Diverse Complexities, Complex Diversities
Critical Qualitative Educational Research in Aotearoa (New Zealand)

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Abstract This paper highlights considerations for critical qualitative researchers in relation to the need to enact methodologies that are contextually responsive. It outlines a range of intersecting complexities that emerge from a critical reading of the context for research in Aotearoa (New Zealand), which include histories of colonisation of Indigenous peoples, increasing cultural diversity likely to be futher impacted by migration from Pacific Islands to Aotearoa because of the climate change crisis, and increasing economic disparities between rich and poor. It then draws upon scholarship by Māori and Pacific Island scholars that identifies alternative methodologies that arise from Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating. It concludes with a series of questions that may be informative for researchers as they design methodologies which engage Indigenous and other diverse perspectives and peoples.

Keywords: *please add some*

Introduction

There is a need in all critical qualitative research for a deep historically and culturally informed awareness of the sensitivities and power effects that infuse the particular research context. Furthermore, research methodologies need to be designed responsively with/in these particularities. I therefore begin this paper with a brief overview of the complex diversities and diverse complexities of my research context of Aotearoa (New Zealand). I then move on to discuss researcher positionality and research design in relation to this context and to the ethical responsivity required in response to the contextual complexities outlined. I draw upon the work of Professor Russell Bishop and several other scholars in offering some thoughts as to pathways for navigating through the diverse complexities that we encounter in our work in Aotearoa.

Deepening Economic and Educational Disparities

> The most pressing problem facing education today is the persistent pattern of educational disparity which disproportionately affects indigenous peoples, populations of colour, those with lower socio-economic status, and new migrants.
>
> (OECD, 2010, p. 119)

Whilst this quote from the OECD highlights an international situation of inequity, rather than being overwhelmed by and detaching ourselves from such homogenised and negative statements, it behoves us to instead examine our educational research contexts to uncover the complex layerings of threads and webs that underpin and perpetuate such inequalities. In Aotearoa, Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 by the British Crown and more than 500 Māori chiefs, legitimated settlement by the British. The progressive ideals expressed in the treaty offered great promise for a mutually respectful relationship between *tangata whenua*, people of the land, and *tangata tiriti*, British and other subsequent immigrant peoples whose presence was legitimated by the treaty (former Māori High Court Judge Sir Edward "Eddie" Taihakurei Durie, as cited in King, 2003, p. 167). In the treaty, in return for legitimating British settlement, the British Crown undertook to protect Māori and acknowledged Māori self-determination over their lands, villages, and everything of value. It also affirmed that Māori were to be equal citizens and that their belief systems were to be upheld alongside the faiths of the settlers. Considered in relation to the chronology of similar treaties worldwide, this was unusual in its affirmation of Indigeneity and recognition of Indigenous rights. It could potentially have served as a blueprint for a dual paradigm, of parrallel, equal, intersecting, and overlapping Māori and British cultures, and it certainly reflected, at least in part, some honourable, progressive intentions on the part of the British.

The implications for education and educational researchers of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi are to recognise and uphold the government's obligations to serve as an honourable treaty partner, that is, to allow for the promised Māori self-determination and protection of Māori language, culture, and values; to ensure that state educational, health, and other services are equitable for Māori; to ensure that Māori have equitable representation in decision-making arenas; and to ensure that the government's objectives align with social, cultural, and environmental justice objectives determined by and for Māori.

Historically, these obligations have been overlooked, and research has been complicit in the suppression and oppression of Māori (L. T. Smith, 1999). The assumption of sovereignty by the Crown and the subsequent onslaught of colonialist settlement was such that for more than a century the treaty, and the commitments it outlined, were disparaged and disregarded by the settler rulers of the young nation, dismissed as a 'simple nullity' (Morris, 2004, p. 117). Monocultural and monolingual English dominance prevails despite some legislative redress in the past few decades. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has written that 'decolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power' (p. 98). This is an important consideration for critical qualitative research.

The colonialist relegation of Māori to the lowest socioeconomic strata has more recently been exacerbated by neoliberal economic policies, such as tax cuts for the wealthy, whilst the state divests itself of social housing stock. Contemporaneous neoconservative social and educational policies mean welfare beneficiaries are compelled to enrol children in early childhood education services or face their benefit being slashed in half, whilst the imposition of 'national standards' in numeracy and (English language) literacy has been narrowing the school curriculum in retrograde ways. Because of successive New Zealand governments' capture by globalised neoliberalism, there has been an extreme increase in the economic disparity between rich and poor, for which we hold the unenviable position of being one of the worst in the world (Rashbrooke, 2014). Significantly, a 2014 OECD report identifying countries with widening disparities between rich and poor shows that New Zealand had the most severe instance of this syndrome among OECD member countries (OECD, 2014),

Whilst many Māori tribes, having researched, negotiated, and received treaty grievance financial settlements, have moved into a new postsettlement era, the fruits of settlements are not yet filtering through to all those who might be eligible to share in these benefits. Māori and Pacific Island peoples are disproportionately represented in the negative social statistics associated with poverty, which include health impacts which begin in childhood, impact on education, and have lifelong effects (Boston, 2014; New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2013; Turner & Asher, 2014).

In 1986, the government was called out by one of its tribunals as having failed Māori both educationally and with regard to the preservation of the language (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). A more recent tribunal reiterated these concerns (Waitangi Tribunal, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). In 25 years, there had been insufficient change to

ensure the viability of the language and prevent Māori children from being disad-vantaged in the New Zealand education system. A 2011 Ministry of Education brief-ing acknowledged that 'although New Zealand's education system has many strengths, with systematic under-achievement for Māori, Pasifika and other learners from poorer backgrounds, we are a considerable way from achieving that goal' (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2011). Yet, if the settlers had not been so convinced of their superiority that they resorted to policies of monocultural domination and had instead honourably adhered to their treaty obligations, the education system would have reflected a dual epistemological model, from the outset paralleling both treaty parties' worldviews.

Ongoing traces of white supremacist thinking and behaviour persist, evident in the ignorance and/or callous disregard for the intergenerational trauma that has been carried forward as a result of wars, the ravages of introduced illnesses, alienation from lands and stories, loss of language and mana (pride, esteem), worn heavily on the shoulders of young Māori, who are often therefore less well positioned educa-tionally (Pihama et al., 2014). In 1981 I was one of many New Zealanders who protested against the touring rugby football team of the apartheid regime of South Africa. After the tour, Māori challenged Pākehā (of European ancestry) New Zeal-anders who had been so opposed to the racism of apartheid to consider challenging the racism in our own country. Yet 35 years later, our country still reflects a discrim-inatory divide between those who retain the power and privilege (predominately Pākehā) and those who have become disenfranchised (predominately Māori).

Superdiversity

Both within Aotearoa and internationally, populations are becoming increasingly diverse (OECD, 2010; Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013; Spoonley, 2015). The particular mainfestation of superdiversity in Aotearoa reflects historical and geneo-logical connections with the neighbouring Pacific Islands. Auckland, our largest city, also has the largest number of Pacific Island peoples in the world, and currently 39.1% of Auckland's population were born outside of New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand. Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2013b). Multiple communities comprise members of Samoan, Cook Islands, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian, and Tokelauan groups, with smaller numbers from Tuvalu, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and the small island states of Micronesia. Many of these islands have complicated histories of oppressive colonisation in which the New Zealand government is implicated.

In many cases, there are more 'islanders' living in Aotearoa than back on their home island. An increasing trend is that, as of the 2013 census, almost two-thirds of Pacific peoples were born in New Zealand (62.3%; Statistics New Zealand. Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2013a). Of those who remain living on the islands, many are often heavily dependent on remittances of funding sent from relatives employed in New Zealand. Those living in Aotearoa face the prospect of loss of their language and culture, such as the traditional weaving arts and knowledge and skills of canoe building, when the materials used in the islands are not available in Aotearoa.

For those living on the islands of Tuvalu, the Maldives, Cartaret Atoll, and Kiribati, rising sea levels threaten their sources of fresh water and crops as well as the viability of the islands themselves, generating the problem of resettlement of climate change refugees (Harman, 2014; Maas, 2014; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013; Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2014). As Pacific Island peoples are forced to relocate, they face challenges of retaining their identities and traditions in their relocated situations. They will also feel the impact of the trauma of leaving ancestral lands, particularly when exact traditions such as the spatial and social relationships between people, lands, and villages are disrupted (Cameron, 2014).

Recently, our neighbouring islands Samoa (in 2012), Vanuatu (2015), and Fiji (2016) have all been hit by devestating cyclones. Both the severity and frequency of these cyclones is being exacerbated by climate change. Children are particularly vulnerable to these impacts of climate change (Lawler, 2011). When these severe cyclones hit the Pacific Islands, Aotearoa resident family members face an increased financial and emotional burden in supporting the recovery of their island relatives.

A further climate change impact is the devastation being wrought on natural habitats, as the vectors in which species have previously dwelled shift in relation to global warming. Aotearoa has a high number of endemic species whose well-being is dependent on the sustaining of specific habitats (Lambers, 2015). Education has a role to play in preparing children to advocate on behalf of and to care for the more-than-human realm, as these climate-change-related disruptions begin to drastically alter the face of our planet and all living creatures, both human and more than human. Educational research in Aotearoa, therefore, needs to take account of and be responsive to these issues of historical colonisation, climate change issues such as loss of homelands and biodiveristy, demographic changes such as increasing diversity, and disparities in our education settings. Methodological considerations include the extent to which constituent populations are involved in initiating the research project to ensure that it resonates with their particular situations and needs, are involved in

research design so that it will authentically engage with their communities, are active in data gathering so as to ensure the data responsively and effectively draws upon the collective, and that they collaborate in the analysis and determination of implications so that it will accurately represent their understandings and interpretations (Bishop, 2005).

Learning From Kaupapa Māori Research Methodology

Critical pedagogue Paulo Freire raised our awareness as to the need for the oppressed to develop a critical analysis and liberatory response to the hegemonic forces of the oppressors and the crucial role of educators as 'cultural workers' in facilitating this process (Freire, 2000). Māori educationalists in Aotearoa have responded to this inspiration. In 1992, Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the former pro-vice chancellor Māori at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, raised these questions for researchers:

1. Who has helped define the research problem?
2. For whom is the study worthy and relevant? Who says so?
3. Which cultural group will be the one to gain new knowledge from this study?
4. To whom is the researcher accountable?
5. Who will gain most from this study? (as cited in Cram, 1993, p. 29)

This series of questions was expanded in Smith's oft-cited 1999 book *Decolonising Methodologies* and was resonated by Professor Russell Bishop in his kaupapa Māori model for evaluating power relations in research, in which he raised issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation, and accountability (Bishop, 2005; Bishop & Glynn, 1999), drawing upon Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) ideas of coconstructed narratives of collective knowing, and of caring research communities.

A key objective of kaupapa Māori theorising is that it was conceived as a 'philosophy of social transformation' (G. H. Smith, 1995). Critical for non-Indigenous researchers who participate in this model is an awareness of their power as researchers to be constantly aware of hidden power effects and to focus particularly on 'disallowing the dominance of self' (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 107) and controlling the tendency for 'researcher imposition' (p. 126). Using methodologies of co-constructed renarrativisation is a collectivist form of interpretation of meanings that transcends traditional individualistic research models. In our research, we have drawn upon kaupapa Māori methodologies, working closely with teacher coresearchers, collaborating on research design, and ensuring te ao Māori conceptualisations were at the heart of the research kaupapa and data-gathering methods, as well as cotheorising the

findings as a collective, ensuring a Māori lens was applied to this analysis (Ritchie, 2015a; Ritchie & Rau, 2010).

Kaupapa Māori methodologies have received international recognition for their innovative counternarrative to recolonising research processes. They have been recognized as modeling a culturally affirming response to colonisation, involving critical analysis, Indigenous self-determination, and societal transformation (Archibald, 2002). Kaupapa Māori researchers illuminate the dimensions of culturally responsive methodology such as cultural and epistemological pluralism and deconstruction of Western colonial traditions of research, and highlight the primacy of relationships within culturally responsive dialogic encounters (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, Barrett, & Ford, 2013). These methodologies can inform those who aspire to research "with" rather than "on" Others (Berryman et al., 2013). The framework outlined by Russell Bishop, of initiation, accountability, benefits, legitimation, and representation, has relevance to all researchers, in particular non-Indigenous researcher allies (Bishop, 2005; Hill & May, 2013). Kaupapa Māori research has been viewed as having potential to contribute to healing 'the ravages of the colonization of Indigenous peoples' own Life-World[s]' (Williams, 2013, p. 96).

Te Kotahitanga – Applying Māori Values in Secondary Schools

Beginning in 2001, Professor Russell Bishop led a project called 'Te Kotahitanga', focussed on improving Māori secondary school achievement. In effect, this meant changing the monocultural racist attitudes and lack of intercultural awareness of the dominant majority, that is, Pākehā (European ancestry) teachers. Drawing upon the factors identified by Māori high school students as to which teacher behaviours and pedagogies empowered their learning, they developed an 'effective teaching profile' (ETP). This profile was strongly critical of deficit theories that had previously blamed Māori for educational failure: "Fundamental to the ETP is teachers' understanding the need to explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Māori students' educational achievement levels, and their taking an agentic position in their theorising about their practice" (Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.).

In offering professional learning opportunities which gave teachers insights about how to enact these Māori values such as *manaakitanga* (caring, generosity, hospitality) and *whanaungatanga* (building relationships), Bishop and his team were addressing educational disparity through employing pedagogies based in a dual epistemological framework, critiquing and moving beyond and away from deficit discourses, and listening and responding to the feelings and needs articulated

by tamariki Māori (Māori children) and their whānau/families. Bishop (2010) considers that his work has ramifications elsewhere, stating that 'while this analysis is based on a case study of an intervention study undertaken in New Zealand, it is suggested that the messages drawn are applicable beyond the shores of this country' (p. 122).

Metaphorical language provides a powerful means for both making sense of our everyday lives and for theorizing our work (Florio-Ruane, 2001). Metaphor is also a particularly strong feature of traditional Māori oratory as well as contemporary Māori discourse, transmitting Māori values in a particularly Māori way. Bishop (2010) points us to the power of metaphors in pedagogy and research methodology, suggesting that 'where the images and the metaphors used to express these images are holistic, interactional and focus on power-sharing relationships, the resultant classroom practices and educational experiences for children of other than the dominant group will be entirely different' (p. 129). He suggests that educators, teacher educators, and educational researchers need to employ culturally relevant metaphors, ones that are

> holistic, flexible and determined by or understood within cultural contexts to which young people of diverse backgrounds can relate. Teaching and learning strategies that flow from these metaphors should be flexible and allow the diverse voices of young people to be heard. (p. 129)

In these pedagogies and methodologies, participants are co-constructors of both processes and meanings, engaging 'in mutual story-telling and re-storying' so that a relationship can emerge 'in which *both* stories are heard' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4), 'or indeed a process in which a new story is created by all the participants' (Bishop, 2010, p. 129). This is a process that my colleague Cheryl Rau and I have used in our research projects aimed at illuminating dual epistemological pathways in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa, which we have termed *counter-colonial renarrativisation* (Ritchie, 2015a, 2015b; Ritchie & Rau, 2010, 2012). This requires responsibility on the part of the researcher(s) to have done one's own decolonizing work, to have opened and broadened one's worldview to respectfully position Indigenous epistemologies alongside Western understandings, embracing a 'multilogicality' (Kincheloe, 2008) that is cognizant of the oppressive histories of colonization. It also requires building and sustaining longstanding, trusting, responsive, and reciprocal relationships with members of the Indigenous (and other) communities with whom one is researching and relinquishing power, allowing them to take the lead in the research process.

Opening up to this research orientation may require huge shifts of a Western-trained methodologist, to move from 'an individualistic, linear, hierarchical, authoritarian, majoritarian, patriarchal, compartmentalized, white-privileged complacency, to an unsettled, contingent, relational, spiritual, and emotional' positioning (Ritchie, 2015a, p. 83). In these models, researcher positionality is acknowledged as implicated and agentic rather than 'neutral'. I feel some frustration when I read research proposals and ethics applications that claim that the researcher will aim to 'eliminate biases'. I would rather see the researcher working to uncover and acknowledge their historicity, their cultural whakapapa (genealogy), to openly and critically situate themselves and their study as being located within the particularities, specificities, complexities, and diversities of the historical, cultural, political, and national context(s). And this critique should be applied also to theoretical paradigms, methodological frames, and research design.

Learning From Pacific Island Peoples' Research Methodologies

Talanoa is a research methodology drawn from a tradition of oratory that is common to Pacific Island nations, including Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Niue, Hawai'i, the Cook Islands, and Tonga (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014). Tongan scholar Timote Vaioleti (2011) positions *talanoa* 'at the heart of the transmission of knowledge in Pacific societies, especially the passing on of instructions, narrating and the telling of stories' (p. 115). Vaioleti considers that 'it is imperative that Pacific research ethics (protocols) emerge from Pacific worldviews in order to keep synergy with the methodology and protect the integrity of participants as Pacific cultural beings' (p. 142).

Talanoa comprises 'political, historical, geographical, educational, cultural, personal, spiritual, social, structural, constructional and emotional' aspects (Latu, 2009, as cited in Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014, p. 320). Vaioleti (2011) offers this holistic contextualisation:

> Talanoa should not be separated from ethics, spirituality, nature of being, existence, time and space, causality, ceremony, and social order. Talanoa is an encounter, individually or in a group, made possible only by a desire by all involved to engage verbally, intellectually, spiritually even emotionally about issues at hand. (p. 128)

Talanoa is deeply spiritual. It accords with the maintenance of delicate balances between humans and their spiritual and physical environment because 'in the Pacific,

good relationships with god/s, the land, nature and each other are the basis of all ethical behaviour (tauhi va)' (p. 145). In *talanoa*, 'even silence is far from empty: it is a way of knowing: "there is eloquence in silence . . . a pedagogy of deep engagement between participants"' (Nabobo-Baba, 2006, p. 94, as cited in Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014, p. 321). Another spiritual aspect of *talanoa* is *talanoa mo hoku loto*, which Vaioleti describes as 'a sharing, a critical reflection, a conversation with my heart or soul' (p. 35). Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) note that 'emotions and empathy are essential elements in talanoa methodology' (p. 319). It is an embodied, sensory process combining 'cultural meaning and bodily feeling' (p. 326). This requires a respectful, attuned relationship between researcher and participants and an understanding of 'the political, cultural, environmental, spiritual, economic and historical connections of the lived context of an individual or group' (p. 326). Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba argue that 'gradually, through this process of emotional sharing, transformation, co-creation, differentiation and recognition, a deeper empathy and understanding between participant and researcher may be realised' (p. 327). Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba consider that *talanoa* processes have potential as decolonising methodologies.

What Does This Mean for Research Design?

In this final section I consider implications of these ideas for critical qualitative researchers. Researchers, whether 'insider' or 'outsider', have huge power and responsibility with regard to the ways they obtain, interpret, and represent research data (Bishop, 2005; L. T. Smith, 1999). Important considerations include:

- In what ways have the focus of the research taken into account consideration of historical/political/social/cultural contexts?
- What 'homework' does the researcher(s) need to do, in critiquing and de-constructing her/his/their cultural/historical boundedness, interests, and motivations?
- What ethical responsibilities emerge from this consideration? How can the research focus be jointly determined so it operates in service of the community that is to be 'researched'?
- How does the research agenda address social, cultural, and environmental justice considerations?
- How does the proposed study respond to considerations of self-determination by Indigenous and other 'marginalised' peoples; protect their languages,

identities, and traditions; and ensure that Indigenous peoples are not remarginalised? How might participant communities be affirmed and enabled to operate as collectives within the research process?

- How is the research design relevant to diverse cultural groups that may be represented as participants? How will cultural specificities be acknowledged and highlighted?
- How will elders of relevant communities be informed and involved? What spiritual processes and protections will need to be incorporated?
- How will the findings be analysed and theorised (and in what ways are participants to be included in this process)? What accountability mechanisms can be included to ensure that participants feel that their understandings have been honoured and are represented in ways that feel appropriate to them?
- And 'who benefits'? Will the research contribute to better understandings of ways in which educators can serve to enhance life-worlds of children and families and the well-being of the more-than-human world? How will the knowledge that is generated be disseminated in ways that will be accessible, transformative, and influential?

In education-related research, researchers need to consider the complexities of the diverse contexts in which they are planning to work. Considerable homework may need to be done in seeking to understand the nuances of inter-relationships generated in postcolonisation, urbanised contexts where poverty and cultural dislocation can be factors. Relationship building can take time; trust needs to be built. The role of elders in many communities is highly valued, yet these people may be already overcommitted and busy whilst remaining pivotal to sanctioning community engagement in the research project. Elders can also ensure the spiritual oversight of the research project and processes and imbue the project with their *mana* (esteem, authority).

Critical, qualitative research that is informed by the matters considered above offers potential for recognising the complex diversities that abound in any research context. Remaining open to these complexities offers researchers not only the greatest challenge but the greatest reward in terms of the richness of the research process and possibilities. As Mirka Koro-Ljungberg (2012) has written, 'complexity builds on multiplicity—of knowing, methods, individuals, emotions, sensations, cultures, approaches, and so on' (p. 814). Moving beyond the comfortable compartmentalised zones of uncritiqued qualitative research opens up possibilities for rhizomatic

ruptures of routinized roles and reporting. Holistic, humble, engaged, sensory, contextually resonant fluidities may emerge, allowing for collective understandings to be generated and theorised and for engagement within the research process to itself offer transformative possibilities to all involved.

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