

Supervising research in Māori cultural contexts: A decolonizing, relational response

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Abstract

We have collaborated for 25 years as Indigenous Māori and non-Māori researchers undertaking research with Māori families, their schools and communities. We have endeavoured to meet our responsibilities to the Māori people and communities with whom we have researched, as well as meet the requirements and responsibilities of our academic institutions. In this paper we reflect on the implications of these responsibilities for our work as supervisors of Masters and Doctoral students (Māori and non-Māori) who seek to research in Māori cultural contexts. We draw on the experiences and interactions we have had with four different postgraduate students whose research on improving educational outcomes for Māori students has required them to engage and participate in Māori cultural contexts. We have learned to listen carefully to our students as they begin to appreciate the impact that their researcher role can have in these contexts. We have learned to appreciate our role as constructing new knowledge with our students and communities, rather than simply as experts and gate keepers of research ethics, design, and methodologies for our institutions.

Key words: supervision; decolonization; cultural contexts; culturally responsive methodologies

Introduction

In New Zealand, non-indigenous researchers from privileged institutional positions have often understood and interpreted Māori social and cultural beliefs, values and constructs, entirely from within their own neo-colonial worldviews. This practice has had a destructive impact on the knowledge bases, experiences and cultural identities of New Zealand Māori as has been

the case for indigenous peoples across the world (Dei, 2008, 2011; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008). As a result indigenous peoples are increasingly positioning their cultural heritages and epistemologies at the centre, rather than at the margins of educational research, policy and practice. This challenges the power inherent in the pedagogical and cultural relationships within many tertiary institutions. Supervisors of research within tertiary institutions have much to learn from the growing literature on decolonising methodologies (Dei, 2008, 2011; Komea, 2004; L. Smith, 1999, 2012). In our research with Māori students and their *whānau* (families) and communities, we found that to be effective we needed to position ourselves as respectful visitors in someone else's cultural space (Berryman, 2008; Glynn et al., 2001; Woller, 2016). Respectful visitors do not set about rearranging the furniture and imposing their own cultural protocols and discourse frames in someone else's cultural space. Yet, this is what can happen when institutionally authenticated methodologies and interpretations of findings are imposed *uncritically* on indigenous researchers and their communities (Barney, 2013; Komea, 2004).

Culturally responsive methodologies (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013) offers alternative research strategies that might contribute to a "more just, democratic and egalitarian society" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 285). Culturally responsive methodologies are consistent with *power sharing* relationships that facilitate mutually respectful and agentic relationships that can create productive pathways between researchers and communities. In the context of research supervision we envisage these relationships and pathways involving supervisors and students co-constructing *new* intellectual spaces and new discourse frames that resist rather than privilege the beliefs, values, practices and the worldview of the powerful and privileged. Such relationships and pathways are unlikely to emerge from world views and institutional conventions that unilaterally define and manage the entire research process. Rather, these relationships and pathways need to incorporate the conjoined and collaborative work of researchers, research participants and institutional research supervisors. Our current supervision experiences with postgraduate students have taught us to seek culturally authentic and responsive pathways

that respect the rights of Māori to define the research questions and methodologies (Bishop, 2005), and to interpret what research findings and outcomes mean for their own wellbeing and success *as Māori* (Ministry of Education, 2013). Emerging culturally responsive and relational methodologies and research pathways are grounded in elements of both critical theory and kaupapa Māori theory (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013). Theories such as these have highlighted the importance of our own conscientisation and resistance on a pathway of unlearning and relearning (Wink, 2011), leading us towards a praxis that we believe can be more transformative and socially just (Freire, 1972). Within the dialogic spaces between ourselves, our students and their research communities, rather than positioning ourselves as the experts, we can listen deeply to what is being said and we can learn from each other. It is in this deep respectful listening that we are likely to find more participatory supervision and research pathways forward.

Critical theory and Kaupapa Māori theory

Critical theories challenge the inequity and social injustice created and maintained by the location of authority and power in the hands of a privileged few. It is committed to challenging the oppressive and hegemonic impact of the power that privileged individuals and groups exert over the lives of less privileged individuals and groups. Critical theory envisions that just as conditions of inequality and injustice have been socially and politically constructed, so too can they be deconstructed, and their hegemonic impacts overcome to transform the oppressor - oppressed relationships (Freire, 1998).

Scholars advocating culturally responsive and relational-based methodologies (Berryman, Soohoo & Nevin 2013) encourage emergent researchers (and we especially include here their academic supervisors), to bring their own subjectivities and ideologies to the research table. In this way supervisors, postgraduate students, and most importantly their cultural communities, can inform the co-creation of new knowledge in new dialogical spaces (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013; Bhabha, 1994; Soja 1996); that is, in the empty space between self and other (Shor 2009).

By re-positioning ourselves as visitors and novices (Glynn et al., 2001), where we do not seek to dominate or control, these spaces become liberatory. In these spaces we are learning to confront the power that our own researcher positioning may be exerting over research students and their research participants. This re-positioning requires us to take a stance of greater humility from which we can learn the power of being *with* people, and researching *with* people. We are learning that co-creation and mutual engagement can be achieved through a dialogic framework of relationships where “there are no spectators” (Freire, 1998. p.180).

Our previous research experience of working alongside and *with* Māori students and their whānau in education (Berryman, 2008) has encouraged us to seek this kind of transformative power-sharing in the context of research supervision. Freire (1972) has long maintained that solutions to problems encountered by minoritized and oppressed peoples will come from the minoritized and oppressed people themselves. While both oppressors and oppressed parties may seek to address inequalities and injustices, it is the less powerful, less-privileged who hold the greater power to transform the relationship, as it is the less powerful and less privileged who have the more authentic and more extensive experiences of inequality and injustice.

Like Critical theory, Kaupapa Māori theory is well situated within the historical context of challenging and resisting the oppressive colonising power wielded over Māori people by settler governments, (G. Smith, 2003). Kaupapa Māori theory promotes not only *resistance* to imposed hegemonic research practices, but also promotes *resilience* (Hokowhitu et al., 2010) in changing these practices through the location of its political and cultural agenda squarely within a Māori worldview. By resisting policies and practices that marginalize and trivialize Māori epistemology and pedagogy, Kaupapa Māori research praxis enables Māori researchers and communities to define their own research questions and exercise ownership and responsibility for the authenticity of the entire research process (Bishop, 2005; G. Smith 2003). Thus, Kaupapa Māori research and praxis removes Māori “away from waiting for things to be done for them, to doing things for themselves; a shift away from an emphasis on

reactive politics to an emphasis on being more proactive; a shift from negative motivation to positive motivation” (G. Smith, 2003, p.2); a move away from Māori being the problem, to Māori having potential (Durie, 2015). This shift locates Māori people’s own social justice interests and concerns at the centre, while at the same time moving Māori away from hegemonic deficit theorising, about their identity and competence within contemporary multicultural, but still neo-colonial, New Zealand society.

Kaupapa Māori praxis in educational research

Māori scholars and researchers have had a substantial impact in increasing Māori engagement and participation in tertiary education including Universities and Polytechnics, and Wānanga or kaupapa Māori tertiary institutions. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, one of the nation’s six central government funded Centres of Research Excellence (CoRE) set a goal of achieving 500 Māori PhD (graduated or enrolled) nationwide by 2010, from a base of 90 in 2001. By 2010, 703 Māori had either completed or were enrolled in PhD programmes.

It is important to celebrate the increasing number of indigenous students now engaged in doctoral research in tertiary institutions across the world. In New Zealand, it is also important that as indigenous New Zealanders, Māori doctoral students maintain their rights, to define their own research questions, research paradigms, worldviews and methodologies. Importantly, Māori doctoral students should expect to find these concerns at the centre of their institution’s research agenda. Institutions therefore need to ensure that their research supervisory processes respect indigenous, culturally located ways of knowing and caring, and that their supervisors engage in authentic power sharing and reciprocity in learning with and from their doctoral students and their indigenous cultural communities.

The critical dynamics of supervisor - student relationships

Paulo Friere’s insight into the dynamics of the relationship between oppressors and oppressed casts a revealing light on the relationship between the researchers and the researched, and also, in the context of this paper, on the relationship between research supervisors and their research students. In our

role as research supervisors we are inspired by Freire's insight that humility and self-awareness might sustain our supervisor-student relationships and our relationship with each other. In relationships such as these, participants must not be imposed upon by researchers, instead, they are "reborn in new knowledge and new action" (Freire, 1998, p. 181) to share in the leadership of the research. In this dialogic space the "work of resistance, critique, and empowerment" (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p.5) is co-constructed. Learning through our students' and their participants' resistance to power and domination impels us as research supervisors to *unlearn* dehumanizing pedagogies and *relearn* more inclusive alternatives (Giroux, 2001; Trudgett, 2014).

Method

This study emerges from the critical reflection of our own research over three decades and whether what we had learned, was contributing or not to our role as supervisors. This reflection was prompted by an institutional invitation to present on this subject to our colleagues and other students from across the university (Glynn & Berryman, 2015). We knew that we should not do this without inviting the voices of research students to contribute their own experiences. Thus continued the process of listening to our students as they reflected on our supervision of their research. Although these conversations began informally, all verbatim quotes and written statements were returned to students for their reflection, verification and annotation. Students also determined whether or not their identity would be anonymized or not.

The three Masters students and one Doctoral student, all carried out their research in contexts that required understanding and respecting Māori knowledge, values and tikanga. At the time of writing this paper, all had completed their qualifications.

Relational and culturally responsive contexts for learning

In New Zealand it is more usual for Postgraduate research students to work largely independently on a selected research topic, with individual intermittent access to their assigned supervisors. However, in this case, we encouraged

these students, one Māori and three non-Māori, to work collaboratively on their inter-related topics. We also met with them both individually and collectively. All students were seeking to better understand factors around the engagement and achievement of Māori students. The three Masters students were all part of Te Kotahitanga, a research and professional development project focused on achieving better educational outcomes for Māori secondary school students (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth, 2014; Bishop, Ladwig & Berryman, 2014; Sleeter, 2011). In Te Kotahitanga a *culturally responsive pedagogy of relations* (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007) was developed that proposed the development of learning contexts:

where power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; where culture counts; where learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals; where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes. (p. 1).

In order to understand how a relational and culturally responsive pedagogy might apply to thesis supervision, we asked our students to describe what had been important for them from their own research supervision experiences.

Their individual reflections demonstrate their clear understandings of the central importance of relationships, both the collaborative relationships they experienced from their work-team colleagues and their student-supervisor relationships. Each of these relationships was critical to their growing sense of *belonging* and *being agentic* within two contrasting and challenging cultural worldviews - those of their Māori research participants and whānau on the one hand, and those of the university institution on the other.

Iti Joyce

The first student who is Māori considers her supervision experiences through the culturally responsive and relational, pedagogical lens promoted through Te Kotahitanga. She closely links her supervision experience to her experiences as a professional development facilitator working with teachers of Māori students.

The process and supervision I experienced in developing a [research] question to do with my thesis involved conversations between my

supervisor and myself and in some cases, anyone else from the [work] team who was present.

The work team she refers to was comprised of both Māori and non-Māori professionals, all of whom had previously held positions of responsibility within the state-funded education system.

Everyone in the team was involved at some stage; starting from the development of my [research] question through to the handing in of my thesis. There were many dialogic and spiralling conversations that fell within three main categories: sense making conversations; targeting my zone of proximal development, my ZPD; and information sharing.

The launching pad for these conversations, was, and is still; based on the relationship I have with my supervisor and the team. Feedback and feed forward were encompassed through a process of manaakitanga [holistic caring for the person] and her experience of mana motuhake [respect for the independence and autonomy of the person to be able to make decisions and achieve]. Although I may not have thought so at the time, the team were, and still are, responsive to my needs, and [to]my ZPD.

Creating contexts for learning where Māori students feel relationally connected to their teachers and are able to use their prior knowledge and experiences as the basis for new learning are essential principles in the type of culturally responsive and relational pedagogy that was promoted in Te Kotahitanga. Another essential principle is that of students being afforded the power to lead and learn, through ongoing dialogic, spiralling learning conversations.

My thoughts of what I wanted to convey were always considered and challenged in order for my theorising and thinking to go deeper. I remember that after these conversations, mostly with my supervisor, I'd receive another boost to launch into my writing. My supervisor would be on the other end [of electronic media] waiting to receive my writing so that the turnaround for feedback and feed forward would be quick, especially in the last month [before thesis submission].

Finally, Iti talks about the importance of the supervisor and student sharing a common vision of excellence.

The generosity and commitment of time and energy [manaakitanga] that I experienced was based on the common vision of excellence for me as a student, from the team, and also from my supervisor.

Iti's thesis examined the experiences of four teachers and four Māori students in a Te Kotahitanga secondary school. She uses their voices together with data on school participation and achievement to examine the shifts that might be attributed to the new relationships and pedagogy developed through Te Kotahitanga. She considers implications for addressing educational disparities when Māori students' confidence and self-esteem develop from supportive relationships such as these so that they are able to succeed on their own terms (Joyce, 2012).

Student 1

Student 1 recalls the research challenges she encountered in trying to come to terms with a task that she had not fully understood, and therefore had not really prioritised. This was the task of conforming to the academic writing style and format expected by the institution in the writing of a thesis.

My experience of completing a Masters [degree] was challenging. It took me a long time to get a clear idea of where to start and how to proceed, and although I enjoyed the actual research and writing, I often felt confused about the [institutional] processes. Also what I understood to be the constraints of academic research and writing. I remember feeling very overwhelmed at times. Sometimes I felt at odds with my own beliefs. I had lots of conversations with different people that helped me: supervisors, colleagues [co-workers on the professional development programme] and family. One of my supervisors was particularly generous in allowing time for me to tease out my thinking. She often checked in with me about how it was going. When I was struggling to stay connected she allowed me time to talk about my attitudes and feelings about the process. She would listen and ask questions to tease

out details. She also helped me make connections between what I was saying about the research or the methodology. Those connections really helped me understand what I was doing and what I needed to do next. I was grateful for her persistent support and very aware of her high expectations of me and together those things were really important for me.

This process of the supervisor listening to the student, starting with the student's own words and supporting them to use their own prior knowledge and experiences to link to what established researchers and others were saying about the same thing was again, particularly important. It took a year for her supervision and collegial support to help her to believe in herself and in her story, before she fully engaged with her academic writing.

Managing the competing priorities of full-time work and study was not always simple. Each time I had to disconnect from the writing for work priorities I had to go back over old ground to reconnect. When one of my supervisors worked with me to develop a 'road-map' it helped me see how the pieces fitted together. I am also grateful for the quick turnaround for feedback / feed forward, particularly towards the end [of the thesis]. It allowed me to stay connected and maximise the opportunities I had to focus on study and the specificity of the feedback / feed forward helped me understand what I needed [to do] to improve and how to do that.

Again it seems, the ongoing listening-and-learning-together dialogue, together with a common vision for education excellence and commitment to the research focus were also essential.

As the completion date was getting close one of my supervisors showed me a colleague's recently completed Masters thesis. I'd never seen a bound copy [of a thesis] until then, and seeing it as a whole story was like a light turning on. It was a really important catalyst for me pulling the chapters together and submitting by the due date.

This thesis describes the in-school and community experiences of secondary school leaders in Te Kotahitanga. Told as a collaborative story, her thesis

provides important insights into a team's combined experiences as they effectively respond to the challenges of providing a more equitable educational experience for the Māori students in their school.

Dawn Lawrence

Part way through her study the Te Kotahitanga contract ended and Dawn gained employment in a tertiary institution in another location. While this considerably reduced her involvement and connectedness with many of her previous work colleagues, her supervisors and some of her previous team remained connected and continued to support her through the personal stresses involved in changing workplaces while trying to maintain her research focus. Again, having the power to lead her learning through collective dialogue and sense making was essential.

One of the things that I recognized, having been alongside others that you also supervised, was the way in which you came alongside each of us and worked from within our individual ZPD. I enjoyed the space you gave me to simply get on with it and work my own way through my spiralling sense-making process, the connections into our shared sense making conversations along the way. I think the fact that it was so connected to our collective theorizing around our daily mahi (work) also supported and challenged me to think deeply. Alongside the conversations you and I had, were conversations I had with the rest of the team, as well as [with] those people who shared their stories within my thesis.

Connectedness to people through this learning was essential for Dawn and her supervisors. Relocating away from the rest of the team potentially meant losing the strength and affirmation she had previously drawn from her colleagues and they from her. Team members who had been through their own research and thesis writing understood this and worked to keep the relationship strong.

Writing the acknowledgments [in the thesis] was extremely difficult as I couldn't find a way to adequately acknowledge that what I had presented

was a fabric woven from the learning I had experienced alongside so many people.

Believing that both student and supervisors shared the same vision, whatever else was happening, was also essential.

The challenge in the approach for me was to keep focused and not end up heading down a number of interesting but disconnected pathways. Because we were rarely in the same physical location and both of us were also up to our necks in the work [of Te Kotahitanga], and in the latter months, the transition to Kia Eke Panuku [the new school professional leadership project], I did sometimes wonder if you were giving me space or if you just didn't have any space for us to focus solely on my thesis.

The ongoing learning through dialogue was less about telling and more about question raising, collective naming to make the learning explicit, reflecting upon and then acting. While the feedback and feed forward was important for this student, question raising was key for both the student and supervisors. Not having to be the expert but to learn together through the research context was very liberating.

What I did appreciate was the feedback and feed forward particularly as I started to pull things together. What really worked for me were the questions you asked, as they constantly challenged me to both deepen and clarify my thinking. Those questions worked to develop a spiralling discourse and I really enjoyed the way in which we went down some paths only to put them on the 'for the PhD' list ... one illustration of the consistently high expectations that were not explicitly voiced but [were] very apparent in our conversations.

[During] the last month or so, when the pressure really came on to pull it together, what really helped to keep me focussed was the fact that you [the supervisor] prioritised the work. The fast turnaround on feedback on draft chapters built the momentum along with words of encouragement.

Achievement of the completed research thesis, the common goal, was seen as having emerged from the inter-relationship and responsibility of both student and supervisor to each other and to their shared endeavours.

I think the moment that captured for me what the process meant for you [the supervisor] was when you held the finished thesis in your hands. At the risk of stepping over a line, the look of accomplishment and pride on your face captured for me the way in which our relationship had grown through the process. It is an image that for me spoke of the reciprocity within manaakitanga [holistic and relational caring], and that understanding that my success or failure is not mine alone.

Dawn's thesis contends that positioning within discourses and pedagogies that are culturally responsive and relational are crucial if school practices are to positively influence outcomes for Māori students. Dawn suggests that discursive positioning such as this has the potential to reduce the inequities experienced by Māori students within general educational settings. The cultural understandings and leadership approach experienced within the school context therefore was an important contributing factor in teachers' capacity to realize their agency in working effectively with Māori students (Lawrence, 2014).

Paul Woller

Paul is non-Māori but is bi-lingual and bi-cultural. He is married to a woman of the Ngāi Tamarawaho hapū (sub-tribe). Together they have children and grandchildren educated through the medium of the Māori language and who have or are still attending Kura Kaupapa Māori education institutions. They have both been strong contributors to their *hapū marae* (an important sub-tribe cultural institution) activities over a number of years.

During my doctoral journey it was critical that I had a perspective from my supervisors that acknowledged both the academic requirements of my thesis and the requirements of the hapū whose story I was telling, within a kaupapa Māori focus. I needed that constant prodding and reminding that just getting across the academic line and doing enough to

meet those academic requirement,- the only good thesis is a finished one - wasn't enough if I was to do justice to the mana (personal and collective prestige) of the hapū.

An important part of supervising this student was helping him to see and understand how easily his own white, neo-colonial educational experiences were influencing, imposing and restorying the voices of Māori. His shared vision and responsibility to contribute to the wellbeing of this hapū made this an essential part of our relationship with him as well as with the elders and people of this hapū.

A thesis is such a long and arduous journey that it is very tempting to just take a few short-cuts, near enough is good enough. But when I chose the hapū, or the hapū chose me, as the focus of my research it created a responsibility and obligation that goes well beyond academic requirements. My supervisors were able to put my needs, and the needs of the community that were part of this research, to the fore-front. My thesis has never been just about gaining a qualification; it has been about telling a story that has seldom been told outside the hapū. How I told that story has been a critical element of my interaction with my supervisors as they have helped me walk the path between two different cultures; the cultural world of Ngāi Tamarāwaho and the academic culture of the university, and do justice to both.

Paul's doctorate tells the important story of how members of successive generations of this hapū engaged and struggled within the mainstream education system, from the era of colonial missionary schooling through to the present day, while all the while striving to hold on to their cultural identity, language and cultural practices. Critical contentions from this thesis involve how contemporary education settings, wishing to raise indigenous and minority student engagement and achievement, can learn from hapū leaders who have succeeded in maintaining their strong cultural identity, despite the imposition of inter-generational assimilation throughout their education (Woller, 2016).

Understanding student experiences of supervision

The individual comments made by these four students show that they clearly understand the concept of research supervision as a relational and culturally responsive dialectical process. There is a common understanding that their supervision experience was a collaborative effort, and not simply an experience of working away in splendid isolation. They drew knowledge, affirmation and strength from each other, as colleagues working together on separate but related tasks. They initiated frequent and continuing interaction with their supervisors and with each other. The interdependent relationships they shared with their supervisors resulted in their increasing independence and power to make their own decisions. Two of them expressed this in terms of the Māori value of supervisors respecting and responding to their *mana motuhake* (autonomy and agency). Interdependence was evident in their valuing the degree of connectedness and the caring and support their supervisors and colleagues afforded them. In one case this was expressed in terms of the Māori value of *manaakitanga* caring *for*, as much as caring *about* them. Their comments indicate that their supervision experience created a deep sense of belonging and connectedness within a new relational space where they could work *alongside* rather than *under* their supervisors. Within this new relational space they learned to generate new *critical* discourses and new knowledge. This space became more important and influential for them than the institutional space in which the institutional discourses and expectations dominated.

Speaking from within this new space, these research students showed that they appreciated their supervisors positioning themselves to work alongside their students, not as experts and gate keepers, but as co-learners in the construction of new praxis and knowledge. It is clear also that these students recognized the reciprocal accountability that developed between themselves and their supervisors. They appreciated that their supervisors maintained an authoritative commitment to maintaining high expectations of their research quality and practice, but also guided and supported them through the emotional highs and lows of the research process. They appreciated how their supervisors

also supported them to meet institutional requirements to a high standard (e.g. meeting ethical accountability and regulatory accountability requirements regarding timelines and writing and presentation protocols). They appreciated that supervisors also supported them to respond to the social and cultural requirements of participants in the field (making themselves accountable to whānau, hapū, and iwi authorities by respectfully learning and following appropriate cultural protocols). Further, students acknowledged and respected their supervisors being comfortable with crossing the boundaries between their personal and professional identities and responsibilities. Students valued their supervisors' support in coping with crises, in participating and sharing in their cultural celebrations, and in affirming their cultural achievements outside the context of supervision. They valued and acknowledged their supervisors' commitment and care that extended beyond the time frame of designing and carrying out their research thesis. They appreciated their supervisors caring for them as people as well as for their emerging scholarship. Supervisors have encouraged and supported them to publish from their research, to present papers at national and international conferences, to consider undertaking further research, and to apply for academic positions.

As supervisors, we have found much to learn and appreciate from the new relational spaces that were created between ourselves and our research students. We learned to know our students, and ourselves, at a deeper and more holistic level. Within these spaces the less powerful were indeed able to effect transformational growth of the traditionally positioned, more powerful. We learned that our students are not defined solely by their role as Masters or Doctoral candidates in our institutions. We learned that their knowledge, experience thinking and understanding are not confined within institutional roles and discourse frames. Our students learned, similarly, that our role as supervisors does not totally define us. Our knowledge, experience thinking and understanding similarly are not confined within institutional roles and discourse frames. We learned to communicate within cultural discourse frames that were not always familiar to us and that we did not control. Yet, it is these spaces that facilitated our conscientization and our increasing awareness of the

potential oppressiveness of our institutional power as supervisors. We become conscious of our need to re-position ourselves, as novices rather than experts, and as responders, not just initiators. In so doing we learned to identify and resist imposing strategies, methodologies, and solutions that we ourselves might have applied in our own studies. We learned to remain open to strategies, methodologies, and solutions that might be more capable of achieving transformative, social change.

Respecting Māori ways of theorising and being critical

In the previous section the four students clearly voiced their experiences and their appreciation of working in a collaborative, responsive and relational-based supervision context. All three Masters students submitted research theses that met all formal institutional requirements and were each highly recognized by external examiners including with Honours or with First Class Honours. One of these students won a national award honouring her Master's thesis. Importantly, from their research in Māori contexts these students also gained vital knowledge, experience, and powerful insights into the challenges that Māori students face in striving to hold on to their language and cultural identities within mainstream schools. They were exposed to understanding what it is like for Māori to live as Māori in their own country, within contexts that are designed and managed by non-Māori individuals, institutions and agencies. They were exposed to Māori values, Māori conceptions of human development and pedagogy, and to the Māori language that incorporates all of these. They came to appreciate how these have been disrespected, belittled and eroded in mainstream institutions. They learned to interact with Māori students and whānau members in culturally authentic, safe and responsive ways where they could learn *through* the culture and not just *about* it. They facilitated teachers and school leadership personnel to listen and respond to the voices of Māori students speaking about their day-to-day challenges while at school.

Because the focus of this paper was on learning about our students' experiences of the supervision process itself, we did not ask them specifically about what they themselves had learned about Māori language and culture, and its

positioning in today's New Zealand schools. Nevertheless, we did learn a great deal about the language and cultural learning that occurred for our four students, on the basis of our interactions with them in the relational, dialogic spaces created within the process of supervision.

Conclusion

Reflecting on our supervision of these and other students whose research we are currently supervising, we have come to deeply respect the wisdom and the transformative power carried within three specific Māori sociocultural principles as tools for critiquing and evaluating our own roles and practices as supervisors of research in Māori cultural contexts.

(1) *Mana motuhake*. This principle has a range of meanings to do with both individual and collective expression of autonomy, independence, authority, agency and responsibility. It is a core element of human dignity. We acknowledge each other's mana motuhake when we create space and opportunities for each of us to represent our own opinions, and understandings in our own way, and to take responsibility for making our own decisions.

(2) *Whanaungatanga*: This principle incorporates the development of respectful and affirmative family-like relationships that emerge from participating in and reflecting on collective actions and experiences. Whanaungatanga both defines and reinforces our cultural identities. Whanaungatanga relationships create culturally safe ways for us to engage and participate both in institutional events and practices, *and* in Māori whānau and community events, and to reflect on them and learn from them together.

(3) *Manaakitanga* This principle involves enacting the cultural obligation to express hospitality, love and respect, and to afford unstinting holistic care and support for each other. This means treating each other with the care and respect as we do when hosting visitors in our own cultural spaces. Manaakitanga may mean that the hosts will go without or position themselves last so that the guests are properly looked after. In the context of research supervision manaakitanga extends beyond the time we are in the supervisor-student relationships. Manaakitanga requires us to call on our networks of friends and

colleagues, and on our knowledge of what is happening in our research fields, to walk our students through the processes of academic writing, getting published, preparing CVs, seeking employment, preparing for job interviews, being present to support them. Manaakitanga further involves us, when our students succeed in gaining employment, in handing them over to their new employers, as our valued colleagues and friends. Manaakitanga obliges us to support our students to reach their own position of mana.

Finally, there is an overarching and relational principle that serves as a concluding statement to our reflections on supervising students researching in Māori contexts. This is encapsulated within the expression: *me nohotahi, mahitahi, haeretahi* (let us live, work and journey together as one). This expression envisions a collective unity of purpose, collective responsibility and accountability, and a commitment to support and care for each other throughout the entire supervision process.

These principles highlight the need for our own conscientization and re-positioning, in order to understand and respect the subjectivities and positionings that we and our students bring to the context of supervision. They enable us to better engage in a process of unlearning and relearning that is essential for the co-construction of new knowledge and transformative social change.

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