

A number of presentations at the NZPsS Conference in Palmerston North this year focused on bicultural issues including those of keynote speakers Dr Catherine Love and Moe Milne and Dr Tim McCreanor.

The following abridged article is based on Tim's keynote address.

Challenging and countering anti-Māori discourse: Practices for decolonisation- Dr Tim McCreanor

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He tao rākau, e taea te karo; he tao
kōrero, e kore e taea te karo.
*The taiaha can be parried aside but words
go straight to the heart.*

In this country there is no more important set of relationships and dynamics than those at work between Māori and the settlers who have arrived here since the early decades of the 19th century. Māori as tangata whenua and sovereign peoples have made their expectations and aspirations very clear.

We settlers not so; from the outset our talk and actions have been ambiguous and destructively double-edged in relation to our Treaty partners. It is the anglophile majority who have dominated the developing relationships and it is our actions, narratives and discursive frameworks that lie most heavily upon the land. In what I call the Pakeha cultural project, we wrote, proffered and signed Te Tiriti and then proceeded to re-interpret and enforce the understanding of it that best served our interests. Our discourses produce and enable a self-serving 'standard story' of Māori/Pakeha relations.

In this paper I will argue that the Pakeha cultural project is critically underpinned by this standard story, a kind of 'collective unconscious' that we

are all aware of, which is identifiable in a limited number of familiar and durable patterns of speech. I will describe some of these and argue that using these patterns can only denigrate Māori. I provide some alternative, decolonising discursive resources that might enable us to rebuild our social relations in a just and equitable manner.

At Waitangi in 2006 Canon Hone Kaa reminded the nation about the importance of power in the identity politics of this country:

It's good that you Pakeha are who you are, and it's important that you know who you are...but you need to understand how you are who you are – and how powerfully you are who you are."

Māori are beginning to turn their vessels toward chosen horizons, after the cumulative effects of their efforts at resistance to colonisation. They have enacted tino rangatiratanga through recovery of assets, economic re-investment and development, educational advancement and political unification. At this time, Kaa's is a mighty challenge to Pakeha to address the construction of Pakeha power, as a part of our voyage to pro-Treaty futures.

For while Treaty settlements may return viable resources to certain Māori groups it is important to acknowledge that these represent a tiny fraction of the value of what has been taken. The challenge that remains is what to do about the injustices and damage that will remain long after the last claim is done. Hone Harawira characterised this gulf as the less tangible, relational aspects of the Treaty of Waitangi that are neglected but crucial to our healthy collective futures. He has pointed out that with Treaty settlements scheduled for completion in 2015, many of those in power are preparing to wash their hands of the Treaty and settle into the long established patterns of unjust exploitation that colonisation has bequeathed to them. There is a real urgency to this!

Social psychologist Margaret Wetherell has focussed our attention on the ways in which we use discourse – talk, text, language, imagery – in making meaning of our social and experiential worlds. She concludes that discourse, is a "quintessentially psychological activity", integral to so many of the processes and practices that psychology works with and yet this domain has received scant attention from the discipline. This is possibly because our culture discounts talk as 'just hot air'; we say, 'Actions speak louder than words', 'put your money where your mouth is'...

Despite being so neglected, discourse is central to the myriad transactions that enact relationships, power dynamics, meanings and material outcomes of our everyday experience. The study of discourse in all its astonishing, banal, patterned flexibility provides important insights into how we are who we are, how we know what we know and how we do what

we do; into the web of relationships, narratives and actions that constitute the Pakeha cultural project.

I begin by grounding the standard story within an influential text arising from the very source of the earliest organised colonisation of Aotearoa by the British. The slim volume *Information Relative to New Zealand*, was published by the New Zealand Company in 1840. In spite of the obvious pecuniary interest of the Company it must have weighed in with considerable authority persuading colonists to emigrate, and then perhaps filling the weary months of travel and fuelling discussions and debates on shipboard.

Amongst chapters on the geography, harbours, climate, natural history, resources, agricultural potential and history of the land is a 35 page essay on "the native inhabitants" gathered from the explorer and traveller accounts. Two key passages stand out for their discursive power and the way in which they appear to distil several key elements of the subsequent patterning of Pakeha talk about Māori.

By 1839 there was a body of explorers' and travellers' tales about the indigenous people of Aotearoa upon which Ward draws to portray Māori:

They are dirty in their persons and sometimes overrun with vermin. They have hitherto scarcely known the meaning of arts, trade, industry or coin; they have no roads, beyond footpaths from place to place. Their liberty depends upon the protection each individual can give himself...there is no system of law or government... Their most conspicuous passion is war ...infanticide is not uncommon... their hatred of their enemies is deep and deadly... they thief with little scruple. (p62-63)

Māori life is represented through the strong lenses of the primitive, the violent, the uncivilised and the inhuman. However with the PR master's wit for spin and perhaps some incipient understandings of the impact of 'recency effects', three pages later a totally different depiction appears:

There is a natural politeness and grandeur in their deportment, a yearning after poetry, music and the fine arts, a wit and eloquence that remind us... of the Greeks of Homer. Their language is rich and sonorous, abounding in metaphysical distinctions... They have an abundance of poetry of a lyrical kind...they are passionately fond of music. They excel at carving...they have given names to each [star] and divided them into constellations ... there is not...a single tree, vegetable, or even weed, a fish, or a bird for which they do not have a name (p66-7)

Amid the commercialised hype, promises of a new Britain in the South Seas of the NZ Company marketing of New Zealand, these constructions would have formed a complementary dichotomy, twin explanatory resources through which the ambivalent European cultural fascination with the Other could reverberate. Dressed in the cloak of empirical truth, it offers contrasting positions to relating to the indigenes of the colony, highly adaptive patterns for interpreting Māori behaviour and justifying settler reactions. Stepping ashore into territory very different from the green hills and satanic mills of England, the positive depiction of Māori would encourage the acceptance of shelter, sustenance and support from tangata whenua. As the strength of settler establishments began to grow and perhaps a familiarity and the competitive spirit of acquisitive eurocentrism began to bear, the negative portrayals of Māori could be of great use in justifying a range of measures that set aside Māori concerns, asserted settler superiority and the cultural imperatives of colonisation.

This historical exploration of the deadly ambivalence I referred to earlier is not intended as mere speculation. Quite early in the contemporary studies of Pakeha discourse we noticed a certain resonance between older, readily identifiable forms of anti-Māori talk, for example from early Pakeha politicians and decision-makers such as Richmond, Featherstone, Pember Reeves and others, and the more subtle

patterns of Pakeha talk in the late 20th century.

There was plenty to talk about. The long-burning Māori resistance of the previous hundred years, along with the Māori urban migration of the 1950s and 60s gave rise to a more visible activism. This included Māori-led protest against racism in rugby, the Land March of 1975, the Treaty of Waitangi Act and a growing number of Treaty settlements. From the mid-1980s, Ray Nairn and I have worked on various discursive databases arising from this era to describe key patterns in Pakeha talk about Māori and Māori/Pakeha relations. Latterly with Kupu Taea, the studies have expanded to include focus groups, individual data, literature, film, professional practice, and mass media coverage including print, radio and television. Outputs show a clear reliance on certain elements of New Zealand Company discourse and a number of other patterns, in a wide range of public and private talk. As noted above, these resources share the common property that they can only be used to denigrate, marginalise, alienate and oppress Māori people, culture and aspirations.

Building on this research base I now provide a brief outline of a dozen such patterns and describe key cues and assumptions; I also attempt alternatives that might be used to challenge and rebut the patterns. I begin with those that resonate most strongly with Ward's representations of Māori.

The first pattern *Good Māori/Bad Māori* models Ward's central ambiguity. Māori people are said to fall into two groups, those who fit into society and those who don't. Those who achieve in education, employment, sport, are law abiding, healthy and happy within existing structures are seen as good. Those who resist, protest, seek restitution, are poor, under-educated, unhealthy, criminal or anti-social, are branded bad.

A range of frequently-heard adjectives are used within this pattern: noble, principled, hard-working, dignified, older, co-operative, punctual, peaceful, honest, polite, happy, clean and tidy.

On the other hand: savage, uncivilised, wild, greedy, rude, lazy, demanding, parasitic, urban, young, poor, unhealthy, failing, welfare-dependent, dishonest, dirty.

This pattern is underpinned by assumptions about the neutrality of Pakeha judgement, and the notion that Māori behaviour can be understood without reference to its social context.

Counters to the *Good Māori/Bad Māori* pattern may sound like this: Māori are not either/or but rather diverse, like all cultural groups, and the foundational notion that they are bad, inferior or primitive is a reflection of Pakeha prejudice, fear and self-interest. Pakeha need to learn to celebrate Māori strengths and acknowledge tensions and difficulties in the context of cultural difference and the disruption of Māori society.

The second major pattern targets *Māori culture*:

It depicts Māori culture as fundamentally inferior to our own. Māori artistic expression and material achievements are said to be negligible. Te Reo and Māori cultural practices are seen as frozen in a timewarp and described as inadequate in the modern world.

Cues include terms such as simplistic, limited, stone-age, inefficient, inadequate, undemocratic, sexist, and phrases such as stick games, grass skirts, mud huts, five musical notes.

Several key assumptions support this pattern. Cultures can be ranked from simple tribal to sophisticated western. Pakeha know enough about Māori culture to judge it. The survival of Māori culture depends on Pakeha sponsorship. Together these resources serve to undermine and marginalise Māori ways of doing things.

Counters in the area of *culture* might include-Māori: Culture is a crucial element in the identity, meaning-making, character and development of Māori and of the nation. It is currently undervalued and marginalized in ways that need to change and develop. A key starting point is the idea that cultures are

different rather than better or worse than each other. Each, with adequate resources, will flourish and adapt to provide sustainable and liveable lives for their citizens. Māori theory and values in areas including commerce, development, sustainability, spirituality, health and social wellbeing are vital. Pakeha must work to develop our sense of our own culture and unique ways of doing things.

There are also a number of ideas about *Māori crime*:

Māori are said to have little respect for people or property and so assault and steal at will. It is claimed that negative Māori values such as greed, laziness, jealousy and anger mean that there are no civil restraints on Māori crime from within the culture, making Māori predatory and parasitic upon Pakeha culture.

Cues include terms such as gangs, thieves, warrior, primitive, wild, enjoy violence, violence gene and identity imagery including Jake the Muss, Mongrel Mob and Black Power.

Key assumptions include the idea that Māori offending is a cultural characteristic and therefore that to change it requires the abandonment or modification of the culture. One of the main effects is to mask the impacts of the wholesale disruptions to Māori social order caused by colonisation. A secondary effect is to obscure a wide range of crime that is heavily entrenched in Pakeha culture at all levels including 'white collar' circles.

An alternative standpoint on *Crime* can use these ideas:

Crime occurs in all cultures but the disproportionate involvement of Māori is at least as much a reflection of the wider environmental circumstances in which they find themselves, as it is of any individual or collective characteristics they possess.

The remaining themes are more explicitly about the relationships between Māori and Pakeha.

One people is what we have named a strong pattern about this relationship.

It argues that we are a unified nation and should all be treated equally.

Terms such as Kiwi, New Zealander, citizen and taxpayer are cues but so also are iconic sports teams, and anything else that depicts nationhood as the primary organising feature of identity.

The assumption here is that such unity cannot co-exist with diversity and particularly not with strong, self-determining Māori identities. This theme is pervasive in Pakeha political discourse in particular. It is an effective way of silencing or marginalizing Māori calls for political, economic and cultural recognition.

Alternative ways of talking about *national identity*:

Entrenched disparities mean that equity of outcomes will require unequal inputs for some time. National identity needs to be re-forged as "unity in diversity" under the Treaty of Waitangi. We need to acknowledge that Pakeha are one ethnic group among many, that there are multiple ways to be a New Zealander and that Māori aspirations may guide and contribute to our development.

Rights is what we have called a closely related pattern about relationships.

Equal rights for all is described as a democratic cornerstone. One person's rights end where another's begin.

The cues are democracy, rights, equality. The main assumption is that the best form of social order is derived from 'majority rule' democracy and the rights that it prescribes and permits.

The effect is to evoke the mythological level playing field of neoliberalism and to mask the historical and systemic infringements of Māori rights upon which our society is founded.

Ways of broadening *Rights*:

The defining and enactment of rights via Pakeha law only is inequitable. The Treaty can delineate the rights of Māori (tino rangatiratanga) and Pakeha (kawanatanga), which may be different and complementary. Rights should be thought of as co-valent, collective and negotiable, to enable the expression of the values and practices of all cultures.

Another major current pattern we have called *Privilege*:

Māori are said to have special privileges that are unfair and racist. Seats in Parliament, Māori All Blacks, housing loans, fishing rights, but nothing for Pakeha.

The assumption is that such arrangements are a breach of egalitarian principles rather than redressing existing disparities arising from the Pakeha cultural project. Effects include raising tension between Māori and Pakeha, and masking the realities of the entrenched Pakeha privilege that advantages us in every sphere.

Another view of *Privilege*:

The status quo is based on the economic, political, legislative and cultural privileging of Pakeha. Decolonisation requires the re-ordering of these debilitating arrangements. Existing provisions that target Māori are often superficial efforts to redress injustice and disparity.

Stirrers is another prominent pattern: Here the argument is that our race relations would return to their 'best-in-the-world' status if activists would desist from making trouble.

The familiar terms like radical, protester, agitator, are cues here and another feature is a sense that a small, unreasonable cohort of troublemakers are trying to get advantage for nothing. The effect is to split the activists off from the masses, constructing them as self-interested attention seekers and constructing the people as dupes to their rhetoric.

An alternative frame sees this as an issue about *Māori leadership*. Māori leadership and justified activism is marginalized and denigrated by efforts to divide and rule. There are multiple examples of people who have been branded as troublemakers who have made huge contributions to society and the national good.

A less common pattern relates to what is referred to as *Māori Sensitivity*: Māori are seen as having become oversensitive about their culture and this has led to racial tension. The

inability of Māori culture to compete is said to have created a defensiveness that is reflected in the determination with which Māori attempt to enforce cultural practices in their own spaces and particularly in public spaces and institutions. Where Pakeha do offend Māori they do so from ignorance rather than intent and it is Māori secretiveness and shame that are to blame.

Cues such as sexist, heathen, and phrases like 'rammed down our throats', force fed and culture Nazi are used of Māori language, protocols and values, to express Pakeha resentment.

The effect is to marginalize and denigrate efforts to acknowledge and include Māori ways in public life.

Re-framing *Sensitivity*:

Māori defence of their rights, practices and culture is a necessary reaction to the myriad overt and covert acts of aggression and subversion performed by colonising practices and people. Claiming ignorance of Māori protocol and practice is no more acceptable before Māori law than it is before Pakeha law and it is Pakeha responsibility to acknowledge, learn and respect Māori ways.

And last but of course by no means least *Treaty of Waitangi*:

The Treaty is seen as a historical document of little importance in the contemporary setting.

Talk of a 'Treaty industry', 'grievance mode', gravy train and diverse ideas about dispensing with it, are cues that draw upon this pattern.

The assumption here is that Pakeha are within their rights to unilaterally determine the worth and meaning of the Treaty.

The effect is to discount recourse to the Treaty in debates or conflicts between Māori and Pakeha. The preference is for the established institutions of police, courts and parliament to settle issues.

A *pro-Treaty* view

The Treaty is a contract and covenant by which Pakeha can live legitimately and justly in Aotearoa. We should work to enshrine it as the foundation

and guide of a new constitution that enables the achievement of a Treaty-based future.

These then are some of the key elements of the standard story along with some attempt to challenge them with alternative resources. These features are even more evident when narratives based on each set of resources are set against each other.

Here is how a standard story version might sound:

This country needs to get over this politically correct rubbish about colonisation. We used to have the best race relations in the world before a few radicals started stirring up trouble with the Māoris filling their heads with ideas and hopes that are completely unrealistic. All this nonsense about the Treaty which is ancient history that I wasn't party to, has gotten even the good Māoris riled up, demanding and troublesome, thinking that they should get land and compensation. The problem is that Māori culture can't foot it in the modern world and it's being swept aside the same way the Māori did to the Moriori – at least we didn't eat them. Māoris are pretty upset about this but they've started ramming their language and their powhiris and their tangis down our throats. They need to move on and forget about losing what they never owned, pick up the spade, put on the suit and put their shoulder to the common wheel for the national good. We're one people now, kiwis, and we don't want Māori rights for this and that, privileging them and dividing our country.

A narrative based on the alternative resources might sound like this:

We can decolonise Aotearoa to create social equity among the peoples of this nation. We need to acknowledge and enact the Treaty and the indigenous rights of tangata whenua as tools to redress the wrongs and as guides to the ways forward. Fairly resourced, Māori culture as the vehicle for Māori values, beliefs and aspirations will support its people as our society adapts to an ever-changing global world. Māori leaders need to be recognised as change agents,

innovators and visionaries for a just society. Māori people as community, iwi and nation are inspiring, leading and supporting the development of sustainable futures for all peoples of Aotearoa. Pakeha in particular can educate ourselves to understand, endorse and co-operate in the development of Māori aspirations and self-determination, to create a national identity based on the diverse strengths of all groups that make up our society.

Speaking firstly of the anti-Māori materials, what I have offered is an impressionistic collage of material ideas, imagery, tropes, phrases and discourses that can be used in many different situations and combinations to provide elements or iterations of a standard story of Māori-Pakeha relations that is known by most Pakeha and drawn upon by many. I argue that such accounts represent a great deal more than 'hot air', that these are indeed the "tao kōrero" of our whakatauki, the "sticks and stones", the weapons of the mundane, everyday war that the conventional Pakeha cultural project wages against Māori self-determination.

Beyond this standard story I have tried to interrupt, destabilise and re-centre Pakeha discourse with alternative resources and narrative that set aside the fatal ambiguities of our talk in

favour of a pro-Treaty vision. For such work there are also affirmative decolonising patterns evident in the work of others within and beyond psychology that can be incorporated into building this resource. Ingrid Huygen's recently completed PhD has surfaced a number of highly affirmative patterns in pro-Treaty talk that strongly complement what is offered here. *Right relationships*, asserts the need for working from tino rangatiratanga/kawanatanga bases to build social change programmes; *Māori authority* acknowledges the reality and potential of Māori leadership in decolonisation.

To conclude, I argue that as Pakeha, as Treaty partners, as psychologists we have a number of tasks and challenges ahead. We must recognise the importance of this troubling domain of discourse to the wellbeing of our nation. It is critical that we acknowledge the standard story and the role that it plays in reproducing the status quo of unjust and exploitative relations between Māori and Pakeha. Without placing this discourse at the centre of the psychologist's mission, we are perhaps like other deniers of injustice, complicit in both the colonising acts and the post-colonial traumatic syndrome that continue to blight Māori development and

threaten to engulf the nation.

Ultimately as Ray Nairn has suggested, what is needed is a decolonising speech community that, from a different set of understandings articulates a very different, pro-Treaty discourses about Māori/Pakeha relations in all areas of national and community life. Māori and minorities of Pakeha have long fought this fight and the innovation is really to bring these resources together, to animate them with our ideas and to explicitly name them as tools for decolonisation.

My challenge for psychology as a discipline, and for Pakeha within it, is to find the ways in which, in all your enterprises, you can enact the vision of your code of ethics and the principles it turns upon. To deal with this challenge, Pakeha need to know a great deal more about ourselves and the sources of our power so that we approach our Treaty partner in ways that will produce the decolonising outcomes we both desire. These aspects of our social worlds are core business to psychology. I urge you to heed this call to ensure that our share of the journey to equity entails more than accepting Māori forgiveness. Beyond this the greater goal is to contribute to a *just* Pakeha cultural project that can stand proudly with the aspirations and achievements of Māori.

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