, research institutions should welcome the diversification in approach that results from engaging in decolonising research, and see such endeavours as an opportunity to face the challenges posed by sustainability with an enhanced adaptive capacity.

Guiding Principle 4: Decolonising research is performative

Decolonising research is performative – it is enmeshed in activism (Swadener & Mutua, 2008: 33).

In discussing the style in which meaning and truth are disseminated, Bishop (1998) has highlighted the critical role of sharing, subjectivity, personal knowledge and the specialised knowledge of the oppressed. Researchers of sustainable development in Aotearoa/New Zealand must recognise the variety in the language and media that Māori use to communicate. Particular attention and regard must be given to stories, songs, oral tradition, dance, poetry, invocations, prayer, rituals, carving, weaving and other art forms. It is in the depths of Māori expression that Western academic epistemological boundaries can truly be crossed, reshaped or broken.

5. Cross-cultural Research

The development of cross-cultural partnerships with, between and among indigenous researchers and ‘allied others’, enabling them to work collaboratively on common emancipatory goals, has been recognised as an important part of the process of moving towards decolonisation (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). Should sustainable development be identified by Māori as a worthy goal, and one which will take them closer to tino rangatiratanga, collaboration with ‘allied other’ groups or individuals could produce research outcomes that are desirable not only as a step in the process towards decolonisation, but also in upholding the principle of intragenerational equity, which is seen as a vital aspect of sustainable development.¹

¹ ‘Intragenerational equity’ refers to equity between people of the same generation. Specifically, intragenerational equity is concerned with ‘people living now who do not have access to natural resources or social and economic goods’ (Balaswamy, 2007: 11). The 1987 report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development – the Brundtland Commission – refers to both intra- and inter-generational equity in its definition of sustainable development as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987: 24).

However, accounts of the process of cross-cultural research indicate that it can be complicated, unsettling and difficult to achieve, and like any collaborative project, subject to the dynamics of personalities, relative power and academic versus non-academic desires (Jones & Jenkins, 2008).

The following guidelines for the process of cross-cultural research have been taken from González y González and Lincoln (2006), and Swadener and Mutua (2008).

1. Collaboration on all phases of study.
2. Sustained time in a culture.
3. Studying the language(s) and culture traditions to the degree possible and developing the ability to code-switch and understand indigenous 'ways of knowing' and communicating. This should enable the use of bilingual data and multivocal and multilingual texts.
4. Co-authorship of papers and publications resulting from the collaborative work, and the inclusion of multiple perspectives in texts.
5. Compensation of local collaborators, translators, and research partners for their time.
6. Making findings available in relevant ways to local shareholders, including funding to distribute publications in the local community. This may include consideration of technical issues.
7. Participation in the community in ongoing (non-missionary) ways, including supporting organisations and individuals doing 'anticolonial' work.
8. Interrogating the privilege and the 'myths of meritocracy' while strengthening alliances.

While researchers may do their best to follow these guidelines, there are significant constraints to the success of a cross-cultural approach that they should be aware of.

Jones and Jenkins (2008: 472) pose the question: 'Is it possible to hear my Māori colleague if I am the one who writes the text, using her insights?' It is preferable that co-authorship is interpreted as having two voices within one paper. Co-authorship as one voice is impossible, as authors have far from homogeneous perspectives.

Some Māori may prefer to study their histories, knowledges and experiences separately from their Pākehā peers, as indigenous scholars are increasingly serving as the gatekeepers to their own knowledges (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). Māori may have no desire to enter into a cross-cultural research relationship, particularly if it is the Māori partner who is doing all the sharing, and the Pākehā partner has no information that is needed or wanted.

Finally, the role of the Western scholar and research institution in the emancipation of indigenous peoples and their knowledges is a dubious one, as historically, and in many instances presently, they hold the role of oppressor of indigenous peoples and knowledge. As Freire (1970: 44) has famously put it, the oppressors cannot find in their power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. Thus, if Māori seek emancipatory goals and self-determination through their research, they may feel that the involvement of non-Māori in the research compromises its ability to deliver.

5. Cross-cultural Research

Taking all these factors into consideration, we see the following as the key principles of cross-cultural research.

Guiding Principle 5: Cross-cultural research serves the communities in which the research is conducted

Cross-cultural research should serve the communities in which the research is conducted, at the same time as supporting the academic desires of the participants (Lincoln & González y González, 2008). Therefore researchers of sustainable development in Aotearoa/New Zealand are principally responsible not to their discipline or institution, but rather to the iwi and hapū whose lifestyles and perspectives they may be researching. Personal accountability, caring and the capacity for empathy are valued characteristics of researchers in this context.

Guiding Principle 6: Cross-cultural research respects the struggles of the past, the tensions in the present, and the potential challenges of the future

'Allied other' researchers of sustainable development should be aware that iwi and hapū may see them as having a role in representing a colonial identity, or colonial actions and ideas. While researchers may find it challenging as individuals to wear the collective label of the so-called 'coloniser', it is important that iwi and hapū who have experienced colonisation be given the opportunity to engage in a process of spiritual, social and psychological healing through the researcher's representation of the coloniser. This may occur through researchers/colonisers acknowledging the struggles of iwi and hapū, and in some cases honouring them by learning and gaining inspiration from the way in which these struggles were resolved. Healing of both the coloniser and the colonised may lead to transformation at both personal and social levels (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 15).

Guiding Principle 7: Cross-cultural research involves learning about difference

When cross-cultural research partners attempt to reach mutual understanding, the indigene-coloniser relationship may be viewed as an obstacle to overcome. Alternatively, the tension of difference could be seen as the foundation of the research relationship and a useful tool in the analysis of issues such as sustainability. Jones and Jenkins (2008) suggest that when attempts are made to progress a relationship of equality through a shared perspective, structural power differences in perspective and history are downplayed or ignored. Māori are unlikely to want to reduce difference, as this sense of difference may be significant to their identity and political location (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). Thus, cross-cultural research should be based on learning about difference from the Other, and acknowledging different perspectives, rather than learning about the Other with an apparently shared perspective of false concord.

Guiding Principle 8: Cross-cultural research redistributes power to make space for those who are marginalised

Cross-cultural research requires consideration of how the power inequity between the privileged and the marginalised positions of the researchers can be managed to produce decolonising research. Those in a privileged position must make space for those in a marginalised position, and for their associated knowledge, in order to establish new boundaries with respect to knowledge and to effect a shift in power. This may cause those who are privileged to feel they have become the outsider. Anxiety may result from a loss of

power, or from a loss of ability to define the conditions of the space within which a relationship with the Other becomes possible, as terms of engagement are no longer controlled by the dominant group (Jones & Jenkins, 2008).

6. Kaupapa Māori Research

There is a strong necessity for Māori to conceive, develop and carry out their own research for the benefit of their own people. An expression of this necessity is what is termed kaupapa Māori research. A space must be created to ensure the perpetuation of the Māori knowledge tradition within the protection and paradigm of tikanga Māori. A kaupapa Māori approach in research claims this space, as a means of resistance and emancipation from a Western research approach, and as a vantage point in the analysis of Māori values, goals and methods that may relate to sustainability.

While the emphasis in kaupapa Māori research is not on how it is carried out so much as the effects that it has, some basic guidelines for the process have been suggested. The following are taken from Barnes (2000), Powick (2003), Smith (2000), Swadener and Mutua (2008), and Walker et al. (2006).

1. Researchers must be prepared to disclose personal information.
2. The researcher is the non-expert and thus seeks out kaumatua or community leaders, establishes a relationship and engages in emotional and spiritual support.
3. The purpose of the research and accountability must be clarified.
4. Qualitative research methods tend to fit more comfortably within a Māori way of doing.
5. Māori maintain conceptual, methodological and interpretative control over protocol and research.
6. Strong emphasis must be placed on the use of a kōrero mai approach that allows participants to tell their stories in their own ways. It is the responsibility of researchers to link the stories back to the information needs.

The issue of whether the researcher should be Māori is still debated. If they are Māori they should also be competent with all things Māori. Māori are the insiders and better understand what is taking place in a kaupapa Māori research situation, whereas outsiders may try to operate from their own cultural perspectives which may not accurately reflect Māori realities (Barnes, 2000; Powick, 2003). Ultimately, Māori are usually left dissatisfied when they and their knowledge and customs are researched by non-Māori with non-Māori methodologies, thus a Māori researcher is highly preferable.

As with cross-cultural research, there are some constraints to gaining acceptance of kaupapa Māori research and in encouraging researchers to partake in this approach.

Kaupapa Māori research tends to be costly in terms of time, as the processes involved in maintaining integrity and the respect of participants can be lengthy and difficult. There is also a need to be extremely thorough in the care taken to fulfil the requirements of kaupapa Māori research.

6. Kaupapa Māori Research

Kaupapa Māori research is likely to be more acceptable to Māori than it is to the wider academic community, as it aims to satisfy Māori aspirations and values. As a result it can also attract criticism as being biased, and for its rejection of a neutral space in research.

However, the lengthy and subjective nature of kaupapa Māori research is, ironically, seen as giving strength and legitimacy to research from a Māori perspective. While it is important to understand potential criticisms, it must not be forgotten who the research is being conducted for.

The following guiding principles have been formulated to help define kaupapa Māori research and to shape its methodology, providing a useful tool for both Māori and non-Māori researchers in this field.

Guiding Principle 9: Kaupapa Māori research promotes tino rangatiratanga

Kaupapa Māori research has a Māori-centred agenda, and is concerned with the struggle for autonomy over Māori culture and well-being (Smith, 1999: 185). Research around sustainability that engages in a kaupapa Māori approach must fulfil the agenda of tino rangatiratanga. A kaupapa Māori approach to researching sustainability can be seen as being part of and contributing to a larger, more global movement of indigenous peoples towards greater self-determination over their lands, resources and destinies (Walker et al., 2006).

Guiding Principle 10: Whakapapa: Kaupapa Māori research utilises Māori epistemology

A kaupapa Māori approach encourages a foundation in Māori values, the return to and retention of the tested and wise Māori ways of knowing, and the development of novel, innovative and unique knowledges and research (Smith, 2000). Thus, a kaupapa Māori approach in sustainability research plays an important role in diversifying the epistemological background from which future strategies are developed.

Guiding Principle 11: Pūkengatanga: Kaupapa Māori research contributes to the revitalisation of Māori scholarship

The use of Māori learning institutions and te reo Māori, sharing of research skills, expansion of research relationships among Māori and the overall development of Māori research capacity through the use of a kaupapa Māori approach all contribute to the broader revitalisation of the Māori academy (Bishop, 1998). When developing research projects, a conscious effort should be made to reflect on the contribution of the research to the Māori academy in all these ways, and through the investment in Māori research capacity generally.

Guiding Principle 12: Kotahitanga: Kaupapa Māori research creates a safe space

Research that is positioned to critique the dominant hegemony of westernised positivistic research and challenge inappropriate ideologies of superiority that disadvantage Māori requires a safe space from which to act. Kaupapa Māori research affords cultural and academic safety, as it is a strategy which takes the legitimacy of Māori culture and values for granted (Smith, 2000). The culture and values of this space ensure that not only are kaupapa Māori researchers protected in their research, but there is greater protection of Māori

participants and data used in the research (Powick, 2003). Ensuring the safety of this space may be particularly crucial in gaining participation and involvement in a research project.

7. Conclusion

The 12 guiding principles outlined above are not final or concrete, but instead form the basis for considering research and planning relationships between Māori and non-Māori. They also provide a foundation for guiding the team at Sustainable Future which involves creating appropriate space for the research of Māori perspectives and people as subjects, promoting positive cross-cultural research relationships, and ultimately producing research that is decolonising in its process and outcomes.

Glossary

Note: We have primarily used the online version of the *Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index* to source these references (Moorfield, 2009). Where this was not possible we have used alternative sources, which are referenced within the glossary.

Glossary	
hapū	kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe – section of a large kinship group
iwi	extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, race – often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor
kaumatua	adult, elder, elderly man, elderly woman
kaupapa Māori	Māori ideology
kōrero	speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation, discourse
kotahitanga	unity
Māori	aboriginal inhabitant of Aotearoa/New Zealand
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge – the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity and cultural practices
ngārara	insect, creepy-crawly, reptile
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pūkengatanga	teaching, preserving and creating Māori knowledge; skills, talents (MAI Review, n.d.)
rangatiratanga	customary authority and control, sovereignty (Kawharu, 2002: 399)
te reo Māori	the Māori language
te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi
tikanga	correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, reason, plan, practice, convention
tikanga Māori	Māori customs and practices (MAI Review, n.d.)
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination
whakapapa	genealogy (Mead, 2003: 370)

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