

USING WESTERN METHODOLOGIES IN AOTEAROA

Research article

Reflections on the Ethics of using Western Philosophy to Guide Research in Aotearoa

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Abstract

Undertaking research requires ethical reflection. In Aotearoa New Zealand, a nation with a history of Indigenous Knowledges being colonised, ethical guides and processes aim to reduce the potential harm of research. This article outlines the realisation of a dilemma that a PhD student and her supervisors contended with when proposing Māori representation in a study that was guided by a philosophy established in Europe. The harm of colonising Indigenous Knowledges by analysing them using western ideas, versus the harm of marginalising Indigenous Knowledges is discussed in relation to the idea of taonga as described in various Waitangi Tribunal claims.

Key words: Ethics, Colonisation, Representation, Waitangi Tribunal

Introduction

Occupational therapy researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand¹ recognise the need to consider the impact of their research on Māori. Put simply, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) confers an obligation to ensure that Māori authority (Rangatiratanga) is upheld, and that tangata whenua receive the same benefits from British government as tangata tiriti. Documents such as Te Ara Tika (Hudson et al., 2010) provide guidance for researchers on how to conduct studies that uphold these responsibilities within current systems. For researchers who are not undertaking Kaupapa Māori research, the minimum recommendation is consultation with Māori regarding research aims and processes and appropriate Māori representation in the research. In this article we describe the dilemma of representation the first author grappled with when undertaking her PhD, and a novel approach to considering this dilemma by referring to Waitangi Tribunal claims. This process of grappling took a position in which thoughtful engagement with the issues is important for a genuinely ethical process. Our purpose in writing this paper is to encourage continued critical reflection and debate in the research space regarding our responses to ongoing effects of colonisation.

¹ We have chosen to use Aotearoa New Zealand. While we acknowledge that not all Iwi refer to the islands colonised as “New Zealand” as Aotearoa, the term is the only one we have access to refer to New Zealand in te reo.

Overview of the Study

In 2015 the first author set out to study the problem of Ministry of Health funded housing modifications, in particular, the details in the Ministry's Housing Modifications Manual that excluded many people who were most in need. She intended to study a wide range of documents² using "Foucauldian discourse analysis" to try to understand how we had come to accept our current practices. Inspired by modern research approaches that focus on particular material objects, she decided to study wet-area showers that would act like a lens, or portal, through which the historical constructions of showers in relation to where and how disabled people should live could be seen. In her original application she proposed collecting data that would ensure Māori were represented, stating:

The researcher is aware of the potential for this research to continue the history of colonisation by drawing on the ideas of European philosophers that do not have an understanding of Te Ao³ Māori... consultation with experts who have an understanding of Te Ao Māori will be essential to address this potential issue.

However, as she embarked on her study and started to gain a greater understanding of the methodology she was using, we began to question the ethics of what had been proposed.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Research at a PhD level requires students to actively engage with philosophy as they consider what they are going to research and how (Auckland University of Technology, 2023). Philosophies that guide research differ in their positions on ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (what knowledge is and how it is produced). Foucauldian Discourse Analysis is derived from the work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), a French philosopher who used what is now described as a post-structural approach to study the history of ideas. Foucault argued that we can investigate history in particular ways to reveal how what we do and what we have come to accept

² Including building records, photographs, notes, assignments, draft booklets, information sheets, educational material, plans, quotes, bills, instructions, supervision records, service records, accreditation documents, registration documents, statistical data.

³ "World" (Moorfield, 2022a).

as true has contentious foundations (i.e., is based on a particular set of possibilities, the history of which has often been forgotten). His work challenges established truths by “pointing out things about their [the established truths’] origins and functions that they would rather remain hidden” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 29). Foucault’s approach to discourse analysis takes researchers beyond an analysis of words and meaning to uncover the *effects* of the things we do. In the words of Foucault, “People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does” (Foucault, 1982, cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 187). By employing Foucault’s ideas, researchers can connect everyday practices, such as showering, to bigger picture ideas and practices such as those that govern how, where and even if, people should live.

Philosophy, when it is applied to research, is rendered into a “methodology” for the study. Because it provides the researcher with a particular lens through which reality is understood, it more or less determines what sort of findings will be possible. Some examples from widely-used Western research traditions can be briefly considered. Looking through a positivist quantitative lens usually means the researcher believes that what is being studied can be observed, divided or combined into measurable portions, measured with a tool, and compared with other measurable things. In this research we will find a world that is objectively quantifiable. Commonly used qualitative methodologies often lead researchers to generate data on what a particular group of people say about something (e.g., through interviews), in order to find what is common and perhaps what is not, to reveal some shared experience of reality. Post-positivist qualitative approaches may also count and measure, but their interest is in discovering the reality of what is *experienced* rather than what is *observed*. By contrast, post-structural qualitative research methodologies typically contend that it is impossible to design and carry out research that does not play a part in constructing the findings. This critical lens brings into question what can and should be studied and how.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis is not a prescriptive methodology, and as such can be applied in different ways. The first author was interested in the problem of the Ministry of Health’s Housing Modification Manual, and how the inclusion and exclusion criteria had come to be accepted. As such, her research drew on Foucault’s idea of genealogy, which presumes that what is done today is connected to historical

practices that may be somewhat forgotten. She used a particular approach to discourse analysis that involves researching “the archives” (Foucault, 2002). In this approach, historical documents are sought and analysed to see how subjects (such as “disabled people”) and objects (such as “wet area showers”) have come to be ‘real’ things that are produced, reproduced and acted on in the world. She aimed to find out how some big ideas that pervade Western societies (such as state involvement in public health, liberal government of property markets, and disablism) produced such subjects and objects, and led to the particular approach to housing modification that is accepted today. Foucault’s ideas about research come from his own historical studies of Western (predominantly European) practices. As part of the process of colonisation, Western ideas about how to govern society are evident in Aotearoa New Zealand, however, this is a nation of two worlds, and Te Ao Māori has its own whakapapa.⁴ Contemplating these genealogies from a Foucauldian perspective for the purposes of the first author’s PhD led us to an uncomfortable place of how to conduct the study ethically while aspiring to avoid colonising practices.⁵

Research and Ethics

Researchers are required to consider the ethics of their research, ensuring that their work does not cause harm and produces some good. Ethics applications reviewed by ethics committees are an important part of the research process and can take a considerable time to work through before a study can begin. Today, in Aotearoa New Zealand, undertaking research is, amongst many other activities, conducted in a space where knowledge and the right to knowledge is contested. It is typical for research institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand to expect that researchers consider the relevance and impact of their research on Māori, and that their research be conducted in a way that (at the very least) does not further impinge on the rights that are laid out in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) (cf., Auckland University of Technology, 2020). In 2015, at the time the study was proposed, the Auckland University of Technology’s Ethics Committee asked researchers to consider the “3 Ps”, Partnership, Participation and Protection, and

⁴ “Genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent” (Moorfield, 2022b).

⁵ Smith (2012) also found Foucault’s ideas useful for critiquing western research methodologies in relation to Indigenous Peoples in her book “Decolonizing Methodologies”. We cite some of Smith’s conclusions below.

to refer to “Te Ara Tika -Guidelines for Māori research ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members” (Hudson et al., 2010). Te Ara Tika states that research in New Zealand ought to consider the interests of Māori:

All research in New Zealand is of interest to Māori, and research which includes Māori is of paramount importance to Māori.

In a research context, to ignore the reality of inter-cultural difference is to live with outdated notions of scientific investigation. It is also likely to hamper the conduct of research, and limit the capacity of research to improve human development (National Health and Medical Research Council [2003]). (Hudson, 2010, p. 1).

Te Ara Tika asks researchers to consider whakapapa, tika, manaakitanga and mana in their research design and provides guidance to minimum, good, and best practice standards.⁶

Te Ara Tika provides a tikanga Māori framework to help ethics committees determine whether health research is ethical. However, attention to the problem of research being colonising is not overtly discussed. Rather, the guidelines refer readers to Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s 1999 “Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples”. Smith describes the dangers of the scientific disciplines as a colonising tool, where knowledge is used to dominate, exclude and marginalise:⁷ “The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity” (Smith, 2012, p. 1). Traditional western research philosophies and practices, considered in the context of Te Tiriti, are a European peculiarity. They are shaped, often unknowingly, by the values, assumptions, technologies, and traditions established by European history. One example is the idea that science may consist of an individual who has been educated at university and can use their senses (enhanced by machinery such as a microscope) to observe, measure, and document the material of the universe (and that such material is stable, observable

⁶ At this point in this article it would make sense for me to summarise these concepts as they are presented in Te Ara Tika so that the reader may understand how the first author considered and applied them in her study. However, from the perspective of a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis researcher, to paraphrase or even to quote a sample (as we have above) becomes problematic. As such, we refer readers to Te Ara Tika (see the link below in the reference list) for detail regarding the framework.

⁷ Smith draws on Foucault’s concept of discipline in her critique.

and universal). Employing such practices in Aotearoa New Zealand, if they ignore cultural difference in the knowable world, become, at best, “outdated notions” (Hudson et al., 2010, p. 1), and at worst, the perpetuation of racist oppression (Waitoki, 2022).

While some research methodologies accept their interpretive lens and recognise that this shapes the selection and use of data, the problem of ownership of knowledge and the potentially oppressive effects of attempting to represent Māori and applying a foreign lens to Indigenous knowledge is less familiar. It is not just positivist research (which claims access to “truths”) that becomes questionable when one considers the use of Indigenous knowledges, practices, and things as research data; the application of any methodology generated outside of that which is Indigenous becomes the site of the possible perpetuation of colonisation.

When an occupational therapist comfortably exists within a dominant culture that reflects and reproduces their own worldview, it can be difficult for them to see colonising and marginalising practices (Nelson, 2007). Occupational therapy researchers undoubtedly intend to do good and set out to hold themselves to the highest ethical standards. However, Smith (2012) contends that this perspective is in and of itself problematic:

Many researchers, academics and project workers may see the benefits of their particular research projects as serving a greater good ‘for mankind’, or serving a specific emancipatory goal for an oppressed community. But belief in the ideal that benefiting mankind is indeed a primary outcome of scientific research is as much a reflection of ideology as it is of academic training. It becomes so taken for granted that many researchers simply assume that they as individuals embody this ideal and are natural representatives of it when they work with other communities. (Smith, 2012, p. 2)

The first author could certainly see that this has been true for her. She had learned that “tāngata whaikaha (disabled Māori) are further marginalised, faring worse than their non-disabled Māori peers” (Independent Monitoring Mechanism, 2020, p. 13). She felt confident her research could help reveal how the Ministry of Health manual contributed to this marginalisation. But what if a basic concept that her research was based on (for example “disability”), let alone the Western knowledge of research methods and methodologies she would employ, was colonising? What if her good intentions were

misguided, and she would be continuing the “white saviour trope” (Waitoki, 2022, p. 140). Although she had ethical approval to seek Māori representation in her data, she decided to reflect on the particulars of her study to see if she could find a space where we hoped her research would genuinely engage with these issues, rather than blindly perpetuating them.

Author one, as a historically constructed actor

Born in the late 1970s, in a predominantly white suburban area of Hamilton, I was raised in a nuclear family and educated in the European tradition. By the time I was born, there had been over a century of colonization that had connected diverse disciplinary powers to the everyday activities of groups within the population to serve particular interests. For example, education and housing policies had established Māori in predominantly rural and blue-collar positions.⁸ However, 1980s saw an interesting combination of rights discourses and a neoliberal governmentality open up spaces outside of established Western tradition. Through my formative years, Māori established early childhood centres, schools, universities, Kaupapa Māori research, religious and health services, arguably exploiting the “progressive spaces of neoliberalism” (Bargh & Ottert, 2009, p. 154).

In my final year of high school, I studied New Zealand history as told by Claudia Orange, James Bellich and Michael King. I was unaware at the time that my school’s choice to teach this history rather than continuing the established tradition of teaching British history was controversial at the time (Manning, 2017). I later studied te reo⁹ Māori for 4-years through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (a Māori university), completing my final year on the Raroera campus. These experiences instilled in me the idea that history is very much connected to today, and a sense of responsibility to ensure Māori people and knowledges were respected and represented in my study. I initially

⁸ However, the area I grew up in, near Waikato University has a greater percentage of people (generally and Māori specifically) with university qualifications than the rest of Hamilton.

⁹ “Language, dialect, tongue, speech” (Moorfield, 2022c).

proposed that I would consult with hapū¹⁰ and iwi¹¹ and intended to seek out documents that reflected Te Ao Māori. However, this plan created the dilemma that ultimately led me down a very different path to that which I had initially proposed.

As a non-Māori researcher, with non-Māori supervisors, drawing on the concepts of a European philosopher, I found myself in the awkward position between discourses that aim to ensure research carried out in Aotearoa New Zealand is inclusive of the perspectives of the Indigenous inhabitants (thus preventing marginalisation), and those that argue one must not cause further harm to Indigenous knowledges by overlaying a European philosophy (and causing further oppression). If I avoided including discourses that have Māori origins, then I continued the long Eurocentric tradition that ignores Indigenous knowledges. If I included them, then I risked colonising those same discourses by attempting to analyse them through a European lens. As Hickey and Wilson (2017) explained, the very idea of disability, so central to my study, is colonising and fails to appreciate whānau hauā from a Māori worldview.

In an attempt to find a position that allowed me to proceed with my research in this space, I turned to the writings of Kaupapa Māori researchers. These researchers are highly critical of the privileging of European philosophers (Dead White Males) in research practices (Pihama, 2001; Walker, 1996). For such researchers, Māori knowledges are considered a gift from the Māori gods that are “created by the use of whakapapa” (Pihama, 2001, p. 82). Māori knowledge is, therefore, a birth right that connects the people, the natural and the supernatural worlds. These researchers aim to confront oppression by positioning Kaupapa Māori theory as the framework for understanding all things Māori, and challenge marginalisation and oppression by ensuring research is reproduced by Māori for Māori.

Kaupapa Māori Theory is not for sale; it cannot be bought. Pakeha may attempt to co-opt our tikanga, to submerge te reo Māori within the Master Language, to appropriate our Theory itself... Our world, nor our World View,

¹⁰ “Kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe - section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society. It consisted of a number of whānau sharing descent from a common ancestor, usually being named after the ancestor, but sometimes from an important event in the group's history. A number of related hapū usually shared adjacent territories forming a looser tribal federation (iwi)” (Moorfield, 2022e).

¹¹ “Extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory” (Moorfield, 2022d).

our Tikanga was never for sale. As Māori, we are not the commodity.
(Walker, 1996, p. 118)

As noted above, in Kaupapa Māori theory, whakapapa is a fundamental concept. All things have traceable origins that describe where they have come from and that establish their connection to all other things.¹² It is this tracing back to Māori ancestors that some Kaupapa Māori researchers argue is an essential element in preventing the misappropriation of Māori knowledges. My genealogy is European. The story of my family is that our first ancestor arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand as a deserter from the French navy (who were apparently hoping to claim the land for themselves at the time).¹³ A trail of immigrants followed on early ships from England, Ireland, and Spain throughout the mid to late 1800s and early 1900s. My whakapapa connects me to the knowledge of “Dead White Males” such as Michel Foucault. As I and my research methodology descend from European universities, I believe that were I to include data from Te Ao Māori in my study I would be claiming authority over that which does not belong to me.

By choosing to avoid misrepresentation of Māori knowledge, one could argue that I meant to deliberately exclude Māori, and discourses from Te Ao Māori that may have permeated practices involved in the funding of modified showers. Another argument might be that I intended to ignore that I conducted my research in Aotearoa New Zealand or that I forgot my obligations to conduct my research in a way that recognised I must not (at the very least) cause evil¹⁴ to the Indigenous population. This was not and is not my intention. It is the particular modern research tradition in Aotearoa New Zealand that calls on researchers to actively seek Māori representation throughout the research process (in an attempt to address the marginalisation that otherwise occurs)¹⁵ that I am concerned with. It is this seeking of representation, the inclusion of data from those representations and claiming that my study represented Māori perspectives that I wanted to avoid. It is the violence of taking mātauranga¹⁶

¹² Although it is recognised that an inability to know one’s whakapapa does not diminish its existence (Walker, 1996).

¹³ Ko he waka taua o wiwi toku waka, ko ngāti wiwi toku iwi, ko Jersey toku motu, ko te British Isles toku moana, ko D’Authreau toku hapu, ko Lyttleton te kainga o toku tipuna.

¹⁴ “Nga kino” (Te Tiriti o Waitangi [Māori version], 1840, p. 2).

¹⁵ See the Health Research Council of New Zealand (2010) for example.

¹⁶ “Knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill - sometimes used in the plural” (Moorfield, 2022e).

Māori with the intent of using it for my own purposes, the harm caused by taking this knowledge and making it subservient to Foucauldian concepts, and my intent to be critical of all discourses that makes the deliberate practice of representation dangerous.

In my everyday practices (as an occupational therapist) I have obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840). I must ensure that Māori are not marginalised and receive “nga tikanga katoa rite ki ana mea / the rights and privileges” (Ko te Tuatoru/Article the Third) of the British (and subsequent immigrant) population. To this end I have sought and continue to seek an understanding of Te Ao Māori. However, in my position as a researcher, particularly given the title of doctor that a PhD confers, I am in a very different space. Rather than providing a service, I am seeking data. Rather than drawing on knowledge to inform my practice, I am creating and disseminating knowledge from a particular and privileged position. My thesis involves the application of Michel Foucault’s concepts, drawn from his own research of European history, to describe practices of government. While these practices were brought to Aotearoa New Zealand through the process of colonisation and, consequently, have an effect on Māori, the approach I took does not seek to understand the perspectives of Indigenous peoples; rather, it is to discover the effects of these governing practices. While I could (and originally intended to) search out knowledge from Te Ao Māori, my purpose would not have been to bring to light the truths contained in such knowledge, but to critically analyse the strategies of government evident in these discourses. To do so would risk misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledges by attempting to assimilate Te Ao Māori discourses into a Foucauldian analysis.

Showers, Disability, Discourse and the Territory of Taonga

We would not like to think that author one’s decision not to represent (or misrepresent) Indigenous knowledges provides a space in which non-Māori researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand can simply exclude Māori perspectives from all forms of research. Whether one is Māori or not, and whether one is using Kaupapa Māori theory or not, any research that describes, defines, or manipulates Māori taonga, or any other things that Māori connect to through whakapapa and kaitiakitanga, ought to be carried out in a manner that acknowledges the decision-making power and Māori control over all things Māori that was guaranteed in Te Tiriti O Waitangi (Broughton & McBreen,

2015). The question is then, does her study enter the territory of Māori taonga or other things? For the purpose of her research, she attempted to ascertain whether her studies did encroach by searching Waitangi Tribunal claims related to the material included in her thesis.

Texts. The primary data source was written texts. Te reo Māori is “an essential part of the culture and must be regarded as ‘a valued possession’” (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, WAI 11, s4.2.4). The Māori language was spoken (or sung), and stories were communicated through arts, but there was no written language prior to colonisation. As such “Kaupapa Māori Theory does not subsume itself within the European philosophical hegemonies that posit the supremacy of the written word over the spoken” (Walker, 1996, p. 119). Historical Māori texts do, however, exist and are themselves considered taonga: “Māori material in archives and libraries are taonga because they hold mātauranga about, and generated by, kaitiaki communities” (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011, Wai 262, s6.4.4[1]). Māori wish for such material to be made highly confidential “so as not to facilitate misappropriate and misuse” (s6.4.2[1]) and are of the view that current legislation regarding archives and libraries fails to address Te Tiriti obligations. However, access to, and protection of these taonga (for now) remains in the hands of the Crown. The risk for the misuse of information has been balanced against “one of the central tenets of open and democratic societies: freedom of access to information” (6.4.4[2]). As outlined above, it is our wish to avoid misappropriation and misuse of such taonga, given the issues outlined above regarding her methodology. As such, she did not source documents that were written in te reo or other materials that were produced or held by kaitiaki communities.

Disability. Most recently, the Wai 2575, #B23 Māori with Disabilities (Part Two) Report (Kaiwai & Allport, 2019) identified issues with funding for housing modifications and acknowledged the historical structures that produced the disparities they identified. The report found that the current system fails to uphold the sovereignty, autonomy, and equality that was guaranteed through Te Tiriti o Waitangi. While the idea of taonga is not overtly discussed, the report does refer to Hickey’s chapter, ‘A taonga is a taonga in any language’ (2009), which explains that applying a discourse of disability to Māori is itself a process of colonisation. Furthermore “Māori with lived experience of disability are considered to be special and precious taonga” (Jones et al.,

2023, p. 12). To claim representation of Māori within a study of disability would result in further colonisation of Māori identity, encroach on the territory of taonga and breach the right to self-determination and control assured by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Jones et al., 2023).

Housing. A further area her study enters is the territory of buildings, in particular homes. Historic buildings are considered taonga (Mataatua wharenuī for example) and dwellings on Māori land are traditionally guarded through formal procedures that permit or prevent visitors from entering. Although many Māori today live in European style houses, this is associated with specific colonising strategies that aimed to disrupt Te Ao Māori (see Williams, 2001 and Wanhalla, 2006). With regards to ownership and governance of Māori land, “statute law has tended to be less cognisant of tikanga Māori” (Te Puni Kokiri, 2016, p. 5).¹⁷ Māori lands and the dwellings that rest on them are clearly taonga: “To Māori, land is everything. Land provides our sense of identity, of belonging, of continuity. Whenua is our link to our tupuna and to the future generations” (Flavell, 2016, para. 4). A Waitangi Tribunal claim that has been published since the first author’s thesis was completed shows that there is some debate whether housing is a taonga (Waitangi Tribunal, Wai 2740, 2023), however, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) confers a responsibility for housing by and for Māori to protect the health of the people. It would seem that she was not entering into the territory of taonga by studying housing in general, however, is important to recognise that an additional history of colonisation has created further structures that create a particularly grim picture for housing and the health of Whānau Hauā.¹⁸

Water. While showers were a European invention, water is most certainly a Māori taonga (Waitangi Tribunal, Wai 2358, 2012). As outlined in the 2012 Waitangi Tribunal (Wai 2358) freshwater claim, Māori ownership and control of water does not (at this point in history anyway) seek to be involved at the level of water coming out of

¹⁷ For example, Te Ture Whenua Māori Bill (2016) which aimed to address the inconsistency between individualised interests in Māori land and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Puni Kokiri, 2016), was recently presented to and rejected by Parliament (New Zealand Parliament, 2022).

¹⁸ Previous research has involved consultation with Māori. McDermott Miller (2005) identified the issue of substandard housing as an issue that was compounded for Māori and the need for more research in this area. Saville Smith et al. (2007) identified barriers such as a lack of information, an expectation that people will ask for what they need, and a focus on the individual as particular barriers to housing modifications for Māori.

a showerhead.¹⁹ In contrast, bodies of water, which function as a resource for food, housing, clothing, healing, travel, enterprise, spiritual life and life force, identity, as the homes of spirits, territory guaranteed protection, relations through whakapapa, and places of occupation are a contested space (Wai 2358). As such, subjects such as the ownership and protection of waterways and ocean, and management of wastewater have attracted the attention of Māori researchers (i.e., Muru-Lanning, 2010, 2012 and Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2008). Furthermore, recently proposed legislation aims to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai (Water Services Entities Bill, 2022).

Some research has attended to the history of Māori use of water for therapy (Nicholls et al., 2016; Stokes, 2000; Young, 1998). Rollo (2013) states that water is used for rongoā, or traditional Māori healing. This relationship between water and healing in Mātauranga Māori, and the link between hygiene and showers that emerged in Europe, would be a subject of great interest. It is the first author's hope that revealing European discourses that have shaped the way that water has been employed in the shower will create some further interest in this area of study and provide space for further analysis of this history from a decolonising perspective. This would further challenge what has been taken for granted in relation to housing modifications and produce possibilities for doing things differently.

Conclusion

As Foucault stated,

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So, my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. (1983/2003, p. 104)

Using western philosophies to guide research in Aotearoa is dangerous. Colonisation is an ongoing process of Te Ao Māori being claimed by others and includes research that makes Te Ao Māori subservient to western concepts. Ideas such as the universal nature of science, the good that it produces, the truth that it reveals, can lead researchers into

¹⁹ “The claimants accept that nothing as a consequence of this claim can mean that anyone in New Zealand has their tap turned off. That’s unacceptable. It’s inconsistent with the partnership obligations under the Treaty. It’s inconsistent with the tikanga of sharing, which is also an essential part of Māori relationships with their water resources” (Waitangi Tribunal, 2012, s1.4.2).

the dangerous territory of racist belief in the superiority of colonising over Indigenous Knowledges (cf., Clements et al., 2021).

In Aotearoa New Zealand we are fortunate to have the Waitangi Tribunal, where claims to colonised territory can be challenged in the courts. In a space where ownership of Indigenous knowledges, practices, and things remains contested (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011 – Wai 262), the values and beliefs that underpin research become questioned, encouraging activism and the possibility of doing things differently. By reading Waitangi Tribunal claims author one learned that there were several areas in which research could enter into the territory of Māori taonga and other Māori things. Her ethical reasoning led to a decision to avoid appropriating discoverable knowledge and analysing in order to avoid colonising it. However, this course of action produces the danger of the needs of Whānau Hauā²⁰ being ignored. Others may have reached different conclusions about which held the greater risk of harm.

To serve her own purposes, a resolution to this problem would have been to establish a research partnership in which the issues related to Whānau Hauā and housing modification were represented through Kaupapa Māori research. However, by setting the agenda she would be further colonising Te Ao Māori. Furthermore, the individualistic nature of the PhD (a European tradition and colonising practice in and of itself) meant she would still be claiming the findings from any collaboration for herself.²¹ Given these limits, she reached some level of resolve by using her study to highlight the work done by Whānau Hauā in defining their own needs, such as the work by Hickey 2006, 2008, 2008, 2020, and which has continued with Jones et al. (2023) who argue that colonisation has produced mass disablement. As a researcher with whakapapa to colonisers, what she could do was limit the territory she claimed, by not concluding what her study means for Whānau Hauā. As Emery-Whittington pointed out

²⁰ The term Whānau Hauā is used as author one concluded her thesis with the words of Hickey and Wilson (2017) who argue for decolonisation of the idea of disability. Author one stated: “In the spirit of the elaboration of the dispositif that I hope for, where those historically seen as a deficit are recognised to be an asset, best positioned to eliminate the burden to the nation of unhealthy, unsafe, and unavailable housing, I leave the final words of this thesis to Dr Huhana Hickey and Professor Denise Wilson. They redefine what disability is, and advocate for the collective action that is needed to restore balance and eliminate that which compromises anyone’s ability to achieve or undertake essential everyday activities” (C**, 2023, p. 327).

²¹ Decolonising practices are however starting to emerge through collaborative PhDs, although there is still the requirement for a distinguishable individual contribution. See <http://www.teipukarea.maori.nz/postgraduate/> for example.

in relation to colonialism, racism and privilege in occupational therapy and occupational science in Aotearoa, “previous director of the United Nations, Erica-Irene Daes, shared an important insight on the power of privilege, ‘You cannot be the doctor if you are the disease’ (2000, p. 5)” (, p. 159).

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