

Decolonising Ethics: Considerations of Power, Politics and Privilege in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Amohia Boulton

orcid.org/0000-0002-2041-3588

Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development, New Zealand

amohia@whakauae.co.nz

ABSTRACT

Indigenous peoples across the world have a shared experience of colonisation; a process that has resulted in war, disease and the decimation of their lands, homes and peoples. In New Zealand, the effects of colonisation are still evident with Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand) experiencing poorer outcomes compared with non-Māori citizens across a range of social, health and well-being indicators. This paper is a case study of work being done in New Zealand, which may have resonance with work in South Africa, and other countries with a history of colonisation. It begins with a brief history of the impacts of colonisation on Māori before considering the concept of decolonisation. The author outlines the work her organisation does as an independent, tribally owned, Māori health research centre to advance a decolonisation agenda. Reflecting on their emancipatory and democratising ambitions as researchers provides the opening for a discussion about indigenous ethics. The paper presents a number of Māori ethical principles that guide their work, arguing that were such principles applied in the development and implementation of social policy and legislation, the effect would be a fairer, more equitable policy that better meets the needs of Māori as citizens. Recent legislation enacted to improve New Zealand's care and protection system for children is discussed to illustrate the need for greater consideration of Māori values when developing legislation that directly impacts Māori. The paper concludes with a challenge to policymakers, practitioners, academics, and researchers alike to actively contribute to an agenda of liberation, emancipation and decolonisation for indigenous peoples.

Keywords: Māori; decolonisation; indigenous ethics; care ethics; care and protection; self-determination



Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development
<https://upjournals.co.za/index.php/SWPR>
Volume 30 | Number 1 | 2018 | #3825 | 15 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2415-5829/3825>
ISSN 2415-5829 (Online) | ISSN 0520-0097 (Print)
© Unisa Press 2018

Care Ethics and a Decolonisation Agenda

When I was first approached to discuss the concept of decolonising ethics, as a keynote speaker at the Social Work Conference, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 8 to 11 October 2017, the invitation was framed around work I had done with an academic colleague Dr Tula Brannelly who, at the time, was living and working in New Zealand. The paper we wrote together entitled *Ethics and Social Welfare in Hard Times* was presented at a conference in London and has since been published (Brannelly and Boulton 2016; 2017). In that paper, we argued that as social science researchers we have emancipatory and democratising ambitions in our work with marginalised groups. Furthermore, we as researchers, not unlike social workers, seek the transformation of our society, transformation that requires meaningful participation on our part, which is politically informed and which is congruent with the need and wishes of the marginalised.

Thus, research can be a very purposeful and conscious decolonising activity. As a Māori researcher, I take the very deliberate stance that the work I do, is and must be, decolonising. As a Māori researcher, I recognise that I am privileged to have been able to work in a space that allows me to pursue a decolonisation agenda. As a Māori researcher, I regard research as a vehicle for the emancipation, the politicisation and the transformation of my people. So how then, do we meaningfully take part in the transformation of our society? What responsibilities do each of us have as researchers, (in my case) or as academics or as social workers? What is the role of the indigenous person in a decolonisation agenda, and what is the role of the settler?

The Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) has, relatively recently, started to consider how to develop more indigenous approaches to professional ethics in social work. The ASSWA has been asking itself, how can the profession of social work in South Africa be “decolonised”; what are the motivations for and challenges of developing indigenous ethics?; and what can we learn from what has happened in other countries that have experienced colonisation? It is hoped that my observations, based both on my research practice as a Māori researcher, and as an academic writer in the area of ethics of care, can contribute to these conversations. However, to do so I must go far beyond the theories of an ethics of care, and convey what it is that makes us, as indigenous people “tick”, what drives us, foregrounding and surfacing of indigenous knowledge, practice and protocols. I must convey our unalienable right to determine our own futures in our own way.

I entitled this keynote **Decolonising Ethics: considerations of power, politics and privilege in Aotearoa/New Zealand**. And I did that because I do not think any conversation about decolonisation or decolonising ethics can get away from the central ideas of power, who has it and in what contexts; of politics and political will, at a national level, at a regional or local level, or at a personal level, and of privilege – again who has it, who does not, in what form is privilege manifested? In order to explore these issues and to try and answer the question posed to me by the conference organisers, I will discuss one specific case study which I have been involved in as a researcher and

as an advocate on the part of our local iwi, our local tribe. The case study illustrates these themes of power, and where power resides, the importance of understanding the political landscape and of understanding privilege. I begin, however, by contextualising that case study, providing a brief outline of our colonial experience as Māori, before turning to a discussion of the ethical principles that underpin the work of my centre, Whakauae Research Services.

New Zealand's Colonial Legacy

Colonial history records that the country we now call New Zealand was first discovered on 13 December 1642 by the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman. However, it was not until Captain James Cook, the British explorer, reached New Zealand in October 1769, circumnavigated the country and then mapped it that colonisation of our country began in earnest (Wikipedia, s.v. "History of New Zealand").

Our oral traditions provide a very different account of how our country was settled, suffice to say as Māori we travelled between our Polynesian homelands, in the South Pacific, and the country we call Aotearoa (the land of the long white cloud) for a thousand years before European explorers came. Following the "discovery" of our land by these explorers, our experience as Māori, the indigenous inhabitants of Aotearoa drastically changed.

A period of rapid colonisation followed as settlers, primarily from Britain, sought lands to establish a new life for themselves. The pace of colonisation was then accelerated following the signing in 1840 of the Treaty of Waitangi by the British Crown and many Māori chiefs. The Treaty of Waitangi is regarded today as one of the founding constitutional documents of our country.

Breaches of that agreement, on the part of the Crown, since the time of signing, have been commonplace and Māori have consistently called for the Treaty to be upheld. It is only recently, in the last forty years, that the Crown has begun to listen to Māori, to take our concerns seriously and to focus on and redress the many breaches that have been identified.

The impact of colonisation included the loss of an economic base, the erosion of political authority, the erosion of Māori autonomy and the destruction of whānau, family cohesion. Land, which Māori regard as both an ancestor to be cared for and a treasure to be held by the collective for the use of future generations, became instead an individually owned commodity within the context of a Western capitalist economy. Colonisation was also responsible for war. The introduction of new diseases took their toll on our peoples and we experienced a drastic decline in our population from a high at the time of first contact which was estimated to be around 90 000 to about 40 000 by the close of the nineteenth century.

Māori left, or were forced off their lands, and settler land acquisition accelerated markedly. This acquisition was aided by deliberate government policies of land sales and confiscations (as a consequence of the so-called land wars) and/or by the government turning a blind eye to settler theft of land. Māori as a people became impoverished.

This period, where the new settlers were making themselves at home was, in turn, followed by post-war urbanisation. During the 1950s we experienced a phenomenon which has come to be known as “urban-drift”; where more of our people left their traditional homelands to become part of the industrial working class. While the country as a whole experienced an economic boom, the experience for Māori was one of leaving one’s tribal lands, heading to the city, leaving behind one’s traditional, culture and customs, including language, and the collectives that sustained them in the past. Many lost their ties to their tribes and sub-tribes.

The detrimental impacts of colonisation on our people are well documented and not unlike those experienced by other indigenous peoples around the world, in Australia, in the Americas, and no doubt in Africa. It is important to remember, however, that colonisation and its impacts are not merely historic artefacts, rather they persist to the present day. We see the effect of colonisation in the suite of health and social indicators we collect and report. Health impacts include shorter life spans when compared to the overall population, as well as a greater burden of disease and ill-health and inferior healthcare experiences when compared to non-Māori. Social impacts include poorer outcomes in all areas from education and employment, to housing and even justice.

Within the context of this very brief colonial history I have outlined, I will give you just one statistic to mull over. It is disquieting although probably not unsurprising for you to learn that despite Māori comprising only 15 per cent of the overall population today, Māori children make up 58 per cent of all children in state care. What is perhaps more alarming, however, is that while the number of Pākehā children (those of colonial or settler descent) in care is reducing, Māori numbers continue to rise suggesting that current approaches to dealing with Māori children are completely ineffective. Furthermore, once in state care there is an increased likelihood that a child will move through the care and protection system (Family Court), to the youth justice (Youth Court) and finally the criminal justice systems (District and High Courts) (Office of the Children’s Commissioner 2015). And it is these children who are the future of our nation (Office of the Children’s Commissioner 2015, 10).

The dire state of Māori children in care evidenced by this data was further illustrated by a study our centre recently completed with a Māori family lawyer. The lawyer, in the course of her work had identified a range of structural and systemic issues with the Family Court system and beyond which urgently needed attention. How and why then, did this lawyer come to our centre to conduct research around the impact of the Family Court system for whānau, as opposed to seeking out a university-based law researcher or an institutional research centre? She approached us to partner in the research because

the centre I run is unique in Aotearoa (New Zealand); it is part of a small but growing body of independent research centres, set up by Māori and run according to Māori philosophies, for the benefit of Māori themselves.

Developing and Implementing a Suite of Indigenous “Ethics”

Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development is the only tribally owned and mandated health research centre in New Zealand. It is completely independent of any university or other research institution. It is a research centre in its own right, and operates under the mantle of a tribe called Ngāti Hauiti.

The Research Centre is run by a small team, comprising only eight staff, five of whom are researchers. However, it competes in exactly the same national grant funding rounds as other university-based academics and research teams, for exactly the same levels of funding. What makes it different from those other teams is that the work we do is not only conducted by Māori, under the direction and guidance of Māori and our Māori leaders, it is also for Māori, and in undertaking it, we are directly accountable to those leaders. As the Head of the centre, I report and am accountable to the tribe for the work done and for the difference that we make in the lives of our people.

The Research Centre operates under a series of research principles which come directly from the tribe we serve, and from Māori protocols, or tikanga, in my language (Te Maru o Ruahine Trust 2003; Whakauae Research Services 2013). These guiding principles are not necessarily unique to our centre. The principles themselves are Māori values, or indeed ethics that are universally understood by Māori throughout the country. The way we interpret and implement these ethics in our work as researchers, however, and how we use these principles to guide our conduct, provides us, as Whakauae, with a distinctive framework by which we can judge the standard of our work and its transformative power.

What then, are these ethical principles? I would argue that we have two sets of principles under which we work, both of which come directly from Māori culture. The first is a set of intrinsic and therefore implicit principles which guides how we work together as Māori, how we treat one another, our conduct and our relationships with one another as colleagues and as whānau, or family – for that is how we see ourselves, as members of a wider whānau of Māori.

These implicit principles or values include:

- Whanaungatanga, which is best understood by the term kinship or relationship. It means that we treat each other and regard each other as members of a wider family and thus accord each member of that family with the respect that they deserve. Furthermore, in understanding there is a relationship of whanaungatanga we also understand that everyone has a role and responsibilities within that family structure.

In knowing this, the family unit can go about its business like a well-oiled machine, where all the parts in that machine are contributing to the whole; which in our case, is the conduct of research.

- Awhi means to cherish, and physically, it means to hug or cuddle someone close. In this sense, along with the word tautoko or support, it means we look after each other, we have each other's backs and we care for members of our team, both in the work that we do and in our personal lives. We look out for each other.
- Kotahitanga means unity and solidarity and in this sense, it means we are united around a single purpose, which for us, is the transformation of Māori lives through excellent research.

While this first set of principles is implicit, and not necessarily written down in our organisational documents, our second set of principals is explicitly expressed in our strategic documents (Whakauae Research Services 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016). These principles guide our ethical conduct, how we approach research, what questions we ask, and how we conduct ourselves in our community and with our research participants. These principles have been handed down to us by the tribal leaders, the leaders of Ngāti Hauiti and are derived from their own traditional teachings and practices from mātauranga Māori, or Māori knowledge.

You will recall I said we have a team of only eight. Six members of the team are Māori, two are Pākehā, in other words non-Māori New Zealanders, whose ancestors were among the first settlers in our country. Of those of us who are Māori, only one, the former Director of the centre, is from Ngāti Hauiti. The others hail from other tribes. So, despite the fact that only a few of us are from Hauiti, and two of the team are in fact Pākehā, we are still able to understand and adhere to these principles, and implement them in the work that we do.

What then, are these explicit principles?

- **Rangatiratanga** is one of the most important concepts in our culture. As a consequence, understanding the principle of rangatiratanga and its enactment is significant not just for our work, but for any Māori individual or collective. Rangatiratanga refers to self-determination, to sovereignty, to agency, to the right to exercise authority. As individuals, we all assert our rangatiratanga over our own lives. We determine what it is to live, to exist, to be who we are. Our collectives, our hapū and iwi, asserted their rangatiratanga over their lands, waterways, food gathering areas, hunting areas, until such time as we were colonised. The concept of rangatiratanga and its standing in our modern socio-political system remains highly contested in our country, in a range of settings, be it environmental law, social policy legislation or child protection law. We interpret rangatiratanga to mean that we will uphold the right of Māori to determine their own aspirations and the pathways for achieving them. In our context, this means that our research is

guided by Māori, the questions that we ask are questions of interest and importance to Māori, and the results are first and foremost, for the benefit of Māori and the Māori position.

- **Manaaki Tangata** refers to the care of all peoples. For us, we interpret this to mean that in all of our activities, our programmes and our relationships, we will uphold the highest standards of care and respect for the people and organisations with whom we interact. So, whether they be research participants, through to the stakeholders who might then use our findings, from Māori whānau to healthcare decision makers, we will work with all in a respectful manner, one which upholds the individual's mana, their own intrinsic worth as human beings.
- **Hauora Tangata** refers to the health of the people, however, another key difference between our culture and that of the Pākehā settlers is that Māori conceive of health in a holistic manner. Health for us is more than the absence of disease. A traditional Māori perspective regards health as all-embracing, encompassing the physical dimension, the spiritual dimension, mental health and the family (Pomare 1986) as well as relationships with, or a connection to, one's culture, to the land and to the environment. At Whakauae we embrace a holistic understanding of what constitutes good health for all. We acknowledge the dimensions of the physical body, spirituality, knowledge and understanding of culture, along with the well-being of the entire whānau and their wider environment as key principles of well-being.
- **Mātauranga** as a direct translation, means knowledge. At Whakauae, we are in the business both of creating new knowledge and preserving the knowledge that has been handed down to us by previous generations. We recognise that knowledge may encompass what we learn in an academic setting, but also other inherited knowledges that we access. Knowledge then, irrespective of the form it takes is, for us, a key enabler of Māori growth and development.
- **Ngākau Tapatahi me te Aurere.** This final principle refers to how we go about our business. The full expression is “Ko te Ngākau Tapatahi me te Aurere, te waka Kōkiri”, which means that when we work together with integrity, our waka, or our canoe, will thrust forward through the waves. So, the concept is that when we all come together as one with integrity and passion we can overcome any obstacles, and move with great speed to achieve our purpose. We interpret this principle to mean that it is through professionalism, integrity, diligence and genuine passion that we aim to build our reputation and make true progress as a research service.

In talking about the principles that guide our work, I hope to demonstrate that for us as Māori, developing a set of indigenous “ethics” as such is not something that we have consciously set out to do. Rather we are guided by our own teachings, knowledge, our tikanga or protocols as Māori. Any collective of Māori, be they a family grouping or

an organisation, a sports team or club will more than likely draw upon a similar set of tikanga or protocols to guide their efforts.

The challenge is not so much in developing our indigenous ethics, but in creating spaces where our ethics, our protocols are equally as valued by non-Māori as by us, and more importantly in ensuring where decisions are made that affect us, then it is our protocols and our ethics that guide the decision-making.

As the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, we lay claim to a set of rights, which derives not only from our political, economic and social structures but from our culture, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, and especially to our rights to our lands, territories and resources, as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2008), a document our country belatedly signed in 2010, two years after its original publication.

The gains that we have made as Māori in our own country have not been achieved without pain and sacrifice. These gains have come as a consequence of years of struggle, protest and hardship. Often our battles, whether physical, or political in nature have been to do with land, the loss of land, and its impact on us as a people, such as in the Land March protests of 1975. However, our battles have also been around our rights to our own language, and where we may use that language, to schooling, education and to the right to preserve and revitalise our culture.

In our struggles to assert these rights, irrespective of the battleground, we act as the collective. The whānau, the sub-tribe, and the tribe all have a role to play. The foundation of any engagement regarding our rights are our elders. Our elders provide the guidance, wisdom and stability which allow us to take on the institutions of power and privilege, the Parliament, Judiciary, and the Government. Often you will see them leading from the front, as in the 1975 Land March protest, which was led by a 79-year-old elder, Whina Cooper. In 30 days, she led the group some 1 000 kilometres to deliver the plea to politicians that not one more acre of Māori land be alienated. However, it is equally likely our elders will be in the background providing strength to our efforts.

I cannot deny that as a people we have made gains. However, in taking the long view, and assessing how far we have come and how much further we have yet to go, how should we look upon the gains we have made? Are they little more than simply a series of indulgences granted by a benevolent benefactor to try and mollify the natives? Or, should we be slightly less cynical and regard the gains we have made as hard-won concessions, reluctantly granted by a series of governments intent on keeping the bulk of the power for itself and its own ends? Or better yet can we regard the gains we have made as a set of unalienable rights, finally honoured by a state that recognises the need for true partnership in our country?

I think there is truth in each of these positions, and we have experienced our success in all of these ways. The ultimate objective, however, is to ensure the last statement becomes the norm – that every gain occurs because our unalienable rights as indigenous

peoples are recognised and the state desires to work with us in true partnership. Only then will we become the self-determining, and autonomous collectives within our own country we desire to be.

I use the following case study to illustrate both how far we have come, and how much further we have yet to go.

Employing Māori Ethics to Guide Social Policy Development – The Case of Oranga Tamariki

Māori society is structured around collectives; a complex network of interdependent relations, relationships, defined roles and obligations. The most basic of these collectives is whānau, comprising family members sharing a common ancestry (or whakapapa, in my language) as well as a fundamental connection to the land. Whānau are inextricably linked to the wider kinship groupings of hapū (sub-tribe) and ultimately the iwi (tribe). Whakapapa establishes collective identity and carries with it a related responsibility for the well-being of the whole. The notion of collectivism is integral to self-determination. Collective self-determination speaks to the right of Māori to exercise authority with respect to their culture, aspirations and destiny.

In traditional Māori society children were regarded as a treasured part of the extended family and were raised and taught through input from the collective (Brown 2017). We did not have a culture of abusing our children, rather they were cared for, loved and nurtured not just by their immediate parents but also by their grandparents and indeed the wider family and tribal community. It is not until after colonisation, that child abuse and domestic violence became a part of the Māori lived experience. The introduction of alcohol and other drugs, the displacement of whole families from their traditional lands and the oppression of language and culture which we have experienced since colonisation have all played a part in breaking down traditional child-rearing practices. Long-term, multigenerational unemployment and economic hardship have also played a part in destroying the foundational collective in Māori society – the whānau, or family.

In July 2017, the New Zealand Government promulgated the new Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Act 2017 which included extensive amendments to the long-standing Children's and Young People's Well-Being Act 1989 (Oranga Tamariki Act 1989) (New Zealand Legislation 2017). The new Act, which ostensibly seeks to provide for the care and protection of Māori children, is a clear case of what can occur when the values and principles of one culture are subsumed under another, more dominant, more powerful culture: the culture that controls the mechanisms of state, the judiciary, and service provision.

The new Act came about as the result of recommendations made to the Government by an independent expert panel established in 2015 and charged with reviewing the entire child care and protection system (Ministry of Social Development 2017). None of the

members of this panel were Māori, in spite of the fact that it was well established that two thirds of the children in care were Māori.

Based on the recommendations of that panel, however, the Government determined that “a bold and urgent overhaul of the care and protection and youth justice systems was required”. Hence new legislation was drafted. Given the numbers of Māori children in state care, no one can doubt there is a crisis. However, rather than adopt a position whereby Māori were asked for the solutions to this problem, the state in its wisdom drafted new legislation, and only then began a process of consultation with Māori for input into the new legislation. Māori opposition to elements of this draft legislation is a matter of record (Justice Iwi Leaders Group 2017).

Clearly the existing child care and protection system was failing Māori. I have already intimated the inevitability of that failure, given colonisation has critically undermined Māori society, including the role of whānau, hapū and iwi in the care and protection of tamariki. The state sought a solution to the failure of its child care and protection system with scant regard for the voices of those most impacted, and certainly with little semblance of adopting a partnership approach.

As an aside, I would also note that public rhetoric unsurprisingly has centred around the failure of Māori to care for and protect their children by contributing to “the need” for the state to more decisively step in and put in place new legislation to deal with this crisis. So, more widely among our society the fault is seen to lie with Māori themselves who are characterised as being “mad, bad and sad” (Turia 2006).

Earlier in this paper I referred to a study we conducted with a family lawyer who, after years of experience working with Māori families whose children had been taken into state care, decided that something needed to be done to improve outcomes for Māori. To her mind the best people to ask about how to “fix” our care and protection system was those whom it affected most – namely the Māori whānau who had had their children uplifted. The research we carried out in partnership with this lawyer, aimed to investigate state care and protection issues from the perspective of the whānau, the family.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the whānau we interviewed also called for changes to the system. The changes they wanted to see included the ability to have a greater say in what happened to their children, once they have been removed by the state; and greater opportunities to get their children back from state care. But what was really interesting was that these whānau also identified when the system worked well – and the things that made the system work well from the perspective of these Māori families were not rocket science. According to our research, where the system worked well was when state agents communicated effectively, included whānau in decision-making, treated whānau with respect, provided understandable and consistent information, assumed responsibility for their own failings, held others accountable, and minimised process delays (Boulton et al. 2018).

At the third reading of the bill, the Minister for Children concluded that this was in fact “critical legislation” providing the foundations for a “child-centred care and protection system” (Tolley 2017). In contrast, Māori have argued that the legislation seeks to significantly weaken Māori participation in decision-making, and remove the priority of placing Māori children with their whānau, their families, their hapū, sub-tribes or with their iwi, tribes. The legislation removes a set of obligations on the state whereby Māori families had the right to be included in decisions regarding their children and instead now provides only that whānau, hapū, and iwi can participate in decision-making and that consideration is given to that child or young person’s place in the wider collective. In contrast to the earlier legislation whereby the state was required to actively consult with Māori, the new legislation clearly signals that the active participation of Māori is no longer viewed as part of the solution. The removal of these positive obligations is unacceptable and is directly contradictory to recognising the importance of whakapapa, or genealogy and the practice of whanaungatanga, of kinships and relationships.

We know that Māori must be part of the solution if we are ever to reduce the number of Māori children in care. Despite a range of formal and informal consultation measures being used, Māori voices were not, and in this case, are not, being heard.

Interestingly enough, only two days before this conference, the issue of violence against children was once again in the New Zealand media. At that time, a well-respected Māori leader and former Chief Executive of Women’s Refuge, in talking about the state response to the care and protection of Māori children, noted “you can’t just pluck those children away and say sink or swim to the families” (Raukawa-Tait 2017). In other words, Raukawa-Tait was emphasising that any intervention into the lives of Māori children must take consideration of the needs of the wider whānau, hapū and iwi from whence those children came, and that the state must have a long-term strategy of returning the child to the family and to their culture. The forced removal of a child, albeit into a place without violence, does not solve the underlying issues which assail many of our Māori families, but rather only further serves to traumatise them.

Decolonising Ethics

So, what might the process, and indeed the outcome, have looked like, if a set of decolonising ethics were applied in the decision-making process surrounding this legislation? Can we even determine a set of decolonising ethics for this one case study?

We have, as Māori, experienced decades of having the heart ripped out of our collectives. Our people have been decimated, our land lost to us, and our tribal and sub-tribal groupings have become fractured with the loss of our land base. Our traditional skills, knowledge and wisdom about parenting have been assailed through a process of colonisation spurred on by Anglo-Christian teachings regarding appropriate parenting. The new Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation

Act 2017 in its very purpose statement seeks the “well-being and best interests of the child or young person” (New Zealand 2017). But it tries to do so in the absence of culture and a Māori world view of the nature of the child, and the child’s relationship with whānau (family), with hapū (sub-tribe) and with iwi (tribe).

I contend that, given our knowledge of Māori world views, and knowing the imperatives of the state, we can in fact conceptualise a set of decolonising ethics that could have guided decision-making in this instance.

While this is in no way an exhaustive list, or even a list based on empirical evidence gathering, it could be considered a starting point for further discussion and reflection. If I were to think of this case study alone, i.e. the development of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Tamariki Oranga) Legislation Act 2017, these are the things I might have wanted to have seen, which would have led to a better outcome for Māori whānau, hapū and iwi:

- an acknowledgement of power-dynamics and a conscious choice to share power. Recognising that in this particular case, as in many others, there is a clear power imbalance between Māori and the state, that there are structural and systemic reasons for this imbalance and that to ensure equity, greater investment and resource must be provided to the “other Treaty partner”, i.e. Māori;
- provision of space for the exercise of self-determination. The state must recognise that Māori have the right and the ability to determine their life choices, and the best way to care for their children, whānau (family), hapū iwi (sub-tribe/tribe);
- recognition of privilege where it exists and the willingness to relinquish that privilege. And in talking about privilege I am referring to the “systematic accrual of advantage by a social or ethnic group”, in other words, conferred privilege and structural advantage;
- the creation of avenues for meaningful participation. It is not enough to put one Māori on a decision-making body when the remainder of that body comprise non-Māori, and then expect anything significant is going to change for us. Real participation includes relinquishing the power and the privilege alluded to before, considering forums, times and ways of meeting and decision-making that may be more culturally appropriate for Māori;
- an acknowledgement of and a respect for the diversity of views that arise when one comes from a different cultural world view; and
- creation of solutions together, between Māori and the state.

Can these be considered decolonising ethics? If we agree that ethics are a set of moral principles that governs a person’s behaviour or the conduct of an activity, then certainly this set of statements would be a useful starting point for any conversation with Māori

about how to best care for and protect Māori children, or indeed any other issue of concern to Māori.

Conclusion

Juanita Sherwood, an Aboriginal scholar from Australia, talks about “decolonisation as a strategy of and for Indigenous sovereignty, dignity and wellbeing” (Sherwood 2010, 63). The ethics of decolonisation, the underlying principles that drive a decolonisation agenda, must be in harmony with the objectives of decolonisation itself. If the ethics that guide our work are contrary to the aims of the work, we will never succeed. Rather we are more likely to perpetuate the very power structures, the systems, the privileges and the outcomes that are manifested today.

My challenge to you in southern Africa is to consider how, and in what ways, the moral code you bring to your work perpetuates colonisation. Have you examined and truly reflected on not just your practices, but the values that underpin that practice? Are you able, through your work and the values that you exhibit and practise on a day-to-day basis, to contribute to an agenda of liberation, of emancipation and of decolonisation for indigenous peoples? In what ways can you and do you support indigenous peoples in their efforts towards self-determination?

Linda Smith, a Māori scholar, academic, and leader who has worked in this space for many years, sums up the challenges that we all face when we engage with the decolonisation agenda. She observes that “there are always lessons to be learned in the process of decolonizing – it is not enough simply to hope or to desire change. Systemic change, the type of change that is required so we don’t keep passing legislation which ignores the rights of Māori as self-determining peoples, systemic change, she notes, requires capability, leadership, support, time, courage, reflexivity, determination and compassion” (Smith 2012, xiii).

I encourage you all, no matter what role you play – be it as a policymaker, practitioner, academic, or researcher, to be the ones that build that capability, to be those leaders, to provide that support, to give that time, to show that courage, to be reflexive in your practice, and to be determined in your objectives and compassionate in your efforts to create a better future for us all, but especially for our children, for it is our children who are our future.

References

- Boulton, A., G. Potaka-Osborne, L. Cvitanovic, and T. Williams Blyth. 2018. “E tipu E rea: The Care and Protection of Indigenous (Māori) Children – Indigenous Child Welfare and Well-being.” *New Zealand Family Law Journal* 3: 3–6, 26.

- Brannelly, T., and A. Boulton. 2016. "Care Ethics and Indigenous Values: Political, Tribal, Personal." Paper presented at the Ethics and Social Welfare in Hard Times: 10th Anniversary Conference for the Ethics and Social Welfare Journal, London, 1–2 September.
- Brannelly, T., and A. Boulton. 2017. "The Ethics of Care and Transformational Research Practices in Aotearoa New Zealand." *Qualitative Research* 17 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117698916>.
- Brown, R. 2017. "Eat? Love? Pray!! Māori and Pacific Whānau Coping Mechanisms and Strategies for Dealing with a Child with a Life-Threatening Medical Condition." PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology.
- Justice Iwi Leaders Group. 2017. Submission to the Select Committee on Social Services on the Children, Young Persons, and their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Bill. Wellington: Justice Iwi Leaders Group.
- Ministry of Social Development 2017. *Investing in Children Programme*. Accessed 28 September 2017. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/investing-in-children/>.
- New Zealand Legislation. 2017. *Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Act 2017 (2017 No 31)*. Accessed 24 April 2018. <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0024/118.0/DLM147088.html>.
- Office of the Children's Commissioner. 2015. *State of Care 2015: What we Learnt from Monitoring Child Youth and Family*. Wellington: New Zealand.
- Raukawa-Tait, M. 2017. Television Interview, 3 October 2017.
- Sherwood, J. 2010. "Do No Harm: Decolonising Aboriginal Health Research." PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales.
- Smith, L. T. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. London: Zed Books.
- Te Maru o Ruahine Trust. 2003. *Ngā Taonga o Kahukura: A Strategy Advancing Hauititanga*. Rātā: Te Maru o Ruahine Trust.
- Tolley, A. 2017. *Second Care Reform Bill Passes Third Reading*. Accessed 29 September 2017. <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/second-care-reform-bill-passes-third-reading>.
- Turia, T. 2006. "To be Māori – A Truly Revolutionary Action." The Health Research Council Annual Hui (Hui Whakapiripiri), Wellington, 11 August. Accessed 26 April 2018. <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0608/S00195.htm>.
- UN (United Nations). 2008. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Accessed 24 April 2018. http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.
- Whakauae Research Services. 2013. *Strategic Plan for 1st January 2014 – 31st December 2018*. Whanganui: Whakauae Research Services.
- Whakauae Research Services. 2014. *Annual Report*. Whanganui: Whakauae Research Services.

Whakauae Research Services. 2015. *Annual Report*. Whanganui: Whakauae Research Services.

Whakauae Research Services. 2016. *Annual Report*. Whanganui: Whakauae Research Services.

Wikipedia, s.v. "History of New Zealand," last modified 20 April 2018, 18:45,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_New_Zealand.