

# Identity, Nationhood and Implications for Practice in New Zealand

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**T**hank you for the invitation to speak at this Conference\* and to share in the celebration of fifty years of psychology in New Zealand. It is an impressive record though could be seen by some as a somewhat dubious claim. If the definition of psychology includes the study of the nature, function, and phenomena of the human mind and human behaviour, then there were psychologists in New Zealand well before 1947, and even before 1847. But if the definition also recognises the scientific nature of the study, and an organised approach to its promotion alongside the other branches of science, then the argument that psychology in New Zealand is only fifty years old takes on quite a different validity. Certainly 1947 witnessed the separation of psychology from moral and mental philosophy and the creation of the Department of Psychology at Victoria University with Professor Earnest Beaglehole as Professor. It was of course also the year that the New Zealand Branch of the British Psychological Society was formed.

I have accepted the invitation to deliver this address with some hesitation; there are others more able to capture the significance of the occasion. But equally I have accepted with a sense of pride, not only because the Conference is being held at Massey University, but also because the invitation recognises the increasing contribution being made by Maori people to health, to human understanding and to the continuing evolution of psychology as a profession grounded in the lives,

cultures and ever-changing circumstances of communities and their people.

Essentially there are only three points I wish to make. All are linked to identity and more specifically to the conditions which promote security of identity. The first point recognises that the alienation of people from their land and their culture subjects them to a fragmentation of identity and, along with loss of possessions, a loss of spirit. The second point is that in a rapidly changing world, Maori people, like their indigenous brothers and sisters in other parts of the globe, have struggled to retain a sense of cultural integrity and to participate in society without abandoning the essence of their own identity. And the third point is simply that identity can be secured more firmly if people are able to feel a degree of participation in the affairs of the nation and are not excluded from determining the directions their own people will take as they move into the next century.

## **Towards Independence**

Ladies and gentlemen, apart from the fact that psychology arrived in New Zealand fifty years ago, the year 1947 was remarkable for other reasons as well. For New Zealand as a modern nation it signalled an important, though ambivalent step towards independence. Whereas more than a decade earlier Canada, South Africa and the Irish Free State had adopted the Statute of Westminster passed by the British Parliament in 1931, it was not until 1947 that New Zealand passed the Statute of Westminster Act. The Statute gave to the dominions of the British Commonwealth a greater measure of independence so that each country could decide its own international policy and unless asked, the British Government could not pass laws on their behalf. Why New Zealand had

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\* This paper was presented as a Keynote Address to the New Zealand Psychological Society's Annual Conference at Massey University, on 2nd September 1997.

been so slow to accept a new level of constitutional freedom when countries throughout the world were fighting for independence, remains unclear. But it presumes that there was no hurry to cut ties with mother England or assert a new identity as a modern nation in the South Pacific. Even when the 1947 Act approving the Statute of Westminster became law, there was no great expectation that anything of substance would change or that New Zealand would lessen its ties with Britain. The nation had become independent but like an uncertain adolescent, took comfort in the shadows of a colonial past.

Two events changed that somewhat false sense of security. First, Britain eventually entered the European community, and second Maori entered the New Zealand society. It may seem inappropriate to locate Maori entry into the New Zealand society after 1947, but it was only after World War II that urbanisation commenced in earnest. Up until then Maori and Pakeha were living largely separate lives and for most New Zealanders the Maori reality was masked. Romantic glimpses of a 'once proud people' dotted the literature and roused the curiosity of anthropologists - the second wave of missionaries - though now tempered by the world wide attention attracted by the Maori Battalion.

In the event, within two decades a massive population migration to town and city brought Maori into close contact with Pakeha neighbours, school teachers and employers. Moreover, a rapidly growing population meant that Maori were to become a much larger group within the community and younger. By 1996 the Maori population had reached 580,000. One hundred years earlier, in 1896, there had been a corresponding and devastating decline in the Maori population to a mere 42,650, a reduction from around 175,000 in 1800. The 1996 census therefore marked not only the highest ever recorded population of New Zealand, but the 100th anniversary of the lowest ever recorded Maori population.

I will not enlarge on the reasons for the threatened extinction of Maori people last century, except to say that a combination of disease, musket warfare, and starvation contributed disproportionately to the near disappearance of the Maori race. And the depopulation was greatest where land alienation had been most extensive. Loss of land had more than economic implications. Personal and tribal identity were inextricably linked to Papatuanuku - the mother earth - and alienation from land carried with it a severe psychological toll, quite apart from loss of income and livelihood.

Two methods were used to separate Maori from

their land. The most unjust was confiscation, legalised through two Acts of Parliament, the N.Z. Settlement Act and the Suppression of Rebellion Act, both passed in 1863. Under them the Government gave itself wide ranging powers to confiscate traditional lands. Tribes who actively or passively resisted surveyors or sales were regarded as rebels and their lands were confiscated. Even if there were little more than a suspicion of "rebellion", land could be taken - and over three million acres were alienated in that way.

Other laws were passed with the express purpose of speeding up sales and transferring ownership from tribal collectives to individuals. The Native Land Act 1862 and the Native Land Act 1865 largely did away with customary land titles, freeing up land for sale and in the process undermining the social links between families and within tribes. Maori society had depended on common interests in traditional lands for cohesion and purpose. As land was transferred, through one means or another, so Maori identity and wellbeing were rendered vulnerable until eventually even survival appeared unlikely. Out of nearly sixty-six and a half million acres, by 1896, only eleven thousand acres remained in Maori ownership. And as I have mentioned, by then, in parallel fashion, the Maori population had declined to less than 43,000. A widespread sense of resignation was typified by a Government conviction that its plain duty was to "smooth the pillow of a dying race."

This demographic saga is a story in its own right but this evening I would like to draw attention to two Maori strategies each of which helped turn the tide and transform an expected genocide into an unexpected recovery. One approach to the problem of Maori dispossession advocated adaptation to western society but with the retention of a strong Maori cultural identity. The key was to be professional Maori leadership and government accommodation of Maori interests. The other approach also supported the acquisition of western knowledge and skills but placed greater emphasis on Maori control and autonomy with less dependence on government goodwill.

The call for acceptance of a predominantly western world was first made by a small group of Maori students from Te Aute College a little over a hundred years ago. During the summer vacation they began travelling to rural and often remote communities bringing new messages - education, ventilated housing, agriculture, economic development, and, health and hygiene. Two of the Te Aute group, Maui Pomare and Peter Buck were to become medical graduates before they entered politics. Both were subsequently knighted. A third, Apirana Ngata, also became a knight and

achieved distinction in law, politics, literature and land reform. Maori social, economic and cultural revival is often credited to this trio, Ngata, Pomare and Buck, and their select band, the Young Maori Party. Their philosophy was simple enough; create pride in a Maori identity and Maori culture and use that as a platform for accessing the best of western technology and education. Because they were able to address their audiences in Maori and employ Maori metaphors to make key points, their task was so much easier and more importantly they had a level of credibility which non-Maori could never possess.

Ngata, Pomare and Buck were in no doubt that the answer to Maori survival lay in the need to adapt to western society and to do so within the overall framework imposed by the law. Though strongly and emphatically in support of Maori language and culture they were equally passionate advocates of western democracy, education and modern health practices. They believed it was possible to retain a secure Maori identity while embracing Pakeha values and beliefs. Indeed that should have followed. But what they had not foreseen was Government rejection of Maori language and culture as relevant to the twentieth century.

In contrast to the Young Maori Party and their confidence in western democracy, other Maori leaders considered that a dual identity was not only impossible, but it had contributed to the dramatic population decline in the nineteenth century. For them the answer to dispossession and disease was Maori sovereignty. While sharing the belief of the Young Maori Party that reformative measures were needed if Maori were to survive, the approach of the Maori sovereigntists was to use the new tools of education and technology but to focus Maori energies on building an identity which not only lauded Maori language and culture but also included a sense of ownership and control. The emphasis was on Maori autonomy and authority, even if it meant defying the law. This group were less convinced about the need to adapt to colonial frameworks. They considered that it ought to be the settlers who made the adaptations. After all Maori were the ones who were at home. Some Maori sovereigntists, like Rua Kenana went further, advocating the expulsion of all Europeans from the country.

Not surprisingly government sympathies were with Ngata's approach and legislation was introduced to bring Maori within the orbit of what was then mainstream New Zealand. The 1900 Maori Councils Act for example established local Maori committees but gave them little real power. The second part of Ngata's prescription - a strong Maori identity - was not

only sidelined in legislation but in one way or another it was actively discouraged. It became policy for example not to allow Maori children to speak Maori in the school grounds. Those who did were punished. And Maori adoption practices, based on a collective approach to child care, were all but prohibited. So too was the practice of traditional Maori religion. Even the new Maori Christian churches such as Ratana attracted scorn and were promptly labelled by other churches as heretic. But the greatest blow to the organisation of Maori knowledge and understanding, occurred in 1907 when the Tohunga Suppression Act was passed. By outlawing traditional healers, the Act also opposed Maori methodologies and the legitimacy of Maori knowledge in respect of healing, the environment, human behaviour, the arts, and the links between the spiritual and the secular.

The Tohunga Suppression Act had dual but contradictory purposes: on the one hand it sought to promote Maori health while on the other it actively discouraged Maori autonomy. The Ottawa Charter would recognise the two as incompatible. By associating poor Maori health with tohunga, traditional healers, the Act was rationalised as an instrument to improve Maori health. Special concern had been expressed about the way healers treated patients with tuberculosis and the Act would prohibit them from further healing activity. In fact the methods adopted by the tohunga to treat tuberculosis were not too different in practice or in theory to the standard medical treatment of the time. Tohunga immersed their patients in the cold running water of a mountain stream while wealthy patients who could afford it, travelled to sanatoria in Switzerland where icy temperatures and an abundance of alpine breezes achieved a similar goal.

But a more sinister motive behind the Act was to bring certain Maori leaders into disrepute, in particular Rua Kenana. Though not opposed to western technologies and amenities, Rua Kenana was opposed to Maori subservience to the Crown and had gained support from a large following who shared his discontent. His prophecy that one day all Europeans would leave New Zealand, sent chills down government spines and attracted scorn and hostility in Parliament. The Tohunga Suppression Act provided an opportunity to silence him and largely to justify his arrest, a clause was added to the Act which made it an offence to foretell Maori futures.

*"Every person who gathers Maoris around him by practising on their superstition or credulity, or who misleads or attempts to mislead any Maori by professing or pretending to possess supernatural powers*

*in the treatment or cure of any disease, or in the foretelling of future events, or otherwise, is liable on summary conviction before a Magistrate to a fine not exceeding twenty five pounds or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve months ..."*

In 1916 Rua Kenana was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, having been found guilty, not of foretelling the future but of using moral resistance against the police. When released he appeared to have softened his position and well before his death in 1937 his mission for Maori autonomy and sovereignty had been effectively silenced.

### **Legislation and the Enhancement of Identity**

So far I have outlined some of the reasons why Maori survival and a Maori cultural identity were threatened and the laws which were responsible. Although those times may be distant, the grievances still linger so that even in 1997 any sense of a meaningful cultural identity remains elusive for many Maori. At a personal level, all too often Maori identities are insecure. A secure identity requires more than a superficial knowledge of iwi or hapu. It depends on access to the cultural, social and economic institutions of the Maori world, especially Maori language, whanau, and land. All three underlie identity and can reinforce identity, and mental health. In a current household study known as Te Hoe Nuku Roa, 700 representative Maori households are being tracked over a ten year period in order to measure aspirations, achievements, levels of participation in society, standards of health and education, and access to Maori resources. Results so far reveal that as many as two-thirds of the study group have limited access to Maori resources such as language and land. Poor health coupled with lower educational achievement seems more likely where access is the lowest. In other words a secure identity might protect against poor health. Neither is it a simple question of being urban or rural. Our results show that alienation from Maori resources can occur regardless of place of residence.

Over the past two years, however, significant steps have been taken to resolve at least a few injustices and to provide comfort if not full compensation for the pain inflicted last century. After protracted litigation and negotiation, a Tainui tribe, Waikato, concluded an agreement with the Crown for the return of some land - as it happens only a fraction of that which was confiscated under the New Zealand Settlements Act - as well as cash payments. The total value of the settlement was \$170,000,000. Not all tribal members

thought it was a fair arrangement but there was sufficient support for the Crown to agree to the deal and to include it in new legislation.

This success and those that may follow - Whakatohea and Ngai Tahu - reflect a new phase in New Zealand's history. Since 1975 when the Treaty of Waitangi Act was passed, successive Governments have grappled with the Treaty and the status of Maori as tangata whenua (indigenous people). While much remains to be done, and Maori patience is often tested to the limit, the paternalism and assimilative policies of last century are fading. In their place, there has been a greater recognition that Maori not only have legitimate claims based on the Treaty of Waitangi, but also have rights by virtue of being indigenous to New Zealand, including the right to be Maori. Change has not come easily: litigation, confrontation, and the mutual exchange of accusations and bitterness have characterised progress. But there has also been the demonstration of goodwill, abundant patience, and overall, a desire to move beyond the injustices of the past and on to more positive developments.

Slowly, some of the laws of the land have also come to reflect Maori perspectives and values. The Resource Management Act 1991, for example, requires that Maori environmental values be taken into account along with the recognition of cultural values pertaining to any building permit, land or water usage or resource utilisation. Then Te Ture Whenua Maori Act 1993, an act about Maori land, is based on customary Maori attitudes to land and its importance for future generations. Whereas land laws even as recently as 1967, were largely written to speed up the alienation of Maori land, the 1993 Act now makes it extremely difficult for Maori land to pass out of Maori ownership. Multiple ownership, once decried as inconsistent with economic development, is now actively encouraged through provisions for a variety of Trusts and Incorporations. The new Act also provides for improved management structures to enable better commercial returns on tribal land. In the process trade offs have been made between individual rights and collective rights, so that greater power is now vested in collective decision making, as it was before the imposition of British law. At the same time Maori individuals are no longer as free to dispose of Maori land as they might wish. Their task, according to the legislation is to practice wise stewardship for the benefit of future generations.

To a lesser degree social policy legislation has also incorporated Maori values, beliefs and practices. The Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, requires social workers to accommodate tribal

arrangements and respect Maori family relationships, especially those of whanau (extended family). Far from encouraging Social Welfare custody over Maori children, a common approach up until the mid-1980's, the philosophy now rests on the assumption that children are best raised within their own cultural context and with their own people. Leaving aside difficulties with resourcing and not infrequent uncertainties about the rights (and welfare) of the child as against the rights of the family, the Act appears to support a positive Maori identity. It allows for tribal elders to take active leadership roles in family group discussions and requires professional workers to observe - or at least not to ignore - cultural preferences and custom.

In the health sector, the Health and Disability Services Act 1993 is less explicit about Maori culture or identity, but government health policy, even without legislative backing, recognises Maori culture and society as strategies for improving Maori health. In identifying Maori health as one of four health gain priority areas, there is active encouragement for more Maori health providers and tribal and Maori community health programmes are rapidly increasing. In addition mainstream providers in hospitals are asked to indicate how their services will contribute towards health outcomes which are relevant to Maori. Few know the answers but at least the question is being asked without assuming that all New Zealanders subscribe to the same notions of good health.

The Mental Health Act 1992 similarly recognises the significance of a Maori cultural identity. Section 5, reinforced by section 65, requires that any court or Tribunal who exercises power under the Act must have respect for a person's cultural and ethnic identity, language, and religious or ethical beliefs. They must also show proper recognition of the importance to the patient's wellbeing of family ties, as well as whanau (extended family), hapu (subtribe) and iwi (tribe).

### **A National Identity**

These examples of laws which endorse Maori world views are not necessarily an indication that Maori identities are now secure or that there is consensus about the place of a Maori dimension in the life of New Zealand. Far from it.

At a national level, Maori often regard the State's efforts as piecemeal and minimal without any real impact, either in day to day matters or in the allocation of power. In contrast non-Maori often complain that a focus on Maori, no matter how minimal, is out of place in a multi-cultural society and does little more than divide an otherwise united nation. Both views may seem plausible, at least to their own followers, but neither

fully recognises the significance to New Zealand of the growth of a jurisprudence which draws on both British law and Maori customary law.

If the law is any indication, there is potential for constitutional changes in New Zealand at quite fundamental levels. And, apart from legal reform, there are other signs as well. On more than one occasion the Prime Minister has raised the possibility of New Zealand becoming a Republic and although serious debate on the subject is yet to be heard, events elsewhere in the world may hurry that prospect. Maori interest in fundamental constitutional reform is also high, though for different reasons. Dismayed by the lack of consultation around the 1994-95 Fiscal Envelope, and then the implementation of the policy despite widespread opposition, Maori groups are interested in developing an alternate and independent mechanism for the formulation and implementation of Maori policy. One option would see the emergence of a Maori policy commission - outside the State; another recommends a separate Maori Parliament to make its own laws and raise taxes; an independent Maori Law Commission has already been established. Radical though those suggestions may sound, however, they are considerably less extreme than the view espoused by younger Maori who seek a constitution based entirely on tikanga Maori - Maori custom law. Nor does Maori autonomy fly in the face of New Zealand's existing conventions. The jurisdiction of the military court, for example, already provides for a parallel system of justice and a parallel set of laws, some of which are not within the jurisdiction of civil courts. Similarly administration of the law has been granted to a variety of professional bodies such as the Medical Council, the Law Society and the Psychologists Council, and penalties can be imposed regardless of civil action.

Autonomy is a not infrequent aim of New Zealand's institutions and mirrors the nation's own constitutional direction. The necessary statute was finally enacted in 1986 when the Constitution Act was passed. Now there is no provision for Britain to intervene or interfere in any affairs of the nation. Probably it was time. New Zealand has outgrown its identity as a nation knitted exclusively from the cultural and philosophical threads of the well-worn fabric of Imperial Britain. Thus, in raising the possibility of a Republic, and in searching for a more consistent and essential Maori voice, the Prime Minister and the so-called radical Maori groups may have more in common than is generally appreciated, or even than they themselves would be inclined to admit.

Meanwhile, there are certain lessons from history which can inform the future. And having at last

embarked on a voyage towards reconciliation and fairness, it would be foolhardy indeed to ignore the past or to continue the myth that we are not in the South Pacific. To dismiss Maori from the national identity equation again would be a signal for outrage. Second time around, and given the youthful nature of the population, I doubt that Maori would stand for it. Nor I suspect would other indigenous peoples in other countries.

### **Identity and the New Zealand Psychological Society**

It may not be very clear how these matters of land alienation, the law and constitutional arrangements relate to psychologists or to the New Zealand Psychological Society. In my opinion, however, there are several implications.

First and perhaps most obviously, the disproportionate number of Maori patients admitted to psychiatric hospitals for treatment, or to jails for detention, means that most clinical psychologists in New Zealand will be called on to manage Maori patients. How that responsibility is discharged will be critical for creating Maori confidence in modern psychology. To date the profession has not generated wild enthusiasm among Maori patients or their families. Quite often the reverse: several recent official inquiries into New Zealand's mental health system have drawn attention to failures in addressing the needs of Maori in a way which strengthens a sense of identity rather than robbing them of whatever vestiges of self-respect they might possess as Maori. If the mistakes of the past are to be avoided then psychological treatment should not carry with it any risks to cultural identity. This does not necessarily mean abandoning usual clinical standards, but it does mean that the significance of a Maori identity to assessment and management will need to be given careful and deliberate thought.

A second implication for the Society is that as the national identity moves yet further away from colonial assumptions, the professional workforce, and the membership of the Society, will need to reflect community population realities. A recent report shows that based on a sample of six professional categories ranging from clinical psychologists to social workers, Maori make up only 7.7% of the mental health workforce. Only 1% of registered psychologists are Maori.

The third point which the Society may wish to consider is how Maori understandings of psychological processes are relevant to the practice of psychology in New Zealand and the registration of psychologists. In approving counsellors for the Accident Compensation

Commission the Commission has not concluded that registration as a psychologist automatically provides a guarantee of competence, let alone safety, nor has approval through other avenues been ruled out. The interface between matauranga Maori - Maori knowledge -and disciplines such as psychology will I suspect provide challenging territory for future debate at conferences such as this. And it is likely that the debate will be promoted by a small group of Maori psychologists and psychologists in training. The Society will not be able to ignore this development nor dismiss it because it is outside established parameters or professional guidelines. Nor should it try. There is every chance that a collaborative approach could see the development of a type of psychology which is firmly grounded in a New Zealand identity and, more to the point, is able to respond positively to clients whose perspectives and reasoning are shaped by a Maori identity.

Related to this point, psychology in New Zealand will be particularly challenged by the emergence of traditional healing as a legitimate health practice. When the Tohunga Suppression Act was passed in 1907, healers disappeared from public view but went underground, operating under adverse conditions away from the gaze of the law. There they remained even after the repeal of the Act in 1964. It was not until 1993, with the formation of a national organisation of Maori healers, Nga Ringa Whakahaere o te Iwi Maori, that the place of traditional healing within New Zealand's health services was raised again. Now at least one provider has a contract to provide traditional healing.

My guess is that whether in hospitals, community clinics, prisons, or indeed the halls of academia, the basis of rationality will be challenged. The point is that conventional explanations may not only be inadequate to explain traditional knowledge, they might impose inappropriate frameworks which are incapable of encompassing the holistic nature of the understanding. Rationality must be understood to be a culture specific notion; one culture's rational thought is not necessarily the same as another's. Indeed, the rational thought that underlies scientific inquiry is but one type of thought.

Full understanding requires the capacity to learn from quite different systems of knowledge and to appreciate that each has a validity of its own within its own cultural context. Science is one such system, Maori cultural knowledge is another. A particular challenge for Maori students of psychology will be to live in two worlds of understanding - and to be enriched by both. A challenge for psychologists who practice in New Zealand will be to accommodate more than one

system of knowledge without necessarily attempting to validate one using the criteria of the other.

### Conclusion

The points that I have touched on this evening may not sound immediately relevant to psychologists or the Society and the urgent problems which many of you will confront when returning to the work place. But practice does not take place in a vacuum and for all of us the New Zealand reality is here and now. Too often any real understanding or meaningful communication has been prevented by the imposition of strongly eurocentric values. Those values have made little sense to men and women from different origins and cultural backgrounds. Rather than being empowered by science, or psychology, or the law, or even by democracy itself, so-called benefits to generations of Maori frequently carried a price - the relinquishment of cultural identity.

It is a price which no people should be required to pay, nor is it necessary. In New Zealand, the gradual reshaping of government policies, the law, and institutional practices has shown that diversity can be accommodated within fair frameworks and that uniformity need not be the over-riding objective. It would of course be naive to suggest that the changes have been comprehensive, adequate or always well received. Even as we meet this evening, Maori in other

arenas are exploring options for disentangling themselves from the residual bonds of colonial arrogance. They are planning quite separate systems for governance, health care, education and economic gain. And I expect that Pakeha groups, unable to accept that there is more than one approach to justice or social equity, or the acquisition of knowledge are equally bent on removing any reference to a Maori identity from the laws of the land or the practices of the professional workforce.

But there are signs that New Zealand's national identity is being reshaped. Fair and representative participation in society will be the hallmark of a new national identity. Continuing disparities between Maori and non-Maori in standards of health, education and income will be the antithesis of a shared identity.

I am grateful for the opportunity to deliver this Address and mindful of the significance of the occasion. Before concluding I would like to add my own good wishes to the Society and the approaches you have fostered and to hope that the next fifty years are as productive as the first fifty. Might I go even further by suggesting that the Society has some potential to contribute to the ongoing development of a national identity, by its own example, and by its recognition of the values, beliefs, and methodologies of others.

T'na tatou katoa.