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Autoethnography and Teacher Education: Snapshot Stories of Cultural Encounter

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Abstract: In this paper I discuss how I framed and wrote an autoethnographic personal narrative of my lived experience as a New Zealand physical education teacher educator in the presence of two cultures, Māori and Pākehā. Central to my qualitative study was writing as a method of inquiry. Using this method I wrote a series of descriptive 'snapshot stories' derived from field experiences, over an 11 year period, that involved close and prolonged encounters with physical education teacher education (PETE) students in tertiary classrooms and 4 day marae stays. The storied accounts served as data for self-reflexivity about my role as a teacher educator as I worked to integrate with Māori culture.

Māori: indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand

Pākehā: European New Zealander

marae: Māori tribal meeting-ground where traditions are upheld

Please note when Māori language is used in this article a meaning accompanies it in the text. Appendix one provides a glossary of all terms

Introduction

Once, I observed a professional photographer at work. Armed with three cameras and multiple reels of film, he aimed his camera lens at the subject[s], approaching each photographic moment with multiple shots, relentlessly pursuing his target and literally poking the camera into people's faces. The procedure was intrusive. It was also very tiring for the photographer as he crouched, stood, knelt, and

angled his camera to get his shots. I observed that his eyes were raw and bloodshot from a day squinting into the viewfinder. His job did not end there, because at the completion of the photographic shoot he would have hundreds, maybe thousands, of photographs to process, sort and choose.

Like the professional photographer aiming to capture the best shot or series of photographs, choosing and using sound research methods to gather data is crucial to the credibility of qualitative research inquiry. Searching for ways to represent doctoral research into my workplace experiences and aspirations, and my endeavours to integrate physical education teacher education with *Māoritanga*, the indigenous culture of *Aotearoa* New Zealand (Legge, 2006), I was drawn to educational and ethnographic research practices where narrative and storytelling was a strong point. To try to make sense and explain how and why I do what I do, I decided to contribute to my professional knowledge and understanding by using “writing as a *method of inquiry*” (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). I wrote a series of stories that portrayed the issues and tensions confronting me. The stories captured images from my personal stance and served as the focal point for further analysis via an interpretive sub-story. I took this stance to; create a picture of my actions, vulnerabilities, conflicts, choices, and values; disclose my pedagogical, personal and professional experiences with *Māoritanga*; contextualise the complexity and struggle needed to make sense of an experience.

My research intent was to understand how individuals, including myself, interpreted or reinterpreted our experiences of *Māori* culture via the curriculum I taught in two undergraduate papers (units of work) in a four year Bachelor of Physical Education (BPE) combined with teacher education at a college of education. These papers had been designed to develop cultural and pedagogical background, to achieve and promote cultural understanding of values, protocols and beliefs that relate to the *Māori* worldview. I framed my research as an autoethnographic personal narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), portrayed as a metaphoric photograph album; a personal narrative because I wrote stories of my experience of the experience; an album because in my mind’s eye there were many snapshots of my teaching.

Rooted in the social context of the author-self, autoethnography uses lived experience as primary data. Autoethnography tends to focus on the phenomenological and interactional dimensions of experiences because they allow the author to emphasise the “fluidity and mutability of meanings and their context-dependency” (Collinson & Hockey, 2005, p. 189). Theoretical perspectives such as symbolic interactionism, feminism and phenomenology are linked to this method. Assumptions underpinning symbolic interactionism sit within the theory of knowledge known as constructivism, where human beings construct meaning as they take part in the world they are interpreting. The subjectivity of daily experiences, become the object of reflective awareness (Van Manen, 1990).

Hayler (2011) suggests that despite a growing body of research about teacher training and education, the voices of teacher educators have until recently been largely absent from the literature. Britzman (2003) noted that teachers rarely disclose private aspects of their pedagogy such as “coping with competing definitions of success and failure, and one’s own sense of vulnerability and credibility” (p. 28). I break this reticence, moving back and forth from the character of researcher to the character of participant (Ellis, 2004). In this article I invite the reader to read excerpts of some stories to compare their experience with mine; to share roles as teachers or teacher educators; to consider how they might research their practice; and to initiate further dialogues that resonate with the problems and dilemmas I faced as I negotiated my way teaching/working across two cultures.

Teaching in, about and through an indigenous culture is not unique to *Aotearoa* New Zealand. By writing this article I want to be more than a lone voice to myself, which I feel very keenly at the present time. I want to know if my way of making sense of a phenomenon, is useful for others contending with the phenomenon in similar contexts. I want to know if through sharing my experiences others are able to add their stories to my collection. My goal in this article is to; provide background to the research project; identify the thrust and influence of relevant qualitative research literature, and

narrative discourse with the practice of writing as a method of inquiry; illustrate the shape of stories I wrote; use excerpts to highlight how the stories provided data for self-reflexivity; and identify what it meant to be the storyteller of my role as a teacher educator.

Background to the Research

There are approximately 4 million people living in *Aotearoa* New Zealand. The indigenous *Māori* are a prominent but minority population, and most have foreign blood mixed with their *Māori whakapapa*-genealogy. *Pākehā*-European New Zealanders, dominate the population while a minority of Pasifika, Asian and other immigrants from throughout the world call *Aotearoa* New Zealand their home. Colloquially, New Zealanders call themselves ‘*Kiwi*’s’, after the national flightless bird. Linked to this characteristic is an identity with the unique *Māori* culture. However, while *Māori* and *Pākehā* cultures sit alongside each other *Māori* are over-represented in most negative economic, educational, and social indices (Bishop, 2003). The balance is tipped towards *Pākehā* culture in the way such things as education, justice and government are practiced. Michael King (1999), a New Zealand historian, wrote that *Māori* had every right to be able to be *Māori* in their own country and to expect *Pākehā* to respect them. This principle underpins my work.

I identify as a *Pākehā* New Zealander. The significance of my work is that I am not of *Māori* descent however, through my work as a teacher educator, in physical education and outdoor education, I found an entry point into *Māori* culture. I have developed a particular interest in addressing issues concerned with teaching *te reo kori*-the language of *Māori* movement (Legge, 2011). *Māori* culture has been integrated into mainstream physical education since the 1940s. In 1987 *te reo kori* was named as physical education’s formal response, instigated to reflect *Aotearoa* New Zealand’s bicultural identity and multicultural composition (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1987). *Te reo kori* was situated alongside physical education aspirations such as games, aquatics, dance, gymnastics, and athletics. Since 1999, the concept has broadened to *te ao kori*-the world of movement, encompassing the body, mind and spirit, and includes teaching a spectrum of *Māori* traditions in recreational games and pastimes, music, medicine, art, and movement (Stothart, 2002; Legge, 2011).

I assert a place for *te ao kori* in physical education because in a country where physical activity is seen as integral to national identity, *te ao kori* is a culturally significant medium through which to learn and critique *Māori* culture. The strength of *te ao kori* lies in the educative value of the unique forms of *Māori* movement. My work has been to increase physical education teacher education (PETE) students’ experience and confidence with *Māori* content; to strengthen their teaching of *te ao kori*; to make *te ao kori* meaningful to sport-orientated physical education students; in the belief that better bicultural awareness will help with interpersonal relationships between *Māori* and *Pākehā* students and teachers. Coursework includes, expressive movement through traditional and contemporary dance, role-plays, peer teaching, practical participation in *Māori* games and pastimes, and links to outdoor education via a four day cultural immersion, staying on a *marae* (spiritually, the *marae* is a *Māori* tribal meeting-ground where traditional customs and protocols are upheld. Physically, a *marae* is a complex of buildings that include a *whareniui*-meeting house, *wharekai*-dining room and *wharepaku*-bathroom) in Northland, *Aotearoa* New Zealand (Legge, 2006; Legge, 2011).

Capturing and Conveying My Experience: Writing as A Method of Inquiry

I was influenced and inspired by ethnographic authors such as Behar (1996), Ellis and Bochner (2000), Sparkes (1999), and Richardson (2000). These researchers had challenged orthodoxy and altered research boundaries to move from the distanced writing of an ethnographer, to first person autoethnographies centred upon the meaning of the research to the researcher/participant. Richardson, Ellis and Bochner addressed emotional events such as the personal tragedy of illness, death of a family member, abortion, and professional issues. Sparkes connected to the sportsperson through the subjective experiences of the injured researcher/participant, and their subsequent loss of ability to participate in sport.

To write an autoethnographic personal narrative, I positioned myself as “researcher as instrument of inquiry” (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 139) using writing as a method of inquiry. I drew on Richardson’s concept of CAP-creative analytic practices, where creative experimentation with the research text, via different genres of writing, juxtaposes artistic representation with social science to complexify and demystify both as socially constructed representations (Ellingson, 2009). In this context writing is a method of inquiry with the premise, not to “get it right” but to explore writing as a means of “getting it”, to discern “what we don’t know about what we do know” (Richardson & Lockridge, 2004, p. 69).

To capture the intensity of my experiences with *Māori* culture my snapshot stories were derived from field experiences over 11 years of close and prolonged encounters with approximately 300 PETE students in tertiary classrooms, gymnasium and off-campus 4 day *marae* stays. Each story came from epiphanies triggered by events and people, ‘snapshots’, because each story captured a few images and informed from the standpoint of a close-up photograph. Tierney (2002) notes that it is not easy to write fiction. I had to learn to write creatively and dramatically (Elbow 1975; Franklin 1994; Lamont 1995), using evocative narrative concepts of emotional recall and introspection, to recollect what happened, when it occurred and who was involved (Ellis, 2004). I avoided abstraction and explanation so each story serves as a lesson for further dialogue. To strengthen the usefulness of a story I, created composite characters and stories; compressed similar incidents into one tale; altered names and identities; and emphasised the cultural focus by writing *te reo-Māori* language in italics to locate my work within a *Kaupapa Māori* (*Māori* cultural aspirations and ways of knowing as theory and practice) paradigm (Bishop, 2003).

To write this style of research, authors show details of their own experience, however like Jenks (2002), I did not think self-reflection had to be painful, so while I wrote stories to privilege emotion, perception, and vulnerabilities, the main point was not necessarily to exemplify my feelings. My choices were made to expand understanding of my experiences with *Māori* culture, that to a certain extent had disturbed me. To check the reliability of my authorship I gave my stories back to the other people who were involved, for comment, to make changes or give their interpretations. I made adjustments from this feedback. I acknowledge my editorial hand. However, by mediating the words and stories for the purpose of illustrating *Pākehā - Māori* cultural encounter, I maintained an impression of the spoken words, and actions of the participants and myself.

After each snapshot story I stepped back to *titiro*-look and see, and wrote a separate interpretive, explanatory sub-story from a sociological and educational perspective. Through the sub-story phase of reflection I attempted to resonate simultaneously with the implications of the story, the content of the study, and with discourses (such as, outdoor education, cultural identity, border crossing, pedagogy, socio-critical and post-modern curriculum), relevant to the phenomena under study. Here the epistemological meanings underpinning the narratives emerge and become the method by which knowledge was generated and reflected on, through reconstructing the meaning of experience (Piantanida & Garman, 1999).

Synopsis of the Snapshot Stories

Writing my snapshot stories was not a linear process however they came together to form a chronicle of my lived experience. Their contexts ranged from the ordinariness of the classroom to dramatic dialogue in the *wharenui*-meeting house, where fraught emotions and feelings are captured because of their circumstances and highly participative nature in a confined context. The complete snapshot stories range in length from 800 to 2500 words. The following synopsis gives a brief account of a selection of snapshot stories.

The first three stories; situate the context of my work in PETE and my 'slant' to teacher education by including *marae*-based outdoor education as a link to teaching physical education's *te ao kori*; show facets of student experiences with *Māori* culture; and reveal how various outlooks of the *tangata whenua*-indigenous *Māori*, and *Pākehā* expertise shape the *marae* stays for PETE students.

Te Pōwhiri-welcome ceremony

Snapshot: The ritual of *Māori* welcome.

Story: The narration is retrospective of past *pōwhiri* I have experienced but is also representative of my current work. The story was written to enable the reader to experience the first impact of a *marae* visit, to meet the *manuhiri*-visitors, and the *tangata whenua*.

Crossing

Snapshot: A classroom scene.

Story: The story tells how students respond to the challenge of their role as *manuhiri* preparing for the 'cultural adventure' of a *marae* stay. Three students are *Māori* and the others are *Pākehā*. I wrote the story to bring the reader into my classroom, to meet a class and set the scene for a trip to the *marae*.

Te tangata whenua

Snapshot: The snapshot is of a group of approximately 12 *Māori* people, sitting closely together on the steps in front of their *wharenui*.

Story: The group of people portrayed represents the *tangata whenua* who have hosted the physical education students, and myself, on their *marae*. The story identifies aspects of our stay to highlight the contribution, character and expertise of the *tangata whenua*. (Legge, 2006, pp. 20-21).

Another three snapshot stories; reveal my cultural limitations and vulnerabilities; portray PETE students' struggle to understand and value *Māori* identity; establish my pedagogical stance for teaching *te ao kori*.

Private lessons

Snapshot: A black and white self-portrait.

Story: Using five stories within a story, I make public my personal and private perspectives on some of my encounters with *Māori* culture. I use examples of encouraging and troubling aspects of my experience to portray my inner struggles, angst and resistances as I have adjusted to the phenomenon of cultural encounter and exchange.

Full of shit

Snapshot: Twenty-five physical education students are seated or lying on their mattresses inside the hazy interior of the *wharenuī*.

Story: This story highlights “the intrusions of chaos, disconnection, fragmentation, marginalisation” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744) of the events in a lived moment “in the face of unexpected blows of fate that call one’s meaning and values into question”.

Te ao kori presentation

Snapshot: Picture a full colour photograph of 29 physical education students performing choreographed *te ao kori* dance sequences.

Story: The story depicts the agency of *te ao kori* as a means to aid in establishing and recognising *Māori* identity through physical activity. (Legge, 2006, pp. 21-22).

A final story, *Haere ra*-Farewell, has no synopsis but serves as a closing portrait. Prior to my departure from the *marae*, I go back into the *wharenuī* to collect something I had left behind. The *wharenuī* has been cleaned and the windows are open, it feels like the room is catching its’ breathe after a long run. Inside, shielded from the bright sun and the sparkling sea across the road from the *wharenuī*, I pause momentarily to reflect on the events of our *marae* stay. As I say ‘*haere ra*’, the story acknowledges the significance of the *marae* in being the cultural meeting point for the PETE students and myself. The story is a *poroporoakī*-closing, where I acknowledge the *tangata whenua* for giving their *manākitanga*-hospitality, and *aroha*-love, and for sharing cultural knowledge and understanding of their past, present and future.

Snapshot Story Portraits of My Practice Context

In this section of the article I use excerpts from four snapshot stories as ‘portraits’ to show the lived experience as a teacher educator and to illustrate the nature of immersion on the *marae*. Brief reflection before and after each excerpt makes links to relevant discourse. The reflection is introspective, looking inwards to examine emotional and intellectual response and to reveal my thinking about the phenomenon under study, as the recollections are interpreted for embedded meanings, and explained. These brief reflective interpretations attempt to highlight some of the tension and contestation embedded in the events. Their purpose is to guide the reader to think about the meaning of a specific experience for myself, and others, and move from the specifics to the generalisable (Piantanida & Garman, 1999).

Crossing the Cultural Divide

The first excerpt situates the PETE students in a classroom where I have introduced the *e noho marae-marae* stay, as a course requirement and have initiated preparation for the off campus venture, particularly our role as the *manuhiri*. The decision to include a *marae* stay in undergraduate coursework came from my observations that many PETE students, *Māori* and *Pākehā*, had limited understanding and experience of *Māori* culture (Legge, 1996). I believed immersion in the culture, in a context of where the culture is lived, could make an important contribution to the PETE students understanding and valuing, the diversity of *Aotearoa* New Zealand society. The inclusion of the annual *e noho marae* for the year 2 PETE students represents the development of a *kaupapa* with *Māori* educators who have skills in expanding cross cultural understanding through experiential learning. *E noho marae* is a carefully sequenced 4 day encounter where I work alongside *Māori* to utilise our combined expertise in physical education, outdoor education, *Māoritanga*, being bicultural, and critical cultural responsiveness.

Excerpt: Crossing

“We will meet at 8.30 a.m. and leave no later than 8.45 a.m.” I said, and then added, “It is a long trip and because we are travelling in a convoy, it takes longer than usual.”

A hand is raised at the back of the class. “Jason, you have a question?”

“What time will we be back on Thursday?”

It is a not an unexpected question, but I can never help thinking, we haven’t even gone and they want to know when we will be back! “We should be back in Auckland by six on Thursday evening,” I reply patiently, “It is difficult for me to give an exact time because the *poroporoakī* may take longer than we expect, and then our departure will be delayed.”

Someone makes a joke about ‘*Māori* time’ that I decide to ignore. I have learned ‘to go with the flow’ on the *marae* and hope they will too...

... under the guidance of *Mere*, Liz and Joe the class practice first one *waiata*-song, and then the other. Towards the end of the session the tunes are starting to come through and the class seem to be more confident with their singing voices.

“*Kia ora tatou*-Thanks to all of you” smiles *Mere* at her classmates, as she too gains more confidence to speak *te reo-Māori* language, publicly. “You have done really well. *Pai rawa*-excellent.”

“Yeah, it doesn’t sound too bad does it?” asks Jason, looking around at the others who seem pleased with themselves for their effort. I agree.

“Yeah, but I think we will need some more practice at lunchtime. Can we meet here on Wednesday after our professional studies lecture?” volunteers Craig. I am impressed. Craig often plays the fool and acts like he isn’t very interested in course work.

“Yeah, that should be okay,” replies *Mere*. Most of the class nod in agreement. They will be there. This is their trip now. (Legge, 2006, pp. 103-104).

The BPE embraces a socially-critical perspective and aims to provide new knowledge that critiques historical and contemporary social structures in education settings, and to offer alternatives to these. *E noho marae* supports *Kaupapa Māori*, as an important alternative source of learning for mainstream educational practice, through the assertion of indigenous *Māori* cultural aspirations and ways of knowing (Bishop, 2003). From pre-*marae* trip questions and conversations, I am very aware that being impelled into a different cultural experience creates hesitancy and barricades to chances. I have found that apprehension, sometimes demonstrated by resistance, usually represents a lack of confidence in dealing with the unfamiliar cultural expectations, especially anxiety about making mistakes or looking foolish in front of peers and the *tangata whenua* (Legge, 1996; Legge, 2006).

The challenges implicit in “being *Pākehā*” (King, 1999, p. 9) working to support cross cultural understanding is fraught with difficulties to make meaningful contact with *Māoritanga*, and respect bicultural interests and values. On a day-to-day basis, I am remote from *Māori* ritual and cultural practices. This is a limitation but no different to the experience of most *Pākehā* New Zealanders. I have had to make a conscious effort, from a personal and professional level, to understand *Māori* culture and to develop any sense of cultural competency. Jack, a *Pākehā* colleague, observed that the *Māori* facilitator I work alongside on the *marae* has a much easier task to promote the notion of being bicultural because he (the facilitator) exists in the *Māori* world (Legge, 2006).

Cultural Immersion as *Manuhiri*

I have strategically created and programmed *marae* stays on the basis of my own personal and educational commitments. By providing opportunities for the PETE students to grapple with what is required, I encourage all to self-manage the situation, take on leadership roles, and use their initiative. On our arrival at the *marae*, protocol requires immediate immersion as we are formally welcomed by a *pōwhiri*- culturally significant welcome ceremony. I ensure the students are familiar with and understand protocols needed for us to participate without problems in this ceremony. A formal and tense ritual, the *pōwhiri* moves us, the *manuhiri*, from being *tapu*-sacred, to a balanced state of *noa*, where human relationships can be normalised, enabling people to meet informally. The *pōwhiri* culminates in the shared eating of food to bring about this state.

Excerpt: Te pōwhiri

It is satisfying to sit in the *wharenui* as the *pōwhiri* ritual proceeds with a momentum of its own, most of it is spoken in the *Māori* language some of it, is spoken in English. The *tangata whenua* carry out their role with dignity and assurance and their actions make me feel privileged and valued to be there. The *pōwhiri* ritual of removing our status as strangers puts my class into the *Māori* world from the moment of their arrival so they have to work together to meet the demands of this custom.

For our speakers, the moment is tense with cultural uncertainty, but they take their turn. Their nervousness is evident, their voices are hesitant, their *te reo Māori* is shaky, which makes the rest of us glad that we did not have to *korero*-speak-on our own, but we sing our *waiata*-song, to support their speeches. It is especially good when we are able to sing sweetly after all our practice. When the *tangata whenua* has spoken their final speech of welcome, we file past and complete our *hongiri*-traditional greeting where noses are pressed together, with each one of them. I know that some class members will feel that their personal space is crowded by the intimacy of nose and forehead pressed against a stranger.

“Welcome” they say, “*Kua ea*-it is done. Come and have a *kapu ti*-cup of tea” (Legge, 2006, p. 4).

Smith (1990) advises non-*Māori* who pursues an interest in *Māoritanga* that their cultural competency must be demonstrated by recognition of the limits of their expertise. Smith cautions that despite taking actions to improve their understanding of *Māoritanga*, metaphorically people can be positioned in the sense that they know all about the habits of the shellfish *kīna*-sea urchin, but this information may not be enough to gain access into the culture. Similarly, Fleras and Spoonley (1999) urge that it is important to identify and accept the limits of one’s own cultural competence. To illustrate this point, in an excerpt from one of five short stories sequenced in an overall story entitled “*Private lessons*”, I reveal how, through immersion on a *marae*, my ‘ways of knowing’ were challenged but my cultural competency was enhanced.

Excerpt: Private Lessons – Kaumātua-elder

We were standing beside the parked bus on the dusty road. It was very hot. The cicadas were making a deafening noise and every time a car went past, we had to move to one side and then regroup to stand silently, listening to the old man’s voice as he continued his dialogue while the dust settled, cloaking everything in a fine brown layer. Through the dusty roadside vegetation and the tall pine trees growing in a plantation, I could see the gentle curve of a beach with pinky-orange sand lapped by a soft blue sea.

I was bored, fidgety and hot. I wanted to run down onto the beach and plunge into the cool water. I was so tired of listening to the same old stuff! No that’s unfair; it was not the same ‘stuff’. I didn’t know that the area in front of us, now covered by a rough pine plantation, had been the site of a tribal massacre and burial!

I remembered how last time we had been there we had taken food and eaten it in the forest, unknowingly committing a cultural profanity. Perhaps this long intonation was a godly reprimand! Time marched on but the *kaumātua* was not going to let us forget the significance of the place as he recited endless *karakia*-prayer, in *Māori* and then in *Pākehā*, explaining his kinship links and connections to the events of this place. Situating his life in the historical events of the past, the old *kaumātua* addressed the spirituality of the *whenua*-land, reasserting its *mauri*-lifeforce, passing on information to be passed on in turn when he was gone.

I looked at my watch and inside my body my impatience surged. “Hurry up!” I thought. We have things to do in this forest before lunch and that is only two and a half hours away. I continued to fidget and fuss inwardly and outwardly, desperately wanting to move on, to be out of the hot sun, to feel cool, not swamped in perspiration and the tension created by my own pressing need to get on with the programme - the one on a piece of paper that said this time before lunch would be filled with environmental awareness activities as an experiential adventure into *kaitiakitanga*-environmental guardianship.

My body felt invaded by the tension and wanted to twitch and jerk and run. How can this man talk for so long? How come he doesn't see my discomfort and relent? I raged inwardly. Doesn't he know how demanding it is to listen to endless speeches in *Māori*? Please, give us break, and let us get on with what we came to do!

I felt resentful because I didn't understand his language. When he finally switched to English, I became annoyed because his dialogue turned towards *Pākehā* religion. It seemed out of place. Hang on, isn't that a contradiction, my contradiction? I tried to collect my thoughts. Here I am fed up with him speaking and telling his story in *Māori*, about being *Māori*, but neither do I like to hear the impact of colonisation on his religious bent.

My thoughts roamed. Why so? I guess it irritated me because I think of it as a transgression of *Māori* spiritual values. “I want things *Māori* and don't like the way *Māori* culture is compromised by *Pākehā*!” I mused, contradicting myself again. I felt tired and fed up with my struggle to cope; it was a Tuesday morning. I wondered what else I could be doing with my time. Where else could I be? Then reality struck me. I was stuck here with my class of physical education students for the rest of the week on the *marae*, away from home, listening to some old man blah on about his ancestors, their loss and his pain! It was painful to have to stand here and listen to it.

“*Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou* –greetings, greetings, greetings...”

Familiar words reached my ears. Ah, those were closing phrases - the *kaumātua* is going to stop talking... Oh no! He has started up again rambling on about some forgotten point that suddenly came to mind.

I looked at the *Māori* people standing nearby. They belonged to his *whanau*-family. They stood and listened, their bodies apparently closed to the heat, their hearts and minds open to his words. He was telling them their history. I was just a bystander, probably an obtrusive one, who dragged twenty-five or more students every year to this place, or thereabouts, to participate in a lived experience of their *marae*.

There it is! Think about it! The meaning finally struck me. This man is the experience! I was moved by my thoughts and the realisation that this elderly gentleman was the epitome of *Māori* culture, being with him like this and hearing his story, although I might not understand it, he was being *Māori*. That was what I came for!

But up to this moment I had missed the point. How stupid and irritating I must be. Too focused on my own agenda, wanting to keep on time, to get back for lunch having ‘done’ some activities in the forest was where I was coming from! I didn't want to be caught in ‘*Māori* time’, taking things as they come, capturing the moment and using it to teach, as this *kaumātua* was doing, in a tradition modelled to him by his elders, and now his

responsibility as an old man. The *kaumātua* sharing his knowledge and feelings ‘is the experience’! (Legge, 2006, pp. 153-154).

The story ‘*Kaumātua*’, illustrates how I felt trapped, stifled and uncomfortably caught between my own cultural perspectives and *Māori*. Pihama, Cram & Walker (2002) suggest that at the core of *Kaupapa Māori* “is the desire for *Māori* to be *Māori*” (p. 30). I did not understand what this meant and allowed my behaviour to compromise my encounter because I was not able to affirm or legitimate the *kaumātua*. I used my cultural reference points when I felt disturbed by the challenge to my equilibrium. I was challenged to be tolerant and accepting of difference when inwardly I screamed for the familiar, or some easier way to understand, believe and respect, what I didn’t know. By dismissing the other culture and acting ignorantly, I was self-centred, wanting things on my terms. Behaving in this way, I missed opportunities for the cultural exchange I was pursuing.

The cultural tug for familiarity is oppositional. I know that I have the capacity to understand difference, to accept diversity and to adapt to other cultural values. To dislocate myself from what I know, to adjust to what I don’t know or really value for myself, was demanding, and this practicality took some time for me to concede. What is it about cultural difference that makes it difficult to accept without some sense of loss? What a huge question I ask, but addressing it is the only way as a *Pākehā* that I can come anywhere near to understanding and appreciating how colonisation, and its ensuing assimilation policies, reduce an indigenous culture, making it difficult to retrieve even the remnants of it without a struggle. The irony is that I, as a *Pākehā*, believe that I have nothing to lose because my *Pākehā* culture is intact.

Cultural Impact

My lived experiences with *Māori* culture, alongside PETE students in the classroom, gymnasium and *marae* have had a huge impact on my life. Frequent interaction with *Māori* people and their culture on the *marae* reshaped my cultural understanding, taught me to recognise my own cultural shortcomings, and made me more aware and open-minded to *Māori* cultural differences and practice. I realised that my learning was more than acquiring cultural knowledge to teach *te ao kori*, as I had originally intended. Rather, it was about supporting the potential of the *Māori* students in my class, and opening the eyes of the *Pākehā* students in the same class to see that *Pākehā* can have a role in mainstream education supporting *tino rangitiratanga*—self-determination, because they (and I) understood why many *Māori* struggle to establish and maintain their identity (Bishop, 2003). The following excerpt serves to illustrate this struggle.

Excerpt: Full of Shit

Pākehā students dominated the conversation while the *Māori* students sat quietly and did not speak. However, it was Linda, an expatriate from South Africa, who began to voice concerns about

the assumptions the others were making. She was not so sure. She wanted to know if her *Māori* peers felt that they had any advantage over the *Pākehā* in their education, particularly in gaining access to the teaching profession. Linda wanted to hear what they had to say.

Incredibly, others in the class said that wasn't necessary and continued to hold the floor with their points of view. Doggedly, Linda made her request again. "I want to hear what the *Māori* students feel about being advantaged or privileged." Again she was ignored but she persisted and made her request two more times before the rest of the class finally agreed to let go of their hold on the discussion to allow the *Māori* students a chance to *korero*-speak.

Now, in the gloom of the *wharenuī*, the spotlight was directly on the *Māori students*. Their peers were finally ready to listen to their *Māori* classmates. There was a hush as we waited. Intuitively I could tell this was an important moment for the class. I observed that each of the *Māori* students took their turn to speak from where they were sitting in the *wharenuī* in relation to Linda, and they directed their response to her.

The first one, Melanie, who could speak *te reo-Māori* language, and was knowledgeable about *Māoritanga* said, "I feel cool, yeah, okay. I don't think I am especially advantaged." She hesitated, about to speak again but shyness overcame her so she stopped. That was all she was going to say, although later she confided in me that she wished she had said more. She turned towards the next *Māori* student, another young woman.

Susie said, "I am quite distanced from my culture and up to this point, staying on the *marae*, I have not put any major emphasis on being *Māori*." She halted briefly and looked down at her hands before continuing. "My family disregard our *Māori* side and do not think that it is important!" she explained and tried to smile but it was brittle, and her face looked like it would crack. Her mouth was turned down and I saw her bottom lip tremble. That was all that Susie could say.

Jay, sitting on his mattress near mine, burst out, "I feel like a half-baked *Māori*!" He then broke down and cried. He was very distressed. The class looked on horrified. This was not what they expected. The silence in the *wharenuī* was intense. Jay sobbed and then managed to gasp out; "I am broken hearted at the struggle to be *Māori*. I don't even know my own language! How bad is that?" Jay stopped speaking, head bowed, tearful eyes averted from the stare of his classmates. (Legge, 2006, pp. 163-165).

In 1994, the New Zealand film 'Once Were Warriors' was released. Jake *Heke*, the male lead role was a riot of antagonism and hate, caught in the turmoil of unemployment, poverty and violence, hitting out in inexplicable rage and frustration. The man was lost, fighting for his life in an attempt to gain control. Jake and his family symbolised the worst outcome of colonisation – separation from ancestral lands, extended family, indigenous language, and cultural practices. These losses took meaning from their lives, supplanting despair, poverty and angry, abusive self-destructive reprisals.

I was shocked by the film's portrayal but recognised it must be viewed and understood for the social reality it highlighted at the time. Through no fault of their own, the legacy of western colonisation had taken from Jake and now Jay, what was rightfully theirs, compromising their cultural identity and wellbeing. Jay wasn't a Jake, but Jay's revelation emphasised how the identity of *Māori* can be masked because discursive practices conceal the culture so that access is compromised or nonexistent. After many *marae* stays my key observations have indicated a high level of personal grief of *Māori* students who acknowledged they had lost or experienced limited exposure to their culture.

Despite the challenge when confronted with 'culture shock', an important personal and professional development for the PETE students' and myself, is to address cultural bias by challenging the way *Pākehā* dominance perpetuates the non-participation of *Māori* in the benefits of education

(Bishop, 2003). Developing a partnership with *tangata whenua*, to allow *Māori* and *Pākehā* PETE students to be able to speak, sing, dance, and laugh together, has been essential in learning to appreciate and respect the diverse values one culture can offer another.

On Being A Storyteller

Using the voice of a storyteller was less impersonal than a distanced voice and meant I was the author of my tale. Lincoln, (1997) suggests to write in the first person is testimony for a qualitative researcher because, as the author of their work, they are expert. By changing my voice to storyteller I altered my voice and the way voices of my subjects could be heard. This alteration made the subjects more like actors with their own speaking roles and interaction with the author. Wolcott (2001) urges qualitative researchers to write descriptive accounts in the first person because their role is usually an integral part of the study and readers need to be aware of that role and of the author's presence. Narration in the first person moves the text along, although it does mean I have had different identities as narrator, interviewer and participant. However, as a single narrator I was consistent, the 'I' of the story after all, was the data gatherer, constructed the script and drew the conclusions.

The stories from my personal narrative are a standpoint, telling of experiences that had an impact and were meaningful to my research interest, but they represent only one way of putting things. For this reason, a personal narrative is not an exact record or mirror of what happened (Reissman, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A personal narrative is a portrayal, constructed through the acts of representation and interpretation, while keeping in mind no picture is ever complete. Piantanida and Garman (1999) advise that personal narrative is suited to professionals who want to examine their practice, and who understand the epistemological underpinnings of narrative as a way of generating knowledge by reconstructing the meaning of experience. Ellis (2004) advocates that narrative works best if it shows by example, rather than tells. Through stories I portrayed my teacher education practice contexts, classroom, gymnasium and *marae* stays. By bringing the reader into contact with local experiences that are familiar or unfamiliar, or not previously represented my stories show how partial and situated the world and understanding of it may be.

However, tensions exist about the validity and authority of the text, and the knowledge that all texts are socially, historically, and politically located. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest, the truth of texts is demonstrated pragmatically, by their truth effects, the critical and moral discourse they produce, and the empathy and resonance they generate. Collinson and Hockey (2005) noted their criteria for credibility was based on congruence or resonance with the reader's own life experiences, or experiences of someone they knew well. Whatever the truth claims are, Piantanida and Garman (1999) reflect that the utility of research can be known by the extent to which: the situational aspects of the study are connected to issues embodied within wider discourses; the implications drawn address the intent of the study and are useful to the intended audience; and the research contributes to the field of education.

Miller (2009) has advocated for teachers to probe into the influences that have gone into constructing their identities, so that they might recognise the social and cultural discourses, and practices that have shaped and defined them. In turn, this insight may help them to transform and outgrow the indoctrination, they have experienced, to become more capable of challenging the stories and values they bring to the classroom. Miller's autoethnographic examination of teacher education suggests that through critical awareness teacher researchers can show their sensitivity as human beings; and invigorate their teaching through reflective consciousness that is prepared to challenge and confront their own foibles and idiosyncrasies. Written in a style that attempted to be accurate and insightful, my snapshot stories are the experiential case material on which pedagogic reflection is possible. They stand as an example of practical theorising important for critical pedagogy because the direction is performative, grounded in the lived experiences of students, and teacher educator (McLaren, 1999).

The benefits of work place research, means that the research can be relevant to the task, and the professional, through critical analysis of the work. De Lautour (2009) suggests that to be able to look at the personal within the professional in tertiary education is an empowering tool. I found that creating an autoethnographic research text altered the focus of the research information by highlighting performance and experience as valid sites of meaning. The teacher education degree programme I teach, is founded on the notion of a socially-critical orientation and this by its very nature is political because it assumes a commitment to socially transformative action, with an implicit agenda to contribute to a more socially just and equitable society. A socially-critical philosophy requires one to be critically literate, and this begins with introspection or self-questioning. Self-questioning seeks to make one more aware of, and address social justice and equity issues. What are the cultural positions a teacher may take in society? Is it a teacher's responsibility to become bicultural or multicultural? What can be gained by highlighting culturally distinct and significant movement in Physical Education? How are the learning experiences of indigenous and other cultures limited or improved by teacher practices?

When my colleagues and I developed the two papers that feature as my workplace research focus, we chose to concentrate on building bicultural relationships between *Māori* and *Pākehā*, as it is a unique feature of *Aotearoa* New Zealand. A critical stance has been that the papers have been coordinated and taught by myself, a *Pākehā* teacher educator. This critical stance highlights that while *Māori* are bicultural, *Pākehā* also need to grapple with what it takes to be bicultural. Turning the gaze onto myself was not always a comfortable process. I didn't particularly want to be at the centre of a story. However, this was insider research about my workplace practice. By writing and using story I said 'I did this!' 'It happened to me'. 'This is my truth'. 'I was involved'. Creating my snapshot stories, as part of the autoethnographic research process, alerted me to agendas that may have remained hidden from my view.

Navigating cultural boundaries and confronting teaching in culturally complex settings I am confident that *Pākehā* educators can contribute to the *Māori* 'project' but will always do so as 'outsiders'. Cultural misunderstandings, such as my frustration with the lengthy monologue of a *kaumātua*, can serve as strong moderating and motivating influences. Through writing I negotiated research terrain where the personal, the professional, the political, the social, and the cultural were juxtaposed against the other so that similarities and differences intersected, overlapped or clashed with one another. My research highlights that it is imperative to share lived experiences in support of understanding difference.

My 'camera lens' focused
I took snapshots
Removed the exposed film
And wondered
How each picture would turn out
I took the film
And spent time
In the dark room of my thoughts
Working to release
The captured images
The negatives developed

Exposed as prints
I reflected on the snapshots
Until I could see
The features of each image
I found a snapshot
Gives a glimpse of an experience
A story
Adds texture and depth
To a picture
(Legge, 2006, p. 99).

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Appendix One

Glossary

Aotearoa – New Zealand

aroaha: love

haere ra: farewell

hongi: traditional Māori greeting where nose and forehead are pressed together

kaitiakitanga: guardianship

kapu ti – cup of tea

karakia: prayer

Kaupapa Māori - Māori cultural aspirations and ways of knowing as theory and practice

kaumātua: elder

kia ora: hello

kina: sea urchin

korero: to speak

Kua ea – it is done

kiwi – indigenous flightless bird, a national symbol

Māori: indigenous people of New Zealand

Māoritanga: a generic term for Māori culture

manākitanga: hospitality

manuhiri: visitors

marae: tribal meeting-ground, complex of buildings including wharenuī & wharekai

mauri: life force

noa: normal

pai rawa: excellent

Pākehā: European New Zealander

poroporoakī: farewell ceremony

pōwhiri: welcome ceremony

tangata whenua: indigenous people of the land (Māori)

tapu: sacred

te ao kori: the world of movement

te reo kori: Māori movement

te reo: Māori language

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou: greetings, thrice welcome

tino rangitiratanga: self-determination

titiro: look and see

waiata: song

whakapapa: genealogy

whanau: family

wharekai: dining hall

wharenuī: meeting house

wharepaku: ablutions, bathroom

whenua: land