THE NEW MĀORI & MĀORI HEALTH

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Introduction

‘Māori’ and ‘Māori Health’ are both deceptive terms whose literal meanings are apparently straight-forward. But on closer inspection, there is a great deal of scope for interpretation of the term “Māori”. I want to investigate that scope.

I want to show you three things. First, I want to show you how defining the term ‘Māori’ is a non-trivial exercise. Second, I want to talk about health and hauora and how these two concepts are defined, and their possible use in understanding Māori cultural diversity. Third, I want to investigate a novel framework for describing the Māori position in 2004 – what I will call the “New Māori”.

Defining Māori and Māori Identity

There are lots of ways of defining Māori: ethnic group, Treaty partner, cultural group are three ways in current usage, often interchangeably. First there is the race/ethnicity debate which has two main approaches: the “I define you” version and the “You define yourself” version. Second, there is the Treaty-relation definition – essentially the “was somebody you’re descended from there when they signed it?” version. Third the cultural or identity group – essentially the “do you look, think, and operate” as a Māori.
The race/ethnicity debate is now well rehearsed in New Zealand. Racism has been largely discounted as a theory and a philosophy. And by **racism** I mean the literal meaning based on the flawed theory that you can organise humankind into sub-groups essentially based on phenotype. A theory which has been operationalised in some ridiculous ways, such as the one drop rule applied to African Americans in the United States and even the half-caste/quarter-caste terminology used extensively in the New Zealand of the mid 20th Century.

The standard for recording and reporting ethnicity in the health sector has recently been released by the Ministry of Health. We have become used to the agreed method of data collection involving choice, the option of multiple ethnic groups and self-identity.

![Ethnicity Options](image)

Yet this approach still leads to large errors of estimation. I believe that perfecting the ethnicity question is a holy grail.

A study I am currently involved with, **He Kainga Oranga – The Housing and Health Research Programme** which operates out of the Wellington School of
Medicine & Health Sciences, and is funded by the HRC, found that for a cohort of several hundred Māori respondents who were asked the same questions by the same interviewers in the same environment, with the only difference being a nine-month time gap, that there was 18% ethnic migration. That is, 18% of the respondents changed their preference for ethnic identity over that relatively short space of time. This was cohort of Māori who were participating in a very positive study, and actually receiving free insulation for their homes to a value of about $1500, so they were not under pressure to identify in any particular way. This phenomenon of ethnic migration is anathema to statisticians because it breaks a fundamental rule about reproducibility. But no amount of rules or standards can ever fully account for the behaviour of respondents.

The Treaty-relation definition is one concerned more with the Crown:Māori relationships which are evidenced by the existence of the Treaty of Waitangi. I have noticed of late that the terms ‘Māori’ and ‘Treaty of Waitangi’ have all but disappeared from the landscape of policy-speak in Wellington since the Orewa Rotary Club speech. As a Māori policy-analyst in the public sector during the early 1990s my job was to go around inserting these very terms within policy documents. By the late 1990s mainstream policy analysts were so ‘conditioned’ as to begin inserting these very terms of their own volition without prompting from me. So it is ironic that in the current political environment we have returned to not mentioning these words.

I take a very dry analysis of the Treaty of Waitangi. Not as dry, I hasten to add, as the current Leader of the Opposition, but much dryer than the position occupied by many of my peers in academia and politics. My analysis starts with the following statement:

“The only thing that matters is that the Treaty exists”
Unlike our near neighbours the Aborigine of Australia, or several of our Polynesian brethren across the Pacific, the British felt they had to ‘treat’ with Māori in order to establish authority. Thus a relationship was established, as were the parties to the relationship. Two points here. I very much favour Mr Moana Jackson’s analysis which focuses on the Treaty relationship rather than Treaty partnership. He asserts that ‘partnership’ is a characteristic which is drawn from civil law and not one from Treaty law which prefers the term relationship. He further cites the bad examples of partnerships evident in law firms, where there are clearly senior and junior partners, as the prime reason why a Crown:Māori partnership is fraught with risk. So when it comes to the Crown and Māori there are no prizes for guessing who the senior partner is!

Now why do I raise the dangerous words “Treaty of Waitangi” tonight? It is because the parties to the Treaty offer another way of defining Māori. Just as the Crown party has perpetual existence, irrespective of the particular Monarch, so too does the Māori party (to the Treaty). The Crown, and its government, should be interested in the broad population of people who are descendants of the Treaty signatories. So descent is the simple criterion which would define all Māori in terms of the Treaty relationship paradigm.

So we have at least three possibilities: Māori the racial group; Māori the ethnic group; and, Māori the Treaty-signatory descent group.

One particular issue with ethnicity I want to cover in more detail. This is really an issue of terminology - the difference between the phenomenon of ethnicity versus the categorisation of ethnicity for the purposes of planning or monitoring.

I don’t have a major problem in theory with categorisation of ethnicity for the purposes, say, of judging DHB performance. In the health sector we have a broad goal of reducing inequalities, but this goal is tempered by the fact that we actually
readily accept some inequalities. For example we accept inequalities between men and women’s life expectancies. We accept inequalities on the basis of age; the New Zealand public tends to value outcomes for younger people over outcomes for older people. But the same public doesn’t accept inequalities within the population of women or within the population of older people. Inequalities on the basis of income, education, geography (within reason), and identity however are all regarded as unacceptable. Whether that be sexual identity, cultural identity or ethnic identity. So taking a slice of the population, say those who identify the Māori ethnic group as one of their identities, and tracking their outcomes over time is acceptable. However, the decision to prioritise all those who have Māori as one of their identities to be Māori only seems illogical to me because it inflates Māori numbers relative to all other ethnic groups, and it washes out some of the disparities through the inflated numbers. That is, averages reduce the gross disparities.

The phenomenon of ethnicity is the subject of much study and debate. I’m surprised how much study there has been internationally, but little within New Zealand. I’ve always been of the view that the only definition of ethnicity which matters is the one in the mind of the respondent when they tick the boxes. And we don’t understand what’s going on in the mind of the respondent. At least we didn’t understand until we started asking.

Te Hoe Nuku Roa - is a longitudinal household study of Māori households which focuses on the achievement of Best Outcomes for Māori. In this study we have sought to understand some of the differences within the population of Māori, and to shed light on why some households do better than others. We are particularly interested in the way in which Māori are distributed. Analysts tend to be either “splitters or lumpers” when it comes to viewing group dynamics. In terms of this “splitters and lumpers paradigm” we are very much in the splitters’ camp wanting to understand the small groups within the larger group. We have piloted a cultural diversity measure which attempts to distribute Māori in some
way based upon their personal views on aspects of identity and culture. *Te Hoe Nuku Roa* (Durie, 1995; Te Hoe Nuku Roa Research Team, 1999, 2000) has given us an excellent lead to the phenomenon of Māori identity. Over the past 10 years we have asked around 1500 Māori individuals who live in Māori households about aspects of Māori culture and identity at three-yearly intervals. A 10-question schedule has been developed and piloted. We have also used the schedule in other studies, notably the Living Standards of Māori study undertaken in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and also a study of Youth Justice Outcomes for young people undertaken in partnership with the Crime & Justice Research Centre at Victoria University of Wellington.

From all of these studies we can identify a set of indicators for Māori identity – what we have called the “M-factor”. The M-factor is a latent trait, not able to be measured directly, so we must identify indicators and construct items and scales to illuminate the factor. These indicators we have identified to date represent items for identity for which there is both a diversity of response and a sense of increasing difficulty with each item. The indicators are given in the following table together with a qualitative measure and some potential questions or items about the indicator which respondents might answer.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Te Reo Māori</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Te reo Māori is an important language for me?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marae</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>I have a high level of comfort participating in activities at marae?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whakapapa (Māori component of ancestry)</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>I can recite more than 3 generations of my Māori whakapapa?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Question</td>
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| Political identity         | Expression (Maori electoral roll as a right or Treaty of Waitangi) | The Maori Electoral Roll should continue as one way of recognising Maori rights?  
Maori Development should follow its own separate pathway?  
Maori Development should be parallel to the development of NZ generally?  
Maori Development should not receive specific attention, only NZ Development should matter? |
| Maori ethnic identity      | Preference        | I prefer to identify only as Maori?  
I prefer to include Maori as one of my ethnic groups? |
| Culture                   | Knowledge and practice | It is important for Maori children to feel confident about Maori culture?  
Maori and Pakeha are very alike?  
I will prefer to have a tangi on my death?  
I feel well-integrated into mainstream NZ society |
| Iwi                        | Knowledge and practice | I responded positively to the Tuhono initiative |
| Whānau                     | Contribution      | I interact with my whanau as frequently as possible?  
I prefer to associate mostly with other Maori people? |

**Table 1: Indicators of Māori Identity – The M-Factor**

Some of the modern techniques of psychometric testing and item response theory allow us to identify the ‘difficulty’ of these items. Thus respondents could be judged in terms of their strength of identity. This type of measure is much less likely to be subject to change over shorter periods of time. The value you attach to te reo Māori, for example, is unlikely to change markedly, so the ethnic migration effect might be avoided. Item response theory would allow you to reduce these eight items to perhaps two-to-four item, and norm-based scoring schema would allow you to identify how typical a respondent was in comparison
with their peers, and also allow you to predict their likely answers to other items.
All of this is very much work in progress for the Research Centre for Māori Health & Development.

**Being Indigenous and Having a View**

The next issue which has always slightly puzzled me is the term “indigenous”. I’ve freely admit to never having quite figured it out. “Indigenous” means literally being born in a place, and so the logical conclusion is probably the one reached by the late Dr Michael King. Dr King asserted that New Zealand has two indigenous groups: an older indigenous group (Māori) and a younger indigenous group (Pakeha). This approach is consistent with the reality that both Māori and Pakeha are immigrants to Aotearoa/New Zealand; it’s just a question of timing perhaps.

Curiously though, we tend to treat flora and fauna and people differently. The oak tree and the opossum will always be regarded as exotic to New Zealand and never be referred to as indigenous.

A much more attractive definition of indigenous has been suggested, a definition based on the concept of ‘worldview’:

In an anthropological study of the practices and beliefs of a range of indigenous people, Knudtson and Suzuki (1992) identified a set of characteristics distinguishing an indigenous worldview. In summary they found that an indigenous worldview held that:

- Spirituality is imbedded in all elements of the cosmos;
- Humans have a responsibility for maintaining harmonious relationships with the natural world;
- Reciprocity between human and natural worlds in required - resources are viewed as gifts;
- Nature is honoured routinely through daily spiritual practice;
- Wisdom and ethics are derived from direct experience with the natural world;
The Universe is made up of dynamic, ever-changing natural forces;
The Universe is viewed as a holistic, integrative system with a unifying life force;
Time is circular with natural cycles that sustain all life;
Nature will always possess unfathomable mysteries;
Human thought, feelings and words are inextricably bound to all other aspects of the universe;
The human role is to participate in the orderly designs of nature;
Respect for elders is based on their compassion and reconciliation of outer-and-inner-directed knowledge;
There is a strong sense of empathy and kinship with other forms of life; and,
Nature is viewed as a continuous two-way, transactional dialogue.

(Knudtson and Suzuki, 1992, p. 13-15)

Their conclusion was that at the core of indigenous spiritual belief systems was the principle that all creation was spirit. For example: land had spirit, rivers had spirit, seas had spirit, winds (weather) had spirit, the Great Mysterious was spirit, man was spirit, and so on.

In a second study by a Māori scholar, undertaken during the course of a Churchill Fellowship, Dr Charles Te Ahukaramū Royal, offers an attractive definition of indigenous people also based on “worldview”. “‘Indigenous’ is taken to mean those cultures whose worldviews place special significance or weight behind the idea of the unification of the human community with the natural world.” Dr Royal contrasts three major worldviews: Western, Eastern and Indigenous. To summarise his more lengthy and eloquent description, a (Judeo-Christian) Western worldview tends to see God as external, with man being made in (his) image. God is in (his) Heaven ‘above’, Church spires point and people lift their eyes and bow in reverence. In contrast an Eastern worldview tends to focus internally and concentrates on ‘reaching within’ through meditation and other practices. Based on his research, Royal asserts that the authentic indigenous view is neither of
these. Rather, indigenous worldview takes definition from the relationship with the world (whenua in Māori terms) and sees people as organically integral to it, with humankind having a seamless relationship with nature - seas, land, rivers, mountains, flora and fauna.

If we accept that Indigenous people have an integral association with nature, then it is easy to see the validity of an argument presented by many people that the dislocation of most indigenous peoples from their lands through colonisation has compounded the effects of introduced diseases on health outcome.

**Māori Health and Hauora Māori**

One of the issues with Māori health is again an issue of terminology. Many people when they speak of ‘Māori health’ really mean the health of Māori people, perhaps in comparison with the health of non-Māori people – the focus is health and the difference is the group in question. Still others see ‘Māori health’ as referencing a Māori model of health – the focus is much broader than health (especially the western, new right, economic version of health) and the difference again is the group in question. This latter use of the term has, in a sense, freedom in two dimensions (the group and the model) whereas the former has only one dimension of freedom (the group).

Māori, understandably, prefer a different term anyway: “hauora”. Yet regrettably I find the use of this term to be very similar to the use of the term Māori health, particularly in mainstream publications, health strategies and the like.

If you take nothing else away with you tonight, then remember this: Hauora is not the Māori word for health – they are related though different concepts. And I won’t belabour the various models we have to describe hauora. The most quoted and used model is probably Mason Durie’s *Whare Tapa Wha* model which uses the metaphor of a strong, symmetrical house. Other significant models are Rangimarie Rose Pere’s *Whaeki* (the octopus) with its tentacles, and now suckers
on the tentacles, having specific meaning. Still other models are Manuka Henare’s report of a model developed during the Royal Commission on Social Policy *Nga Pou Mana* and a Waiora model being developed by one of our own post-doctoral researcher Dr Stephanie Palmer.

The mistake, I think, is to see hauora and health as two sides of a coin. I see them as extremes on a continuum with Māori views on hauora/health being distributed along the continuum in a parallel way to the distribution of cultural identity.

**The New Māori**

One of the most interesting questions for Maori in 2004 concerns Maori identity - what does it mean to be Māori and who are we? I want to introduce a term to you tonight – “The New Māori”.

What do we know about us in 2004? As I’ve suggested earlier, we’re no good at being counted. We’re not entirely comfortable with the label “indigenous”. We’re increasingly political, or at least grist to the political mill. We’re more heterogeneous than at any other point in our history. There are more of us than ever before. Our similarities to other New Zealanders are under-emphasised yet our differences are important. Our similarities with other colonised, indigenous peoples are profound, yet (again) our differences are important. Our greatest resource continues to be ourselves. So who are we really?

It was Mason Durie who first coined the term ‘Diverse Māori Realities’ in a paper he wrote for the Ministry of Health in 1993. In this paper he identified three main groups of Māori:

*“Māori people generally fall into at least three broad groupings. Some Māori are linked with conservative Māori networks. Their children will attend kohanga reo; they will be more or less comfortable on a marae; they will be members of a Māori cultural group or committee; they will speak or*
understand at least some Māori; they may belong to a predominantly Māori sports team and they will attend tangi.

Second, there is a group who will have some limited association with Māori society but will be, for the most part, integrated into mainstream New Zealand society. Their lifestyles may not be significantly different from their pākeha neighbours. But they will strongly resist any insinuation that they are not Māori.

Finally, there is a third group who will not be likely to access Māori institutions nor to take advantage of mainstream services. Their children will have no early childhood education; they may never be part of a marae activity, or visit a library, or belong to a sports club, or attend a Polytechnic…In effect they will be isolated from both Māori and general society and mainstream services. Yet they will maintain vehemently that they are Māori. And so they are.” (Durie, 1994).

Another colleague from Manatū Māori days, Waho Tibble, who sadly passed away only this week, had another analysis which he routinely shared with anyone who would listen. He said if you lined all the Māori people in New Zealand up in a single row, at one end you would have someone who was 100% Māori, at the other end you would have someone who was 100% Pakeha, and in the middle – some poor schizophrenic!

We’ve developed a framework called the “New Māori” which builds on both of these models and uses the findings from Te Hoe Nuku Roa. This framework allows us to investigate intra-Māori differences by moving us forward in our understanding of the dynamics of identity.

This framework adds a fourth category to Mason Durie’s three. A group of pluralistic Māori perhaps characterised as the growing Māori middle-class. A group who are comfortable in both mainstream NZ and the Māori world and importantly a group whose outcomes are relatively better than many of their Māori and Pakeha peers.
Summary

In summary I offer the following as the basis for our future research within the Centre for Māori Health & Development:

Defining Māori is a non-trivial exercise, and interchangeable definitions thwart our attempts at research and analysis;

The Treaty of Waitangi - the only thing that really matters about the Treaty is that it exists;

Hauora is not the Māori word for health, they are at best intersecting concepts. Health and hauora are points on a concept continuum;

Ethnicity may be part of one’s individual and collective identity, but it is not their identity

Perfecting the ethnicity question is a holy grail; the preferences and behaviours of respondents should be the starting point for understanding the relationship between ethnicity and identity (the M-factor);

Māori identity is a continuous variable which we can measure accurately using modern techniques; and,

The New Māori framework importantly includes a growing group of pluralistic Māori New Zealanders, who desire participation in both Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pakeha.

References

