Enhancing cross-cultural evaluation practice through kaupapa Māori evaluation and boundary critique: Insights from Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract
In Aotearoa New Zealand, concern about the impact of colonisation and experience of institutional racism has led to calls for evaluative practice to be firmly grounded in a Māori worldview to reflect indigenous values and avoid deficit framings. With this in mind, our evaluation projects have been informed by a blend of kaupapa Māori evaluation and boundary critique to ensure that our systemic inquiries were responsive to hapū aspirations. We focus on the role that boundary critique played in supporting our cross-cultural evaluation practice. Applying boundary critique enabled the expansion of the evaluand to encompass hapū values and outcomes from a te ao Māori/hapū perspective. We posit that boundary critique is useful when undertaking cross-cultural evaluations as it provides a way to make explicit the different values of te ao Māori (the Māori world) and te ao Pākehā (the Western World).

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects on the practice of systemic inquiry with an indigenous Māori community to address environmental health issues in an isolated region of New Zealand.

Glossary of Māori words: Hapū, sub-tribe; Hui, meeting(s); Iwi, tribe; Kaitiaki, local hapū resource managers; Kaitiakitanga, an ethic of sustainable resource management concerned with the care and protection of mauri (the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity); Kawa, marae protocol; Māori, indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand; Kaupapa Māori, Māori approach; Matauranga Māori, Māori knowledge; Marae, the focal area of a Māori village and consists of a large meeting house and dining area and ablution block; Te ao Māori, the Māori world; Te ao Pākehā, Western world; Tēina, junior/novice; Tino Rangatiratanga, self-determination; Tuakana, senior/leader; Whakapapa, genealogy; Whakawhanaungatanga, the process of establishing relationships, relating well to others.

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These Hokianga-based evaluation projects have involved an ongoing partnership between Hauora Hokianga (a community-owned health service), hapū (Māori sub-tribes) and the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR, a government research agency).

This chapter focuses on how we, as a cross-cultural evaluation team, framed our systemic inquiries to reflect Hokianga hapū aspirations, interests and values. Specifically, we focus on the role that boundary critique has played in supporting our cross-cultural evaluation practice (Gates, 2018; Midgley, 2000; Ulrich, 1983). Boundary critique provides a methodological approach to explore what issues and, whose views, should be included or excluded in an evaluation (Midgley, 2000; Ulrich, 1983). We make the case that boundary critique is a useful framework when undertaking cross-cultural evaluation. It provides a way to clarify values and ensure systemic inquiries are firmly grounded in a Māori worldview and so reflects indigenous values and avoids deficit framings (Kawakami, Aton, Cram, Lai, & Porima, 2007).

The chapter is structured in four parts. It begins with a brief review of the fields of kaupapa Māori evaluation and systems thinking to position our cross-cultural evaluation in terms of a shared commitment to holistic and relational approaches. We then describe the case study context and the two systemic inquiries, we use as exemplars to make our case. Next, we focus on the key boundary judgements made in each systemic inquiry and how these impacted the ability of the Māori community and stakeholders to use the findings to support public health action. Last, we reflect on the implications of our evaluation practice for culturally responsive evaluations in indigenous communities.

LOCATING OUR CROSS-CULTURAL EVALUATION PRACTICE

Our evaluation practice has parallels with a culturally responsive evaluation approach given shared concerns for cultural context, a strengths-based approach and social justice (Frierson, Hood, & Hughes, 2002; Thomas & Parsons, 2017). Our systemic inquiries are grounded in kaupapa Māori and systems thinking and in doing so, attempting to make the best of both worlds (Broodkoorn, 2006).

Kaupapa Māori evaluation

Our Hauora Hokianga researchers locate their practice within the field of kaupapa Māori evaluation. Even though values shape how we think and make judgements about the world (Ulrich, 1983), evaluative thinking is often presented as free of culture (Wehipeihana & McKegg, 2018). Wehipeihana and Mckegg (2018) write that ‘there is little discussion about how different cultural perspectives and worldviews might impact the form and kind of critique and interpretation that leads to evaluative judgements of value and goodness’ (p. 95). Cram and Lenihan (2000, cited in Carlson et al., 2017) assert that kaupapa Māori evaluation is focused on the emancipation of Māori in a space that is uniquely and unapologetically Māori. It provides a critique of the dominant Western (colonial) worldview that marginalises Māori cultural perspectives (Sadler, 2008, cited in Cram, Pipi, & Paipa, 2018). Luo, Liu, and Liu (2018) maintain that ‘only when evaluation is conducted in a culturally responsive manner will the evaluation results be relevant and meaningful’ (p. 104). A Māori worldview values multiple perspectives and experiences and strives for a shared understanding of issues (Marsden, 2003, cited in Wehipeihana & McKegg, 2018). Furthermore, kaupapa Māori evaluation allows for Māori to have the strongest ‘voice’ in evaluations that occur in a Māori context (Kerr, 2012).
Systems thinking

Our ESR researchers locate their practice within the ‘systems turn’ in the evaluation field (e.g., Williams & Imam, 2006). The systems literature is vast and encompasses a wide range of hard, soft and critical traditions including cybernetics (e.g., Ashby, 1956; Beer, 1981), general systems theory (e.g., von Bertalanffy, 1968), system dynamics (e.g., Forrester, 1961; Meadows, 2008), complexity theory (e.g., Kauffman, 1995; Prigogine & Stengers 1984), soft systems (e.g., Checkland, 1981; Churchman, 1979) and critical systems thinking (e.g., Midgley, 2000; Ulrich, 1983). Williams and Iraj (2006) harness this diversity by recommending that complex evaluands and evaluations are understood in terms of inter-relationships (how issues are connected), perspectives (different viewpoints on issues) and boundaries (who or what issues are included or marginalised). The boundary setting act is central to contemporary systems practice and high-quality evaluations (Reynolds & Howell, 2010; Reynolds, Gates, Hummelbrunner, Marra, & Williams, 2016). Evaluations cannot take the ‘whole into account'; they are necessarily partial ‘considering some facts and values relevant’ and ‘benefiting some groups and interests better than others’ (Reynolds et al., 2016, p. 669; italics in original). Therefore, where the boundaries are drawn is fateful in terms of whose issues of concern and value are taken into account and how improvement and merit/worth is understood (Churchman, 1970; Gates, 2018; Midgley, 2000).

Kaupapa Māori evaluation and systems thinking

An increased focus on indigenous health has given rise to calls for programme evaluation methods that reflect indigenous values (Kawakami et al., 2007). Interest in the role of culture has grown over the years with systems scholars such as Gu and Zhu (2000), Midgley and Shen (2007), Brocklesby and Beall (2018) and Foote, Midgley, Ahuriri-Driscoll, Hepi, and Earl-Goulet (2021) considering the relationship of culture with systemic and participative methods. While only a few studies have explicitly explored the relationship between mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) and systems concepts (e.g., Taurima & Cash, 2000; Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2008; Morgan & Faau, 2018), there are various reflections from New Zealand researchers applying systems thinking methods in bicultural research and evaluation teams where issues of knowledge-power are central to the co-production of evaluation findings. For example, Hepi, Foote, Rogers-Koroheke, and Taimona (2007) report that Checkland’s (1981) rich picture method effectively framed evaluation questions in a Māori community development context. Heke, Rees, Swinburn, Waititi, and Stewart (2019) looked at the extent to which causal loop diagrams were able to give voice to Māori concerns and interests and concluded that feedback thinking was ‘able to operate effectively with both Western and Māori paradigms’ (p. 29).

While these scholars have examined the acceptability of systems methods in Māori community contexts, others have encouraged learning between the Western and Māori cultural paradigms. Broodkoorn (2006) advocates for the complementary use of kaupapa Māori research and participatory action research methods to achieve ‘best of both worlds’. More recently, Macfarlane and Macfarlane (2019) developed He Awa Whiria (the ‘Braided Rivers Framework’) which sets out how distinct Western science and kaupapa Māori research streams can be conducted in parallel and then brought together at key points in the inquiry.

Kaupapa Māori evaluation and critical systems thinking have a shared connection in critical social theory and its concern to critique domination and alienation (Smith, 1999; Jackson, 2000). We found boundary critique a helpful way to conceptualise our systemic inquiries. It drew attention to taken-for-granted (and often culturally based) assumptions
that infuse evaluative practice (SenGupta et al., 2004). See Nkwake and Morrow (2016) for a discussion about assumptions in evaluations. Our analysis, therefore, draws on the theory of boundary critique (Midgley, 2000; Ulrich, 1983). Boundary critique highlights the need to reflect on and choose between different boundaries that shape inquiry lines and how stakeholders render judgements about worth (Gates, 2018). The boundaries of analysis which define relevant facts and values (Ulrich & Reynolds, 2010) therefore, have important implications for the salience, credibility and legitimacy of systemic inquiries (Nicholas et al., 2019) and ultimately impact on the utilisation of the evaluation findings (Gates, 2018). Foote et al. (2021) provide an example of how different boundaries of participation in community environmental management limit Māori involvement as just another stakeholder (subject to mainstream consultation processes) or as a Treaty of Waitangi partner (where cultural consultation needs are meet).

Draw the boundaries too narrowly then important perspectives may be missed and stakeholders excluded from deliberations about merit. Draw the boundaries too widely then an evaluation may lack focus and so lessen the opportunity for stakeholders to reach an accommodation about merit. Therefore, setting the boundaries is critical and depends on ethical judgements and what is considered useful by those involved in and affected by the evaluand and evaluation (Ulrich & Reynolds, 2010). To facilitate such dialogue, Ulrich (1983) developed four groups of three critical questions to make the boundaries of a system or proposal visible and subject to debate. These 12 questions are asked in an ‘is’ and ‘ought’ mode to draw out value judgments. When necessary, they can be deployed polemically to embarrass decision-makers who choose to impose boundaries (and values) rather than engage in stakeholder discussion (Ulrich, 1987). See Table 1 for Ulrich’s questions expressed in an ‘ought’ mode where the system in focus (‘S’) can include the evaluand, evaluation or wider context.

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**Table 1** Critical system heuristics questions (Ulrich, 1987, p. 279)

1. Who ought to be the client (beneficiary) of the system S to be designed or improved?
2. What ought to be the purpose of S; that is, what goal states ought S be able to achieve so as to serve the client?
3. What ought to be S’s measure of success (or improvement)?
4. Who ought to be the decision taker, that is, have the power to change S’s measure of improvement?
5. What components (resources and constraints) of S ought to be controlled by the decision taker?
6. What resources and conditions ought to be part of S’s environment, that is, should not be controlled by S’s decision taker?
7. Who ought to be the involved as designer of S?
8. What kind of expertise ought to flow into the design of S; that is, who ought to be considered an expert and what should be … [their] … role?
9. Who ought to be the guarantor of S; that is, where ought the designer seek the guarantee that … [their] … design will be implemented and will prove successful, judged by S’s measure of success (or improvement)?
10. Who ought to be the witnesses representing the concerns of the citizens that will or might be affected by the design of S? That is to say, who among the affected ought to get involved?
11. To what degree and in what way ought the affected be given the chance of emancipation from the premises and promises of the involved?
12. Upon what worldviews of either the involved or the affected ought S’s design be based?

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1 Signed by iwi/Māori and the British Crown in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi established the right of the Crown to govern; sought to ensure that Māori have the same rights as British citizens; and guaranteed Māori control over economic and other resources. The Treaty of Waitangi is now seen as an agreement and organising framework between the New Zealand government and iwi/Māori and has also emerged as a formal platform for environmental management relationships.
For this chapter, the system in focus is our cross-cultural evaluation practice. We posit that boundary critique is a useful method when undertaking cross-cultural evaluations as it provides a way to make explicit the different orientations of te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā as well as cognisant of the varying capacity of hapū to engage with evaluation activities.

**CASE STUDY CONTEXT**

**Hauora Hokianga–ESR partnership**

The evaluation partnership has always been based on the premise that each partner brought their different knowledge, abilities, skills and experience to the evaluation. The Hauora Hokianga researchers brought their extensive community development experience and knowledge, their knowledge and credibility in te ao Māori, whakapapa and their fluency in te reo Māori (Hokianga hapū whakapapa and Māori language) and practices in tikanga Māori (Māori customs). The ESR researchers were part of an interdisciplinary team of biophysical, systems and social scientists with expertise in environmental health, evaluation, participatory action and bicultural research. The ESR team had obtained external funding2 with the broad remit to improve community participation in drinking and wastewater management and were able to choose the boundaries of analysis rather than accept the boundaries imposed by funding agencies.

At the start of the partnership, the ESR researchers knew that undertaking cross-cultural research would be quite different from how they would typically conduct research with non-Māori agencies and communities. This was because of the historical misplacement of trust by Māori in the Crown given breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi and, in more recent times, the misplaced trust in non-Māori researchers who have tended to emphasise disparities and deficits without suggesting constructive solutions (Bishop, 1997; Crengle 1997; Jones, 2000; Reid, Robson, & Jones, 2000; Teariki, Spoonley, & Tomoana, 1992). Therefore, gaining trust and working with the Hauora Hokianga researchers was critical to gain trust and work with hapū.

**How Kaupapa Māori and systems thinking informed our systemic inquiries**

Whakawhanaungatanga or relationship building is central to our systemic inquiries (Midgley et al., 2007) with trust central to aligning partner and stakeholder interests and values (Hepi et al., 2007). Trust was developed by making sure the ESR researchers’ activities were subject to kaupapa Māori processes and principles, and Hauora Hokianga researchers were central to decision making about how fieldwork activities such as hui (meetings) would be undertaken with hapū (Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2007). At no point did the ESR researchers claim they were undertaking kaupapa Māori research, but conforming to kaupapa Māori principles meant they aligned with the Hauora Hokianga researchers hapū aims (Midgley et al., 2007). The approach taken by ESR and Hauora Hokianga was a shared management approach (Harmsworth, 2001) based on partnership with hapū participants

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2 Public good research funding was obtained from the Foundation for Science, Research and Technology and the Health Research Council to develop collaborative decision-making tools to support meaningful community engagement in urban water decision making and environmental health. See Foote, Gregor, Hepi, Baker, Houston and Midgley (2007) and Midgley, Ahuriri-Driscoll, Foote, Hepi, Taimona, Rogers-Koroheke et al. (2007) for examples of research outputs.
and sought to maximise hapū independence and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) (Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2007). As suggested by Midgley (2000), we undertook boundary critique at the start of our systemic inquiry (it is unreasonable to assume that marginalisation dynamics do not exist) and then reviewed the adequacy of our boundary judgements throughout the life of our projects. However, rather than formally apply CSH, Ulrich's (1983) questions were drawn upon informally in evaluation team debriefs to help make sense of the systemic inquiries – what Checkland and Scholes (1990) refer to as Mode 2 use. Boundary choices about evaluand and evaluation were made explicit, which allowed for critical reflection. Being attentive to the importance of boundary judgements such as expertise and control enabled the evaluation team to examine whether chosen lines of inquiry and selection of methods supported hapū aspirations and negotiate the boundary judgements that flowed into our systemic inquiries.

SYSTEMIC INQUIRIES

Learning from the stories of Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga

A critical issue in undertaking a systemic inquiry with an indigenous community is ensuring that the values and interests of that community are not unwittingly marginalised by the uncritical application of evaluation methods (Cram, 2015). Recognising how culturally ingrained assumptions shape the process of inquiry requires reflecting on whose expertise is privileged and decisions about who is considered an ‘expert’, what ‘expertise’ counts and what will ‘guarantee’ a successful inquiry (e.g., cultural competency of the evaluation team) (Ulrich, 1983). These decisions impact on the ability of stakeholders and hapū to use the evaluation insights. In this section, we reflect on the decision to ground the evaluation of the Ministry of Health’s Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga (safe drinking water) pilot project in terms of hapū values, understandings and interests (Hepi et al., 2007).

The Ministry of Health commissioned a formal evaluation to determine whether the risk of waterborne illness had decreased as a result of improvements to marae drinking water supplies (a marae is the focal area of a Māori village and consists of a large meeting house and dining area and ablution block). The formal evaluation’s narrow boundaries meant significant cultural and social benefits were missed and the critical role that a kaupapa Māori consultation process played in ensuring hapū participation was downplayed. Hokianga hapū dismissed the evaluation as culturally non-responsive and sought assistance from the ESR team to document various ‘spill-over’ outcomes including how hapū utilised the project pilot as leverage to support kaitiakitanga (guardianship) over water, create employment and establish a track record in managing external funded projects (Foote, Hepi, Rogers-Koroheke, & Taimona, 2005).

Therefore, our systemic inquiry adopted a wider boundary of analysis that understood health in terms of community ownership and control/tino rangatiratanga rather than the absence of water-borne disease. This framing brings into focus issues, such as how access to a clean and healthy environment and the ability to act as kaitiaki (guardians), that are critical to hapū identity and well-being.

Figure 1 sets out the tension between the narrow and wider boundary of analysis following the diagramming conventions of Midgley (1992). Prioritising the physical dimensions of health created a primary boundary around which the safe drinking water pilot was understood. A second and broader boundary, which includes the Ministry of Health’s concern for safe drinking water, captures an expansive understanding of health in terms of community ownership and control. This primary boundary was locked in place by public health legalisation and regulations. Midgley (1992) notes that strongly held boundaries can
lead to stakeholders and issues becoming marginalised through attributions of ‘profanity’ and ‘sacredness’. Such stereotypical descriptions are encountered in evaluation practice. Community views might be dismissed as ‘subjective’ with the views of experts seen as ‘objective’ and, therefore, prioritised (Boots & Midford, 2007). Hapū views were at risk of being marginalised by the Ministry of Health’s environmental health framing.

We recognised that hapū expertise was central to understanding how hapū engaged with the safe drinking water pilot project and created benefits beyond safe drinking water. Our systemic inquiry was firmly rooted in te ao Māori which had two important implications. First, a relationship between the ESR researchers and hapū had to be brokered by the Hauora Hokianga researchers and built through sustained engagement by attending hui to build the trust necessary to undertake the systemic inquiry. Our initial engagement was greeted with understandable suspicion from hapū and we were cognisant of the mistrust created by colonisation and institutional racism (Hepi et al., 2007). A boundary conflict arose from the ESR researchers’ professional identities given how researchers have historically treated Māori as objects of research (and contributed to a ‘victim-blaming’ discourse around health inequities) and the fact they were representatives from a government agency (and therefore associated with breaches under the Treaty of Waitangi) (Midgley et al., 2007). This conflict could not be resolved, and Hauora Hokianga researchers had to vouch for our trustworthiness and integrity which enabled us to attend hui where we were careful not to present ourselves as ‘experts’ but there to learn from hapū experiences. Considerable time was invested in relationship building, enabling each party to explore what interconnections and synergies might arise in partnership.

Second, situating the inquiry within te ao Māori draws attention to power-relations and the need for all parties to be accountable for the expertise they hold. To these ends, the cross-cultural evaluation team moved between te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā in terms of a tuākana (senior/leader) and tēina (junior/novice) relationship, roles and responsibilities. When non-indigenous researchers were in te ao Māori, our Hauora Hokianga researchers were our tuākana, and we were to learn from and be guided by them. When the research team dealt with te ao Pākehā, the ESR researchers took the lead where appropriate. The tuākana/tēina relationship was fluid, moving back and forth depending on what expertise was needed. Acknowledging and valuing the different sources of expertise held by the research team led to learning on different levels, built trust and enabled a cross-cultural and collaborative approach.
Te Riu o Hokianga

The outcome from ‘Learning from the stories of Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga’ was the development of a Māori community development model. Our second systemic inquiry, Te Riu o Hokianga, aimed to further develop the model by examining how regulatory, institutional, cultural and community interactions shaped the ability of hapū to address marae wastewater problems. After the Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga pilot project, hapū approached the Hauora Hokianga researchers about addressing marae wastewater needs. Marae onsite wastewater systems were failing due to increased wastewater volumes, inadequate maintenance and inappropriate designs not meeting the unique wastewater needs of marae.

Our inquiry was founded on the premise that solutions to marae wastewater problems grounded in Māori processes and structures were more likely to result in sustainable environmental health outcomes (Conway, Tunks, Henwood, & Casswell, 2000). A key decision then was to focus on the marae with hapū asserting tino rangatiratanga, strengthening Māori knowledge and developing uniquely Māori solutions. The research drew upon kau-papa Māori, systems thinking and participatory action research methods to ensure the research acknowledged tikanga and kawa (marae protocol), accommodating the varying capacities of hapū and was solution-focused (Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2008).

Government agencies tend to take a ‘one size fits all’ approach when working with communities, and work with hapū as they would a non-Māori community (see Foote et al., 2021 for an example). This entails them taking the expert role and viewing the issue from a Western worldview, which potentially marginalises hapū interests and values. To combat this marginalisation, we set the solution-focused hui with hapū members and representatives from government agencies on the marae. If hapū are to have success in engaging meaningfully with the various agencies to address an issue, they need the agencies to come to them, into their world/reality at the marae where the kawa (protocol) and processes are controlled by Māori (Irwin, 1994). We found that this enabled community ownership and the balance of power was shifted over to the hapū. Due to kawa processes at marae, the agency representatives could not dominate the proceedings, and there was also less risk of ‘blame-shifting’ to other agencies if those other agencies were present. Respecting and working within marae protocols also contributed to relationship building.

During hui, it was revealed that the Crown (government) right to determine marae land use and the acceptability of wastewater discharges was highly contested by hapū participants since the starting point of hapū/iwi development is mana and capacity to exercise authority (Winiata, 2006). The hapū participants held that as the onsite wastewater treatment and disposal (OSTD) systems were on their marae (and on Māori land), they had the authority to determine how the systems should be managed. Hapū contested the need to engage with local government agencies and comply with regulations including costs associated with resource and building consents. Figure 2 examines wastewater discharge in terms of tikanga and kawa versus ‘effect’ (defined by legalisation) highlights two conflicting values that arise from the boundaries.

Attempting to understand which of hapū or local agency views is ‘correct’ is not necessarily helpful; both are correct according to their respective ‘cultural’ perspective. It is more important that both sides understand the other’s values and perspective and develop mutually acceptable solutions (Checkland, 1981).

BOUNDARY ANALYSIS

The previous section detailed two instances of where hapū aspirations and concerns were central to the systemic inquiries. We set out boundary judgements underpinning each
systemic inquiry in Table 2. In the case of Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga, a broader boundary (health as community ownership and control) was drawn around the evaluand rather than what was adopted by the Ministry of Health evaluation focused on the risk of waterborne illness. In examining the pilot project’s success, hapū perspectives were privileged and highlighted the kaupapa Māori consultation process, devolution of funding to Hauora Hokianga and the skillful way that hapū leveraged the safe drinking pilot to create social, cultural and economic outcomes. Our systemic inquiry was grounded in te ao Māori and the principle of ‘by Māori for Māori’

While boundary judgements about expertise were central to the systemic inquiry about Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga, participatory action research with Hokianga hapū to improve OSTD in Te Riu o Hokianga rested on boundary judgements related to control. That is, who ought to control what resources deemed necessary to improve OSTD systems. For hapū,
failing wastewater treatment posed numerous public health and cultural risks. While the disposal and management of sewage, through necessity, was a significant feature of traditional Māori society (Durie, 1998), wastewater management is governed by Acts of Parliament. These Acts tasked government agencies with various responsibilities and hapū had to seek approval for any improvements to their onsite wastewater systems. Following Ulrich (1983), hapū were not decision-makers as they did not have the necessary control over permissions, nor did they have clarity about how the consent processes worked in practice. Indeed, in multi-agency and hapū hui, it became apparent that this confusion extended beyond hapū and that the lack of coordination and communication between agencies with responsibilities for onsite wastewater management meant that considerable confusion existed about resource consenting processes. Te Riu o Hokianga’s major focus was to broker a meaningful relationship between the local government and hapū to facilitate a ‘smooth’ resource and building consenting process hence the OSTD ‘road map’ was initiated (see Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2008 for further detail). In this way, our intervention privileged hapū as the decision-maker and highlighted a key boundary conflict between the authority of hapū and the Crown to decide what was appropriate land use or not (decision environment). Still, pragmatically hapū decided to smooth over this conflict given that funding was contingent on obtaining resource consent.

**DISCUSSION**

Our systemic inquiries highlight the tensions as well as opportunities in our evaluation practice. In doing so, we not only reflect on the challenges of navigating between te ao Māori and te ao Pakehā but also consider the value of boundary critique as a means for ensuring systemic inquiries are responsive to hapū aspirations and concerns. Attention to values, interests and boundaries is also a defining characteristic of kaupapa Māori evaluation practice. According to Cram et al. (2018), the reason that evaluation often does not sit well with Māori communities is not just because of their experience of deficit-based and marginalising research, but also because of a mismatch of worldviews between te ao Māori and te ao Pakehā. These mismatched worldviews were evident in our systemic inquiries with central and local government agencies drawing boundaries around environmental health issues that excluded or marginalised hapū values and interests. In the Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga systemic inquiry, the Ministry of Health’s formal evaluation downplayed significant cultural and social benefits and the critical role that a kaupapa Māori consultation process had played. Again, with the Te Riu o Hokianga systemic inquiry, we sought to widen the boundaries of local government OSTD management practices.

We challenged these narrow boundaries by focusing on the marae as a setting with hapū asserting tino rangatiratanga, strengthening Māori knowledge and developing uniquely Māori solutions to environmental health problems. The practice of boundary critique facilitated new framings of the issues and highlighted the need for tools such as the OSTD ‘roadmap’ to encourage interactions within and across institutional, organisational and community boundaries to produce better outcomes for Hokianga hapū.

Our approach to the evaluation partnership is also consistent with that reported in the literature. Cram et al. (2018) state that in te ao Māori, people are both learners and teachers, meaning that all parties can learn from each other. In this context, they call for evaluators to become learners to strengthen their responsiveness to indigenous context. In both our systemic inquiries, mutual learning was facilitated using a tuakana-teina approach. Therefore, the training in indigenous context that Cram et al. (2018) call for was undertaken in partnership. Such training was bolstered by whakawhanaungatanga (the process of
establishing relationships, relating well to others). As the ESR researchers did not reside in the Hokianga, the Hauora Hokianga researchers hosted them when they came to undertake fieldwork. Therefore, they further developed their relationship by coming together after undertaking the fieldwork, to debrief and socialise in the evenings. During these times, the ESR researchers could reflect on and discuss with the Hauora Hokianga researchers the history and politics of communities they were working with and in doing so deepened their understanding of the boundary conflicts. While we acknowledge that the tuākana-teina approach played a role in ensuring our systemic inquiries reflected hapū interests and values (and so was culturally responsive), we also highlight the need for non-indigenous evaluators to be mindful of cultural taxation (Torepe & Manning, 2018). Here, cultural upskilling can fall heavily on the indigenous evaluators who then can face reputational risks if the cross-cultural evaluation practice is of poor quality or culturally inappropriate.

CONCLUSION

By applying boundary critique in our systemic inquiries of our cross-cultural evaluation, we were able to make explicit the different values between te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā when addressing environmental issues important to hapū. Boundary critique ensured that the evaluation boundaries were not drawn too narrowly and that they did not only privilege a western world view and expertise. Applying boundary critique enabled the expansion of the evaluand to encompass hapū values and outcomes from a te ao Māori/hapū perspective. Boundary critique was also important in making explicit where the knowledge-power sat within the systemic inquiries as this is central to enable the co-production of evaluation findings.

However, boundary critique in itself is not enough when undertaking a cross-cultural evaluation. It was essential the evaluation was embedded in te ao Māori with kaupapa Māori evaluation driving the systemic inquiries. We drew the boundaries so that the hapū voice was the ‘strongest’. Our inquiries supported hapū tino rangatiratanga and enabled hapū environmental health outcomes. The use of boundary critique and kaupapa Māori evaluation also ensured the utilisation and impact of the evaluation findings were both meaningful and relevant for both hapū and the government agencies involved in the systemic inquiries.

Our systemic inquiries within our cross-cultural evaluation, blending boundary critique and kaupapa Māori evaluation worked well together to achieve the best outcomes for hapū. We would recommend other researchers when embarking on similar cross-cultural evaluations to consider the use of both approaches. This will ensure that indigenous voice, which is often marginalised, is central and expands the boundary of what is valued and what counts as expertise. The potential benefits extend beyond the binary of Western and Māori cultural perspectives and hold considerable promise for wider communities and the natural environment's viability.

Mihi ki te kāhui tāngata kua ngaro

Kei kōnei tētahi rerenga mihi poroporoaki ki te hunga i whai wāhi ki ngā kaupapa mahi ngā punawai i ngā tau ki muri.

Ka hoki mai anō a mokemoke, nāna anō a roimata, aue, ka pā mai te aroha i a ahau e whakaraupeka nei i ōku mahara ki te kāhui kanohi tāngata kua ngaro i te tirohanga. Ka nui tēnei kāhui tāngata, nā rātou tēnei kaupapa i whakaara ake me te pikau i ō rātou rā o te
ora. Nā tēnei kāhui, kua whiwhi ngā marae, ngā hapū me te iwi e noho papakāinga nei i Hokianga ngā puna waiora e rere whāngai iho nei ki te iti me te rahī me te mano tāngata. Ka rere iho te wai, rere i te ao, rere i te pō, kāti, ka maumaharatia hoki rātou i te ao, i te pō.

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A tribute to those who are no longer with us, who played a major part in the development of Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga.

As we look back in past years and remember those who initiated the kaupapa o Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga, those who are no longer with us, we feel the sorrow, the loneliness, the heartache, for it was they who saw the need for safe drinking water in the community and strived on behalf of the people to make this a reality. Many marae, hapū, iwi of Hokianga great and small now gratefully enjoy the flow of safe drinking water.

The water continues to flow, day and night, and we think about them often.

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