

## Tikanga and Ethics: *A Dialogical Encounter of Two Cultures*

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### **Abstract**

This discourse resulted from two counselling practitioners, one Māori and one Pākehā, working together to establish a union of two cultural codes. Their conversations are transcribed, analysed and presented, along with the processes they used to attempt a dialogical synthesis of two cultural traditions and positions. The resulting article explores the coming together of two cultural codes of best practice, and argues that what is created is a third code – a bicultural code, which is not so much written as one that is typified by doing. One code may be referred to as ‘tikanga’, the other ‘ethics’. The former originates from the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, the latter has its roots in the European traditions, and both have been updated and made modern by a series of revisions and refinements. A glossary of Māori terms is provided in Appendix 1.

We play different roles in life. In this article I take the role of Te Kaea, as Kahu named me, because I am ‘the caller’, the person who in the first instance brought us together to produce an article on the relationship of ethics and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Kahu takes the role of consultant or pilot, helping me to navigate the often difficult, but always rewarding, journeys into Māoritanga and biculturalism. She is the speaker, and many of her words appear in this text. I am the writer who compiled a narrative that reflected our discourse. Kahu is Māori from Ngati Kahungunu and Ngati Tuwharetoa iwi. I am tauwiwi, having emigrated from England in the eighties. Kahu is wahine, while I am male. Kahu is the cultural consultant providing her insights on tikanga Māori. I am the university academic wanting to be respectful by seeking consultation. Our coming together is bicultural in more ways than just ethnicity.

If we can, as counsellors, when judged by our peers and clients, be deemed to be truly ethical we can perhaps receive no higher accolade. However, in a bicultural setting there are at least two ways of establishing what actions are ‘right’ or ‘tika’. Arguably this is always the case as people struggle to interpret ethical codes (NZAC, 2002), and yet what makes this country special is that in Aotearoa New Zealand we have a treaty, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which requires the Crown and ngā iwi o Aotearoa,

who were signatories, to establish a relationship in keeping with that treaty. The extent to which we have honoured Te Tiriti historically and in the present varies in perception from author to author, person to person, institution to institution. We may be a country with two names, Aotearoa New Zealand, and two languages. We are also a country struggling to come to terms with ethical codes that are derived from two distinct cultures and yet in praxis need to serve two entangled cultures (Reilly, 1996). The basic tenet of this article is that we cannot divide ethics from tikanga – we have to find a way of conjoining them.

As I write this I am aware that as a Pākehā I am occupying a central and powerful position. I cannot claim this article to be co-written. We did, however, collaborate over the content of the article just as we collaborated in the process by which we met and dialogued over it, though this may not be enough to claim that we actually equalised our power. The writer becomes the inevitable arbiter of what gets written and how the flavour of an article is formed. Where the writer is Pākehā there is the ever-present danger of colonialism being re-enacted and re-enforced. My acknowledgement of this is a necessary condition for transparency but may not be sufficient to curb Eurocentric bias.

To assume autonomy over knowledge, especially when one is aware that to do so is to diminish another's knowledge, is to break codes of ethics. As such, failure to consult is an act of marginalisation of the other party. As we researched this article we were bound by the New Zealand Association of Counsellors' Code of Ethics s 11.2 b, which specifically requires researchers to 'obtain consent from research participants' (p. 35), and also s 11.5 b, which asks that researchers 'avoid contributing to the marginalisation or objectification of people' (NZAC, 2002). Concurrently, Te Tiriti o Waitangi Article Two requires Pākehā to protect Māori chieftainship over taonga, which includes ancestral lore, which can be viewed as being tikanga (Kawharu, 1989; Mead, 2003).

My motives for working on this article are part of the practice of decolonialism of self, which is an ongoing challenge and requires me to explore biculturalism for Pākehā. In order to put this biculturalism into practice and write about ethics and Te Tiriti I should obviously practise within the Code of Ethics of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors/Te Ropu Kaiwhiriwhiri o Aotearoa (NZAC, 2002) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, which means consultation with tangata whenua, my treaty partner.

My use of the term 'tangata whenua' is in itself a choice bound up in ethical consideration. When missionaries translated the Treaty into te reo they used the term coined by Captain Cook – 'Tangata maori' – to refer to the indigenous people (King, 2003), whereas I use tangata whenua here as 'people of the land' (Walker, 1990). It is

interesting to note that while Māori were given this collective name by Cook and his company, the European visitors were named Pākehā by the indigenous groups – a case of ‘mutual ethno-genesis’ (Campbell, 2005). In order to be ethical it is vital that the names by which people wish to be known result from a process of asking. Once without asking I referred to a broad collection of Māori people as ‘pan-Māori’ but this caused some upset, and hence I retreat from this descriptor in favour of ngā iwi o Aotearoa. But again I cannot assume that this is the generally preferred collective noun; to be ethical under the Treaty is to consult widely and frequently. Bond (2000) describes this approach to ethics as being typified ‘by a commitment to engaging in mutually respectful discussion from which ethics appropriate to that context can be constructed’ (p. 47).

My collaboration with Kahu on this article began early in 2006. At Kahu’s suggestion we met at her workplace, Te Korowai Aroha Whanau Services, in Porirua. We greeted and Kahu asked me to say a blessing or first words that might guide us. I responded with, ‘Nga mihi o te rā ki te tāua e hui mai nei. Kia tāu te rangimārie, kia whakanui tāua, me nga mea e whakapono ana tāua. As we come together I hope that we will have peace and respect in our hearts, and that we continue to develop trust in one another.’ We sat and over a cup of hot water talked not of the content that such an article on tikanga and ethics might contain but rather of what process we wanted to create and follow. This conversation was principally held in English because my reo is not sufficient to the task of adequate understanding. I was aware that my insufficient command of te reo Māori was a powerful shortcoming, and one in which a truly bicultural partner would not be so constrained. To have held the discourse in te reo Māori would, I suggest, have greatly changed the content and power relations in our discourse. The use of te reo over the use of English is itself an ethical consideration. The *contra preferentum* rule requires Pākehā to consider that the version of Te Tiriti that is composed in te reo Māori has precedence over the English translation (Kawharu, 1989). Since the time of the establishment of te reo Māori as an official language (Karetu & Waite, 1988) we have a further imperative to work in te reo where possible. Such acknowledgement reflects true veneration of the culture and the people. Te reo is a taonga too.

Kahu saw our working together like two people steering the same boat. She asked that we focus on two elements in the first instance. Firstly that we should examine ourselves and seek out our thoughts and feelings related to this task, and assess our capacity and willingness to stay faithfully on course. Secondly we ought to consider what roles we might take while completing this task.

The ethical construct that is ‘fidelity’ (Gabriel, 2005) was important for Kahu to ask us to consider here. Because of past and present exploitation there is a requirement

for truth and honesty to be present in our cross-cultural dealings. As Bond (2000) asserts, fidelity ‘as a moral principle is highly compatible with counselling and signals the importance of “trust” and being “trustworthy”’ (p. 48). Here Kahu was in part asking what my motives were: were they clear and ‘upfront’; could she indeed trust me? To ascertain ‘what was in my heart’ was to anchor our discourse in respect.

Concerning our roles we then expanded the metaphor of the steering of a waka. Kahu suggested that to her I was the caller, Te Kaea, who summoned or suggested that we journey together, and that this gave me a distinct role. We then considered what it took to navigate a boat through open seas and also to be able to dock a boat safely in a harbour. These two environments require two sets of expertise, and a ship’s captain needs to hand over to a pilot when conditions require it. This conversation involved us in analysis of cultural trends. I expressed an urge to lead, yet I also acknowledged the need to be guided by significant others when I stray out of my known territory. Meanwhile Kahu described how she ‘allowed’ herself to follow Pākehā leadership because she knew that I was the author and writer of the discourse and she was aware of her role and responsibility as the consultant. We both expressed an urge to remain open to exploring these roles, and considered what might be a preferred way for us to manage them.

With all the best of intentions and repeated attendance and participation in workshops that seek to develop awareness of colonialism and to decolonialise (Lang, 2006) my practice, I still transgress. It is important that while I accept the inevitability of repeat colonialism I am not guilt-ridden by this to the point of torpor. As hooks suggests to her fellow black audience, in her chapter on ‘ending the shame that binds’, ‘When we decolonize our minds, we can maintain healthy self-esteem despite the racism and white supremacy that surrounds us’ (hooks, 2003, p. 54). I would like to suggest that when Pākehā fully decolonialise their minds we can become liberated from guilt because our delusions of white supremacy become historic. Arguably it is what is in our hearts that matters. We may slip up and disempower even when our intention or motive is to empower.

As such ethical practice is a goal, frequently it is the intention to be ethical, in a deontological or rule-driven way, that governs ethical practice. This presents us with an ethical conundrum. If I suspect that to act may cause offence because I do not ‘know’ enough, ought I to act? Yet not to act is to risk offence because one is not doing anything to acquire more knowledge. It is through our actions that we experience the learning that inter-cultural alliances create. Hence inaction may be safe in terms of ‘maleficence’ (Gabriel, 2005) in that we do no harm, yet it may also contravene issues of beneficence (ibid) in that we do no good! To take a step knowing that one may ‘put

one's foot in it' is ethical where not to take a step out of fear of getting it wrong is not.

Our conversation turned to a consideration of Iwikau Te Heuheu and Governor George Grey (Frame, 2002) and their travels around Aotearoa New Zealand together, and how Iwikau may be viewed as having acted in the role of pilot to Grey's captain. We appreciated the difference and the equality that each of these roles brings. The pilot knows the waters and currents of their own domain, while the captain retains a knowledge of their own boat and their own purpose. At times the surrendering of the helm from one to the other is necessary for safe passage, while each needs to relate well to the other so that communications are clear. As such we considered that Grey and Iwikau had an ethical relationship born out of the respect they held and exercised for each other. To aid our own biculturalism in practice we resolved to continue to explore the roles of pilot and captain, and to be self-aware and other-aware as we compiled this written article.

Kahu then identified a further conundrum of how many pilots there ought to be, to guide a captain. We considered that each harbour would need its own pilot, and that perhaps each iwi would need to be consulted when a Pākehā seeks to work with a member of that iwi. This is in line with the guidelines we had previously co-produced (Lang, 2004). This is also a practice that Kahu follows when she works across iwi – she consults too. We agreed that we would co-author this article, and that while we thought this satisfied the requirement to consult we would be asking for the article to be reviewed by others and that we could at some point consider who that might best be.

Arriving at this decision exemplified achieving a consensus as described by Metge (2001) in *Korero Tahi*, as the decision formulation procedure that reflects the practice of arriving at not just the decision itself but the ownership of decisions also. Such a process is one that draws on the tikanga of the marae and is one to be observed, that is to say followed, in the spirit of Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Kawharu, 1989).

Our second meeting a month or so later began with a waiata, at the suggestion of Kahu. We had not started with a waiata before; rather, we usually began with a karakia said by one of us. It felt significant that we sang together 'Te Aroha': 'Te aroha, te whakapono, me te rangimārie tātou tātou e'. In my leading way, and arguably contrary to our proposed self-awareness around role-taking, I began with a summary of what I had been thinking and feeling since the last meeting.

I reflected that ethics has a history, a present and a future, that is, it is time-relevant – time-dependent. Also, we do not treat people equally by treating them the same; rather, equity is achieved by responding proportionately to someone's needs. Hence treating fairly and responsibly is ethical best practice. However, if ethical practice pre-colonisation was determined by ngā iwi o Aotearoa under the rule of

tinorangatiratanga, then Te Tiriti o Waitangi would suggest that Pākehā have been added to the list of co-constructors of ethical practice. Consequently the establishment of ethical practice needs to be achieved through pluralistic means. Whenever just one person or agency decides on the proper way to act or be, however knowledgeable, considerate and non-prejudiced that person or agency might be, then it is hard if not impossible to see that decision as being ethical. Ethics is a shared journey rather than a single destination. The irony of our situation then struck home, as having articulated this view I realised that I had been standing in front of the whiteboard, pontificating about ethical best practice, while Kahu sat facing the board, waiting! To give me my due I noticed this blunder before Kahu had to say anything, and I suggested, 'Te Kaea needs a pilot! Let's change places,' which we did.

I am not suggesting it was wrong or unethical of me to express my view. It is ethical and non-exploitative for a Pākehā to contribute what they will to the discussion. Indeed it is important for Pākehā to be able to bring their own strengths to debates. It is equally important that they resist the often unconscious inclination to dominate. This involves introspection on what power one holds and wields where 'power involves a plurality of incommensurable discursive regimes, each with its multiplicity of "micro-practices"' (Besley, 2002, p. 54). This seeming lack of common measures of biculturally formed tikanga/ethics requires us to enter into new and exciting post-colonial discourses that celebrate power sharing and power redistribution born out of a greater appreciation of power relations (Moodley & Palmer, 2006).

Having 'taken the floor', Kahu began with a reflection on our intended destination, and asked, 'Ngā tikanga me te Tiriti o Waitangi, is this the same as ethics and the Treaty? Or does something get lost in translation?' Kahu suggested that 'we may be tempted to translate ethics as tikanga and that when we do so we produce words to describe tikanga as "getting it right" or "best practice", but really ngā tikanga needs to be defined in Māori concepts, including ngā marae; karakia; tapu/noa; ngā huarahi; mauri; ngā motuhake; ngā mōteatea; ngā kawa; ngā atua; rahui; tika, and more'. Kahu went on to describe how in the past Māori have been encouraged to define themselves in Pākehā terms. The requirement for Māori has been to become bicultural, which has meant being bilingual at home and school, and bi-national as Aotearoa and New Zealand. But now if we (Māori and Pākehā) want to be ethical we need to perceive biculturalism as two separate cultures travelling together experiencing, understanding and valuing each other and acquiring awareness and proficiency in the other culture. Such an act redistributes the balance point of the power relationship back to the centre.

In this context becoming bicultural means and requires adaptation. Most importantly, to understand Māori terms they need to be lived – only then are they truly

honoured and not just having lip service paid to them. If tikanga needs to be lived then ethics is about being and doing with virtuous motives rather than just reasoning and considering. This suggests a teleological focus, ‘which emphasizes the consequences of actions’ (Houser et al., 2006) or outcome-focused assessment of ethicality. This places the emphasis on what happens, what is produced, what is done in the name of bicultural partnerships. This is the ethics of praxis (Freire, 1996), or as Houser et al. (2006) prefer, ‘Virtue Ethics [which] focuses on the process by which moral attitudes and character develop’ (p. 11).

Kahu advocated for Sid Mead’s book on tikanga Māori (Mead, 2003). She suggested we ‘need to study together the content of this book so that we can deepen our understanding. This study is important because the meaning of words changes with time. Concepts that are not used because they have been suppressed need to be re-learned by Māori and non-Māori. Take for example ngā mōteatea that grieve for battles lost and lives taken that have less relevance today, and the haka. Old haka have words that don’t fit our modern society we have changed and our tikanga needs to change too. Some karakia went with their kaumātua to their grave because the karakia were perceived as being too sacred to use, and we don’t know how to use them. As Māori moved from the determinants of ethical ways of being to the recipient of ethical ways determined by Pākehā so many of their previously preferred ways became awkward or lacking in fit with modern standards and practices. But they haven’t died out. Like Apirana Ngata suggested, many Māori have learnt to walk two paths and because Māori have learnt to be bicultural they have preserved tikanga but in a form that sits alongside the predominately Pākehā-determined ethics. Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires that we, that is all of us Māori and Pākehā, acknowledge the ethical practices of each other and seek to combine them, to find a bicultural ethics.’

On taking Kahu’s advice I found that Mead (2003) does indeed have much to offer in terms of appreciation of how ‘tikanga’ can be perceived and its role as a ‘Māori ethic’ (p. 6). He explains that “‘tika’ means “to be right” and thus tikanga Māori focuses on the correct way of doing something. This involves moral judgements about appropriate ways of behaving and acting in everyday life’ (ibid). Mead (2003) also provides specific encouragement for researchers to consider tikanga, especially ‘the values of manākitanga, whakapapa, mana, tapu, utu and ea ... research in a Māori sense seeks to expand knowledge outwards (te whānuitanga), in depth (te hōhonutanga) and towards light (te māramatanga)’ (p. 318). It is my humble hope that this research into tikanga/ethics has achieved some of these three expansions.

In our conversation Kahu outlined how the loss of kaumātua and the impacts of colonisation on Māori self-determination of tikanga had caused some confusion

around tikanga, how it is to be determined and by whom. Hence the process of establishing tikanga is in a state of flux. This condition or circumstance needs to be factored in when bicultural relationships are formed. Indeed, the search for bicultural best-practice is about adjusting to and accommodating changes by combining in cross-cultural and responsible discourse which in turn assists bicultural tikanga/ethics to emerge. A role for those who seek to find bicultural solutions is to draw out the differences and smooth out the difficulties in discourses which seek to acknowledge power issues. It was an important moment in our discourse when I realised that 'Te Kaea needs the pilot now'. I had acknowledged the power differential or, as Clarkson (2003) describes it, the 'cultural colonisation' (p. 194), and we had, because of our prior discussion, a mechanism to reverse this. By becoming the learner and not the educator I had taken up a de-colonialist position and Kahu shifted into her own element where she had the self-determination and power to direct our discourse.

As we concluded our discourse together we reflected that this bicultural waka is in new, turbulent and choppy waters, and that navigating this had been a challenge for us both. As Frame (2002) suggests, biculturalism is evidenced by the apparently strange mathematics of one plus one is three. As two cultures combine so they produce a third, a truly bicultural third, and 'if our common law is to emerge, it will need to recognise and accommodate the best and most functional of the concepts and values of our two major cultures. This will require the restoration of a better balance ...' (p. 76).

This article can only make suggestions as to how ethical decisions can be made rather than what is ethical. Hence our focus on process is perhaps the most valuable outcome, because the process may endure longer than any particular ethical statement or 'answer' to an ethical problem. We are trying to be ethical by *being* bicultural. In a practical way tikanga/ethics is about being aware of stereotypical inclinations and 'swapping seats'; interchanging language from te reo to English; being mindful of our colonised perspectives and power positions; beginning and ending with karakia and waiata; acknowledging the space in which we meet and the sacrifices others make to help this to happen; celebrating the wairua/spirit that is with us, but most of all being respectful and mutually empowering in our dialogue.

Kahu and I ended our discourse as we began with the waiata 'Te Aroha' ...

Te aroha, te whakapono, me te rangimārie tātou tātou e.

The love ... love, respect and peace for us all

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## Appendix 1

### Glossary of Māori terms [using Ryan (1989) and Ngata (1993)]

What is presented here is a glossary of terms used in this article as they appear chronologically. It is important to note that the easy translation of one word from te reo Māori to English is not a simple task. Often the reduction of a concept to a word that describes or names that concept may require many words to define it adequately in another language.

tikanga	custom; rule; principle
kaea	caller; haka leader
wahine	woman
iwi	tribe
tauiwi	foreigner; immigrant
ngā iwi o Aotearoa	the indigenous tribes of New Zealand
taonga	treasure(s)
te reo (Māori)	Māori language
korowai aroha	cloak of love/care
whānau	family (extended)
Pākehā	non-Māori; European
kōrero tahi	talking together
marae	meeting ground
karakia	prayer-chant
tapu/inoa	sacred; forbidden/free from tapu
huarahi	road; pathway
mauri	life principle
motuhake	special; separate
mōteatea	a lament
kawa	protocol for ceremony
atua	god; supernatural
rahui	no trespass order
waka	Māori canoe
haka	fierce dance with chant
kaumātua	old man; elder
manākitanga	befriending
whakapapa	cultural identity
mana	power; influence
utu	value; revenge
ea	paid for; avenged
tinorangatiranga	absolute Māori sovereignty