

Chapter Five: The Study And The Process: Shovels And Picks, Sifts And Strainers.

As argued in the first four chapters eurocentrism and androcentrism in societal structures in general and in educational administration theory and practice in particular, requires strategic negotiation for those decentred by them. This is particularly so for women resisting 'being defined as deviant, deficient or invisible' (Court, 1989; p. 41) in administration theory. The extent to which such definitions operate to exclude groups based on gender are further complicated by the ways in which notions of ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or class combine. In providing a Maori centred approach to the research design the central focus becomes normality, competency and visibility so as to hear eight Maori women share their experiences of education as students, as teachers and as educational administrators. Although criticisms could be directed at this thesis that it perpetuates similar bias as studies found to be andro and eurocentric, this study makes no claims of 'scientific neutrality' or generalisability, as explained in the previous chapter.

The research on Maori women in educational contexts, identified in chapter three, indicate institutional experiences are problematic. This research focuses on eight successful Maori women. Success is defined in terms of the participants' ability to attain necessary school credentials that would serve as entry criteria into pre-service teacher training courses and positions of responsibility in their current roles. The study investigates the strategies used by eight Maori women to negotiate the sites in which they were educated and in which they work. The specific aims of this project are threefold.

1. to record both student and workbased experiences of eight Maori women who currently hold positions of responsibility as educators in general stream, bilingual and total immersion programmes in the primary sector;
2. to identify the strategies used by the participants who identify as Maori to negotiate institutional terrains and sustain their self ascribed identity;
3. to investigate any correlation between student strategies used by the women to attain school based credentials and the strategies they employed as teachers to negotiate workbased contexts.

The research was designed to use a series of individual, paired and group focus interviews to gather data, in keeping with the principle *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face interaction) as the culturally preferred means of communication.

Pilot Study

Three months prior to the commencement of interviews, those who had indicated an interest in the research, but were outside the geographical area from which the majority of the sample were drawn, helped to refine and to clarify my thinking about the interview process. This group of four women including myself constituted an informal network as a pilot study. We met on three occasions where the women responded to questionnaires and interview questions that had been predetermined by myself. At the third meeting we debated the type of information that both the questionnaire and interview schedule solicited.

During this process a planned questionnaire was abandoned and the majority of questions I had formulated for interviews were rejected. The group felt that structured questionnaires and interviews would constrain the number of issues that

might seem relevant to different participants. This group used 'different' as a concept to acknowledge that homogeneity could not be automatically assumed even though the group might superficially appear to be so by ethnicity, gender and profession. As a result there was a move away from a formal, rigid exchange of questions and answers in preference for an interactive process of telling, listening, clarifying and understanding (Chase 1995).

During this phase the value of hui was discussed as a means through which issues could be shared and debated, mirroring the processes enacted in the pilot study. As a consequence the decision to engage in unstructured interviews that included individual, paired and group focus (hui) meetings emerged from this process.

Types of Interviews

Thus individual interviews were chosen as a way of providing the context in which 'life histories' could be shared. Middleton (1988) maintains that

Through focusing both individuals and their socio-historical context, the life history method enables researchers to study people as creative strategists who devise means of resisting and resolving the contradictions they experience (p. 128).

Middleton further asserts that life history research "is a collaboration between the researcher and the researched (providing the) means of generating theory collectively" (1988, p. 132). What is recognised is the ability of people to actively engage in resisting or accommodating their socio-historical context as they seek to make sense of their world. While the term life history implies that all facets of participants lives are explored, realistically this thesis provides only a glimpse of what are recognised as fuller, dynamic, continually developing life trajectories.

Although this study thus has a narrower focus, the intent is consistent with what Middleton (1988) argues is central to a life history design,

...to elicit respondents' own analyses of their lives, (and) also designed to test (the researchers) developing and changing analyses of both the lives of the individual women and the events and structures of the wider socio-historical context in which they planned and lived them (p. 133).

The individual interviews also came to serve a further purpose during analysis. Seen as the primary data, unaffected by group dynamics, this data provided the means to analyse the extent to which tuakana/teina principles operated group processes. Tuakana/teina principles are to do with status, recognising the dynamic power differentials that could operate in hui contexts. For example, within a paired or group situation some participants might defer to older women; to those seen to be competent in te reo or more versed in tikanga, those seen to have taught for longer periods; or who hold principalships opposed to middle management positions. These dynamics could potentially modify the contribution of some participants while simultaneously amplifying the voice of others. Recognising the potential interplay of this cultural dynamic of consideration and positioning of self within a Maori group framework, individual interviews preceded any grouping of participants together.

The participants were drawn from four different programme types, and once individual interviews were complete, paired interviews provided the forum in which these participants could be brought together so that issues related to particular programmes could be explored.

The group focus interview or hui drew all the participants together with an initial two-pronged focus. First to allow a further forum in which the women could engage in discussion and debate regarding generalised issues pertinent to Maori women

educators in the primary sector. Secondly, it provided the context in which the validity of initial themes drawn from the individual and paired interviews could be discussed and debated. The hui also provided the appropriate forum to discuss another issue which arose during individual and paired interviews, to do with anonymity, as indicated in the section on *The Interview Process*. (p. 2)

Open ended questions were used in each interview to identify and investigate the women's perceptions of the issues that they saw as significant in shaping their experiences of school as students, as teachers and as educational administrators.

Benefits derived from interpretive, unstructured interviewing are complimentary to the principle kanohi kitea, face to face interaction. This study used this approach along with the further principles of mana, 'eliciting respondents analyses of their lives' (Middleton 1988, p. 133); mauri, acknowledging the contribution of individuals to collective understanding; mahitahi, working together in a reciprocal manner where meaning is mediated by both the researcher and the participant in order to achieve maramatanga, a better understanding of the issues constituting the focus of inquiry. Staircasing the interviews further emphasised the participants' ability to come together, explore and analyse their professional experience with each other and recognise the commonalities and divergences within the group. This approach also served to de-emphasise my role as the researcher as participants freely responded to each other, sought clarification and at times provided alternative analyses of issues raised by each other.

Ethical Considerations: Enacting the principles, Mana and Mauri.

Due to the nature of the research being undertaken and the legacy of the historical location of Maori in research, it was seen to be important that the project not only meet the ethical standards outlined in Massey University's "Code of Ethical Conduct (1994)", but that it equally satisfy ethical imperatives being advanced by Maori for Maori research. Some of the principles involved in the latter have been articulated elsewhere (Te Awekotuku 1991; Bishop and Glynn 1992; Curtis 1992; Durie, A 1992 and 1998; Stokes 1992; Teariki, Spoonley and Temoana 1992; and Walker 1992; Mead, L 1996; Smith, G 1997). A number of these principles are reflected in general research while others are specific to Maori contexts. It may be argued that many of the institutions from which this group is drawn are not Maori defined. Nevertheless, the participants as Maori individuals, must be afforded the considerations that such identification dictates.

Ethical considerations: Informed consent: Mana and Mauri

As indicated in the following section initial contact was made by an intermediary. Once potential participants indicated an initial interest they were contacted again to reiterate the purpose of the research project and to outline the rights and obligations of both the researcher and participant. The prerogative to freely withdraw at any stage remaining with them was accentuated (see Appendix One, Information Sheet; and Appendix Two, Consent Form). Maori protocol dictates that tribal representatives be consulted if the participants are all from the one tribal area. As diverse hapu and iwi affiliation was evident within the final sample the opportunity to include whanau during interviews was encouraged to sustain the integrity of the research and add a further monitoring check to the processes. This option was usually not taken up, although some interviews were carried out in participants' homes during which times family members freely moved in and out of the room in

which the interview took place. A further monitoring process, of interest to participants was the identification of my supervisors, their ethnicity and research interests.

The Participants

In methodological terms the participants in this study represent a non-probability, purposive group (Gall, Borg and Gall 1996) that was drawn from four different types of educational programmes currently operating in the primary sector:

- Resource teachers of Maori
- Kura Kaupapa Maori
- General stream
- Bilingual units operating in general stream schools.

They were sought via a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is non-random, allowing the researcher to identify participants in terms of typicality and relevance to the research project (Dixon, Bouma and Atkinson, 1987). The goal of purposeful sampling is thus to select cases that are likely to be 'information rich' (Gall, Bourg and Gall, 1996; p. 218) with respect to the area of research interest. This was used in combination with snowballing which activates the professional networks of the participant to extend the net from which the sample is drawn (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996). Snowball samples have been criticised for being skewed due to participants potentially identifying like minded professionals. This problem was noted and mediated by choosing a sample from the range of programme types listed. These participants can also be considered a 'rare population' (Lee 1993), in which case snowballing techniques are considered appropriate.

The criteria used to select research participants involved consideration of:

- their self identification as Maori;
- whether they were currently holding a position of responsibility;
- their willingness to be interviewed individually, in pairs and as a group and
- their proximity to each other.

The last consideration arose for practical reasons such as encroachment on participants' time and financial constraints on the part of the researcher. Therefore, an attempt to locate the sample in one area was seen to be important.

Initially it was intended that the sample would be drawn from those attending *The World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education*, in Albuquerque in 1996. However, few Maori women from the primary sector in management positions were in attendance. For this reason formal hui that were planned and prepared for were not carried out, although in speaking informally to two women who were in attendance, both agreed to participate in the project. During the process of establishing the remainder of the sample group, a friend (another Maori woman educator) became the intermediary contact in the area where the majority of participants resided. Initiating contact through a third party was important for two reasons; in the first instance, it maintained the principle of *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face contact) while at the same time providing the space in which participants could consider the project without feeling undue duress to participate. Secondly, using a third party sponsor was also a positive means by which potential participants could be contacted when the sample sought was geographically distanced from the researcher. It did however mean that, although she did not personally participate in the project, her own credibility was entangled in the project by representing my position and the worthiness of the project to some of the women who knew her but did not initially know me. Once ascertaining the participants' willingness to discuss the project further, one to one explanations of the aims and

purpose of the project were initiated followed by the mailing of consent forms and information sheets.

It was during the sample selection that Resource Teachers of Maori (RTMs) were added to the group in response to a suggestion made by a participant. This participant pointed out that RTMs worked across a number of programmes simultaneously. A conscious effort was made to draw participants from a range of programme types in the primary sector in the attempt to negate the potential homogenising effects of using snowball selection techniques.

The eight women were evenly divided amongst the identified programme types:

- two were principals at Kura Kaupapa schools,
- two principals from generalstream schools,
- one Deputy Principal teaching in a bi-lingual unit,
- one Senior Teacher teaching in a bilingual class and
- two Resource teachers of Maori who worked across a variety of sites.

At the time of commencing the interviews (at the end of 1996) teaching experience ranged from 5 years to over thirty years - approximately 130 years teaching experience combined. Six of the women worked within a 100 kilometre radius of each other and had some association through a variety of professional, social and political networks while the other two, outside this radius knew some of the participants through similar national networks, but not all. Of the eight women I had trained with two, knew two others socially and came to know and respect the other four during the course of interviews.

In spite of heavy workloads the eight women gave of their time not on one, but on three occasions, to participate in individual, paired and group focus interviews. In

addition they provided written feedback on the discussion chapters and/or oral feedback during telephone conversations.

The Interview Process: enacting the principle Mahitahi

Each participant was interviewed individually in order to give voice to their own background; in a paired situation discussing issues pertinent to the programme types in which they operated; and in a group focus hui to discuss issues pertaining to Maori women educators in general.

The first series of interviews took place at the end of 1996 as the school year came to an end. The paired interviews occurred mid 1997, followed by the group focus interview two months later. The individual interviews occurred in a variety of locations: at the participants' workplaces, in their homes, and in one instance in the home of the woman who had sponsored the project. Interviews varied in length from one to two and a half hours of taped interview excluding mihimihi and the reiteration of rights and responsibilities of both parties. As a result of the pilot study, semi-structured interviews, allowing for an interactive engagement between researcher and participant was enabled.

Although the women's current status located them in one programme type, the individual interviews clearly identified that there were a multitude of common experiences across the identified programmes, and still others not included in the research design. For example, some participants had shared experiences from when they had established and taught in Rumaki (Maori immersion) units in Generalstream schools; others had worked in Bilingual Schools as opposed to Bilingual units. Some had unique experiences, such as one had facilitated the

transition of a Generalstream School to Kura Kaupapa, while another had experience in a Kura Kaupapa Home School initiative that later attracted state funding. Consequently few of the participants limited their reflections solely to the programmes in which they were working at the time of interview.

The four paired interviews occurred in a variety of locations, my home included on one occasion. These varied in length from one and a half hours to three hours of taped discussion. During these interviews discussions were often directed by participants seeking clarification of each other's situation, while comparing and contrasting the contexts in which they worked.

The group focus interview (hui) took place over a five hour period including karakia, mihi and kai. Karakia duly acknowledged realms beyond our own and the wider groups to whom each of us are connected as a means of preparing for the hui at hand. Mihi as the means of introduction and the opportunity to make explicit connections within the group and out to whanau, hapu and iwi. Kai shared in hui also has a variety of meanings, rarely just sustenance for the body in this instance it was to manaaki (be hospitable toward) participants and mark the transition between the completion of the hui and returning to our own homes.

The participants had previously been sent a panui (notice, see appendix 3) outlining the purpose of the hui, which had a three pronged focus:

1. to discuss issues that they believed important to Maori women educators
2. to discuss methodological issues such as anonymity and the use of pseudonyms and
3. to provide feedback on general themes that were beginning to emerge from previous interviews.

Analysis of data

Analysis of data occurred concurrently with the interview process. Notes made during and at the end of interviews were journalled with themes and sub themes being tentatively identified. Emerging categories were then fed back, checked and clarified with participants at subsequent interviews. Identifying the themes was based on issues that were seen as significant through the number of coded data points emerging from the individual, paired and group focus interviews, added to which were issues less commonly identified but jointly agreed during feedback to be significant.

All themes were colour coded and drawn together based on commonality with the origin of dialogue and page references noted in relation to the original transcriptions. Theme files were created, and where dialogue fitted into multiple themes, sections were reproduced to sit within the most appropriate file. Their relevance to other themes were also cross referenced. Files were then re-checked and reintegrated into three broad areas addressed within the discussion chapters: Te Kete, The Briefcase, and Te Tuara.

The analysis phase further involved the participants checking transcripts with the right to delete, modify or add to individual interviews. During the write up phase, the women were also provided with full chapters, (in draft), of the discussion sections of the thesis. This process allowed the women an opportunity to see what dialogue of theirs was used, as well as the way in which it was interpreted. During this phase many provided feedback. Comments included the detection of grammatical errors,

questioning of some vocabulary, surprise at the commonality of experience and words of encouragement. Two participants stated that they had shared their copies with whanau members before supplying feedback in order to check the accuracy of their childhood recollections. Three comments addressed the issue of the 'expert voice'. One participant encapsulated many responses (having read the first and second discussion chapters),

There were times when this reader became quite emotional as the narratives jogged many memories of a time when transition and change were to eventually shape our roles today. You have used the narratives most effectively to explain succinctly and in academic speak the shaping of Maori education. I am particularly pleased that you have not chosen to validate our narratives through the use of a whole lot of theorists who mean little to us or who know nothing about us - Kia kaha. (Written communication from a research participant)."

During this final phase, previous understandings regarding the handling of data at the completion of the project, previous decisions made regarding the issue of pseudonyms, and future recognition of participants and further publication were reconfirmed (see Appendix Four). A copy of the thesis will be provided to each participant upon completion.

Ethical considerations of truthfulness and minimising harm: Mana, Mauri and Mahitahi

Adopting a collaborative open approach in which intent, process and outcomes of the research project were made transparent, was crucial to the achievement of the methodological aims. It required; the sharing of information regarding security of data; negotiating who would provide support with transcription of interview tapes; the use of pseudonyms; the way the data would be used within the confines of the thesis; handling of data at the completion of the project; and permission to use the data for further publication.

Interview tapes were secured in a lockable cabinet. The transcription of tapes were completed by myself and one other. When it became evident that support was needed in this area, the participants whose tapes were involved were informed. A non-Maori transcriber was the preferred option as a further means of sustaining anonymity (the issue of pseudonyms had not yet at this point arisen), as they were aware that the unknown whakapapa of any Maori transcriber could possibly link such a person to any one of them and therefore create unanticipated confidentiality problems. The transcriber was required to sign a confidentiality statement and all transcripts were then checked by me against the tapes and forwarded to participants for further comment. Over 600 pages of dialogue were generated across the thirteen interviews, divided into colour coded files.

Ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity: Mana and Mauri

Confidentiality and anonymity, although initially offered, became a point of ongoing negotiation throughout the process. Initially the women's participation was contingent on their preparedness to sustain the right of confidentiality of other participants with whom they would be paired and grouped. However by the end of the group focus interview this criterion was changed, initiated by the participants actively asserting their position in the project. During the group focus hui the issue of pseudonyms was raised. I sought direction from the group with regard to the use of suitable pseudonyms, prompted by the number of comments in the individual and paired interviews that centred on the significance of names, and the power invested in the 'naming of names'. I shared with them options I perceived regarding the way to proceed and possible short comings of each.

- First, I considered each participant providing their own pseudonym - but was aware that in the minds of Maori readers in particular this left open the

potential elevation of 'voices' over others based on the significance or insignificance of names chosen.

- Then, as I perceived these women to be navigating paths through an education system ever conscious that the path was not solely their own, the possible utilisation of nga whetu (constellations of navigational stars) was suggested.

While both suggestions led to animated discussion the first option was disregarded in agreement with the shortcomings identified. The second was also put aside as some participants felt that the use of nga whetu might be perceived as whakahihi, an arrogant attempt to whakamana themselves. An alternative was then suggested by a member of the group. This she labelled "ownership of korero"; wanting to be identified as owning the discussion that had occurred.

After some debate and an expression of my concern that things were changing dramatically from what we had first negotiated and I had initially guaranteed, two things were decided:

- first, that should any one of the participants individually express concern about this development (either in the group forum or individually to me) it would be abandoned,
- secondly, it was decided that, if no objections to use names were expressed I would identify each participant in the mihi (forward) of this document but not identify individual voices within the discussion or analytical sections.

As negotiated with the participants, no individual identifying markers are used from this point on. This was a consensus decision, made by participants, to support each other. This support was not contingent on a unified articulation of issues as the women recognise both commonalities and divergences in each of their positions. However the intent of the decision was to allow the reader to focus on the issue

raised, opposed to the identity of the person making any particular statement. Although each participant felt strongly that they were prepared 'to own my own korero' it was felt that individual identity may have undesired effects. In the first instance, there was concern about the potential consequence of readers either elevating or trivialising what was said based on the speakers identity rather than the point being made and the second concern, that if information was misappropriated (by those who might on use the data in unintended ways) the detrimental effects of such would be reduced by rightfully allowing the participant to either claim or deny ownership of individual responses.

Benefit to participants: Mana, Mauri, Mahitahi and Maramatanga

Maori research should go beyond the "minimising of harm" required by Massey's Code of Ethics. Maori writers (Te Awekotuku 1991; Durie, A 1992; Teariki et al 1992; Timutimu-Thorpe 1992; Walker 1992) maintain that Maori research should, in fact, be of value to and benefit, not only the researcher, but also those being researched. This view is closely aligned to the notion of reciprocity. Issues of reciprocity raised throughout the research process extend beyond any lineal interpretation of 'giving to' and 'giving back' when claiming insider status. The participants themselves talk of reciprocity as 'giving back' not solely to those who have nurtured them, but also, in terms of what they strive to give back by giving out. In this sense reciprocity is more than, 'I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine', it involves the added dimension of recognising that one has been nurtured within a group bringing with it the attendant obligation is to nurture others. In this context the ripples of giving back extend outward toward wider circles, encouraging growth and development. Furthermore, reciprocity involves addressing issues of honesty, responsibility and accountability. While some intrinsic satisfaction was expressed by participants at the

chance to document the struggles faced by themselves and whanau, they identified other potential benefits that would be derived from further dissemination of issues raised.

A potential benefit commonly identified by participants, involved the wider dissemination of findings in the hope that an increased awareness of Maori issues in education would contribute to changing negative stereotypical views of themselves and most importantly of Maori children. This may mean future conference papers or journal articles written collaboratively - these are ongoing issues that will continue to shape and strengthen the links made. I am also aware that, having forged this link with these participants, disconnection is not automatic at the completion of the project. Benefits in this regard are not always instantly obvious, nor always directly related to the project undertaken - it is a network activated, the completion of the project does not extinguish links made. I am conscious of the fact that I may be required at some future date 'to pay the piper' and I accept this as part of initiating a Maori defined research project.

Conclusion

To recap, methodological issues cohere the area of research interest to the research product (Dippo 1994). Freire (1996) extends this recognition by arguing for the specificity of links between the research interest, the research method and the research product. These three aspects of research combine to create a complex relationship in which the philosophical position shapes and mediates the consequent decisions about method and outcome. Methodological issues are driven by ideological positions that are locatable in a cultural, historical, social and political milieu. Treating this milieu as static assumes life, culture and knowledge itself were fixed and immutable. Fundamentally, as Maori, we are not born into, nor

do we live in a vacuum isolated from the need to be cognisant of shifting internal and external influences. Such a position requires the posing and reposing of questions directed not only at the site of study but also at the real (ontology: the nature of reality), the true (epistemology: the ways of knowing that reality) and the good (axiology: disputational contours of right and wrong) advanced in scientific endeavour (Scheurich and Young, 1997). Such questions in the development of a methodological position require consideration of who stands to benefit from the research? Whose interests are being served in its instigation, in its development and in its dissemination? As Maori researchers we cannot set ourselves apart from such questions being directed at either ourselves or the disciplines in which we are schooled. It became increasingly evident that the vehicle called science that was leading me toward new knowledge was governed by imperatives, as earlier suggested, that were not instantly visible. While the institutional context may see this as the primary objective of a masterate thesis grappling with a process, writing in an area where there is little that is published, these issues combined, add to the dilemma of double accountability. Primarily there is the accountability to whanau/hapu/iwi through the participants and their aspirations, juxtaposed with the institutional promotion of academic debate, much of which removes itself from the field from which the data is collected. The principles of mana, mauri, mahitahi and maramatanga were enacted in an attempt to breach this disjunction.