

**Searching for synergy:
Maori/ indigenous and scientific conservatory values – the affinity proposition^{1,2}**

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Abstract

Reconciling similarity/ affinity and difference/ distinction is one of the most important development issues of our contemporary period. Yet much effort aimed at gaining support for the plight of Maori/ indigenous³ peoples remains locked into the assertion of difference and distinction alone, those points of cultural affinity that could play an important role in processes of reconciliation and movement forward being largely ignored. What is proposed here is what is referred to as the ‘affinity proposition’, that is, it is argued that Maori/ indigenous development requires, for its further advancement, a focus not only on difference and divergence, but also on similarity and affinity. At the very heart of Maori/ indigenous development are issues relating to social justice, economic equity, freedom, ecological sustainability and cultural diversity, concepts which are equally highly valued in many sectors of mainstream (non-indigenous) society. Certainly, there are important differences in the ways in which these values are perceived and articulated in the context of different cultures, and these differences have recently been the focus of considerable attention and debate. However, there are also similarities which have received less attention in spite of the fact that they may hold the key to achieving a sufficient level of mutual understanding to underpin effective Maori/ indigenous development.

This paper explores the development of a synergistic process of reconciliation between Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values. It reports on the preliminary findings of a research project whose focus is a cross-cultural study of environmental governance and management regimes under the *New Zealand Resource Management Act 1991*. The central questions addressed here are: *Can reconciliation be achieved through recognition of both affinity and difference? Could such reconciliation underpin effective Maori/ indigenous development?* It is argued here that a process of synergy is already under way, a process that can best be understood in terms of a theoretical framework that encompasses both the concept of modernity and the sustainable development paradigm.

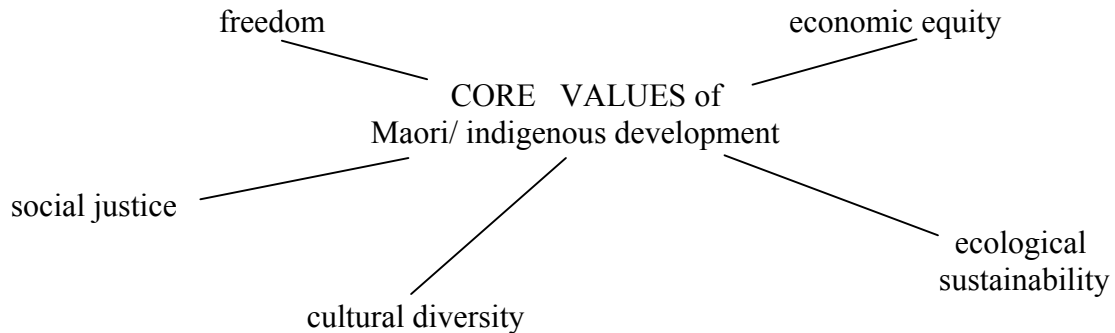
Introduction

Indigenous peoples, undoubtedly, are the ones most adversely affected by globalisation and by the WTO agreements. However, we believe that it is also us who offer viable alternatives to the dominant economic growth, export oriented development model. Our sustainable lifestyles and cultures, traditional knowledge, cosmologies, spirituality, values of collectivity, reciprocity, respect and reverence for Mother Earth, are crucial in the search for a transformed society where justice, equity and sustainability will prevail.

Indigenous Peoples’ Seattle declaration: Third Ministerial Meeting of the WTO, 1999.

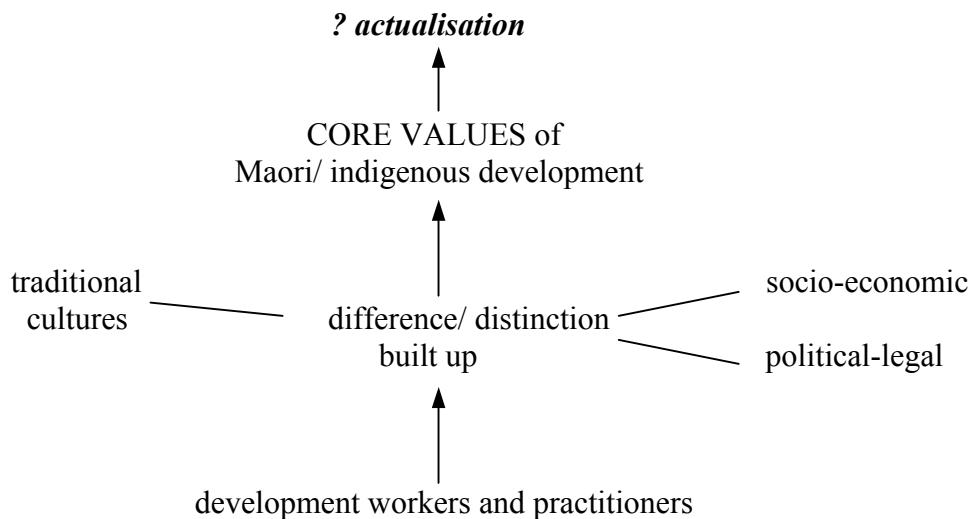
The diagram below (*Figure 1*), which is central to the discussion that follows, relates to the work of both Howitt (2001) and Sen (1998).

Figure 1: Core values of Maori/ indigenous development



It has frequently been observed that the position of Maori, and of indigenous people more generally, in relation to the effects of globalisation is essentially different from that of other disadvantaged groups, and that, just as the nature of that disadvantage is different, so too is the position adopted in relation to pleas for sustainability and conservatory ways of living (Black, 1996; Havemann, 2000; Henare, 1988; Patterson, 2000). However, it may be that engaging in a discourse that emphasises difference (in relation to culture) and disadvantage (in relation to socio-economic position and political-legal status) is not necessarily either the most appropriate or the most effective way of achieving the actualisation of Maori/ indigenous core values (as is suggested by the insertion of a question mark in *Figure 2* below):

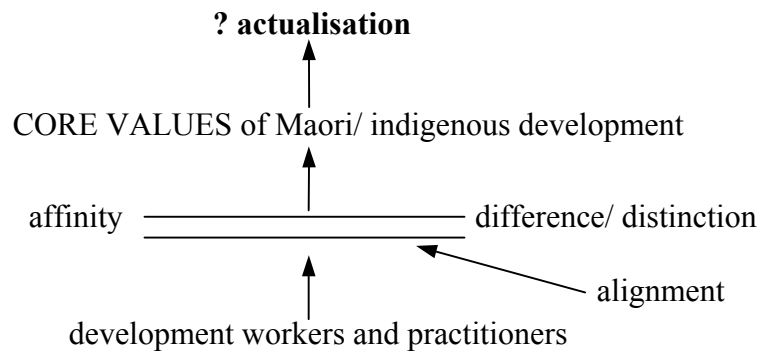
Figure 2: The difference/ distinction approach



Discussions that centre on the dual themes of globalisation and culture often emphasise what is generally referred to as ‘traditional culture’ (tangible and intangible),⁴ focusing on difference in a way that has now come to seem almost inevitable. In fact, however, it is equally possible, and arguably potentially more productive, to engage in a discourse whose concern is to seek reconciliation by

focusing not only on difference/ distinction, but also on similarity/ affinity (see *Figure 3* below):

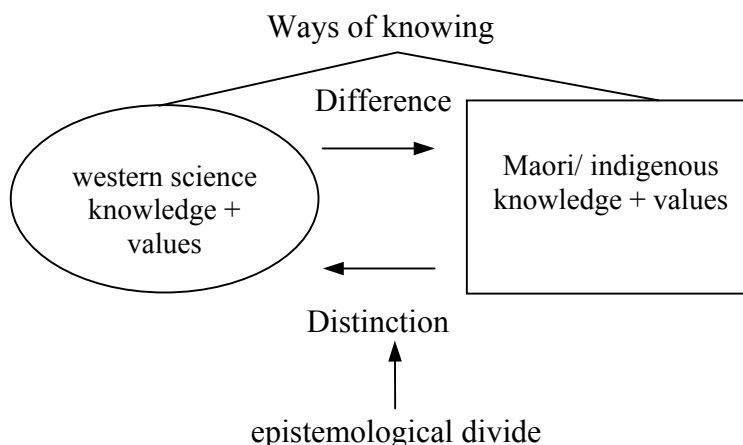
Figure 3: Reconciling difference and affinity



This realignment brings with it, I shall argue here, a greater potential for reconciliation than is present where the emphasis is solely on difference, a potential for reconciliation that is more able to yield good results (in terms of positive outcomes for Maori/ indigenous people) than is an emphasis on difference and dissonance. However, the difference/ distinction logic has become so firmly locked into place that it is sometimes now very difficult to see how we could possibly replace it by a perspective that, in emphasising both similarity and difference, would allow for the operationalisation of what I shall refer to as the ‘affinity proposition’, that is the proposition that any emphasis on difference needs to be balanced by an emphasis on similarity if positive and productive change is to ensue.

I argue here that unlocking the epistemological divide of difference/ distinction between western scientific ways of knowing and Maori/ indigenous⁵ ways of knowing (knowledge and value systems) is at the heart of achieving reconciliation and thus operationalising effective development programmes (see *Figure 4* below).

Figure 4: The epistemological divide



Realignment in terms not only of difference/ distinction, but also of similarity/ affinity would appear to be critical in relation to resolving the current epistemological divide. The central question here is: *How can this realignment be achieved?*

I shall suggest here what I perceive to be some key aspects of the *process of counteracting difference/ distinction thinking*. In doing so, I shall draw upon my ongoing doctoral research which involves a cross-cultural study of Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values in the area of environmental governance and management regimes under the New Zealand *Resource Management Act 1991*. The primary focus is conflict and convergence of Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory and use values, my aim being to develop a *synergistic process model* which reflects the capacity to counteract difference/ distinction discourse. The search is for synergy⁶ between difference/ distinction discourse and similarity/ affinity discourse.

The evolution of values, value change and the comparison of values are the key aspects in the development of the synergistic process that I shall now discuss in two main parts:

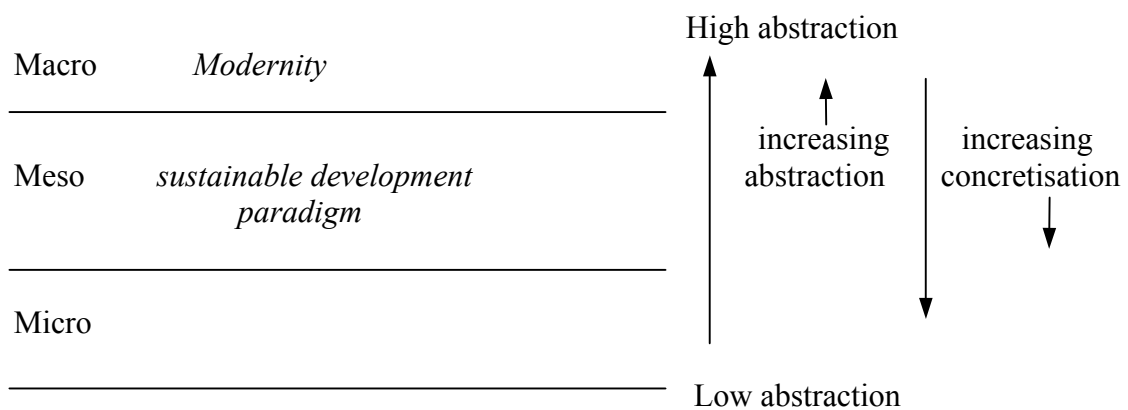
- evolution of values and value change at the broad level of thinking within the modernity paradigm;
- more specific comparison of values within the context of the sustainable development paradigm.

Introducing modernity

Within the social sciences, modernity is located and developed at the macro level. Within the context of this study, it provides for the most abstract level of thinking within the overall framework (see *Figure 5*).

Modernity is an over-arching benchmark (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990; Havemann, 1997; Taylor, 1999) from which can be derived all lower level concepts within the research framework (including the sustainable development paradigm) (Escobar, 1995; Rist, 1997; Tisdell, 1999). In *Figure 5*, the three levels of abstraction are labelled ‘micro’ (low level of abstraction), ‘meso’ (medium level of abstraction), and ‘macro’ (high level of abstraction) and are associated with degree of concretisation (from low to high).

Figure 5: A framework for the research – levels of abstraction/ concretisation



Thus, *Figure 6* presents a trajectory of knowledge and values (Maori/ indigenous and scientific) as they evolve over time and space. Modernity is associated with transition (with a transition process, with periods of transition, and with characteristics (contours) of transition). In this context, my primary interest - the period that has been described as 'late modernity' – is seen as a stage in the process of transition that has characterized knowledge and value systems from the pre-modern (or non-modern period) through the modern period to the late modern period.

Value change

A major problem in relation to the perpetuation of difference/ distinction discourse is a persistent failure within modernity to account for, and accommodate, value change. If this is to be remedied, the reasons for it need to be understood and strategies for acknowledgment of change need to be put in place.

One reason for the perpetuation of difference/ distinction thinking is that Maori/ indigenous ways of knowing have persistently been located 'out' of the 'modern' and 'in' the 'pre-modern'. This relegation has had a critical effect on perceptions of value change. Indeed, Maori/ indigenous knowledge and values are often seen in terms of some sort of fixed, unchanging and distinct existence, as something that can be excavated and retrieved from the past and reinstated in the present, a perception that largely ignores that process of transition that has inevitably affected the entire spectrum of knowledge and values.

Another reason for the perpetuation of difference/ distinction discourse resides in the constant revamping of 'modern' explanations for change, explanations that are inadequate in that they are locked into 'modern domain thinking' and are based on concepts of certainty and fixity that are wholly unable to accommodate the realities of the change process.

Also problematic for the understanding of value change is a persistent emphasis on Maori/ indigenous people's resistance to change. Although this resistance focus highlights the differences and distinctions of Maori/ indigenous ways of knowing, it fails to acknowledge the adaptive strategies employed by Maori/ indigenous peoples over time, strategies that have been associated not only with resistance but also with reconciliation. In this sense, the type of emphasis we see in difference/ distinction discourse is a partial representation only of the response to change of Maori/ indigenous people.

The key starting point from which I build my account is the Maori/ indigenous standpoint on modernity (rather than the Maori/ indigenous standpoint on tradition). In seeking to prevent the Maori/ indigenous viewpoint from being locked into the bounds of tradition and dislocated from modernity, it is important to begin by situating the pre-/ non-modern world within a wider historical context, a context which encompasses the epochal framework of modernity. From such a perspective, the contemporary period (late modernity) can be seen as one stage in the ongoing process of change.

Locating myself as a researcher in the contemporary period of modernity (late modernity: the 'revolutionary period')⁹ is another essential ingredient of acknowledging value change. Recognising current Maori/ indigenous perspectives as being located within late modernity is crucial if we are to come to terms with all of the facets of far-reaching change that are impacting on indigenous peoples (including

The sustainable development concept

By adopting the concept of sustainable development, two old enemies growth and development are reconciled.

Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, 1995, p. 7).

There has been an ongoing failure to reconcile and mobilise Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values in the SDP. Escobar (1995) and many others¹⁷ argue that the problem stems from the fact that the SDP is not really about conservation, preservation and sustainability. Rather, it is about the ongoing expansion of economic growth (Barber, 1996; Escobar, 1995; Howitt, 2001; Rist, 1997). As has so often been observed, finding ways of overcoming this primary focus on economic growth values is central to the potential actualisation of Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values in the SDP (Geddes, 1995; Peters, 1993; Schuurman, 1993; Tisdell, 1999).

Values contrast

Much effort to reverse the economic growth impetus of the SDP has been based on a difference/ distinction approach in which Maori/ indigenous values are *contrasted with* scientific ways of knowing. Thus, there has been a preoccupation with contrast, an ongoing emphasis on the differences between knowledge and value systems (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Gunn & McCallig, 1995; Roberts, Norman, Minhinnick, Wihongi & Kirkwood, 1995; Solomon, 2000; Wright, Nugent & Parata, 1995). This is indicated in *Table 1*:

Table 1: *The emphasis on contrast within the SDP*

<i>Scientific ways of knowing:</i>	<i>Maori/ indigenous ways of knowing:</i>
- truth/ rationality	- myth/ irrational
- objective	- subjective
- linear	- cyclic
- eurocentrism	- ethnocentrism
- single/ present generation	- future generation
- materialism	- reciprocation
- narrow physical scope	- multi-dimensional
- individualism	- spiritual/ cultural focused
- economic growth focus	- collective
- mechanical/ segmented/ reductionist	- socio-cultural focus
- short term view	- holistic
- positivist	- long term view
	- experiential

The retrieval of past knowledge and values (knowledge and value excavation) and the politicising of values are the two most common approaches to a values contrast approach (Gillespie, 1998; Gragson, 1999; Howitt, 2001; Kawagley, 1995; Klein, 2000; McCan & McCan, 1990; Taiepa et al., 1997; Tropser, 1998; Roberts, 1996, 1999; Roberts & Wills, 1995). Although this approach has had some benefits, it has

had minimal impact on reconciliation and on the positive mobilisation of values (see *Table 2*).

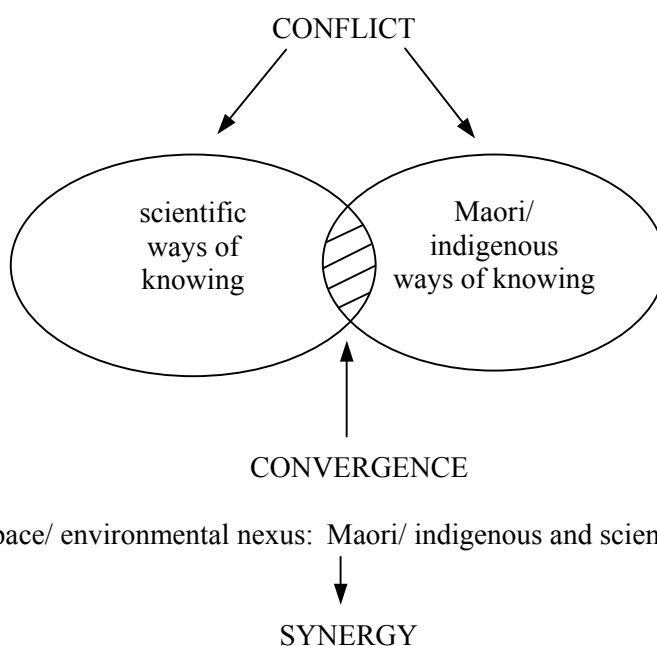
Table 2: *Evaluating the values contrast approach within the SDP*

<p><i>Positive:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• establishes the legitimacy of the ‘other’ in relation to the dominant order• highlights power imbalance• initial political value <p><i>Negative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• risk of caricaturing• ongoing rehearsal of difference• limited political viability• not progressive• preoccupation with difference and distinctions <p><i>Overall:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• fails to mobilise and reconcile

Comparison of values

Comparison of values counteracts difference/ distinction discourse. It involves the comparison of values in relation to both conflict and convergence. In my study, the comparison of conflicting and converging Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values is a critical aspect of the development of a synergistic process (see *Figure 9*). In allowing for the realignment of affinities and differences in the search for synergy, this approach has a great deal to offer in terms of its potential for reconciliation.

Figure 9: *Towards a values comparison approach*



The focal point of an approach based on comparison is the highlighting of values convergence, that is, the highlighting of that shared space or environmental nexus of Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values. It is here, in focusing on similarities, that discourses converge as a shared discourse emerges, a shared discourse that is characteristic of post-materialist green understandings of the humankind-environment relationship (Dobson, 1990, 1999; Dobson & Lucardie, 1995; Merchant, 1989, 1996; North, 1995; Pepper, 1993, 1996; Worster, 1993). Thus, it is possible to find the synergistic potential of Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values. Indeed, the rationale for the search for synergy in relation to Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values is its potential as a means of reconciliation and of mobilisation around the notion of sustainability (see *Table 3*).

Table 3: *Evaluating a comparative approach*

Positive/ negative:

- considers value conflict and convergence
- refer to conflict evaluation

Convergence positives:

- identifies convergence of shared conservatory values
- represents ecological insights from Maori/ indigenous and western science value systems
- evident synergistic potential
- greater political viability
- more pragmatic mode

Overall:

- mobilising and reconciliatory

Conclusion

Although largely unexplored, a model that highlights the potential for reconciliation appears to have real potential for the advancement of Maori/ indigenous development. My general focus here has been on the process of operationalising reconciliation. In particular, I have focused on the development of a synergistic process model for the reconciliation of Maori/ indigenous values and scientific conservatory values. Key aspects of this model are: the evolution of values, value change, and the comparison of values. I have argued that all of these (largely ignored in a difference/ distinction paradigm) have a potentially important role to play in reconciliation. I have also argued that reconciliation is an important aspect of development. However, it is evident that there is a need for further development of this model from the perspective, in particular, of a Maori/ indigenous perspective on reconciliation within the framework provided by discourse on modernity and late modernity.

*He rangi ta matawhaiti,
He rangi ta matawhanui.*

The person with a narrow vision sees a narrow vision,
The person with a wide vision sees a wide horizon.

The widespread effects of difference/ distinction discourse are now evident throughout the world and the need for reconciliation at a global level is pressing. However, reconciliation at a global level depends upon reconciliation at more local levels. How we respond to the need for local and global reconciliation will be a central part of determining the shape of the future. In this, Maori and other indigenous peoples have a very important role to play.

Endnotes

1. A version of this article was presented at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand at the 7th Joint Conference (22 – 24 November, 2002): *Preservation of Ancient Cultures and the Globalization Scenario*.
2. I wish to make sincere acknowledgement here of the work of all of those who have made this research possible. This includes indigenous and non indigenous researchers (past and present), and those development workers and policy/ decision makers who have dedicated themselves to building and fighting for the core values of freedom, social justice, economic equity, cultural diversity and ecological sustainability.
3. The use of ‘Maori/ indigenous’ here refers to Maori as both indigenous peoples of New Zealand and of the world (Burger, 1990; King, 1992; Maybury-Lewis, 1997; Perry, 1996).
4. I distinguish here between two realms of traditional culture: ‘tangible’, referring to observable signs or markers that demonstrate shared patterns of behaviour or conduct, and ‘intangible’, referring to the ideational basis of social life as framed in organised systems of beliefs, values and shared understanding of the world.
5. From my Maori/ indigenous viewpoint, I refer to Maori/ indigenous ways of knowing as the *te ao Maori* paradigm, to traditional ecological knowledge as *matauranga te ao turoa*, and to Maori/ indigenous conservatory and use values as *nga tikanga tupato*.
6. This refers to the interaction or cooperation of two or more values to produce an enhanced effect than their separate effects is what is referred to here.
7. This refers, in general, to the period from 1700 – 2000.
8. These two terms refer to the periods before and after what has been termed the ‘modern period’.
9. ‘Late modernity’ is a term used to describe the contemporary, revolutionary period of modernity, a period which is also often described in the following terms: second modernity; reflexive modernization; risk society; post-traditional society; network society; information age; and biotechnology age (Beck, 1992, 2000; Castells, 1997, 2000; Giddens, 1990, 1996; Held & McGrew, 2000; Rifkin, 1983, 1988; Taylor, 1999).
10. ‘Reflexivity’ (referring to a process that can be applied to itself) is arguably the main concept of late modernity at the epochal and self/ collective levels. A person, or a discourse or system, can analyse itself and can, therefore, confront and change itself (Luhmann, 1985).
11. The concept of ‘detraditionalisation’ involves “the liberation from some traditions and the ability to construct new ones” (Havermann, 1997, p. 23).
12. ‘Globalisation’, the all-embracing attribute of modernity, is “a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions”, involving – assessed in their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact-generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 25).
13. ‘Simple reflexivity’, which characterizes peoples and societies in the pre-modern period, is grounded in locality, kinship and community.
14. ‘The construction of Maori/ indigenous identities’ is taken here as being grounded in traditional Maori society (the *te ao Maori* paradigm) from which the guardian of the environment (a very loose translation of *kaitiaki*) principle stems (Henare, 1988, p. 1; Roberts et al, 1995, p. 14). It is characterised by: a conservatory ethic, a unified approach to living, a holistic worldview in which all things are united/ related (*whanaungatanga*) (Henare, 1988; Mead, 1996; Roberts, 1966; Patterson, 2000).
15. This may be described as a viewpoint according to which “the past has a heavy influence or, more accurately put, is made to have a heavy influence, over the present” (Giddens, 1996, p. 62).
16. ‘The term ‘enhanced social reflexivity’ refers to a form of reflexivity in which self-identity is no longer grounded in tradition, a form of reflexivity that that characterizes late modernity.
17. See, in particular, Barber (1996), Black (1996), Dobson (1990), Dobson and Lucardie (1995), and Rist (1997).

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