

Chapter 13

Assimilation and difference: A Māori story

Georgina Tuari Stewart

Introduction

This chapter continues an ongoing exploration of what it means to be Māori today, as an example of living cultural difference, even after several generations of my people having spent their entire lifetimes under British settler derived conditions. The 19th-century British colonisation of Māori was based on policies of assimilation of Māori to British-imposed conditions. The two names for one country are used strategically in this chapter, to recognise that “New Zealand was created in Aotearoa by the British” (Willmott, 1989, p. 2). In the emerging modern nation-state of New Zealand, Māori were expected to abandon their traditional lifeways and conform to European/White norms. Claims of cultural difference such as those in this chapter are made by Māori people who are, to all outward appearances, fully assimilated to the dominant Western culture of New Zealand today. But the assumption of ‘full’ assimilation overlooks symbolic culture, seeing ‘culture’ only in tangible forms such as clothing, food, technology, and so on. So in this chapter I want to bring an analytical microscope to the concepts of cultural assimilation and cultural difference, as applied to a person (such as myself) who identifies as Māori today, in the brave bicultural new world of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The key argument of this chapter, which I will pursue through both original narratives and close readings of credible sources, is that Māori identity as cultural difference still exists today, but over time has increasingly moved towards symbolic levels of ethnic culture, and incorporates a strong element of ‘struggle’ (Webster, 1998), such that political subjugation is part-and-parcel of Māori identity, almost independent of personal financial circumstances. One effect of this link is that even being in a privileged position such as a senior university academic does not protect a Māori person

from racism in the workplace. As such, this chapter is written as Māori testimony. It is not trying to be a resource for White educators, but if found useful for such a purpose, well and good.

Colonisation of Māori is generally glossed in national discourse as having 'saved' Māori from extinction, and/or vastly improving Māori lives. The ill effects on Māori of being alienated from their traditional lands is being recognised through the Waitangi Tribunal, and the state also recognises its responsibility to help protect the endangered Māori language from extinction, but less obvious are the losses that Māori have suffered as a result of becoming alienated, to greater or lesser extent, from traditional Māori knowledge and ways of thinking (Jackson, 1992). Colonisation by assimilation aims for Māori becoming the same as non-Māori, thereby deleting distinct Māori identity. After WWII the state's official policy softened to 'incorporation' and 'integration' but these modified, rather than transformed, the overwhelming direction of assimilation (Hunn, 1961).

Assimilation is so strongly embedded in Māori experience that it is seldom even mentioned, being either assumed or ignored. Using my own experiences and observations as one source of data, I approach the question of Māori assimilation and difference using a combination of two major theoretical traditions: Kaupapa Māori - the word 'kaupapa' has many levels of meaning, from 'base' to 'topic' to 'philosophy,' as explained in the next paragraph (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2011), and philosophy of education, as interpreted in the local academy (Marshall, 1987; Roberts, 2015). These two traditions underpin my research framework and an approach to collecting and analysing data that opens space for 'autoethnography' as explained in the paragraph after the next one, and 'writing as a method' (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018) which I extend to Māori/Indigenous research (Stewart, 2021b). I collect and analyse various sources, data and insights to produce 'layered texts' (Rath, 2012) in an approach I call 'Kaupapa Māori Autoethnography' (Stewart, 2023).

Kaupapa Māori theory originated as a set of principles associated with an Indigenous community-driven form of education in Aotearoa (the Māori part of New Zealand), which was seeded in the

early 1980s and has since grown into a widespread social and intellectual movement (Hoskins and Jones, 2017). In thought and action, Kaupapa Māori is based on the principles of being:

- related to ‘being Māori’;
- connected to Māori philosophy and principles;
- committed to the legitimacy of Māori language and culture; and
- concerned with ‘the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well being’

(G. H. Smith, cited in Smith, 1999, p. 185).

Kaupapa Māori research methodology can be placed like a lens or filter across a method like autoethnography, because although it guides research paradigm and ethics, Kaupapa Māori does not specify any particular data collection methods that must (or must not) be used in research.

Autoethnographic methods have great potential to be more widely used in Kaupapa Māori research, especially by those researchers who are immersed and/or expert in their topics.

About te reo Māori in this chapter: Te reo Māori is an important plank of Māori identity, so is an essential feature of Kaupapa Māori research, as spelled out in the principles discussed prior. In this chapter, Māori words are in plain font, in line with the status of te reo Māori as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand (New Zealand Government, 1987), and supported by the principle of sociolinguistics to the effect that normalising indigenous languages is a legitimate practice (May, 2012). Māori words (excluding names) are translated in brackets on first appearance; Māori words used more than once in the text are also listed in a glossary immediately following the main text.

Autoethnography and other recent post-qualitative methodologies (Adams and Herrmann, 2020; St. Pierre, 2018) emerged as a result of the ‘crisis of representation’ in research and theory, which destabilized the authority of the text and the autonomy of the author. In qualitative research, these changes greatly increased the importance of positionality – that is, the relationship between the researcher and the research. Autoethnography is a leading research methodology that aspires to

complete the mission of qualitative research by stepping fully out of the shadows cast by science over educational research, in particular questions about truth and the reliability of findings.

To record and study one's own life under the banner of autoethnography inevitably involves a significant element of narrative writing, in the form of biographies and vignettes based on one's experiences, thereby bringing narrative genres more centrally into research and scholarship in education. This chapter includes the most extensive account of my personal history of any of my academic writings to date. In the next section I am capitalising on my side role in my personal life as a whānau (extended family) researcher and holder of information about family history. This other role allows me to give a more detailed account than in previous writing of the basis upon which a typical Māori person (such as myself) understands their ethnic identity today. In writing about my life, I am reminded that all writing, including scholarly writing, is a 'curation' - a few points or snippets, carefully selected from the whole 'buzzing' stream of one's experience of reality.

As a Māori person undertaking educational research, for whom Kaupapa Māori is 'home ground,' I also find value in 'philosophy of education' and 'autoethnography' based on my personal experience as one of just a handful of Māori-speaking qualified teachers of senior school science. My research builds on my history of involvement since 1993 with teaching, developing and researching Pūtaiao, the Māori science curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2020; Stewart, 2020), eventually completing a doctorate on this topic, reading curriculum theory and philosophy of science and inventing the original concept of 'Kaupapa Māori Science' as a local critique of science (Stewart, 2007).

The central curriculum question for Pūtaiao concerns the relationship between science and Māori knowledge - an extremely complex, deeply philosophical question, which demands consideration of the impact of science on all aspects of contemporary education practice and theory, yet is consistently, problematically reduced to a binary question: 'Is Māori knowledge a form of science,

or not?’ (Stewart, 2019). The problem is that this question has no correct ‘hard’ or scientific answer, due to the slippage in meaning of its constituent terms. The only truthful answer is “it depends” on how we are defining both science and Māori knowledge. To investigate this relationship requires sound arguments supported by reliable evidence, as demonstrated in the breach by the history of published debate, in which many authors (both scientists and Māori writers) fail adequately to represent either one or both forms of knowledge.

In this chapter I am grappling with a linked set of complex concepts: binaries, representation, authenticity, relativism. To study the question of Māori cultural assimilation opens up to all these concepts. First of all, it raises the questions discussed prior: ‘What is a Māori?’ and ‘Do Māori still exist today?’ Next come the questions: ‘Can anyone become a Māori?’ ‘Who counts as ‘real’ Māori?’ and ‘Who owns the definition of ‘Māori’?’ (Stewart-Harawira, 1993). Underpinning all of these questions is the ‘hoary chestnut’ of relativism vs universalism, and whether philosophical universalism is actually a disguise for majoritarianism, including the White patriarchy. I will pick up these questions again in the penultimate section, below.

I am interested in probing such philosophical questions using auto-writing in the form of original stories and vignettes of experience, cognisant of the description of stories by Thomas King (2003) as both ‘wondrous’ and ‘dangerous’. Story can bring the reader up close and personal to confront a complex topic, embedded in complex socioeconomic systems and assumptions, and thus acts as a powerful teaching tool. Story as a genre transgresses the usual standards to which academic research is held, yet is acknowledged as a universal and ancient form of teaching and learning (Herman, 2003). To write about one’s own experiences is inevitably done in the form of stories. In Māori research, the identity of the researcher is always of interest, so the following section introduces me, and the background I bring to this work.

Antecedents to my personal identity as Māori

I grew up in a bicultural Māori-Pākehā (New Zealand European) family in 1960-1970s Auckland and received an excellent education in the state schools in Aotearoa-New Zealand. My parents had bought the ‘worst house in the street’ as our family home, so as to be just inside the Grammar Zone, the area of Auckland where children could by right attend the city’s oldest and most prestigious secondary (high) schools. An annual school census is one of my childhood memories of being marked as Māori. At school assembly, it would be announced that all Māori students had to stay behind after assembly. This annual ritual was lonely, since I was invariably the only student from my class to stay behind to be counted. I felt like I had to mentally ‘grit my teeth’ and stand up for my right to self-identify as Māori, despite (or because of) being in the top class in my year. It was a point in the school year where my ethnic difference from my classmates came into focus. This ethnic census is one way the national education system ‘performs’ Māori ethnicity. That experience (among others) triggered an inchoate inner sense of the questions I am still investigating today, including in this chapter.

One important childhood memory is a family discussion about ‘how much Māori’ we were. My father counted himself three-quarters Māori (but see below) so from him we were $\frac{3}{8}$. Adding on the $\frac{1}{32}$ from my mother, we decided we were ‘three-and-a-bit eighths’ or ‘just under half.’ It was a potent fractions lesson: right away I resolved to myself that I would ‘marry a Māori’ so my children would not again have their ‘blood’ halved. Decades later, my two siblings and I all have children with full Māori partners; a surprising claim given the strength of the notion that no ‘full’ Māori remain alive, yet entirely reasonable if Māori identity is understood as an ethnicity, rather than through the racist pseudo-concept of ‘race’.

The dominant notion of Māori identity as based on a ‘fraction’ of a person’s ‘blood’ is racist because it falls prey to the pseudo-concept of ‘race’ as a scientific or real category, determined by a biological essence to do with something physical such as the ‘blood’ or ‘genes’ of an individual.

The notion of Māori identity as ethnicity, on the other hand, is more about the self-identity with which we grow up. I think that if a person's four grandparents understand themselves as Māori, one is full Māori in an ethnic sense. This is not a full and final definition of what it means to be Māori, but it suggestively illuminates the nature of ethnicity as a self-understanding of belonging to a particular cultural group within the society/country/nation of one's upbringing.

In early New Zealand (here purposely using the name of the colony) the children of Māori mothers and British/White fathers often grew up in Māori whānau (extended families) and were culturally and ethnically Māori. My paternal great-grandfather Paraika Tuari (transliteration of Frank Stewart) was one such. His father, John Timothy Mangles Stewart (1826-1891) was a shipman of Scottish ancestry from across the Tasman Sea in Australia, who plied a trade in Northland kauri timber for the booming housing markets of Sydney, Melbourne and the other Eastern seaboard Australian cities, in the same vessel in which his father, Thomas Stewart (senior), had left Bristol, England, in 1839 with his wife, children and in-laws, bringing them to colonial Australia. John's oldest brother, Thomas Stewart (junior) stayed and lived out his life in New Zealand, a well-known early European settler at Ngunguru, on the coast east of Whangarei, where kauri logs cut in the local forests were brought by river to the coast.

After his father John Stewart had left Northland for the last time, Paraika was born in 1859 and grew up with his mother, Mere, amidst the iwi (people, kingroup) of her second husband, ranking local ancestor Waata Te Maru, at Whananaki, a stunningly beautiful coastal village, further north up the same coast from Ngunguru. Paraika took after his Stewart side, with fair skin and greenish eyes, but was an accomplished native speaker of te reo Māori and a person of mana (prestige) in both Māori and Pākehā circles of the Whangarei district of the late 1800s and early 1900s. He was well-known amongst the coastal whānau, still living on their ancestral lands (now 'millionaire row' beach homes owned by wealthy Pākehā) for travelling the rohe (district) by walking up and down the coast, his white sandshoes hanging around his neck, stopping in at each beach to visit the kāinga

(Māori homesteads) between Taiharuru to the south and Whangaruru to the north. Paraika really did not show his age; in his 90s he was still taken as being in his 60s. Paraika died in the early morning of the 4th of October, 1954, at Pātaua (one of those kāinga), at the back steps of an old house that still stands there today. At the time it was the home of his cousin, Ngaronoa Mahanga. In his memory, the Mahanga whānau buried Paraika's pipe, set in concrete, by those steps.

Paraika and Ema, a woman from Wainui (see story below), had a son, my grandfather, whose name was Nuku Stewart (1899 - 1960). In the late 1910s Nuku was betrothed by the elders in the indigenous Māori custom of 'tomo' to a highly-ranked Māori woman from Matauri, by the name of Tangiaranui Te Karaka (1900 - 1981). Nuku and Tangi went on to have 15 children born between 1919 and 1941, of whom one was my father, Wiremu (Wina) Stewart (1927 - 2007).

My father was a native speaker of te reo Māori: it was his first language he learned as a small child in his home. He spent the first few years of his life living with grandparent figures in a Māori whare (the word here meaning a handmade shack) with a dirt floor. By the time of my childhood, my father was working in Auckland as an owner-operator with Co-op Taxis. I remember as a child watching his mouth moving silently as he read the newspaper. He told me about learning English on turning five and going to school, and how he was 'given the supplejack' (hit with pieces of a vine cut from the local bush) by the teachers when they heard him speak a word or two to his siblings in Māori, which school rules considered 'swearing'. He told me about moving as a young man from his home in Northland to live in Auckland, and the culture shock of that move. For many years he translated English into his own reo (language) in his head as he conversed with others. He recalled being married to my mother, his second wife (his first wife was also a native Māori speaker, from Rotorua) before he could converse in English without that mental translation process.

With my family background of both my mother and her mother being teachers and avid readers, as well as poets, from an early age I enjoyed generous access to books, and reading was my first and

abiding favourite activity or ‘passion’ as we would say today. So, teaching was ‘in my blood’, but it was not my first career choice - that became to help save the Takahē (a flightless native bird) from extinction, after reading *Two in the Bush* by Gerald Durrell. When I left secondary school in 1978, that impulse saw me enrol in a Bachelor of Science degree at Auckland University, resulting in a first class MSc in organic chemistry in 1981. Following that, I worked first as a research technician in the Cancer Research Laboratory in the Auckland Medical School, and later in sales and customer support of chemical analysis equipment.

At the end of 1988, I left my job and went north to live at Matauri in an effort to reconnect with ‘my Māori side’ from which I felt I had moved too far away for comfort. From there, I went further north to live with Mangu Awarau at Waimanoni, near Kaitaia, where I first heard about Kura Kaupapa Māori (Kaupapa Māori schools) and extended my limited earlier knowledge of te reo me ngā tikanga (Māori language and customs). In 1991, I returned to Auckland and completed secondary (high school) teacher training at Auckland College of Education. After a year teaching Te Reo Māori at Onehunga High School, in 1993 I was appointed as an inaugural teacher at one of the first Māori-medium secondary schools, Te Wharekura o Hoani Waititi Marae, in Oratia, West Auckland, until wanting to live in Te Taitokerau (Northland) drew me to take up the Head of Māori position at Tikipunga High School in Whangarei in 1996.

My teaching and ongoing involvement with various national curriculum projects in Māori-medium education spurred me on to enrol part-time in doctoral studies in 2001 for a chance to investigate the Māori science curriculum. After graduating in 2007 I held short-term research positions before being appointed in 2010 as a Lecturer in Education, University of Auckland, based at the Tai Tokerau campus in Whangarei. In mid-2016 I moved to AUT in Auckland, where I am **now** **currently an Associate** Professor in **Māori Philosophy of Education, in** Te Ara Poutama, the Māori faculty.

I have developed a delineation of Māori philosophy that pays attention to the symbolic level of culture in colonising histories (Stewart, 2021a). Māori Philosophy as I understand it considers how identifying as Māori and working with Māori knowledge influence one's everyday thinking about social matters of all kinds. I use the Kaupapa Māori principles discussed prior to guide a process of critically reading through and past the chauvinism of Eurocentrism and patriarchy found in most published work on Māori. I think of this approach as rehabilitating and repurposing older (Eurocentric) scholarship about Māori philosophy for indigenous scholars and their work, under the umbrella of the Kaupapa Māori intellectual project.

My research explores Kaupapa Māori approaches to blending narrative and analytical genres and registers, within an overall concept of writing as a Maori/Indigenous method of inquiry (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2018; Stewart, 2021). The following two previously unpublished autoethnographic vignettes are attempts to use the power of 'story' to illustrate contemporary Māori difference, as I know it.

Story 1: Te hikoi ngāhere - The bush walk

May, 1993: I had been appointed as the inaugural teacher of Pūtaiao (Science) at one of the first Māori-medium secondary schools to be recognised by the state schooling system - Te Wharekura o Hoani Waititi Marae, situated at Parris Park in Oratia, Waitakere City, West Auckland. It so happened that an elder from Tūhoe (kingroup name) was living nearby; I was put in contact, had an initial visit, and arranged a bush walk with the students (a small group of about 15). In retrospect, it is unfortunate that I did not arrange to record this trip on video, or even photographs and audio files. All I have at this distance of time are my memories.

At the time I felt under pressure to come up with an answer to the question: 'What is Māori science?' I remember feeling a sense of longing for the elder who was leading us to finally delineate for me what Māori science actually is. On the day, we met up at the Arataki visitor centre in the

Waitakere ranges and went for a walk in the ngāhere (forest/bush) along the well-constructed pathways. As we walked into the bush, the elder spoke about his connections to the various plants we encountered. He told us stories about going into the ngāhere as a young child with his grandmother to collect plants for rongoā (herbal medicines), and so forth. I was experiencing an intense inner cognitive dissonance between my teaching subject of 'Science' and the stories the elder was telling, but I kept silent, and tried not to show how I was feeling. That query took years of reading and thinking before I knew the answer: 'Māori science' is more of a political than an epistemic concept; a provocation, rather than a useful element for a model of Māori or indigenous thought (Stewart, 2022).

In retrospect, that field trip to the ngāhere was a classic example of the gap between Māori knowledge (by which I mean the same as Mātauranga Māori) and 'Science' as per the secondary school curriculum. That experience (and others) made me realise the problem of trying to equate Māori knowledge with science. The elder spoke about his Māori knowledge of the native plant species by telling 'holistic' stories of his life, not filtered through the sieve of science criteria. Someone like this elder who is Māori by upbringing does not necessarily have a perspective from which they can theorise their identity in terms that make sense in a 'science' framework. Māori knowledge as demonstrated by the elder is non-abstracted, non-theorised knowledge, part and parcel of a holistic sense of reality as a simple rendition of 'ontology' - as well as epistemology as theory of knowledge, and ethics as a framework to guide right action in the world.

The elder was from Ngāi Tūhoe (kingroup name), the children of the vast Urewera forest in the mountainous heart of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. He demonstrated that Māori knowledge is still within living memory, in contradiction to the assimilationist propaganda of the dominant national discourses. According to dominant ideologies, all things Māori are inferior to all things Pākehā, and 'real' Māori died off from 'natural causes' many generations ago. All this experience of struggle and resistance at symbolic and intellectual levels is captured in my notion of

Māori philosophy, described prior. While Māori have been subject to more subtle forms of colonisation, compared with Indigenous peoples in Australia, South Africa, etc, the underlying thinking beneath all forms of colonising ideology has been the same.

Story 2: Te whakanui i te kotahi rautau o te wharenuī - Celebrating the centenary of the meeting house

December, 2021: It is the end of a long hard year in my role as a senior Māori academic at one of the local universities. Like every other university in the international Anglophone academy, we have been badly impacted by the pandemic and response; international students and research, on which we rely, have been the most affected.

A date has been in my diary since last summer for the centenary celebrations of the wharenuī (meeting house) at our marae (Māori community centre) in Wainui, Whangaroa, Te Taitokerau Northland. By the time the date arrives, the pandemic response has meant working off-campus for about four months. A recent change in the national public health settings means there are no travel restrictions within the region, but strict legal limits on the numbers of people at events. I set off alone after lunch on the Friday, and a few hours later arrive at the village at the top of the hill leading down to the beach, where my sister lives in the house left to us by our father. It is great to catch up after so long apart, and we raise a few glasses of gorgeous Marlborough sav blanc.

The pandemic restrictions have resulted in the centenary celebrations adopting an unusual programme for the day, consisting of several sequential pōwhiri or welcome ceremonies for the peoples (hapū or marae) of the surrounding areas, focusing on those ‘under the mountain’ of Whakarārā - our local maunga (mountain - indigenous Māori identities are associated with local landmarks such as peaks and rivers), so uninspiring up close, yet visible at distance in all directions from sea or land. The first ceremony is timed for pre-dawn, for locals and experts; we decide to attend that one. The alarm goes off at 3.15 am and I briefly consider saying I can’t go, as I feel

terrible, but I soldier on and have a quick shower, make a cup of tea and wake my sister. We get ready and go an hour later into the ‘dark before the dawn’ time. We travel separately since we must head off in different directions from there. I follow her a few kilometres down the coastal road, then turn inland towards one of our family’s two main ancestral marae. These are places I have visited and known intimately for as long as I can remember.

Our marae are just like those dotted around all over the north; none of them have any carvings, apart from the tourist-oriented ones at Waitangi, and the war memorial-funded Ōtiria marae in Moerewa. Many of the existing buildings on the smaller marae around the north were made by hand by the local people, including our uncles, in the period between WWI and WWII, when the wood cut down by hand was converted to building timber at small local mills. Our Wainui marae is for the kingroup (hapū) who know ourselves as Ngātiruamahue—the descendants of the ancestress Muimui, a survivor from the hapū (kingroup, often glossed as ‘sub-tribe’) of Ngare Raumati, who were wiped out by inter-tribal warfare in the early 1800s, before the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Māori name for the Treaty of Waitangi, 1840). This small handmade building that we call the wharenuī (meeting house - lit. ‘large house’) was opened in December 1921, almost exactly one hundred years ago to the day on which we are heading there now.

Mainly through social media, I have been following the progress over the previous months as the locals (i.e. my whānau) have defied pandemic restrictions and winter weather to complete extensive renovations: replacing and enlarging the concrete footpaths around the buildings; repairing all damages and replacing some of the wooden surfaces and windows; new carpets, blinds, and of course fresh paint inside and out. In the last few weeks on social media I had seen talk of carvings and warnings (especially to women) to stay clear. As with all the small community marae I know of in Te Taitokerau Northland, our wharenuī has stood, simple and uncarved, bereft of any Māori iconography, since all carvings and other decorative elements such as tukutuku (patterned woven wall panels) were ordered to be destroyed by early European missionaries (mainly Anglican and

Catholic) who infiltrated the peoples of Northland very early on, before encountering other iwi in other parts of Aotearoa. Our wharenuī building is so small and homely I was finding it difficult to imagine what it could possibly look like as a whare carved in the traditional Māori style. For some reason, I got the idea that a pou (carved pole) may have been erected near the building, rather than carvings affixed to the building itself.

We park up and walk through the dark towards where indistinct voices and shadows of people are gathering in knots, slowly forming and moving towards the position at the end of the path leading up from the carpark to the wharenuī. We stand about with our old friend the (Māori) Bishop, and others. Many cars are already parked, and we can vaguely make out a group of people seated to one side of the main building. Behind and to one side is some light and activity from the kitchen, and from around the back the hāngi (earth oven) fire sends up sparks like fireworks into the crisp dark air. A car pulls into the spot next to us and another old friend, now an elder expert in the Māori world, gets out.

In the glimmering of the pre-dawn over the hills surrounding this peaceful inland valley, the wānanga (focused discussion) emerges; a kaupapa (process) is outlined, an opening karakia (prayer) is offered, and our group turns to move purposefully towards the whare. In the next minute or so I have one of those strange experiences one can only attribute to the spiritual-metaphysical aspects of being human. All I am doing is walking slowly, next to my sister, up this little path I have walked so many times before. My eyes are transfixed by the indistinct sight ahead of us in the gloaming of a tekoteko (carved figure) standing above the apex of the roof, atop vague visual hints of a carved house front. My ears and mind are full of the formal language of the karanga (calling) issuing towards us from the women standing in front of the building, and the tauparapara (incantations) of the elders moving alongside us, delivering their oratory power as they walk, slowly and ceremoniously, towards the renewed building, brandishing their tokotoko (walking sticks) as they

go. Suddenly I feel a deep, strong, peaceful sense of being pulled towards the building by some invisible but inexorable force; my feet are shuffling forward without any conscious will on my part.

We arrive as a group at the new wider concreted area in front of the building, and move to the right to walk in a circle around the outside of the whare, an activity in which many others join, touching the walls as we go. The incantations continue without pause or break. Returning to the front of the building, where the carvings are now subtly lit by well-placed lights, my sister and I retreat to the plastic chairs set out for us to the side, drinking in the sights and sounds as the core group of tohunga (experts) head inside to complete their process.

As a competent listener of te reo it is a real treat on this day of celebration of a hundred years of our wharenui and marae to sit and listen to the mihimihi (oratory), the kauhau (explanations), the stories, the giving and receiving of gifts, the memories, the songs. These utterances are the taonga (treasures) of Māori language, thought and philosophy that keep alive the Māori world, and should never be expected to be assimilated.

The next section considers two policies, assimilation and apartheid, imposed by European powers on indigenous populations, using apartheid as practised in South Africa as a dis-analogy for assimilation as practised in New Zealand.

Assimilation and Apartheid: Two sides of one colonial coin?

The two ex-colonies, New Zealand and South Africa, share much history in common, but also display vast differences in the dominant attitudes of contemporary 'White' culture towards the Indigenous peoples of their respective homelands. Between 1948-1994, South Africa followed an official policy of **Apartheid**, where people were kept apart on the basis of their skin colour, with inter-racial love and marriage subject to heavy legal and social sanction. Generations of such racist social ontology, which completely reifies the binary between White and non-White skin colour,

cannot be overcome simply by making a decision not to be racist. In practice, the most common result of such a decision means teachers taking a 'culture-blind' position, ignoring ethnicity and the effects of racism altogether.

By contrast, in New Zealand history, the European colonizers followed a policy of **Assimilation**, whereby Māori were expected to assimilate to the culture and values imposed by the British settler government. Assimilation in principle anticipates a time when 'Māori' no longer exists as a separate identity. Histories of happy Māori-Pākehā marriages seemed to confirm the success of assimilation. 'Apartheid' and 'assimilation' may seem like two opposites as policy approaches to governing bi-ethnic societies, but they both aim to replace pre-existing indigenous cultures by hegemonic White systems, and both are justified by appeal to the same basic racist ideas, in which Europeans or Whites have a natural right to dominate and rule over their indigenous and non-White fellow citizens.

The topic of apartheid came to a head in New Zealand with the 1981 Springbok rugby tour, against which an extensive campaign of protest was organised to support the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa. This movement, seeded in the Black universities, was gaining momentum at home and support internationally, strengthened by reports of the violent crackdowns by the government against the protestors. In 1981, the Springboks were still being selected on apartheid grounds; national representation was denied to non-White rugby players. Similarly, in previous decades, apartheid policies had prevented Māori All Blacks from touring South Africa, or led to them being dubbed 'honorary Whites' (Keane, 2012). The legendary historical rugby rivalry between the All Blacks and the Springboks, combined with the history of protest in New Zealand against using apartheid policies against Māori All Blacks, meant the 1981 tour was bound to catalyse strong emotional national debate.

As a 20-year-old university student at the time, I borrowed a motorcycle helmet and joined many others to march and shout slogans of protest in the streets near Eden Park, the hallowed ground of New Zealand rugby, where the final test of that tour was played under dramatic conditions. I remember marching up and down for a while, before turning a corner and being confronted with lines of police advancing with batons, at which point my platoon of the protest turned and ran away.

That rugby tour was a touchstone of inter-ethnic relations in Aotearoa New Zealand: the point in time when many White New Zealanders ‘became Pākehā’ in realising how the same racist policies to which they were objecting in South Africa also applied to Māori at home. The phrase ‘becoming Pākehā’ here refers to accepting a White identity founded upon relationship with Māori (King, 1985).

Today the concept of Māori identity remains as contested as ever, as expressed in the poignant question I am often asked: ‘What is a Māori, really?’ While I am certain of the answer, it is not a formula. It is a question that defies succinct definition, but rather invites an holistic or experiential response, which narrative and autoethnographic writing seek to invite. As an ethnic identity, Māori a relational category, meaning one that only comes into being as a result of contact between different cultural groups.

In recent generations, Māori cultural difference has moved away from the material and towards the symbolic levels of culture. This means that Māori symbolic culture in all its forms - language, thinking, values, philosophies, narrative genres and repositories, and others such as facial tattoo, and the arts in general, are more important than ever before, to keep alive a sense of what it means to be Māori. The purpose of the two stories in the previous section is to provide detailed accounts of Māori difference in terms that will be recognised by Māori (and other Indigenous) readers, and may also have educational value for Pākehā/White readers.

Compared with telling stories, bald synoptic assertions can be confronting, as I have found in my own attempts to teach about Māori-Pākehā relationships, which sometimes invoke negative reactions when a Pākehā/White listener ‘takes it personally’ in response to my efforts to describe the reality of Māori life. Based on the North Shore in Auckland, I am in a community and teaching sector in which (mostly White) South African immigrants are strongly represented, after 25+ years of active recruitment by the New Zealand government of teachers from South Africa, large numbers of whom have taken the opportunity to leave behind the unsettled conditions in their home country.

But there is a conceptual gap in social ontology for teachers bred from the heavily racialised thinking of South Africa, who migrate to live and teach in Aotearoa New Zealand. This gap was expressed to me by a university manager using the phrase ‘real racism’ to refer to South Africa - a wording that carries the implied assertion that anti-Māori racism in New Zealand either does not exist, or is ‘not real racism’. This thinking is problematic because it denies the effects of history and philosophy on current ethnic gaps. National memory is pushed below the surface of mainstream social discourse, invisible to the outsider, including most White South African educators.

My experience suggests this gap supports how Māori are being re-colonised within the local academic and university system. This gap in understanding returns to a deficit model of Māori equity and reduces cultural responsiveness - the state’s policy solution for Māori underachievement in schools - to a checklist and some classroom tips and tricks (Krzyzosiak and Stewart, 2019). A critical view of ‘cultural responsiveness’ sees through it as an attempt to ameliorate the effects of racism, without acknowledging its existence. Cultural responsiveness on principle cannot effect equity, which would require eliminating the ethnic wealth gap (which is instead accelerating). The covert purpose of cultural responsiveness as a response to ethnic educational inequity is to assuage the guilt of White educators, rather than to help those populations, including Māori, who have been harmed by racism in schooling and society.

Policies of apartheid and assimilation may appear at first sight to be opposites, but closer inspection shows that both arise from the same central notion of European/White superiority and Indigenous/non-White inferiority, adapted and elaborated into specific local conditions within each social context. While South Africa and New Zealand may represent the clearest examples of the workings of apartheid and assimilation, respectively, aspects of both approaches can be seen in other ex-British Empire countries, including Australia, Canada, and the US.

The next section drills down into contemporary effects of Māori assimilationist policies in education.

Making a difference: Contemporary Māori identity

There is widespread racial complacency within the dominant Pākehā/White culture of New Zealand, bolstered by a longstanding reputation for the ‘best race relations in the world’ (Human Rights Commission, 2017), and maintained by ideological beliefs about national identity, such as that Māori willingly ceded sovereignty by signing the Treaty of Waitangi, despite evidence to the contrary (Māori Law Review, 2014). The subtle and embedded nature of racism in Aotearoa New Zealand renders it invisible, except to its victims in the moment, which allows it to continue unchecked.

Equity and diversity are key education policy drivers in Aotearoa New Zealand that build on the underlying assumption of Māori assimilation and the notion of a ‘level playing field’ - but without explaining why the playing field is skewed to start with. In the absence of critical analysis, the effect of equity policy in education is to induce positivistic responses, such as the intense competition between universities for a very small number of Māori and Pacific doctoral scholars who are not already in academic jobs (McAllister et al., 2019). Simultaneously, there are ongoing losses of Māori and Pacific academics from the universities as they burn out and leave, seeking greener pastures.

The implicit nature of the dominant assumption of complete Māori assimilation and sameness has the effect of rendering Māori cultural difference invisible. The right to self-identify ethnicity is a basic democratic right in Aotearoa New Zealand, yet Pākehā often seem to find it difficult to understand the Māori desire to retain their own culture and ethnic identity - so engrained are the old ideas about European superiority. One of the hardest concepts for non-Māori people at all levels of education to understand is that Māori people have their own interests that lie beyond the equity obsession with 'closing the gaps' - most Māori academics are not interested in being career cultural advisors for their non-Māori colleagues.

To reject the racist concept of Māori identity as based on 'blood quantum' (Smith, 1999, p. 72) allows claims about 'being Māori' to return to a more genuine indigenous criterion of ancestry, or whakapapa (genealogy). A minimal claim to Māori identity is being able to trace one's whakapapa back to one or more Māori ancestors, the tangata whenua (indigenous peoples) of Aotearoa. Today, Māori-Pākehā misunderstandings and clashes of perspective on social issues are significant markers of cultural difference.

At more general levels, binary concepts as such have gained a bad reputation among social scientists, from being associated with hierarchical thinking, which invariably favours the wealthy societal elite. As a Māori researcher concerned to answer the question of whether or not Māori cultural difference still exists, I am centrally concerned with binaries, real and reified, and the difference between them. The topic of Māori cultural difference, as I have argued, invokes a mixture of both. My conclusion is that one or two 'real' or scientific binaries exist, which are refracted through multiple lenses to produce a spectrum of reified binaries in relation to Māori identity, including that of 'Māori science.' The mainstream reaction is to conclude that binary thinking is in itself 'wrong' or inadequate. Conversely, a Māori analyst (such as myself) might wish to play with and invert the binary, rather than pretending it never existed.

It remains evident to me that a binary concept is a powerful basic tool for language and thinking, since it follows the logic of identity: same + different. We learn language by refining binary concepts - a word refers to *this* and not *that*. The human brain, it seems, is geared to using binaries in learning, knowing, and teaching. There is a 'real' i.e. scientific language binary at the core of the national identity of Aotearoa New Zealand, since all natural languages, including te reo Māori, are considered equally valuable in cognitive terms by contemporary sociolinguistic theory (May, 2012).

Conclusion

Using a Māori philosophy framework, I have sampled from my own life and history as supplementary sources in order to provide a detailed account of Māori cultural difference and its significance for today's generations of Māori people. The dominant view of New Zealand remains that of an Antipodean replica of 'mother country' Britain, but my counterview, through a critical, Māori-centric lens, is cognisant of the ongoing shadow existence of 'Aotearoa' - the marginalised Māori part of the contemporary nation-state. My arguments lead me to conclude that 'Māori identity' and 'Pākehā identity' form a real binary, because a person can either claim whakapapa as Māori, or not. Māori identity thus constitutes a second social scientific category, in addition to the linguistic binary of te reo Māori and English. The refraction of language and identity throw up a series of reified binaries across the entire social field in its many domains - media, schooling, science, public works, recreation, museums, tourism, and so forth. There are many lifetimes of work remaining to be done to fully explore the richness of the intercultural encounter of being Māori.

Glossary

As used in this chapter

Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand
Hapū	Smaller kingroup made up of several whānau
Iwi	Larger kingroup made up of several hapū

Jackson, M. (1992). The Treaty and the word: the colonization of Māori philosophy. in Oddie, G., Perrett, R. (Eds.), *Justice, ethics and New Zealand society* (pp. 1-10). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keane, B. (2012). *Ngā rōpū tautohetohe – Māori protest movements - Rugby and South Africa*. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. [Ngā rōpū tautohetohe – Māori protest movements – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)

King, M. (1985). *Being Pākehā: An encounter with New Zealand and the Māori renaissance*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

King, T. (2003). *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Krzyzosiak, J., Stewart, G. T. (2019). Can culturally responsive policies improve Māori achievement? *Curriculum Matters*. 15: pp. 42-58. <https://doi.org/10.18296/cm.0036>

Māori Law Review. (2014). *Waitangi Tribunal finds Treaty of Waitangi signatories did not cede sovereignty in February 1840*.

[Waitangi Tribunal finds Treaty of Waitangi signatories did not cede sovereignty in February 1840 – Māori Law Review \(maorilawreview.co.nz\)](#)

Marshall, J. D. (1987). *Positivism or pragmatism: philosophy of education in New Zealand*. NZARE. [Home » NZARE](#)

May, S. (2012). *Language & minority rights: ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of language* (2nd ed.). London and New York:Routledge.

McAllister, T. G., Kidman, J., Rowley, O., & Theodore, R. F. (2019). Why isn't my professor Māori? A snapshot of the academic workforce in New Zealand universities. *MAI Journal*, 8(2), 236-249. <https://doi.org/10.20507/MAIJournal.2019.8.2.10>

Ministry of Education. (2020). *Pūtaiao*. <http://www.tmoa.tki.org.nz/Te-Marautanga-o-Aotearoa/Nga-Wahanga-Ako/Putaiiao>

New Zealand Government. (1987). *Māori Language Act*. <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0176/latest/whole.html>

Rath, J. (2012). Autoethnographic layering: recollections, family tales, and dreams. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 18(5): pp. 442-448. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800412439529>

Richardson, L., St. Pierre, E. A. (2018). Writing: A method of inquiry. In Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5th ed. (pp. 818-838). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Roberts, P. (2015). It was the Best of Times, it was the Worst of Times ...': Philosophy of Education in the Contemporary World. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 34(6): pp. 623-634. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11217-014-9438-z>

Smith, G. H. (2003). *Kaupapa Māori theory: theorizing indigenous transformation of education and schooling*. <http://www.aare.edu.au/data/publications/2003/pih03342.pdf>.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. Dunedin: Zed Books/University of Otago Press.

Smith, L. T. (2011). *Opening keynote: story-ing the development of kaupapa Māori: a review of sorts* (Hutchings, J., Potter, H., Taupo, K. (eds.)). NZCER. [Hei Hauhake Whakaaro - A Resource for Kaupapa Māori Researchers \(auckland.ac.nz\)](https://www.nzcer.org.nz/kei-tua-o-te-pae-hui-proceedings)
<http://www.nzcer.org.nz/nzcerpress/kei-tua-o-te-pae-hui-proceedings>

St. Pierre, E. A. (2018). Writing post qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 24(9): pp. 603-608.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417734567>

Stewart-Harawira, M. (1993). Māori, who owns the definition? *Te Pua*, 2(1&2), 27-33. No doi.

Stewart, G. (2007). *Kaupapa Māori science [Unpublished EdD thesis]*. University of Waikato.
<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/2598>

Stewart, G. T. (2019). Mātauranga and Pūtaiao: the question of 'Māori science'. *New Zealand Science Review*. 75(4): 65-68. <https://scientists.org.nz/NZSR>

Stewart, G. T. (2020). Māori Science Curriculum. In M. M. Atwater (Ed.), *International Handbook of Research on Multicultural Science Education* (pp. 1-23). Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37743-4_33-1

Stewart, G. T. (2021a). *Māori Philosophy: Indigenous Thinking from Aotearoa*. London: Bloomsbury.

Stewart, G. T. (2021b). Writing as a Māori/Indigenous Method of Inquiry. In Stewart, G. T., Devine, N., Benade, L. (eds.). *Writing for publication: liminal reflections for academics* (pp. 41-54). Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4439-6_4

Stewart, G. T. (2022). Mātauranga Māori: a philosophy from Aotearoa. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 52(1), 18-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03036758.2020.1779757>

Stewart, G. T. (2023). Kaupapa Māori Autoethnography. In E. A. Anteliz, D. L. Mulligan, & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Autoethnography in Educational Research* (pp. 326-336). Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-International-Handbook-of-Autoethnography-in-Educational/Anteliz-Mulligan-Danaher/p/book/9781032119922>

Webster, S. (1998). *Patrons of Māori Culture: Power, Theory and Ideology in the Māori Renaissance*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.

Willmott, B. (1989). Introduction: Culture and National Identity. In Novitz D. , Willmott, B. (eds.). *Culture and Identity in New Zealand* (pp. 1-20). GP Books. [Culture and identity in New Zealand: David Novitz and Bill Willmott: 9780477014229: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B000000000)