

BOOK REVIEW

Critical conversations in kaupapa Māori. Hoskins, Te Kawehau, and Jones, Alison (Eds.). (2017). Wellington, New Zealand: Huia. 211 pp. ISBN: 9781775503286. Book review DOI: 10.20507/MAIJournal.2018.7.2.8

In the late 1990s and early 2000s I was an emerging health services researcher undertaking a masters degree in applied social science research and then a PhD. I well recall being introduced to the concept of kaupapa Māori research and my initial and very personal reflections on the implications of explicitly adopting a kaupapa Māori approach in my own work. In the course of those two research degrees I was made aware of what some understood to be a taxonomy of Māori research; a taxonomy which Cunningham (2000) described as being based primarily on the degree of Māori involvement and control in a specific research project. Ratima (2001) postulated that research can be understood on a continuum, with four key divisions: research that does not involve Māori; research that involves Māori; Māori-centred research in which Māori are afforded a degree of control; and finally kaupapa Māori research. Writings of that time, many of which came from the field of education, challenged Māori (and some non-Māori) researchers and academics to consider how they conducted research, the questions they asked, and the contribution their research would ultimately make for the benefit of Māori. For many of us starting out on a research career, kaupapa Māori embodied the ultimate form of research endeavour, given its intrinsic links to ideas of resistance, struggle

and emancipation as well as to those of cultural revitalisation, self-determination and empowerment. From my perspective, the ability to undertake kaupapa Māori research was a truly aspirational goal.

Almost 20 years on, the kaupapa Māori approach has become firmly embedded not only in educational research and teaching from whence it emerged, but in disciplines as seemingly diverse as law, architecture, environmental studies and my own field of health services and health policy research. Given the apparent acceptance and omnipresence of kaupapa Māori as a contemporary theoretical framework, a set of methodological guidelines, and a field of study (p. xiii), one might very well ask, in 2018 what more do we need to know about kaupapa Māori research? What are the gaps, if any, in our understanding or application of kaupapa Māori theory and practice? Do we in fact need another text on kaupapa Māori?

In response, Hoskins and Jones clearly establish in *Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori* that a number of critical conversations are still to be had for those of us working in and with kaupapa Māori theory, methodology and practice. The editors' stated intent with this book is to take the opportunity to pause and examine the effects of kaupapa Māori theory; to critically identify and discuss the boundaries and

conventions surrounding kaupapa Māori; and to do so in such a way as to invigorate engagement and extend the productive possibilities kaupapa Māori offers (p. ix). To achieve these aims, Hoskins and Jones have brought together a range of academics, philosophers and writers to reprise their seminal work as guest editors of the special issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies He Hautaki Mātai Mātauranga o Aotearoa* entitled “He Aha te Kaupapa? Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori” (Hoskins & Jones, 2012). This new edited collection includes contributions from many of the authors of the special issue, most of whom have updated their original work and contributed chapters specifically for this volume. The text also includes a chapter from the second edition of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012) *Decolonising Methodologies* reproduced with permission, as well as two chapters reproduced in their entirety from the special issue.

The opening chapters from Mason Durie and Linda Tuhiwai Smith explore the emergence of kaupapa Māori, providing a solid foundation for the remaining chapters which cover a range of topics from kaupapa Māori and the humanities (Alice Te Punga Somerville) to the relationship between kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori (Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal); and from kaupapa Māori as a critical Indigenous philosophy of education (Georgina Stewart) to the contribution of Pākehā to kaupapa Māori research and scholarship (Alison Jones), amongst others.

A key strength of this text, aside from being a collection of writings from some of the academy’s most illustrious thinkers, academics and researchers, is its ability to challenge and question our assumptions (dare I say our complacency?) that kaupapa Māori either as theory, or more practically as an approach, requires little more from us as academics, scholars and researchers. Instead, the writers in this collection point to a number of areas where more critical engagement and thought is required. Indeed, after reading the text I, as a member

of the current generation of academics, was left with a sense of responsibility—that we need to push the boundaries of our thinking and practice, to create an even greater space for those who will follow us. Brad Coombes in his chapter challenges us to think outside the current orthodoxy of method, seeking instead practices and means of eliciting data that are as diverse as the population with whom we work. Garrick Cooper’s contribution meanwhile warns us of the dangers of attempting to rigidly codify, organise and categorise “knowledge”. As kaupapa Māori researchers we must be wary of employing a kaupapa Māori approach in such a fashion as to simply mimic the processes inherent in Western science. Furthermore, we must remain open to complexity, to the idea of the unknowable, and of the divine. Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni’s chapter provided some of those most compelling reading for me, as she discussed the intersection between Pasifika knowledges and research practices and kaupapa Māori. Suaalii-Sauni’s challenge is to consider how we (Māori and Pasifika) work together in Aotearoa given our many commonalities and subtle, yet critical, differences. She concludes by noting that, as with ocean voyaging, navigating the relational/social/intellectual spaces between our two knowledge traditions is an adventure, one which draws on the past to inform the future.

For me, the only potential gap in an otherwise seamless collection was the lack of a chapter discussing the tensions inherent in undertaking kaupapa Māori research in a “soft” funding environment. As an applied health services researcher, outside of a university institution and concerned with translating research evidence into changes in practice, policy and funding, I would have found valuable a chapter discussing the challenges and potential compromises of undertaking kaupapa Māori research for Crown funders and Crown entities—but perhaps this conversation requires a different type of text.

This edited collection makes a valuable and timely contribution to how we as researchers

and academics might conceptualise, understand and practise kaupapa Māori in a contemporary context. With Hoskins and Jones collecting together these “critical conversations”, readers are left to reflect on the challenges posed in the text for their own work. Despite the challenges being so clearly articulated, the overwhelming impression one derives from reading the collection is one of promise for the future. Clearly we cannot rest upon our laurels; there is work still to be done. However, it is important to consider how far we have come and the gains that have been made. To continue Suaalii-Sauni’s theme, we must now recheck our horizon and remind ourselves once more of the ongoing need for robust, rigorous and contextualised kaupapa Māori theory, and then, with our adventurous spirit, set out for a future in which kaupapa Māori is not merely an aspirational goal, but an absolute and irrevocable one.

References

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