

# Theoretical underpinnings of Kaupapa Māori directed practice

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**Abstract:** This article attempts to unbundle and identify the theoretical underpinnings of Kaupapa Māori practice. It suggests that Kaupapa Māori as a concept, has been underpinned by two differing, sometimes competing theoretical perspectives. One is Critical Theory, which comes from the Marxist/socialist grand theoretical tradition seeking to challenge and transform oppressive structures. The second is constructivism, where knowledge is validated through a social construction of the world, thus is located and specific. This article contends that a Critical Theory informed approach is not the understanding held by many in the Māori community of what Kaupapa Māori practice is, instead, this article advocates for a constructivist 'Native Theory' approach as being one that fits better both with the community view as well as a theoretical explanation that is more conducive to Māori development. While these two theoretical explanations may seem to be in conflict with one another, a preliminary model is presented that integrates these approaches.

**Keywords:** critical theory; kaupapa Māori theory; native theory

## Introduction

When the term 'Kaupapa Māori' is discussed, what is it that is actually being talked about? Depending on who you ask you can get a number of different answers. There are two major, and in some ways, opposing viewpoints. For many in the Māori community, Kaupapa Māori usually refers to a group or organisation that operates using Māori cultural values, such as the Māori language schools (Kura Kaupapa Māori). In academic circles 'Kaupapa Māori' usually refers to a Māori philosophical approach to a field of practice or theory that focuses on challenging well-established Western ideas about knowledge. These two are often talked about as though they are the same thing: but are they?

This question arose when after twenty years of working in the Māori communities of South Auckland and Otago, I commenced work at a University and found that the academic descriptions of Kaupapa Māori, particularly Kaupapa Māori Theory, did not match up with my own experience of what attracted me to Kaupapa Māori services and approaches.

This article attempts to unbundle and identify the theoretical basis of Kaupapa Māori and to explore some of the implications these approaches have for Kaupapa Māori practice. It is suggested that Kaupapa Māori as a theoretical construct, particularly as it is articulated in academic writings on Kaupapa Māori Theory and research, is incomplete and that it is in fact informed by two differing theoretical perspectives. The first is Critical Theory, which comes from the Marxist/socialist grand theoretical tradition seeking to challenge and transform oppressive structures. It has the goal of bringing social, economic and political change through empowering people to emancipate themselves (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). The second theoretical perspective is constructivism, where knowledge is validated through a social construction of the world, thus is located and specific. It is the latter which, of course, is closer to the approach found in the Māori community.

This article contends that a Critical Theory informed approach is not the understanding held by many in the Māori community of what Kaupapa Māori practice is. Instead, this article advocates a constructivist 'Native Theory' approach as being one that fits better both with the community view as well as a theoretical explanation that is more conducive to Māori development. While these two theoretical explanations may seem to be in conflict with one another, a preliminary model is presented that integrates these approaches.

## **Kaupapa Māori Theory and Critical Theory**

In its most basic form, Kaupapa Māori is referred to as the philosophy and practice of being Māori: "It assumes taken for granted social, political, historical, intellectual and cultural legitimacy of Māori people, in that it is a position where Māori language, culture, knowledge and values are accepted in their own right" (Smith, 1992, cited by Bishop, 1996, p.12).

This philosophy is most often expressed in the delivery of culturally appropriate and relevant services to Māori in the education, health and welfare sectors. These services are colloquially referred to as "by Māori, for Māori" and according to Durie (2001) involve a number of defining characteristics including; the use of cultural values, whānau participation, use of Māori language and custom, outcomes measures relevant to Māori and a competent and professional workforce.

Some have taken this further to where Kaupapa Māori is not just a philosophy, but has been developed into a theory of social change. One of the earliest advocates for this approach was Graham Smith who acknowledged that "Kaupapa Māori Theory developed out of a description of the alignment of Critical Theory and Kaupapa Māori praxis in [his] writings of the late 1980's" (Smith, G., 1997, p. 98).

Critical Theory is a perspective that holds that the "social world is characterised by differences arising out of conflict between the powerful and powerless" (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001, p.20). Therefore, for change to occur it requires an understanding of the forces that have created the disparities so that they can be exposed, confronted and challenged. Critical Theory is drawn from the broad 'Socialist' or Marxist theory tradition (Crotty, 1998). Socialist theory identifies class distinction as the cause of much of the inequality and injustice that those in the working classes suffer (Crotty, 1998). Māori are included in these exploited classes because, as indigenous people impacted by colonisation, they have lost their 'capital' and the power that comes with it.

According to Graham Smith (1997, p.38) there are three significant components of Kaupapa Māori theory that align themselves with Critical Theory. The first is 'conscientisation' which Smith refers to as 'revealing the reality'. This is a process that critiques and deconstructs the hegemonic forces that marginalise Māori knowledge and takes place within a 'Critical Theory' framework.

The second component is resistance, or what Graham Smith calls 'oppositional actions'. He sees this as having two approaches. The first revolves around what he calls reactive realities, i.e. "responding and reacting to the dominant structures of oppression, exploitation, manipulation and containment". The second approach is "proactive activities" where the aim is to bring about a change in conditions to allow wider change to occur through acting collectively (Smith, G., 1997, p. 38).

The third component of Graham Smith's analysis of Kaupapa Māori is praxis, or as he defines it, "reflective change". This involves not just critiquing what has gone wrong, but working to

achieve a way forward drawing on, and applying, what is learnt (Smith, G., 1997, p. 38). While few authors would state that Kaupapa Māori Theory emerged from Critical Theory, many writers acknowledge the congruence and strong relationship between the two. Linda Smith states that Kaupapa Māori is “located in relation to Critical Theory, in particular to the notions of critique, resistance, struggle and emancipation” (Smith, L., 1999, p. 185).

Pihama adds that:

Intrinsic to Kaupapa Māori Theory is an analysis of existing power structures and societal inequalities. Kaupapa Māori Theory therefore aligns with Critical Theory in the act of exposing underlying assumptions that serve to conceal the power relations that exist within society and the ways in which dominant groups construct concepts of ‘common sense’ and ‘facts’ to provide ad hoc justification for the maintenance of inequalities and the continued oppression of Māori people (Quoted in Smith, L., 1999, p. 186).

Kiro (2000) is one writer who believes that Kaupapa Māori Research is located with, and related to Critical Theory, particularly with its focus on emancipation and the exposing of power relations in societies. She relates Kaupapa Māori research specifically to Friere’s analysis of praxis and emancipatory thinking where Kaupapa Māori Theory “acts as a politicising agent for conscientisation and emancipation” (Kiro, 2000, p. 31). She is one of the few that contends that Kaupapa Māori does have “its roots firmly in the work of liberation theology and Paulo Friere” (Kiro, 2000, p. 30) and therefore Critical Theory.

Because of its location in, or alongside Critical Theory, Kaupapa Māori Theory is seen as seeking to affect the unequal power relations inherent in New Zealand society. This raises one of the common factors found in most writings on Kaupapa Māori Theory; namely, the focus on resistance to oppression, and the position that Kaupapa Māori takes as being a part of the resistance against Western hegemony. Bishop (1996, p.13) is another author that sees Kaupapa Māori as not only committed to a “critical analysis of the unequal power relations within our society”, but as a “deconstruction of those hegemonies which have disempowered Māori from controlling and defining their own knowledge within the context of unequal power relations in New Zealand”. Further, Graham Smith (1997, p. 27) states that Kaupapa Māori Theory “evolved out of Māori communities as a deliberate means to comprehend, resist and transform the crises of ... under-achievement ... and the ongoing erosion of Māori language, knowledge and culture as a result of colonisation”. Examples of this oppositional position come especially in discussion about Western colonialist hegemonic forces that have marginalised Māori processes and knowledge, to which Kaupapa Māori is therefore seen as a response. It is seen therefore as closely linked to colonial oppression throughout the world – especially of indigenous peoples.

Māori education initiatives such as Kura Kaupapa Māori and Te Kōhanga Reo have been the prime exponents of a Kaupapa Māori approach. They have been described by Fleras and Spoonley as “subversive” because they are seen as challenging both power relations and the nature and origin of knowledge as defined by mainstream schools that follow a Pākehā ideology (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p. 35). They go further by saying, that the use of Māori pedagogy for teaching and learning constitutes a criticism of general school practice and indicates resistance to existing state structures.

Intrinsic to this discussion on power relations and a position of resistance are the notions of indigeneity and identity in the application of Kaupapa Māori Theory. Elizabeth Rata describes this approach as being racist, as it appears to link socially created behaviour to a genetic predisposition which she suggest has antecedents in Nazi ideology and having antidemocratic

tendencies (Rata, 2004). Rata also questions the legitimacy of Kaupapa Māori Theory because it appears to be based on a predisposition to 'knowing' and 'feeling' that, she says, Māori claim is based on genetic inheritance.

However, if resistance to the imposition of power is a key part of Kaupapa Māori Theory, it means that you actually have to have had that power imposed on you to resist it. It may be that to many, personal struggle against oppression along with personal whakapapa is a signifier of 'Māoriness'. Therefore, it may not be the genetic inheritance that creates the 'feelings' of knowing, but a shared culture along with a shared experience of oppression.

One of the developments of a response to the 'West's' hegemony is Kaupapa Māori research which is underpinned by Kaupapa Māori Theory. Kiro (2000) speaks of Kaupapa Māori Research as being an indigenous approach that not only validates Māori language and tikanga, but challenges those ideologies that would seek to continue to marginalise te reo and tikanga, and therefore by inference, Māori knowledge. Linda Smith also highlights the need for an acknowledgement of the validity of Māori knowledge and philosophical approaches, but again, stresses the importance of Kaupapa Māori research to issues related to social justice (Smith, L., 1999, pp. 183-185,189).

## **Kaupapa Māori and Constructivism**

While Kaupapa Māori appears to be tightly linked to Critical Theory, there is a second thread of Kaupapa Māori practice supported by an entirely different theoretical perspective. This second thread comes from a constructivist view. Constructivism is the belief that society, reality and meaning are manufactured, confirmed and validated through our interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998, pp.52-63; Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 26).

Constructivism claims that it is through language that we construct and make sense of our world. It is at once, both more and less than conventional theories such as Critical Theory. At the level of epistemology (knowledge) 'constructivism' can be distinguished from the more conventional 'realist' theoretical standpoint, where realism claims that we can know reality directly, arriving (theoretically at least) at 'absolute truth'. Constructivism on the other hand claims that what we 'know' comes from our construction of reality through language and practice. Since there are multiple ways of constructing or viewing reality there are a number of 'truths' where this process of socially constructing reality is influenced by a number of factors, particularly those relating to cultural, historical, political and economic factors (Payne, 1997). Although relativist, this position does not end in the situation where any idea is as good as any other, as, if knowledge is socially constructed as a result of historical, cultural and community forces, then it becomes useful and powerful as a result of our interacting with others who are also constructing the same reality. This suggests that there is no single 'truth' constructed by mankind that "reaches across all communities" but that "there is a 'truth', 'justice' and a 'power' which comes from participating in community and is defined by community" (Haber, 1994). The outworking of this view is that decisions about knowledge are made on whether it is socially acceptable and or, whether it is useful. (It should be noted that this article seeks only to discuss the "generation of social reality, and advance(s) no claims about the status of the physical world" (Collin, 1997, p.5) by association it also intends to make no claim about the status of the spiritual world).

Based on a constructivist approach to knowledge, it follows that Māori, and indeed Iwi, will have also constructed their own reality based on their own world-view and values, adapting to change as those changes were considered useful and could be incorporated into that world-view. Marsden calls this 'Māoritanga', "the corporate view that Māori hold about ultimate

reality and meaning” (Marsden, 2003, p. 3). He writes of the Māori world-view as being built on an understanding of a material world and a spiritual world that interconnects, where “the cultural milieu is rooted both in the temporal world and the transcendent world” (Marsden, 2003, pp. 22-23), that is, where concepts such as mana and tapu intersect both dimensions. Part of the construction of that world-view is the position of tikanga in Māori society where “tikanga is the set of beliefs associated with practices and procedures to be followed in directing the affairs of a group or individual” (Mead, 2003, p.12) and thus is both “conceptual and represents a set of ideas, beliefs and practices and at another level it has to do with practice” (Mead, 2003, pp.22-23). It also should be noted that such knowledge has to be accepted by a group or community for it to be relevant. Thus the knowledge of Māoritanga itself is dependent upon iwi, hapū and even whānau knowledges.

None of this denies in any way that Māori society has been hugely affected by the impact of the social construction of colonisation to the degree that Māori people now have a choice of whether to follow tikanga Māori or not (Mead, 2003). Today there is a continuum where some Māori have maintained many of the values and practices of their ancestors, while others are indistinguishable in life-style from their non-Māori neighbours (Durie, 1992).

The colonial construction of the world and its imposition through the colonisation process, as it has affected Māori in the last one hundred and seventy years, certainly called into question the validity of the Māori world-view and the validity of Māori knowledge. As Linda Smith states, colonisation along with “the globalization of knowledge and western culture constantly reaffirms the west’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge” (1999, p. 63). However, the ‘West’ has done that with many indigenous knowledges, what is important about such a perspective is not the content of those knowledges but that they have been systematically oppressed. From a Critical Theory point of view it is an almost universal process where it is the colonial oppression that matters and must be resisted similarly amongst all oppressed peoples. From a constructivist perspective it is not the oppression which is the prime focus but the knowledge which has been dominated and that must always be specific and contextual in its construction by a community.

Although Māori knowledge was marginalised by the ‘West’, many Māori believe in the validity of their own knowledge and processes, particularly as these relate to Kaupapa Māori - irrespective of the issue of whether they have been oppressed or not. Ka’ai suggests this giving a constructivist description of Kaupapa Māori ideology as:

... a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society that have emanated from a Māori metaphysical base. It informs Māori about the way in which they best develop physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially and intellectually as a people (Ka’ai, 2003, p. 203).

A feature in a number of the writers on Kaupapa Māori Theory is how they align it to Critical Theory and yet also use constructivist approaches to define it. While a number of the aforementioned writers talked of Critical Theory as one of the underlying tenants of Kaupapa Māori Theory, they also include Māori social constructive values such as tikanga, rangatiratanga, Māori cultural ethics, Māori knowledge language, values and culture (Bishop, 1996, p. 15; Kiro, 2000, p. 31; Smith, G., 1997, p. 41; Smith, L., 1999, p. 183).

## **Constructivism versus Critical Theory?**

From a constructivist point of view there is no benefit in suggesting that a theory is “true” or “untrue” – merely that it is more or less useful in advancing the goals of the community which holds it. While therefore I agree with some of the Critical Theory based analysis of Kaupapa Māori Theory, particularly for this stage of our decolonisation process, it may have a limited application for the future. If a fundamental part of Kaupapa Māori is about critiquing unequal power relations that means that it is possible to have an identifiable end to Kaupapa Māori approaches in a New Zealand context. By that I mean a time when Māori “oppression” has ended and Māori knowledge and approaches are not part of a resistance to Western hegemonic approaches because Māori knowledge, practice and values have become, and are considered, normal. After all, this is what we are striving for, is it not?

Then there will also be no need for resistance. Michael Foucault (1998, p. 95) said that, “where there is power, there is resistance”, but if no power is being imposed, or perceived as being imposed, how can there be resistance. Therefore how can Kaupapa Māori Theory, as it is being described, come from a genuinely Māori world-view if it needs to exist in opposition to something else and only while that power is perceived to be imposed? While resistance is an interesting explanation of what Kaupapa Māori does, surely that is a by-product, rather than the core, of what a Māori philosophical approach is. In a way it becomes about the oppressor, instead of about us.

When I worked as a Māori health promoter in the community, Kaupapa Māori had a very simple explanation: it was a group or school or service that operated under a Māori philosophy. In other words, the important values that we held as a Māori community were those that took precedence. Therefore, concepts such as tapu, mana, utu, aroha and manaakitanga were the normal ones: it was a positive expression, not just a negative critique and resistance. It was about being Māori, using Māori processes, looking at the world and understanding it, even judging it by Māori values. However, when I became an academic my definitions became muddled because I was faced with what, to me, was a whole new theoretical outlook. There were discussions about Critical Theory, resistance and challenging the Western hegemony of power and knowledge discourses. It was a place where Critical Theory is popular precisely because it is in the academy and it is an intellectually respectable theory, far more so than the world-view of Māori.

As mentioned previously, it is proposed here that there are two threads to Kaupapa Māori Theory and they have become so entwined that they are seen as the same thing. How Kaupapa Māori is described in many of the academic institutions of our country is different to the way our community views it. Perhaps this is an accident of history. Graham Smith’s original and excellent work on Kaupapa Māori Theory emerged from a desire to describe what was happening in movements such as Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori, in a discipline (education) that has been heavily influenced by Critical Theory and socialist writers. With the growth of the numbers of Māori in other disciplines such as sociology, social work and community development, there is an increase in the number of Māori academics influenced by social constructivist writers.

The way the academic version of Kaupapa Māori Theory is used to critique and challenge Western approaches appears to be reliant on ‘Critical Theory’ to justify its existence. Therefore this implies that indigenous, and more specifically Māori approaches cannot exist outside these frameworks and maintain some form of validity. Constructivism, although admittedly a Western defined construction, is merely an epistemological approach and not a substantive theory. It is open-ended and contextual, an orientation to the world which, at least in form merely asserts that power is the basic social relationship and social forms are

constructed according to the power of social actors to impose their views. In other words it merely identifies that we are already doing what we are doing, believing what we are believing, valuing what we are valuing, and provides an explanation for why this is so.

In some ways, Kaupapa Māori Theory as it stands, is an acknowledgment that we have sought to place our knowledges in the box of the Western academy, an act which could negate a thousand years of Māori knowledge. In a discussion among a number of Māori researchers in Christchurch in 2001, one of the issues discussed was “where does mātauranga Māori fit into the academy?” In a reversal of the question, one could say the real question is where does the academy fit into mātauranga Māori (if it can); otherwise it is yet again, defining Māori knowledge and experience in terms of Western concepts.

Russell is one author who appears to get around this paradox with her explanation of ‘Native Theory’. She defines Native Theory as “the right of indigenous people to make sense of their time and place in this world” (Russell, 2000, p.10). This may sound like stating the obvious because people have always had no difficulty in existing in their time and place, but it also infers that indigenous people do not need the West to acknowledge, research, record and affirm their knowledge for it to be valid and useful in research, in practice and in life. Neither do indigenous experiences need Western civilisation for them to exist or to define themselves.

Russell’s approach agrees with the constructivist strand of Kaupapa Māori Theory where it operates without a need to reference itself to non-Māori and as such may seem more challenging to Western approaches but does not need to be. Native theory acknowledges that what many Māori seek, is to move forward culturally as Māori in Māori contexts. Native Theory is a context that, for example, allows Māori research for Māori people using Māori processes and terms that may not yet be acceptable to the Western academy. While Western research methodology has provided a vast history of development and an extensive armoury of approaches, it is not static. It is continually evolving and has changed in the past when challenged by socialist and feminist thinkers (Sarantakos, 1993, pp. 34, 36). Do we really need to wait for them to approve or catch up?

In comparison to Native Theory, the strength of a Critical Theory approach is that it identifies and challenges structural and systemic power differences and seeks to create social justice through re-distributive models. One of its weaknesses is that it is a modernist approach: where there is one answer to the problems we face, where if we can get everyone to be conscientised just like us then we can create social change and bring about a more equal society. There is a focus on the negative, the failure of Māori to compete because of colonial oppression, and, as a grand theory, Critical Theory can be equally applicable to all oppressed peoples. Native Theory avoids the deficit model pitfalls of a Critical Theory approach, i.e. the desire by the middle-class, including some Māori, to conscientise oppressed people by replacing their ‘false consciousness’ with a suitably defined, emancipated and decolonised consciousness as defined by academics and government policy analysts.

Another weakness of a Critical Theory approach to Kaupapa Māori is that in a way, it is not about us: it becomes about them. We are looking at ourselves in relation to them (Pākehā) judging and evaluating ourselves by their values through their eyes. However, it is not about them and our interaction with them, it is about us, our values, our beliefs and our knowledge.

There are many Kaupapa Māori initiatives, organisations and projects that do not rely on Critical Theory ways of viewing. Their purpose is not about critiquing power relations or resisting Western hegemony; instead they are seeking to promote Māori advancement and Māori development using Māori concepts in a contemporary environment. Authors such as Mason Durie advocate for Māori self determination based on a framework of Māori

advancement and Māori development, that although is generalised, promotes Māori advancement, politically, economically and culturally as Māori, reflecting Māori aspirations and realities (Durie, 1998).

Durie's framework for Māori advancement does not need to operate in opposition to something; it does not need to emancipate, although it can do. It operates on an independent philosophy where tikanga Māori is a 'normal' approach and so is more akin to the way Native Theory acknowledges the space for indigenous peoples to continue to create their own theory and interventions.

Community based Kaupapa Māori initiatives and groups, are operating as 'by Māori, for Māori' organisations, using and valuing Māori knowledge and concepts. They operate in a space that Māori have created to use Māori concepts to promote the development and advancement of Māori people. Native Theory is a positive approach that provides a positive direction for Māori self-determination and development.

### **Implications for Kaupapa Māori Theory**

This article raises key implications for Kaupapa Māori approaches to practice, particularly the identification of the two threads (critical theory and constructivism) that inform it. The application of Kaupapa Māori Theory will continue to cause confusion as the different demands of the two threads compete in the academic world and in the Māori community. Perhaps the main problem is that we have sought to explain what Kaupapa Māori is by looking at what it does rather than why it does it. It would also be useful to look at its endpoints, what it hopes to achieve before aligning it to a particular theory.

There are four possible ways forward. Firstly, maintaining the status quo, where Kaupapa Māori Theory and Kaupapa Māori practice are considered to be the same thing and confusion and even conflict continues. The second way to advance is where the Critical Theory critique fades leaving Kaupapa Māori to mean what many in the community seem to believe it to mean -- a Māori philosophical approach to working with Māori, that stands on its own and makes reference back to itself to achieve validity. However, examining it from a Critical Theory perspective, without a critique of power structures it opens up the possibility of leaving people content to remain in their oppression. There is even the possibility that Māori may develop oppressive structures within local communities in the name of advancement and development.

The third possible way forward is that academics continue to adopt the Critical Theory informed approach and gradually seek to change the meaning in the community by raising 'community consciousness.' However, that would mean that for this form of Kaupapa Māori to maintain its usefulness and validity, Māori would always have to be in a sub-altern position and is unlikely.

The fourth way is a compromise where we try to integrate and incorporate both views into a single model, where the desired results of these theories are revealed. This could be a way of acknowledging the competing theoretical under-pinnings while concentrating on what is probably more important to many Māori people, that is, the implementation of services, organisations and research that use Māori cultural values as the norm.

The following is a framework that summarises the major features and relationships of the theoretical approaches discussed in this paper. It is proposed as one way of modelling how the key theoretical positions and their components are related, and is an attempt to bring

convergence and a degree of integration between Critical Theory and Constructivist approaches. It shows the strengths of the different approaches linking them both to the Māori world and to Māori academic views. It is a preliminary model but is offered as a base from which to evaluate and test further positions, constructs and questions relating to this area of theory-building for the body of indigenous knowledge.

Explanatory Theory	Key Components	Strategy	Goals
Native Theory (Constructivist)	Iwi Māori knowledge Iwi Māori values Iwi Māori processes Self-determination	Kaupapa Māori practice & research	Māori advancement Māori development as Māori  A just society
Critical Theory (Marxist/Socialist)	Power analysis Empowerment Resistance Emancipation		

**Figure 1. A preliminary model for the theoretical integration of Kaupapa Māori practice**

As outlined in Figure 1, Critical Theory and Native Theory are the explanatory theories that according to Shannon & Young (2003) describe why the world is like it is. Each has its key components, which are those concepts or values that are important for implementation. For Critical Theory, the key concepts include a power analysis, empowerment, resistance and emancipation. For Native Theory the key values include Iwi Māori knowledge, Iwi Māori values, Iwi Māori processes and self-determination. Both theoretical approaches flow into Kaupapa Māori practice and research from where their goals aims emerge. In this model Kaupapa Māori practice or research helps Critical Theory achieve its principal goal of “a just society”. It also helps achieve the principal goals of Native Theory; namely, Māori advancement and development as Māori.

## Conclusion

This article has argued that the practice of Kaupapa Māori in the community, while using some of the useful elements of Critical Theory is more closely explained by a constructivist theoretical approach, particularly Native Theory. Critical Theory is attractive because it delivers, it emancipates and strengthens those involved in struggle, it also provides a justification and channel for the frustrations over the marginalisation of Māori people and Māori knowledge. The answer may be to acknowledge that Kaupapa Māori has use of Critical Theory but is not necessarily defined by it.

Kaupapa Māori may challenge and resist, but that is incidental to the primary focus which is to develop and advance as Māori using our own knowledge, values, and processes. Those of us who are involved in Kaupapa Māori do not do it because we are 'rebels who have finally found a cause', but because it is inherently right and normal for us to do so. Māori development and advancement is about practice and research that supports us as Māori to develop, not in relation to others, but to be where we want to be and to do what we want to do.

From a Native Theory perspective, Kaupapa Māori is about the right of Māori and iwi to make sense of their time and place in this world, to define themselves using their own reference points as to what is of value and what processes are important. It is about Māori constructing their own theory, explanations and outcomes.

It has not been my intention to criticise or belittle any of the contributions made to the development and recognition of Kaupapa Māori theory and research. The intention is to build on the foundations laid by Māori scholars over at least the last twenty years. The development of these Māori scholars and researchers has been a tribute to the resilience and the expertise of our people, and we have a lot to be grateful for. However the attacks on Kaupapa Māori as a theory and as a practice from outside our community continue, therefore we need to have a greater understanding and insight in to what it is we are using to justify our processes and thus support the increasing desire to have Kaupapa Māori services and approaches that meet our needs in ways that are appropriate to us.

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