

# Māori Approaches to Assessment

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*Kaupapa Māori theory serves as the overarching philosophical framework for two interrelated projects discussed in depth in this article: (a) the New Zealand Ministry of Education funded Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project (KMLAE); and (b) the author's doctoral work, which chronicles the progress of participating Māori centers toward the development of Māori early childhood assessment approaches.*

*Te manu i kai i te miro, nona te ngahere  
Te manu i kai i te matuaranga nona te ao  
The bird who partakes of the miro berry owns the forest  
The bird who partakes of education owns the world.  
(Traditional Māori Proverb)*

This whakatauki (proverb) illustrates the value that Māori have always placed on education and learning. In fact learning was viewed to be of such importance that it could begin before birth. Because an individual's learning added to the value of the whole community, it was crucial that children acquire the appropriate skills, knowledge, and attitudes to enhance the community and to guarantee not only their own and their family's or community's survival, but that of future generations. Children's learning was, therefore, not left to chance. It was a dynamic process that required the involvement of the learner, the teacher, and the community. Assessment of learning was also a community activity, measured by the level of family and community support and enthusiasm. Hemara (2000) maintains:

Māori learners were assessed by their peers, teachers and all those who were affected by the results. When a whakakapapa (genealogy) recitation or other activity was being performed the listeners sounded their approval or otherwise. This showed how well the learner lived with the information they had accumulated and how well the assessors knew the learner and the subject under scrutiny. (p. 22)

In this article I discuss work completed on two interrelated projects: (a) the New Zealand Ministry of Education funded Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project (KMLAE), aimed at creating a professional support resource primarily aimed at Māori early childhood services and based on the development of exemplars of assessment from Māori perspectives and contexts; and (b) my doctoral thesis entitled *Tikanga Māori as Outcomes for Early Childhood Implications for Assessment: Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Framework Development*, which chronicles the progress of participating Māori centers toward the development of

Māori early childhood assessment approaches and framings. I discuss Kaupapa Māori theory, which provides an overarching philosophical framework for the projects, and examine assessment in relation to traditional modernist understandings to Learning Stories, an alternative New Zealand approach, and to Te Whāriki Early childhood Curriculum. Key themes emerging from the research projects are discussed and exemplars of assessment are presented to illustrate the themes.

I also use whakatauki (traditional Māori proverbs) throughout the article both to embed it in te Ao Māori (the Māori world) and to draw on important messages from the past on Māori values, understandings, and behavioral expectations. Hemara (2000) states that whakatauki are “treasures from the past [that] throw light on tribal history and lore.... In particular they throw light on the value dimensions of Māori lore.... A proverb constitutes a compelling reason for acting one way or another” (p. 73).

### *Kaupapa Māori Theory and Practice*

*E kore au e na'garo, he kakano I ruiruia mai I Rangiatea.  
I will never be lost; the seed was sown in Rangiatea.*

(Traditional Māori Proverb)

This whakatauki emphasizes that the speaker has and knows his or her genealogical links to Rangiatea (the Māori ancestral homeland), so is confident and secure with a positive future. Not only does the whakatauki stress the importance of a secure Māori identity to the well-being of the individual and family, it also highlights the need for Māori cultural and educational initiatives to be grounded in Māori understandings, world views, philosophies, and practices.

Kaupapa Māori theory provides this grounding. Kaupapa Māori has been described as “the philosophy and practice of being Māori” (Smith, 1992, p. 1). Kaupapa Māori is not new; in fact Māori have struggled to have their rights with regard to language, culture, and land acknowledged and legitimized since colonization. Kaupapa Māori in its present form emerged as a result of raised political consciousness among Māori communities during the 1970s and 1980s. This was a response to the threat of imminent Māori language and culture loss, together with successive government policies that failed to deliver on Māori language, cultural, and educational aspirations.

Māori communities armed with the new critical understandings of the shortcomings of the state and structural analyses began to assert transformative actions to deal with the twin crises of language demise and educational underachievement for themselves. (p. 171)

Kaupapa Māori covers interventions and social transformations across diverse sites including Te Kohanga Reo (Māori immersion language nests for children aged 0-5) and Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori immersion primary schools), Māori research, and tertiary education. It is a culmina-

tion of Māori resistance to 150 years of an imposed educational system that has failed to meet Māori educational aspirations and has resulted in educational underachievement and societal disadvantage (McMurphy-Pilkington, 2001).

Kaupapa Māori is the collective grouping of culturally resistant, Māori-driven intervention initiatives. The Ministry of Education (2000) defines the term *Kaupapa Māori* as “Māori centred/based/defined philosophies, frameworks and practices” (p. 3). These philosophies, frameworks, and practices are derived from “distinctive cultural epistemological and metaphysical foundations” (p. 3), and Kaupapa Māori expresses how these ideas and practices are framed and organized. Smith (2002) argues that Kaupapa Māori is a term used to describe “the practice and philosophy of a Māori culturally informed life” (p. 453) and adds that politically, it relates to promoting and advancing the cause of “being Māori.” The historical, social, political, intellectual, and cultural legitimacy of Māori people is taken for granted. It affirms Māori cultural capital and presupposes Māori normality and equality:

Kaupapa Māori speaks to the validity and legitimacy of being Māori and acting Māori: to be Māori is taken for granted. Māori language, culture, knowledge and values are accepted in their own right. (p. 13)

Autonomy and control over Māori cultural well-being is posited with Māori (Smith, 1990). The Māori experience is central to the theoretical base. It accepts Māori and Māori processes as reality and uses them in a Māori philosophical framework. According to Smith, a Kaupapa Māori theoretical positioning presupposes that:

- the validity and legitimacy of Māori is taken for granted;
- the survival and revival of Māori language and culture is imperative; and
- the struggle for autonomy over our own well-being, and over our lives, is vital to Māori survival. (p. 100)

Kaupapa Māori is both theory and transformative praxis. Kaupapa Māori has become an important and coherent philosophy and practice for raising Māori consciousness, supporting resistance, and encouraging transformative action and reflection (praxis) in order to progress Māori cultural capital and learning outcomes in education and schooling. It is important to understand that this does not necessitate the rejection or negation of Western theory and practice; it is not one or the other; rather it requires the repositioning or recentering of Māori theory, knowledge, and world views. Smith (1999) states, “It is about reconciling and reprioritizing what is really important about the past with what is important about the present” (p. 39). Smith (2002) argues that the coherence and impetus of Kaupapa Māori theory

is derived from an adherence to a utopian vision of emancipation. Kaupapa Māori theory is more than simply legitimating the Māori way of doing things. Its impetus is to create the

moral and ethical conditions and outcomes which allow Māori to assert greater cultural, political, social, emotional and spiritual control over their own lives. (p. 456)

### *Te Whāriki*

Te Whāriki is the New Zealand Ministry of Education's early childhood curriculum policy statement. *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa/Early Childhood Curriculum* (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 1996) is a bicultural, socioculturally conceived curriculum document, written partly in Māori, founded on the aspiration that children "grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (p. 9). Te Whāriki translates to "a woven mat" that allows for diverse patterning depending on knowledge bases, beliefs, and values on which all may stand. Te Whāriki is an example of how traditional Māori and Pakeha (Western) values, concepts, world views, and philosophies have been integrated into a modern, bicultural, educational document. A large number of people were involved in the writing of Te Whāriki, led by Helen May and Margaret Carr. A Māori team headed by Tamati and Tilly Reedy were instrumental in developing the conceptual framework for Te Whāriki. Māori perspectives and world views, therefore, are inherent in the curriculum document, and according to Hemara (2000) are as valid today as they were when first conceived by ancestors. Te Whāriki makes a number of statements to support and guide assessment processes based on the guiding principles Whakamana (empowerment), Kotahitanga (holistic development), Nga Hononga (relationships), and Whānau Tangata (family and community).

### *Whakamana/Empowerment*

Mana can be translated as "prestige" or "power" and whaka to "enable" or "make happen." Whakamana in the context of education relates to the process of empowering the child to learn and grow. Te Whāriki states, "feedback to children on their learning and development should enhance their sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners" (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 30). To achieve this, a credit-based assessment approach that empowers the child and supports the development of confident, competent learners is crucial. This focus on credit-based assessment is a movement from past assessment practices in early childhood that have been associated with Western modernist discourses of the child and child development (Drummond, 1993). In these modernist discourses the child was viewed as needy and deficient, requiring the support of adults to address perceived inadequacies. Consequently, the purpose of assessment was to measure the sum of the child's knowledge and to identify any weaknesses or shortfalls (Broadfoot, 2000; Carr, 2001; Cowie & Carr, 2004). Stonehouse and Gonzalez-Meña (2004)

make the point that when children are assessed and compared with each other, "even ones who, by comparison, are ahead of the rest have some gaps and weaknesses so they get the message that they aren't there yet, wherever 'there' is" (p. 14).

Progress was identified as the movement through a hierarchy of predetermined skills and competences that were both linear and universal (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). These ideas about the child and learning have been generalized and institutionalized to represent universal truths for all human beings. This has served to foster power ideologies and to fabricate a rationale for the marginalization of diverse peoples and cultures as backward and deviant.

Child development has been constructed based on enlightenment/modernist notions of human progress that are linear, universalistic, deterministic, and that establish advancing as a standard for "normalcy." Those who do not fit are abnormal. (Cannella, 1997, p. 63)

The result of this ethnocentric, universalistic ideology of learning has been to position Māori children in the deficit, viewed as both problematic and "at risk." Durie (2006) states, "the stereotypic low achieving Māori student becomes a self fulfilling prophecy, compounded by policies ... that target Māori because they are 'at risk' rather than because they have potential" (p. 16). The role of assessment in this context is to uncover problems, identify areas of dysfunction, and fix them. This preoccupation with deficits and problems ignores the strengths of Māori children and families and assumes that non-Māori benchmarks of learning capture Māori aspirations. They do not.

#### *Kotahitanga/Holistic Development*

Kotahitanga relates to reflecting how children learn and grow holistically. Kotahi translates as "one" or "together with," and kotahitanga means "oneness," "singleness," and "togetherness" (Hemara, 2000). Te Whāriki states, "Assessment of children should encompass all dimensions of children's learning and development and should see the child as a whole" (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 30).

Again this is an alternative view to the traditional modernist perspective where children's learning and development could be compartmentalized and measured in an unbiased and objective way. Learning was viewed as an independent endeavor, fragmented and free of context, with assessments validated through objective measures, impartial and detached from the child's reality (Broadfoot, 2000; Carr, 2001). Furthermore, this orientation of assessment with its perception of the independent, autonomous learner situated the learning in the past and focused on the child's unsupported understanding and learning rather than his or her potential capabilities.

Traditional approaches to observations and assessment can underestimate what a child is capable of knowing, because all they can tell us about a child concerns the small events and

moments in their life that are readily observable by the educator. Thus these approaches can result in simplistic views of who the child is and who they are becoming. (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 150)

### *Nga Hononga/Relationships*

Nga Hononga is about how children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things. Hono can be translated as “splice,” “continual,” or “join.” Te Whāriki states, “Assessment is influenced by the relationships between adults and children, just as children’s learning and development are influenced by the relationships they form with others” (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 30). Learning is actively produced through social interaction that entails consequences. Rogoff (1998, cited in Fleer, 2002) explains:

What is key is transformation in the process of participation in community activities, not acquisition of competences defined independently of the sociocultural activities in which people participate. (p. 112)

This perspective of assessment is a fundamental shift from the modernist perception where assessment was something to be done to children, a technical activity that could reveal or display learning. Children existed in an ahistorical, asocial, acultural world, and assessment was a context- and value-free activity.

Te Whāriki challenges the concept of the found world that is knowable, objective, and factual and supports the notion of constructed worlds (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Lather, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Wenger, 1999; Woodhead, 1997). This notion of constructed worlds advocates the concept of *meaning making*, where children and adults engage in activities and learning that have social, political, economic, and cultural significance in worlds of multiplicities and complexity. They are worlds of “multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities” (Lather, p. 21). The child actively participates in his or her own learning, interacting with the environment, acting on and transforming relationships with people, places, and things, and co-constructing knowledge. The child is, therefore, a social being embedded in communities, with infinite potential and possessing a multitude of abilities, identities, and knowings. Malaguzzi (1993, cited in Dahlberg et al., 1999) states,

Our image of children no longer considers them as isolated and egocentric, does not see them as engaged in action with objects, does not emphasise only the cognitive aspects, does not belittle feelings or what is not logical and does not consider with ambiguity the role of the affective domain. Instead our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and most of all connected to adults and other children. (p. 48)

### *Whānau Tangata/Family and Community*

Whānau tangata incorporates the wider world of the family and community. Whānau can be translated as “to be born” or “family group” and tangata as “person.” This principle stresses the concept that individuals

are never alone if they continually strengthen and maintain their family and community connections (Hemara, 2000).

Te Whāriki states, “families should be part of the assessment and evaluation of the curriculum as well as of children’s learning and development” (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 30). Cowie and Carr (2001) make the point that not only should families be part of the assessment process, but that assessment itself can work as a “conscriptio device” to recruit whānau involvement in the development of a center community of learners and teachers. They maintain, “assessment both enlists participation and is an artifact of the community of practice” (p. 2). Assessment provides a context for the development of trust and respect and enhances relationships between teachers, whānau, and children. Assessment provides whānau with an avenue to access and contribute to curriculum and validates what the learner brings to the context, encouraging children and whānau to share their knowings and understandings with the center.

### *Learning Stories*

The Learning Stories approach to assessment developed by Carr (2001) and early childhood practitioners working on the Assessing Children’s Experiences in Early Childhood project is an alternative to traditional modernist assessment approaches. Learning Stories involves observations in everyday settings aimed at providing a cumulative series of qualitative snapshots or written vignettes of individual children displaying one or more of the five target domains of learning dispositions. These learning dispositions are based on the strands of Te Whāriki: Mana Atua (well-being); Mana Whenua (belonging); Mana Reo (communication); Mana Tangata (contribution); and Mana Aoturoa (exploration). The Learning Stories approach is credit-based in that it foregrounds what children know and what they can do as opposed to what they cannot do. Learning Stories highlights the image of competent children engaged with their families, communities, and culture. Carr describes an approach to assessment that reflects the connected, culture- and context-specific nature of learning:

The traditional separation of the individual from the environment, with its focus on portable “in the head” skills and knowledge as outcome, has been replaced by attaching social and cultural purpose to skills and knowledge, thereby blurring the division between the individual and the learning environment. (p. 5)

Learning Stories focuses not on a hierarchy of predetermined skills, but on participation and increasing complexity. Interpreted observations, discussion, and multiple perspectives contribute to a deeper understanding of the child and provide validity for the process. This assessment approach also provides for social spaces where family and community are able to contribute their “funds of knowledge” to the curriculum and to children’s learning (Carr et al., 2001).

Cowie and Carr (2004) make the point that Learning Stories is an approach to assessment that can contribute to social thinking in three important ways. First, it can work as a “conscriptio device”: the social “glue” that recruits involvement of whānau/educators in the development of a center community of learners and teachers. Narrative and credit-based assessments provide a context for the development of trust and respect and enhance relationships between teachers, parents, and children. Second, the Learning Stories approach provides an avenue to access and contribute to curriculum. It supports participation and mediation of learners and whānau. It validates what the learner brings to the context, encouraging children and whānau to incorporate their knowings and understandings to the center. Third, Learning Stories provides a space to negotiate and renegotiate the meaning of children’s learning, constructing multiple or multidimensional pathways of learning works-in-progress or formative assessment.

Formative assessment must make a difference to, form, and inform learning. In early childhood the interpretation of the gap between what went on before, what is happening now, and what might be the next step will shift. The assessments will story and re-story as new information comes to hand (Cowie & Carr, 2004).

#### *Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Development Project*

The Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Development (KMLAED) Project and my doctoral research came about as a result of work on the Kei Tua o te Pae/Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars (2005) project. The Kei Tua o te Pae project began as a pilot project in conjunction with the Ministry of Education’s National Exemplar project in schools. Kei Tua o te Pae is a best-practice resource aimed at supporting teachers to develop practices that incorporate assessment and quality learning experiences. Kei Tua o te Pae provides early childhood educators with exemplars of assessment that are credit-based, narrative, collaborative, and that inform ongoing learning. The exemplars reflect the Te Whāriki curriculum document by making connections between learning and learning opportunities, including multiple voices, and including assessments that are meaningful to a range of audiences and that reflect the value of early childhood education. The focus is on children actively participating in their own learning, interacting with the environment, acting on and transforming relationships with people, places, things, and time, and co-constructing knowledge in a sociocultural context (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 2005).

A Māori advisory group, Te Roopu Kaiwhakangungu, made up of Māori academics and educationalists from a range of organizations across New Zealand, was established to offer advice and guidance to the project on issues related to Māori and bicultural assessment. Involvement in Te Roopu Kaiwhakangungu gave group members the opportunity to reflect



on and critique early childhood assessment theory and practice in relation to Māori values, ways of being and knowing, and aspirations for the future. This critique highlighted for members that although the Kei Tua o te Pae project had a strong commitment to developing bicultural assessment understandings and promoting bicultural development, further work was required on assessment approaches that were inherently Māori, that reflected and promoted Māori values and understandings, and that made valuable statements about learning and progress for Māori.

This critique and ongoing transformative action process is in line with key elements that Smith (2002) argues are integral to Kaupapa Māori development. The first element is *conscientization*. Conscientization develops from critique that is informed by theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The focus is not only on deconstructing what may not fit, but on seeking transformative actions, strategies, and interventions. This aspect is, therefore, twofold in that it provides a critique of existing frameworks and structures while working on the development of alternative structures. Through this process a space is created for other cultural perspectives to be recognized and acknowledged. The second element is *resistance*. Resistance involves "a conscious collective will to make change of existing circumstances" (p. 485) and requires not only a resistance to cultural loss and oppression, but a range of strategies that highlight Māori aspirations and visions for the future. The third element is *praxis*. Praxis (action and reflection) requires transformation. It provides for flexibility and movement with new and emerging challenges. Kaupapa Māori, therefore, provides a dynamic theoretical and practical basis and can critique and reconstitute the ideas of conscientization, resistance, and transformative praxis in varying ways depending on circumstances.

Kaupapa Māori initiatives develop intervention and transformation at the level of both "institution" [by establishing alternative structures] and "mode" [by developing alternative pedagogy, practice and administration]. (p. 247)

The KMLAED Project can be seen to add to the process of retrieving space for Māori voices and supporting transformative action, thus contributing to the process of recovering our past and reconciling our knowledge, values, and epistemologies. The primary aim of the KMLAED Project is to produce a resource that will support quality teaching and learning experiences in Māori early childhood settings as defined by Māori. It will, however, be available to all early childhood services in New Zealand, and it is anticipated that this will aid non-Māori services to develop bicultural understandings and practices. The KMLAED Projects draws on Kaupapa Māori theory, Te Whāriki, the Learning Stories approach, and traditional Māori values and concepts in order to articulate assessment understandings and framings that articulate and reify Māori ways of being and knowing and valued learnings. The project was initiated in 2003 and worked with seven Māori immersion/Māori whānau-based, licensed, and

chartered early childhood centers. A qualitative action research approach was used to support centers to articulate frameworks of assessment based on center philosophies, Kaupapa Māori theory, emerging understandings of assessment, community/whānau aspirations for their children, and professional knowledge and understandings of early childhood theory and practice. Centers also developed exemplars of assessment that reflected their assessment frameworks, including understandings of the construct of the Māori child and how the Māori child develops and learns.

One such understanding is that children are infinitely wealthy, strong, and powerful. Traditionally Māori children were seen as the receptacle of the combined understandings, abilities, and strengths of their ancestors—taonga (treasures) to be held in trust for future generations.

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini.*

*I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents, and strengths of my family, tribe, and ancestors.*

This whakatauki underpins the Māori construct of the child, in which children are perceived in terms of “he taura here tangata” (the rope that binds people together over time) and “te kawai tangata” (the genealogical link that strengthens family relationship, Metge, 1995; Reedy, 1991). Children are, therefore, immensely powerful, rich, and complete, an important living connection to the family—past, present, and future—a living embodiment of ancestors and a link in descent lines stretching from the beginning of time into the future. This represents a construct of the child that is extremely wealthy, inherently competent, capable, and gifted, no matter what his or her age or ability.

Hemara (2000) adds that traditionally it was important to Māori that children assert both themselves and the mana (power/prestige) of the whānau (family), hapu (subtribe), and iwi (tribe), and care was taken to ensure that children’s spirits were never broken. Keesing (1928, cited in Hemara, 2000) noted, “the whole family and tribal training ensured that boys and girls were reared to maintain the aggressiveness, independence and prowess of the ancestral stock” (p. 8).

A Kaupapa Māori approach to assessment privileges and empowers Māori children and insists that the construct of the powerful, rich Māori child be at the heart of understandings about learning and assessment rather than the deficit, problematic Māori child. Māori children’s cultural capital is acknowledged and valued and their learning achievements celebrated. The approach requires that educators not stand back as aloof, unbiased observers, but involve themselves enthusiastically in the process and the celebration of learning and success. Durie (2006) argues that celebrating success is important, but more important for Māori educational development is normalizing success. Assessment is a powerful vehicle for the normalization of success for Māori children and whānau.

Kaupapa Māori assessment has the important role of not just normalizing Māori success, but also being seen to do so.

Another understanding is that Kaupapa Māori assessment recognizes and acknowledges the importance of relationships in providing children with security, strength, and connectedness, not only with whānau, but with the wider world.

*Kia mau ki tena, Kia mau ki te kawa maro.  
Hold fast to that, Hold fast to the swoop of the cormorant.  
(Kelly, 1949, cited in Hemara, 2000, p. 39)*

These are the dying words of a chief of Ngati Maniapoto to his people. It became a Ngati Maniapoto motto, encapsulating the need for unity in the tribe. It describes a traveling cormorant formation with young fighting men on the outer boundaries protecting the women, children, and old people in the interior. The outer ranks protected the inner ranks, and the inner supported their protectors, a reciprocal relationship that was almost indestructible (Hemara, 2000). Durie (2006) states,

Constructive relationships between parents and children and with grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts, cousins are important determinants of successful learning and lay the foundations for positive relationships in later life.... Whānaungatanga, building relationships, is a crucial whānau function that contributes to human potential and to successful engagement outside the whānau. (p. 7)

Kaupapa Māori assessment recognizes that assessment cannot be restricted to the individual child in the EC center context, but must be viewed through the lens of whānau (family), hapu (subtribe), and iwi (tribe). Whānau are intrinsically involved in the child's learning and so must be intimately involved in the assessment process. Embedded in the concept of whānau are concepts of rights and responsibilities, obligations and commitments, and a sense of identity and belonging. Collective action and responsibilities are expressions of this social identity and associated social obligations. This positioning also requires a reconceptualizing of the construct of the teacher as the expert, with the power to judge and classify children, to that of a contributing whānau member and the perception of teaching as a non-hierarchical collaborative activity where all concerned make a valued contribution. Kaupapa Māori assessment is premised on the belief that whānau are integral to the teaching and learning process and so fundamental to the assessment process.

*He hono tangata e kore e motu; kapa he taura waka e motu.  
A human bond cannot be severed; unlike a canoe rope, it cannot be severed.*

Whānau have also been instrumental in developing assessment understandings, framings, and exemplars on the KMLAED Project. They have worked to articulate what being Māori means for them; what learnings their community values; and how the acquisition of these valued skills, knowledge, and dispositions can be documented and assessed for their

specific whānau, communities, and contexts. No attempt has been made to generalize these understandings across other centers or communities; however, a number of concepts/themes have consistently emerged that I explore further. Three of the key concepts are Manaakitanga (hospitality/caring), Whānaungatanga (kinship/relationships), and Rangatiratanga (sovereignty/self-determination).

*Manaakitanga: Caring/Hospitality*

*Manaakitia te tangata, ahakoa ko wai, ahakoa no hea*

*Treat people respectfully, irrespective of who they are or where they are from.*

(Traditional Māori proverb, Macfarlane, Glynn, Grace, & Penetito, 2005, p. 25)

Manaaki is commonly translated as “to entertain or befriend, to show respect or kindness” (Patterson, 1992, p. 148). Hirini (1997) states that the Māori view of self is fundamentally nonindividualistic, relating identity with the kinship group. Collective action and responsibilities are expressions of this social identity and associated social obligations. The enhancement of personal self-worth is linked to giving in this collective context rather than amassing personal wealth. Manaaki denotes what the kin group owe each other not only in terms of feeling love and affection for each other, but displaying it, giving, and helping.

Manaaki is derived from the word *mana*. Shirres (1997) describes mana as power. He makes the point that a Māori way of describing a person’s worth is to speak of their mana. Mana can also be translated as prestige, power, or reputation; however, it also has a deeper meaning of spiritual power and authority. Mana is inherited from ancestors, but until it is actioned, it is only potential power. Mana is enhanced through an individual’s own accomplishments and actions, but it could also be lost. It is crucial for the child and his or her whānau/community that this does not occur and that the child’s mana be nurtured and enhanced (Hemara, 2000; Marsden, 2003; Metge, 1995).

Education and learning are important aspects of the child’s upbringing that can enhance mana (Early Childhood Development, 1999). Te Whāriki argues, “Ko te whakatipu i te mana o te mokopuna te tino taumata hei whaingā ma tatou” (Enhancing the power/status of the child is the highest objective for us all; New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 32). Kaupapa Māori assessment is intimately related to enhancing the mana of the Māori child and whānau. For Māori it is about centralizing Māori constructs of the child and whānau in the assessment frame, ensuring that assessments capture the strengths, abilities, and competences of children and whānau rather than any perceived deficiencies.

Manaakitanga describes a process whereby the potential power (mana), life essence (mauri) and spirituality (wairua) is nurtured through positive actions and goodwill of others. It is embodied in educational contexts that are culturally safe, a context where both student

(child) and teacher are in a reciprocal relationship of respect and understanding. (Macfarlane et al., 2005, p. 25)

Manaakitanga acknowledges the mana inherent in each child. Assessment for Māori, therefore, must acknowledge, respect, and protect each child's mana and further promote and encourage its growth and development. Respect for mana is demonstrated in how people are treated and can be seen in the following understandings: whakamana (empowerment), tiaki (nurturance), aroha (love), awihina (helpfulness), atawhai (kindness), pa-te-aroha (compassion), ohaoha (generosity), utu (reciprocity), and kawenga (responsibility). The following exemplar<sup>1</sup> (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, in press) highlights how children are able to manaaki the mana of other children, respecting and taking responsibility for the well-being of others. According to Shirres (1997), "the ability to manaaki, show hospitality, the ability to give" (p. 119) is a sign of mana.

Parewai and Tu are 2-year-olds who attend one of the KMLAE project kohanga reo (immersion language nest). The story below was written by Parewai's mother and describes an intimate interaction between Parewai and her friend Tu when Parewai and her mother were leaving the kohanga at the end of the day.

*Kaua e Haere Paawai (Don't Go, Paawai!!)*

Today when I went to pick up Parewai from kohanga and as we were walking out the gate towards the car, Tu began calling out "Kaua haere Paawai, kaua haere" (Don't go Parewai, don't go). She was holding on to the bars of the gate with her face between two bars as if in jail. She looked very sad and Parewai went back. They touched hands affectionately and talked quietly, face to face. This went on for a few minutes, then, Parewai turned to leave. Tu called out again "kaua haere Paawai" and again Parewai turned back. The talking and touching took place again and finally Tu said "see ya." Parewai replied "see ya" and both went happily their different ways.

Manaakitanga—It was amazing to see the affection and caring these two girls had for each other. I was very touched to see my baby being so loving towards her hoa (friend).

Despite their young ages, these two children are able to ask for and receive compassion, empathy, and reassurance. Parewai acknowledges and is respectful of Tu's feelings and takes responsibility for her friend's well-being. Parewai's actions not only acknowledge Tu's mana, but also reflect her own mana and her understandings of manaakitanga. The story not only displays great affection and caring (manaakitanga), it also highlights that manaaki is a concept that is valued and promoted in Parewai's family and community. The interaction also reflects and at the same time strengthens the kinship bonds (whānaungatanga) between the girls.

*Whānaungatanga: Kinship/Relationship*

*Kia urupu tatou, kaua e taukumekume.*

*Unity gives us strength, disharmony drives us apart.*

(Traditional Māori proverb)

cited in Macfarlane et al., 2005, p. 25)

For Māori, the whānau is the foundation for the growth and development of the Māori child. It is the Māori child's essential moorings, providing opportunities to interact with the physical, social, and cultural worlds and gain the skills required to function in these arenas. The whānau is the basic social unit of Māori society. In its basic verbal form, whānau means "to be born." Over time the whānau has acquired many meanings and interpretations. Members of a whānau may or may not live together in the same community, they may or may not be socially and economically interdependent, but generally whānau are still thought of as "a large family group comprising several generations of parent-child families related by descent from a recent ancestor" (Metge, 1995, p. 16).

More than simply an extended family network, a whānau is a diffuse unit based upon a common whakapapa (genealogy), descent from a shared ancestor, and within which certain responsibilities and obligations are maintained. (Durie, 1994, cited in Cunningham, Stevenson, & Tassell, 2005, p. 13)

Kaupapa Māori assessment requires that we recognize what the child brings to the context. This includes not only their inherent wealth and strength, but also their history, their whānau, and their whakapapa and ancestors. This has been described by one participant on the project as "an invisible roopu" (group), who although not seen must be acknowledged. Assessment approaches for Māori, therefore, must not view the child in isolation, but rather surrounded by whānau both visible and invisible, living and dead. This idea strongly links the child with his or her whānau, hapu (subtribe), iwi (tribe), history, whakapapa, and identity (Hemara 2000). Māori children's self-esteem is not a matter for the individual; rather it is dependent on positive relationships with others, especially the whānau (Hirini, 1997).

To be a person is not to stand alone, but to be with one's people, and the deeper the oneness the more we are truly persons.... The persons we stand with are not only living but even more the ancestors, those members of the family who have already gone before us. So basic to being a person and being Māori is to be whānau, family, not just with the living, but also with the dead. (Shirres, 1997, p. 53)

Embedded in the concept of whānau are ideas of rights, responsibilities, obligations, and commitments. Metge (1995) maintains that two of the main functions of the whānau are to support its individual members and to care for and nurture children. Durie (2003) adds that the key capacities inherent in a whānau structure are:

- Capacity to care (Manaaki),
- Capacity to share (Tohatia),
- Capacity for guardianship (Pupuri taonga),
- Capacity to empower (Whakamana),
- Capacity to plan (Whakatakoto tikanga),
- Capacity for growth (Whakatini).

*Whānaungatanga* (kinship) is how Māori view, maintain, and strengthen whānau relations. It has been described as the “element that provides strength, warmth and understanding in family and kinship relations” (New Zealand Government Department of Health, cited in Hirini, 1997, p. 44). *Whānaungatanga* involves responsibility and commitment among members and generates whānau cohesion and cooperation.

*Whānaungatanga* describes a process of treating people as if they were family. According to Macfarlane et al. (2005), in an educational context, *whānaungatanga* “involves the central importance of establishing and maintaining effective and equitable relationships between teachers and learners” (p. 25).

*Whānaungatanga* acknowledges the connectedness of children to their worlds and the relationships that define their worlds. These relationships can be expressed as follows: *mahitahi* (cooperation), *herenga* (commitment), *kawenga* (responsibility), *whakahoahoa* (friendliness), *whānau/hapu/iwi* (community), *whakaute* (respect), *mahiponotia* (reliability), *kotahitanga* (unity). The following exemplar involving Te Hirea (4 years, 6 months old) Dujournae (2 years), and Ariana (2 years, 3 months) illustrates some of these roles and responsibilities being enacted, or more precisely attempting to be enacted.

The following story is from a bilingual early childhood center in South Auckland. It was written by Estelle, an early childhood teacher, and describes an interaction between Te Hirea (4 years old) and a group of babies.

*These Babies Don't Whakarongo (Listen)*

Today Te Hirea asked if she could be my helper/*kaiawhina* with the younger children for the nappy changes and I agreed. We held hands as we walked to the changing area, four babies and Te Hirea, the helper. All the children sat down awaiting their turn to change. While I was changing the first child, I heard Te Hirea say, “E noho (sit down) darling, darling *whakarongo* (listen), *titiro* (look at) *kia Ariana*.” After a few more tries at getting the children to sit, Te Hirea pointed at Dujournae and in a stern voice said, “e noho or *turu kino*” (sit down or naughty seat). I finished the change and quickly stepped in because Dujournae was becoming quite unhappy saying, “*Whaea* (aunty/mother/mama) Estelle will take over now.” I did have a laugh to myself but laughed even more when Te Hirea put her hands on her hips and said, “*whaea* these babies don't *whakarongo* (listen) can *Ihipera* help you tomorrow.”

*Whānaungatanga*—Te Hirea takes on her *tuakana* (elder) responsibilities with enthusiasm and authority even in the face of perceived “disobedience” from the babies.

Despite the difficulty experienced with the babies, Te Hirea takes her *tuakana* (elder sibling) responsibilities with enthusiasm and *gusto*. The *tuakana/teina* concept is based on reciprocal kinship relationships and is embedded in the collectivist nature of Māori society. *Tuakana* (elder sibling or relative) take responsibility for the care and support of the *teina* (younger sibling or relative). Through this support young children can acquire skills and knowledge that could not be acquired alone, and older

children have opportunities to learn to cooperate, take on responsibility, care, nurture, and develop kinship relations (whānaungatanga).

Whaea Estelle has an important role in providing opportunities for Te Hira to develop her tuakana skills with the babies. In order for children to learn tuakana/teina roles, they must be encouraged to take on these responsibilities, which for the babies may include learning to accept care and support when offered.

### *Rangatiratanga: Self-Determination/Sovereignty*

*He maramatanga to tenei whetu, he maramatanga ano to tera whetu.*

*This star has its own brightness, that star also has its own brightness.*

(Traditional Māori proverb, cited in Macfarlane et al., 2005, p. 25)

Rangatira is a term for nobleman or chief. In a Māori world view, rangatiratanga includes a focus on individuals reaching their highest potential in order to expand and deepen their talents and skills, thus strengthening and enhancing the whānau or collective (Macfarlane et al., 2005). Rangatira are recognized as having innate qualities inherited from ancestors, as do all Māori children. Rangatiratanga acknowledges the chiefly origins of children.

Rangatiratanga refers to the autonomy, power or authority that individuals have over their own lives and learning. It affirms their identity as a descendant of an ancestral whānau member and acknowledges the rights that accompany that status. The unique qualities of each and every individual are acknowledged and respected. (p. 25)

Rangatiratanga in the context of assessment is less about being a chief and more about displaying chiefly qualities. These qualities may include pukumahi (industriousness), hauoa (courage), manaaki (love and honor), kawenga (responsibility), atawhai (kindness), maia (confidence), puakitika (assertiveness), hiringa, (determination), and arahina (leading).

George is 1 year, 8 months and attends a bilingual early childhood center in south Auckland. The following story was written by a staff member in the toddler room.

#### *Tumeke (Awesome) George!!*

George was playing with a toy in his area with his friends. He then turned around and threw it over the gate into the babies' area. He tried to climb up over the gate, tried to unlock the gate, he kicked the gate, and then tried to crawl under the gate. He wanted his toy one way or the other. After being unsuccessful at getting the gate opened George then lay on his stomach and pulled himself under the gate using his arms. It took George a couple of minutes to get in the baby area but he finally did it with a big smile on his face. He picked up his toy, looked at it for a bit, then threw it back over the gate to his area. George then got back on his stomach again and crawled back under the gate. George then picked up his toy on the other side and started playing with it, showing all his friends. The look on George's face when he had retrieved his toy was as though George had just climbed a mountain.

Rangatiratanga—Maiatanga—George displays wonderful perseverance and determination to retrieve his toy. Kaitoro—George takes a risk and succeeds in his chosen task. Tumeke (fantastic) George!!



Maramatanga-George is able to work through the difficulty of retrieving his toy. He attempts a number of strategies before achieving his goal—lateral thinking. Mana-George is so proud of his achievement. His smile is a mile wide. He rangatira mo apopo tenei!! (A chief of tomorrow)

This exemplar reflects a rich, competent child who displays determination, problem-solving skills, persistence, and strength of character, all characteristics of a great chief.

#### *A Final Word*

The first draft of the KMLAED Project resource is due to be published in 2007. The resource will provide the basis for professional development support on teaching, learning, and assessment in Māori early childhood centers, including the development of each center's context-specific assessment approach, based on center/community philosophical underpinnings, values, and whānau aspirations for children. The emphasis on the development of context-specific assessment approaches, recognizes, and acknowledges the diverse realities and contemporary world views of Māori people. Māori are not a homogeneous group; in fact Māori are now more socially and culturally diverse than at any other time in our history (Cunningham, 1998). Therefore, work carried out with one group cannot be generalized to represent the lived realities and understandings of all Māori early childhood settings. It is not about creating a one-size-fits-all approach to assessment, but more about authentic assessments that reflect and have significance for the whānau, community, teachers, and children. In order for this to occur, meaningful partnerships between teachers and communities must be developed and maintained.

In conclusion, the development of Kaupapa Māori assessment approaches is an important development for Māori early childhood education. It can be seen as contributing to Māori resistance and development through the legitimization of Māori ways of knowing and being in the context of early childhood education. It supports the articulation, reification, and validation of Māori understandings and epistemologies through the development of assessment approaches premised on Māori values and valued learnings and where Māori children and their whānau are honored and empowered. Māori educational aspirations are acknowledged, with success not only celebrated, but normalized through the assessment process. It supports the enhancement and growth of children's identity as Māori and pride in being Māori. I begin this article with a whakatauki about possessing the world through learning. I finish with an aspiration for the future: that our children be able to live confidently as Māori in both a Māori world and a global world and that they attain the fruits these worlds have to offer.

#### *Note*

<sup>1</sup>Exemplars are from the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project (New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, in press).

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