

MANA TAMARIKI: CULTURAL ALIENATION

Māori child homicide and abuse

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Abstract

Māoridom has been rocked by a number of high profile child homicides in New Zealand. Many Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent) commentators attribute this to deficits in Māori culture. Māori, on the other hand, tend generally to hold that the high level of Māori child homicide and abuse is a recent phenomena related to colonization. This paper examines pre-European Māori parenting and finds that violence towards children was not common practice. It examines the origins of violence towards children in cultural alienation and looks at the role of the Māori renaissance and re-enculturalization as solutions.

Introduction

Over the past decade, New Zealand has been rocked by several horrific Māori child homicides. Debate has raged around both their causes and solutions. Led by columnist and Mayor of Whanganui, Michael Laws, several non-Māori commentators assert that the violence derives from inadequate Māori parenting, and the warlike and backward nature of Māori society and culture (Laws, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). This view has sympathy in a wider non-Māori

audience that perceives cultural icons such as the haka (Māori war dances) as evidence of a people preoccupied with violence (TV3, 2005). This in turn has been linked to recent arguments regarding sensationalized but now discredited genetic research from 2007, which claimed that Māori possess a “warrior gene” that pre-determines a propensity for violence. Most Māori commentators believe that the origins of the violence stem from colonization and argue that the media exaggerate perceptions about Māori violence against children.

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While that view has substance, the rates of abuse are high: Māoridom has been rocked by each new case. Māori are in the middle of a cultural renaissance that began in the 1970s, and each new incident raises the question of whether the current flowering is making a difference.

This paper asks the following questions: How bad is Māori child homicide and abuse relative to the non-Māori population? Do the media over-emphasize Māori child abuse? Was Māori parenting violent before contact with Europeans? Did violence against children come about as a result of contact with European settlement? Have economic, political, social and cultural processes such as land loss, disempowerment, language deprivation, assimilation, alienation and urbanization contributed to and/or exacerbated violence? Is the current Māori renaissance making a difference? What are the systemic impediments to making progress? What will help? What is the place of Māori culture in addressing the problem?

Theoretical background

My theoretical background is based in postcolonial theory including F. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961); Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1970); Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994); and Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). I am also influenced by whiteness theory, including Ruth Frankenberg's *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993); Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992); and David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness* (1999). I have particular interests in decolonization, subaltern studies and counter-hegemony, especially how indigenous scholars are subjugated within Western institutions and how indigenous scholars respond as liberationists,

subalterns or Western auxiliaries. A main thrust of my writing is concerned with countering dominant ideologies in both the public and academic spheres about the way Western writers portray indigenous peoples. In that regard, my writing is centred in kaupapa Māori, mātauranga Māori and indigenous emancipatory writing. This paper aims to engage with and counter dominant beliefs about indigenous Māori child homicide and abuse.

Colonization

Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand whose origins extend back 6,000 years to a series of Austronesian migrations through Near and Far Oceania, Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, arriving in New Zealand between 1,000 and 2,000 years ago (Howe, 2006). Britain colonized New Zealand for its resources, signing the Treaty of Waitangi with Māori in 1840 after which Māori were subjected to war, confiscation and forced sale of land. Between 1840 and 2000, Māori lost 96% or 63.4 million acres of their land (New Zealand History Online, 2009). During the worst of the land struggles colonial cavalry charged and sabred to death naked Māori boys aged 8 to 10 years old at Handleys Shed; in Taranaki, bounties were paid for the heads of Māori, apartheid-type pass laws were invoked and detention without trial applied (Simpson, 1979); in the Urewera Forest, scorched earth campaigns, summary killings of prisoners and non-combatants including men, women and children at Kōpani, Onepoto and Ngātapa (Waitangi Tribunal, 2009, 2010); Auckland Māori were expelled, interned or forced to wear coloured armbands reminiscent of 1930s Germany during land wars (Sorrenson, 1959). Demographic decline, driven by disease, destruction, dispossession, disenfranchisement, disempowerment, dismemberment of culture and despair caused the Māori population to drop 70%, from about 150,000 in 1769 to just 44,000 in 1901 (see Poole, 1991 for a summary

of demographics).¹ Māori were expected to become extinct (Belich, 2001); in the words of politician Issac Featherston, government policy should “smooth . . . their dying pillow” (Foster, 1966).

Māori faced systematic economic, political, social and cultural marginalization, cultural alienation, forced assimilation, demonization, racism, structural prejudice and intergenerational impoverishment. Māori language was banned, their culture, heritage and identity decimated. The number of speakers of the Māori language declined from 95% in 1900 to just 5% in 1980 (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). After massive land loss, Māori were urbanized moving from 83% rural in 1936 to 83% urban in 1986. Housing was advertised as “Europeans only”, hotels refused reservations from Māori; Māori could not tour with the All Blacks to South Africa. Māori were discriminated against in movie theatres, swimming pools and barber shops in Pukekohe. A separate school was established when Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent) parents protested about Māori children mixing with their own (Belich, 2001).

Renaissance

Māori have recovered, today numbering 565,000 (14.6% of the population) (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Initially led by radical Māori youth protest in the 1970s (Walker, 1991), Māori language became an official language of New Zealand in 1986. Twenty-four percent of Māori now speak their language (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Māori have 25 radio stations and two TV channels. Many tribes are powerful economic units. There are 22 Māori in New Zealand’s 120-member Parliament, 7 from dedicated Māori seats. Māori hold more portfolios in the government

executive than ever before. There has been a huge effort to address young people’s issues, including health, education, unemployment, justice, violence, suicide, alcohol and substance abuse, street gangs, and cultural alienation, amongst others. The flagship of this movement has been the establishing of Māori-led initiatives in education under the maxim that “Māori do not fail in education; education fails Māori.” The phenomenon of brown people failing in white education is changing under Māori advocacy. There are 491 *kōhanga reo* and *kōhungahunga* (immersion preschools for children up to 5 years old) (Ministry of Education, 2009), over 150 *kura kaupapa*, *kura teina* and *whare kura* (primary and secondary immersion schools for children up to 17 years old) (Ministry of Education, 2008), over 91 *tikanga rua reo* (bilingual units in mainstream primary and intermediate schools for children up to 12 years old), 90 schools with immersion classes (Maxim Institute, 2006), and three *whare wānanga* (Māori universities). Most other state tertiary institutions teach Māori language. A key point of relevance for the debate on Māori child abuse is that the initiatives are successful because they are led by Māori at all levels. They were not propagated by the system, a system that had created the problem; they involve devolution of resources to Māori.

There has been progress at all levels of education. Māori school entrants in preschool have increased to 91.4% (Ministry of Education, 2009). The number of Māori leaving school with a university entrance qualification doubled between 2001 and 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2007). The proportion of Māori adults with at least one high school qualification has risen from 39% to 54%, and those with post-school qualifications from 18% to 25%. Māori numbers in tertiary education rose from 38,000 to 91,000 between 1994 and 2003 (Ministry of Education, 2005a). Although these students are mainly concentrated at lower certificate and diploma levels, Māori are now the highest percentage participating ethnic group

1 Estimates of the Māori population at contact range between 100,000 and 175,000.

in tertiary education (Ministry of Education, 2005b). The number of Māori with PhDs and other doctoral level qualifications has grown from about 30 in 1993 to over 500 in 2007 (Walker, 2010).² Huge gaps still exist in all areas of education between Māori and non-Māori but, under Māori leadership, Māori are going forward.

High-profile cases of Māori child abuse

Despite the huge progress of recent years, Māoridom has been stunned by a number of high-profile child abuse cases. The torture to death of 3-year-old Nia Glassie evokes a litany of such incidents. Nia was subjected to extensive abuse for weeks before being admitted to hospital and dying of brain injuries on 3 August 2007. The court concluded she had been kicked, beaten, slapped, jumped on, held over a fire, had wrestling moves practised on her, placed in a clothes dryer and spun at top heat for up to 30 minutes, folded into a sofa and sat on, shoved into piles of rubbish, dragged through a sandpit half-naked, flung against a wall, dropped from a height onto the floor, and whirled rapidly on a rotary clothes line until thrown off.

Another example is the gang-related drive-by shooting of innocent 2-year-old Jhia Te Tua, for which Hayden Wallace, 27, and Karl Check, 26, received life imprisonment with a non-parole period of 15 years for the shooting in May 2007. The two ethnic Māori gangs involved were the Mongrel Mob and Black Power, gangs formed in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of cultural alienation when Māori were urbanized.

The beating to death of the twin brothers Christopher and Cru Kahui, aged 3 months, who died on 18 June 2006 in hospital after being admitted with serious head injuries. Their father was charged with the killings but later

acquitted. Some evidence suggested that he was “profiled” into the charges. Serious questions were raised about the mother, who among other things, stopped for a meal at McDonald’s while transporting the twins to hospital then left them in the emergency ward for staff to look after, asking them to “ring her” about the outcome.

James Whakaruru was 4 when he died at the hands of Benny Haerewa, his mother’s boyfriend in April 1999. Little James Whakaruru told his great-aunt Kathleen how much he loved his mother and that he knew his mother loved him. Haerewa was jailed for 12 years for manslaughter.

The dreadful roll call includes the abuse of Delcelia Witika, Lillybing Karaitihana Mātiaha, Pirimai Simmonds, Jonelle Tarawa, Mereana Edmonds, Tamati Pōkaia and others. Every new report brings dread for Māori that it is one of our own. This raises several questions.

How bad is Māori child abuse?

The Māori child homicide rate is double that for non-Māori in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2004), which contributes disproportionately to New Zealand rank as third highest for child abuse deaths in 27 OECD countries (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2003). This report detailed child maltreatment deaths in 27 OECD countries averaged over a 5-year period during the 1990s, and placed New Zealand 25th out of 27 countries, with a rate of 1.2 deaths per 100,000 children under the age of 15 years. This was high compared with an OECD median of 0.6 deaths per 100,000. Only Mexico and the United States (both 2.2 per 100,000) had higher child maltreatment death rates than New Zealand. Fifty percent of babies under 1 year old taken into State care are Māori. Māori constitute 40% of 2,000 critical and 25,000 of general child abuse cases reported annually (Ministry of Social

² The estimate of 30 PhDs in 1993 is mine.

Development, 2007).³ At 55 per 100,000, the Māori rate of abuse-related head injuries to children under 2 is amongst the highest in the world (Taonui, 2007). Māori child admissions to hospital relating to intentional harm were over double the rate of all other ethnic groups between 1994 and 2004 (Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, 2006). Those most at risk of homicide between 1991 and 2000 were Māori boys aged 0–1 years old (Doolan, 2004; Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003). Violence in Māori homes not only occurs at a higher rate but is more likely to be serious; Māori women experience considerably more serious and much greater levels of domestic violence than non-Māori (Newbold, 2000). Fifty percent of those sentenced for the offence of “male assaults female” in 2004 to 2005 were Māori, and 42% of Māori women said a partner had abused them physically, compared with only 20% of white women (Ministry of Justice, 2007).

Do the media over-emphasize Māori cases of child abuse?

Although the rate of Māori violence against children is high, there is strong evidence that the media over-emphasizes negative stories and statistics about Māori. The work of Hirsch and Spoonley (1990), McCreanor (no date; 1989), Nairn and McCreanor (1990, 1991), and more recently Rankine et al. (2008), underline that the Pākehā-dominated media represents Māori as inferior to Pākehā culture, depicts Māori as negative, extreme or threatening and promotes that Māori (men especially) seek and enjoy violence. Rankine et al. (2008) in particular

emphasize that the media portrays Māori on one hand as privileged through treaty settlement processes and affirmative action policies unfairly denied to Pākehā (a theme dismissed as unfounded by the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples) while on the other characterizing Māori as a source of problems or conflict, poor, sick and a drain on “the taxpayer”. The drivers of these characterizations are racism and prejudice.

These perceptions were exacerbated by the film *Once Were Warriors* (Scholes & Tamahori, 1994), which, although it portrayed a vivid reality of the domestic violence of the culturally alienated and impoverished Māori urban underclass, also reinforced negative stereotypes about Māori. Moreover, these notions have been reinforced by the now discredited “warrior gene” research of 2007, which purported that Māori had a genetic tendency to negative behaviour but was later discredited for using too small a sample and for sensationalizing the findings, probably in order to obtain more funding; and, more recently by historian Paul Moon’s 2008 book, *This Horrid Practice*, on Māori cannibalism, which made unfortunate insinuations about Māori infanticide. Professor Moon used the example of Māori practising infanticide as evidence that Māori were a violent culture relative to others and therefore cannibals. Interestingly, he missed that the highest rate of infanticide during the 1800s was in the UK, where changes in law removing support for single mums gave rise to the almost systematic starving to death of infants on “baby farms”, which, using this thesis proffered, would mean that the British, rather than Māori, were the “savages”.

Māori are over-represented in child homicide. However, the problem is not just confined to Māori; it is a New Zealand problem. For instance, although Māori, who are 14.6% of the population, accounted for 28 (31%) of the 88 children killed between 1993 and 2003; 48 (54%) of all child homicides were Pākehā children (Pacific Island or Asian comprised

3 Figures released in June 2007 show in the year to 30 June 2007, a total of 4,672 (46%) of cases of child abuse came from Māori households, compared with 27.8% (2,828 cases) from Pākehā families. In 2006, the percentage for Māori was 45.1%, and for Pākehā 30.7%. Only 2.8% were Asian and 16.4% Pacific Island.

12 deaths or 13.6%).⁴ Between 2001 and 2005, Māori children under 15 years old were 28% or 17 of 61 child homicides—44 were non-Māori (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). The majority of children killed were European; the question therefore arises as to why it is that the photos of Māori child victims are more likely to be named and publicized. And, while the names of Māori victims are well known, the names of Pākehā children are not.

However horrifying the figures, it is simplistic to blame Māori. Do we condemn all white men because they have the highest incidence of child pornography and paedophilia, vilify all Christians because of sexual and physical abuse by Catholic nuns and priests, judge all mental health workers for 30 years of institutionalized torture of young patients, such as in the psychiatric hospitals Lake Alice and Porirua, or reject the work of all social workers working with indigenous communities because of the horrors of the residential schools in Canada, the stolen generations in Australia and residential homes in New Zealand? Racist stereotyping and scapegoating never solve the issues they do not seek to understand. The abusive “Once Were Warriors Syndrome” we have today did not exist in pre-European times; it is part of a colonial legacy that afflicts impoverished and alienated indigenous minorities the world over. Further, it is ignorant and arrogant to blame the Māori leaders of decimated communities who put themselves on the line for their communities on a regular basis on all issues for little or no recompense. The Māori Party, Māori Council and Māori Women’s Welfare League have shown regular commitment to this issue. Māori leaders were amongst the staunchest

supporters of New Zealand’s recently introduced anti-smacking legislation.

Was pre-European Māori parenting violent towards children?

Many Māori today are quite convinced that pre-European society was not as violent as some Pākehā might suggest. Appeals to tikanga (customary beliefs and practices) such as aroha (compassion and love), whanaungatanga (family), whakapapa (genealogy) and so on support this. Traditional whakataukī (aphorisms expressing values and codes of conduct) speak of the importance of children. The bond between mother and child was valued: “he aroha whāereere, he pōtiki piri poho” (a mother’s love, a breast-clinging child). “Tāku hei piripiri, tāku hei mokimoki, tāku hei tāwhiri, tāku kati taramea” referred to children cherished as “my pendant of scented fern, fragrant fern, scented gum, sweet-scented speargrass”. Children were called “te tau o te ate” literally the “string of the heart”. “He kai poutaka me kinikini atu, he kai poutaka me horehore atu, mā te tamaiti te iho” (pinch off a bit of the potted bird, peel off a bit of the potted bird, but leave the substantial part for the child) iterated that the welfare of the children ensured the future of the tribe.

Grieving parents were called “me he rau i peke i te haupapa” (leaves shrivelled by frost). A mother’s grief was expressed as “ka whati rā ia tāku mähuri tōtara” (my tōtara [a species of tree] sapling has been broken). When parents might be lost children would be cared for “matua pou whare rokohia ana; matua tangata e kore e rokohia” (the carved figures of the ancestral house is also found, the human parent may not be), meaning the tribe as symbolized by the carved figures of ancestors will always look after the child. Children were cared for by the whole tribe “te parahako o te koekoeā” (like the egg of the long-tailed cuckoo which is placed in the nest of other birds to be raised). Parents were to

4 Interview by Steve Braunias of Dr Cindy Kiro, New Zealand Commissioner for Children, published in the *Sunday Star Times* (5 Aug 2007, p. A18). Dr Kiro said 88 children died between 2003 and 2006 of which 48 were Pākehā and 28 were Māori, and 12 Pasifika or Asian. More precisely, it was 50 between 1993 and 1997, and 38 between 1998 and 2003 (Ministry of Social Development, 2006, p. v).

provide initial welfare and the other members the refining skills for life “nāu i whatu te kahu, he tāniko tāku” (you the parents wove the cloak; I/we provide the fine border). “He tamaiti i aitia ki te takapau wharanui” (children are conceived upon the broad laid out mat), and “ka mahi koe, e te tamariki moe porī” (well done, children who sleep near their relatives) reinforced that they were to be cared for by all.

Other sayings warned against maltreatment. Children were to be protected from harm “māku e kapu i te toiora o ā tāua tamariki” (by my hand will our children be kept unharmed). “Ko te rātā te rākau i takahia e te moa” refers to the rātā tree that when trodden on when young cannot grow straight. “Ngā huka kokoti kōmata”: just as frosts (huka) will cut down young shoots (kōmata) so too will the ill-treatment of children disrupt their upbringing. Parents were to instruct children well and children to take their guidance: “kia mau ki te kupu a tōu matua” (children listen to the words of your parents). However, the young were encouraged to speak their minds “ka mahi te tamariki wāwāhi tahā” (well done children who break calabashes, meaning those who challenge the status quo). This exuberance was celebrated: “he ahi tawa ki uta, he kumu tarakihi ki te moana” (children are like the noisy popping of roasting tawa berries, and the noisy feeding of large shoals of the tarakihi fish). (Whakataukī from Mead & Grove, 2007.)⁵

While whakataukī are insightful, Māori left no extant written accounts about parenting from the early contact period. The records of early European explorers, traders, missionaries, settlers and administrators dating between 1814 and 1868 are useful here. Given that there were very few Europeans in New Zealand in 1814 and no more than 2,000 in 1840, we can assume for the most part that the parenting they observed is a fair indication of usual practice

before contact. The records are doubly useful because observations are made at different times and places, independently of each other. On other subjects, many of the commentators appear Eurocentric, which adds weight to the comments about childrearing.

Samuel Marsden was the first missionary in New Zealand arriving in 1814, just 45 years after first contact. Critically, given that Māori men commit most Māori child homicides, Marsden made the following comments that Māori men engaged in little violence against women and children:

I saw no quarrelling while I was there. They are kind to their women and children. I never observed either with a mark of violence upon them, nor did I ever see a child struck. (Elder, 1932, p. 128)

The New Zealanders do not correct their children lest they should abate their courage or subdue their violent passions. Hence the children are in no subjection to their parents. (p. 479)

Marsden believed children were treated respectfully:

The chiefs . . . are accustomed to public discussions from their infancy. The chiefs take their children from their mother’s breast to all their public assemblies, where they hear all that is said upon politics, religion, war etc. by the oldest men. Children will frequently ask questions in public conversation and are answered by the chiefs. I have often been surprised to see the sons of the chiefs at the age of four or five years sitting amongst the chiefs and paying close attention to what was said. The children never appear under any embarrassment when they address a stranger whom they never saw. (p. 193)

His observations of the nature of children support this:

⁵ See pp. 64, 66, 81, 119, 164, 167, 198, 258, 287, 288, 297, 319, 322, 379, 384, 391—index available by first word.

The children are generally very easy, open and familiar at the first interview, and show an anxiety to pay every little attention in their power to the strangers. There can be no finer children than those of the New Zealanders in any part of the world. Their parents are very indulgent, and they appear always happy and playful and very active. (p. 283)

Joel Polack's (1838 edition) published views support Marsden's comments concerning Māori fathers, which he contrasts with European views of punishment:

The New Zealand father is devotedly fond of his children, they are his pride, his boast, and peculiar delight; he generally bears the burden of carrying them continually within his mat . . . The children are seldom or never punished; which consequently, causes them to commit so many annoying tricks, that continually renders them deserving of a sound, wholesome castigation. The father performs the duty of a nurse; and any foul action the embryo warrior may be guilty of, causes a smile rather than a tear from the devoted parent. (p. 374)

The obstinacy of the children exceeds belief; the son of a chief is never chastised by his parent. The boys are brought up entirely by the men; and it is not uncommon to see young children of tender years, sitting next to their parents in the war councils, apparently listening with the greatest attention to the words of war uttered by the chiefs . . . (p. 378)

They also ask questions in the most numerous attended assemblies of chiefs, who answer them with an air of respect, as if they were a corresponding age to themselves. I do not remember a request of an infant being treated with neglect, or a demand from one of them being slighted. (p. 379)

Polack (1840 edition) also adds insight on the role of women in protecting children and the

sense that children belonged to the tribe:

The wife almost invariably opposes the husband in favour of her children, and the former dares not assume any superiority, as the relatives of his wife are ever ready to avenge, even with his blood, any unkindness shown to her or the children, the latter being regarded as less belonging to the parents than to the tribe in general. (Vol. 1, pp. 32–33)

George Angas' observations in 1847 emphasize the care of both mothers and fathers:

Both parents are almost idolatrously fond of their children; and the father frequently spends a considerable portion of his time in nursing his infant, who nestles in his blanket, and is lulled to rest by some native song . . . (p. 91)

The children are cheerful and lively little creatures, full of vivacity and intelligence. They pass their early years almost without restraint, amusing themselves with the various games of the country. (p. 92)

Richard Taylor traversed much of New Zealand, and in 1855 published what he had observed. His account supports those of earlier observers, although he does recount one instance of corporal punishment, but says this was the exception rather than the rule:

. . . in general they show great affection for their offspring; indeed the children are suffered to do as they like. They sit in all their councils; they are never checked; once, and once only, I saw a man, whose child (an infant, one or two years old) was very troublesome, take him up and run out with him to a river close by, in which he kept ducking him until he ceased crying. (p. 165)

Edward Shortland published his observations about Māori parenting in 1856. His account is useful in that it explains the motivations for not punishing children and that the close

relationships with other family members acted as a check against over-chastisement:

Curbing the will of the child by harsh means was thought to tame his spirit, and to check the free development of his natural bravery. The chief aim, therefore, in the education of children being to make them bold, brave, and independent in thought and act, a parent is seldom seen to chastise his child, especially in families of rank. Were he to do so, one of the uncles would probably interfere to protect his nephew, and seek satisfaction for the injury inflicted on the child by seizing some of the pigs or other property of the father. (p. 156)

This is reinforced by Swainson (1859):

Considering how little the Māori children are subject to restraint, their quiet and orderly conduct is especially remarkable. In bringing them up, the parents seldom have recourse to personal chastisement, believing that it has the effect of damaging the spirit of the child. At an early age, the Māori children acquire great self-respect; and at the public discussions of their elders, they may be seen seated around the outer circle, attentive, grave, and thoughtful listeners. (p. 10)

William Colenso's account from 1868 also wrote about parenting by the extended family while again implying that this acted to discourage against abuse of children:

Their love and attachment to children was very great, and that not merely to their own immediate offspring. They very commonly adopted children; indeed no man having a large family was ever allowed to bring them all up himself—uncles, aunts and cousins claimed and took them, often whether the parents were willing or not. They certainly took every physical care of them; and as they rarely chastised (for many reasons) of course, petted and spoiled them. The father, or uncle, often carried or nursed

his infant on his back for hours at a time, and might often be seen quietly at work with the little one there snugly ensconced. (p. 30)

These observations accord with others in the Pacific. Malinowski (1929) provides a dated but seminal description of the social organization of the Trobriand Islanders in Melanesia that included their social organization, sexuality and child-raising practices:

Children . . . enjoy considerable freedom and independence . . . there is no idea of a regular discipline, no system of domestic coercion . . . The parents would either coax or scold or ask as from one equal to another . . . the idea of a definite retribution, or of coercive punishment, is not only foreign, but distinctly repugnant . . . several times when I suggested, after some flagrant infantile misdeed, that it would mend matters for the future if the child were beaten or otherwise punished in cold blood, the idea appeared unnatural and immoral to my friends, and was rejected with some resentment. (pp. 52–53)

In summary, violence toward children in pre-European times was an exceptional circumstance rather than a rule. Both parents, including fathers, were attached to their children. Shared parenting by the extended family acted as a check against violence. These points suggest that today's incidence of child abuse and the current high levels of male Māori violence towards women and children has genesis in the post-contact period with Europeans that impoverished, broke down and isolated families, dislocating them from traditional contexts and the extended networks that previously protected children.

Is there a link between the intergenerational impacts of colonization and Māori child abuse?

Several facts support a connection between Māori child abuse and cultural alienation, systemic marginalization and intergenerational impoverishment. The key ingredients can be traced to the period from 1840 to 1980. Māori alcohol abuse and impoverished despair can be traced to the period after the colonial wars of the 1860s when confiscation, land courts and the impact of landlessness took hold as articles in the *New Zealand Herald* observed:

. . . men and women have abandoned all work and all industrious occupation. They can scarcely be said to have had a home . . . for the most part they have for years past lived in tents or slept on the ground with the shelter merely of a wind break. They have been made to do this by having to run from one part of the country to the other end after land courts. They have had to live on wretched watery foods and the only relief from the utter misery of their surroundings is in getting drunk. What wonder is it that they should die like rotten sheep and the children born to them should linger out a short life. (*New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1885)

In these districts where the natives have not sold most of their surplus lands or at all events where they have not during the last 5 years been subject to immoral and destructive influences of land selling, they have kept up their numbers. In former years it has been noticed that the great decrease took place in these districts in which the natives had been detained from their settlements and their usual occupation. (*New Zealand Herald*, 26 May 1891)

And, as the Member of Parliament Robert Bruce said:

I believe we could not devise a more ingenious method of destroying the whole of the Maori

race than by these land courts. The natives come from the villages in the interior, and have to hang about for months in our centres of population . . . They are brought into contact with the lowest classes of society, and are exposed to temptation, the result is that a great number contract our diseases and die. (Bruce, 1885)

The domestic abuse and child violence we see today begins during the period of urbanization between 1950 and 1980, when 60% of Māori were urbanized into poor housing areas as cheap unskilled labour in areas vulnerable to economic change (Belich, 2001). This brought forth new generations of doubly alienated Māori: rejected by the dominant culture and at distance from their ancestral culture, concentrated in poor housing, working for low wages or on welfare, and subject to across-the-board racism. A generation of urban Māori parents who had been born in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s entered an intergenerational cycle of poverty, alcohol, drugs, gang culture, single-parent families, domestic violence, hopelessness and frustration. By 2001, 20% or 120,000 of Māori people did not know their tribe (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). Many families disintegrated. Māori have the highest rate of solo parent families; 41% of Māori children compared with 17% of European children live in single parent families, mainly headed by women (Families Commission, 2008).

Their experience turned inward, manifesting in violence, crime and abuse. Thirty-year figures show, for instance, that after the 1984 to 1990 economic restructuring, which impacted more on poor Māori than poor non-Māori (Minto, 2007) the Māori child homicide rate, which had been only 10% higher than that for non-Māori, more than doubled, from 1.05 (1978–1987) to 2.4 per 100,000 between 1991 and 2000 (Table 1).

The connection between abuse and cultural alienation via economic restructuring leading to greater cultural alienation and that leading to more violence is further supported by the fact

TABLE 1 Changes in rates of Māori and non-Māori child homicide: 1978–1987 and 1991–2000.

	Māori	Non-Māori
1978–1987	1.05	0.92
1991–2000	2.40	0.67

Rate per 100,000 for children aged 0–14

Source: Doolan, 2004.

that in most cases *prima facie* reports suggest Māori child homicide occurs in culturally less robust or culturally alienated families. This reinforces that it is not the inherent nature of indigenous culture that causes cyclic intergenerational child bashing, but rather the proximal removal or distortion of that culture. The highest rate of cyclic poverty and of alcohol, drug and child abuse in western Europe is in the Glaswegian south-west of Scotland: amongst the descendants of *white* Highlanders urbanized after Culloden, who had lost their lands, language and culture.⁶ This cultural alienation is also why, in New Zealand, Māori child abuse rates currently outstrip those for Pasifika, at least for the moment. Samoan and Tongan populations remained a majority in their own countries during colonization; they retained more land, their languages stayed intact. Culturally stronger Pasifika communities were more successful at transferring their communities from Apia and Tongatapu to Auckland, than Māori were at transporting them from Ahipara and Te Tai. However, Pasifika now living as minorities within a dominant culture are a time bomb ticking away in places such as south Auckland, as gradually, three or more generations of re-settlement have begun to erode the cultural integrity of those communities (see Taonui & Newbold, in press).

6 I use the term *white* here to demonstrate that cultural alienation not only occurs to *brown* indigenous peoples such as Māori but also to other colonized or otherwise dominated and subjugated groups.

TABLE 2 Changes in rates of Māori and non-Māori child homicide: 1991–2005

	Māori	Non-Māori
i. 1991–2000	2.40	0.67
ii. 1996–2000	1.90	0.90
iii. 1999–2003	1.5	0.70
iv. 2001–2005	1.5	0.60

Rate per 100,000 for children aged 0–14

Comparing: i. (Doolan, 2004, p. 10); ii. and iv. (Ministry of Social Development, 2008, p. 7); iii. (Ministry of Social Development, 2006, p. 5)

Is the Māori renaissance making a contribution?

Thirty-year figures show that the renaissance period is having a positive impact. In fact, the rate of Māori child homicide is decreasing at more than twice the rate of that for non-Māori (Table 2).

When compared another way, the rate of Māori child homicide has been improving steadily, both in terms of the reduction in the number killed (Figure 1) and, as in Figure 2, a percentage of all child homicides. The percentage of child homicides for non-Māori (including Pākehā European, Pasifika and Asian) is increasing as a proportion of all homicides as Māori child homicide decreases. Meanwhile, the rate of reported Māori child abuse, although still twice that for non-Māori (11.9 compared with 5.9 per 1,000 children, 1998–2003) is also decreasing. Taken together they suggest that the Māori renaissance is working. The rapid decline in Māori child homicide also suggests that, in the long term, Māori child homicide figures may become better than those for Pākehā, although the current economic downturn is a concern with as many as four new Māori child homicides in 2010.

Many good people sit at decision- and policy-making levels. However, many of the measures currently in place address the symptoms of child abuse rather than the underlying causes. Many of the structures and organizations that address the issue derive from the structures that created the problem; we have already noted the

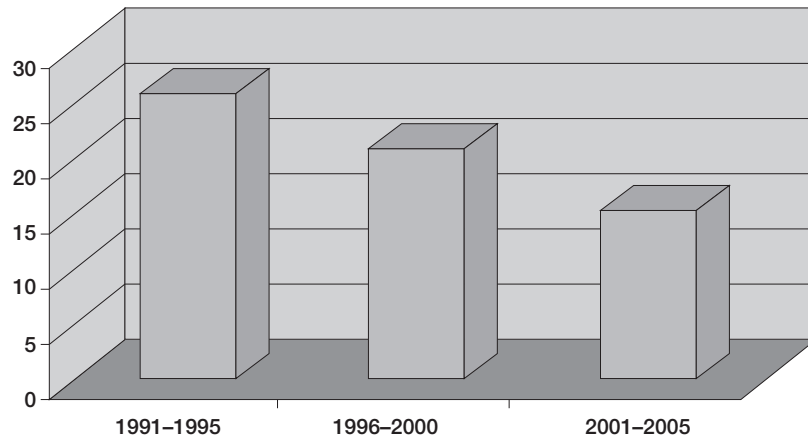


FIGURE 1 Number of Māori child homicides.

Source: Connolly & Doolan, 2007

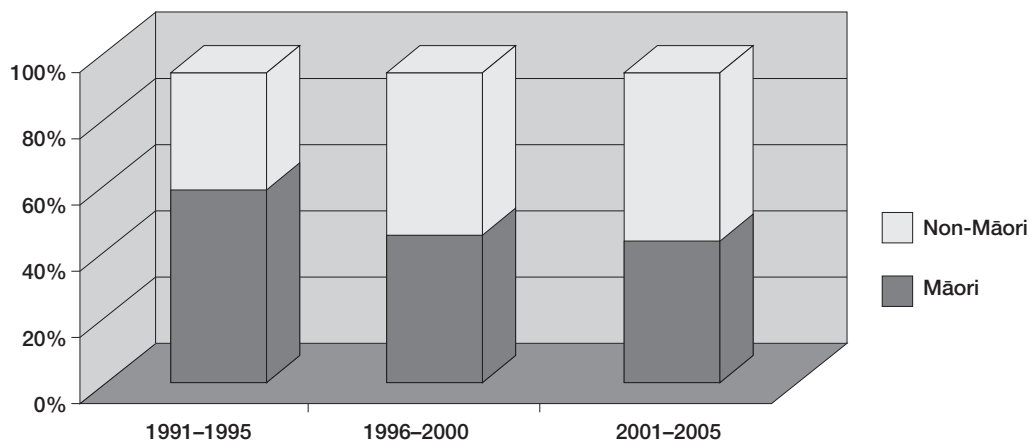


FIGURE 2 Māori child homicides as a percentage of all child homicides.

Source: Connolly & Doolan, 2007

residential schools in Canada, stolen generations in Australia and residential homes in New Zealand.

What will help?

A tenet of this paper has been that the Māori revolution in education came about because Māori have presence across the board: in teaching, administration, policy, leadership and decision making. The same needs to happen in the area of child welfare. There are many Māori working in social work and support services, but mainly at the lower end. We need more Māori with strong cultural skills, requisite professional

qualifications and the ability to make decisions; and, more importantly, they need to be properly resourced. A steady devolution of resources will allow Māori-led programmes to succeed. It is evident in other health areas that Māori-designed and -led initiatives provide much higher success with Māori communities (Durie, 2005). The new suite of Whānau Ora policies promoted by the Māori Party and the Māori-led Paiheretia Whānau (family) restoration programmes need resourcing.

There is a need for anti-silence campaigns, mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, and intervention programmes. However, these have the very real prospect of racial profiling if solely left to an already monocultural

health system: not all brown people are child abusers; not all Māori are child abusers; the majority patently are not. Pākehā health workers, administrators and decision makers need cultural re-training similar to the successful Kotahitanga Programme in education; not only to understand Māori, but more importantly to understand the assumptions Pākehā make when governing them.

The place of culture

We rarely recognize that colonization and its concomitant intergenerational impacts constitute violence: colonization is the application of anger upon vulnerable peoples. This violence has a reciprocal reaction within the societies upon which it is inflicted: cultural alienation, forced assimilation and cumulative marginalization create anger in indigenous societies. Where this anger is not understood, it becomes internalized within the colonized society and inverts upon itself. The indigenous oppressed attack each other. Angry men fight each other, sometimes in gangs, the red fights the blue. Anger seeks the weak and vulnerable in the form of mothers and children, violence expresses itself by seeking innocence. Re-enculturation can emancipate individuals, families and tribal groups. Case histories about perpetrator or victims need not only to trace the circumstances of the individual concerned, but also their parents and wider family because the journey of the many in the past shapes the life of the one in the present. Promoting the rebuilding of culture within the perpetrator not only includes the beliefs and values of the ancestors, but also the history of the people, including colonization. At an individual level, this knowledge has the ability to dissipate anger by raising consciousness. Positive enculturation enhances a sense of belonging, rebuilds identity and promotes self-worth. This facilitates the healing of relationships within families. At its best expression this allows perpetrators to reconnect both with the honour

of traditional whakapapa and the dishonour of colonization to find meaning and place in terms of honouring their ancestors and working for the good of current and future generations. Māori culture is not a problem; it is a solution.

Conclusions

Child violence in pre-European Māori society was much less than today. Currently Māori child murder, although still higher than that for non-Māori, is decreasing at twice the rate as that for non-Māori. The current crisis derives from cumulative intergenerational experiences of colonization, alienation and poverty. Culturally strong families are less violent. Culturally based programmes for Māori are likely to be highly successful, but because of stereotyping and other issues, the programmes need devolvement from centralized systems that are dominated by non-Māori: the systems we have in place to solve these problems derive from systems that created them.

E ngā taonga iti, moe mai i waenganui i ngā mātua tūpuna, ma rātou koutou e aroha e tiaki. Moe marie. Kei runga i a matou katoa te whakamā o to mamae, kia kua tērā mahi. Rest with the ancestors, those who will love and care for you. Find peace. The shame of your suffering is on all of us, may there be no more.

Glossary

Te reo Māori	English
aroha	compassion and love
haka	Māori war dances
huka	frost
kōhanga reo	immersion preschools for children up to 5 years old
kōhungahunga	immersion preschools for children up to 5 years old

kōmata	young shoots
kura kaupapa	primary and secondary immersion schools for children up to 17 years old
kura teina	primary and secondary immersion schools for children up to 17 years old
Pākehā	New Zealanders of European descent
tikanga	customary beliefs and practices
tikanga rua reo	bilingual units in mainstream primary and intermediate schools for children up to 12 years old
tōtara	a species of tree
whakapapa	genealogy
whakataukī	aphorisms expressing values and codes of conduct
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	family and relationships
whare kura	primary and secondary immersion schools for children up to 17 years old
whare wānanga	Māori universities

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