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# Telling stories: analysing Māori and Pākehā workplace narratives

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**ABSTRACT**

The concept of encounter between Māori and Pākehā which has been the focus of so much historical and anthropological research also provides a rich source of insight for sociolinguists interested in the details of everyday workplace talk. Exploring the concept of 'the culture order' we discuss ways in which workplace narratives may provide evidence of subtle differences in Māori and Pākehā ways of telling stories at work. More than twenty years ago, examining Māori and Pākehā narratives in conversational contexts, features were identified in the narrative structure, as well as in the preoccupations of the different ethnic groups, which could be interpreted as contributing to the construction of distinctive ethnic identities. More recently, the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) team has turned attention to workplace narratives, noting nuanced construction of identity in this discourse activity. We offer evidence of hybridised identities which allow for positive orientation to Te Ao Māori while navigating a Pākehā-dominant corporate world.

## Cultural encounter and the workplace context

The concept of encounter between Māori and Pākehā which has been the focus of so much historical and anthropological research also provides a rich source of insight for sociolinguists interested in analysing the complexities of everyday workplace talk. Following James Cook's first encounter with the Māori people of Aotearoa in 1769, the country was regarded as ripe for colonisation. The nineteenth century saw the beginning of the colonisation process which resulted, as in many other colonised countries, in the gradual repression of the cultural norms and values of the indigenous Māori people and the assertion of those of a different European culture. The relative social status of the different groups resulted in a hegemonic relationship or an 'order' manifested as sets of taken-for-granted unmarked socio-cultural norms, expressed in different ways in different social contexts (Holmes 2018a). The norms of the most powerful and politically influential group, the Pākehā, began to prevail in many public or semi-public contexts, including the workplace. The culture order comprises a hegemonic ideology promoting particular socio-

cultural values which influence the ways in which individuals discursively construct their social, ethnic, and gender identities in particular contexts in different societies. In general, it is minority cultural group members who are most aware of the impact of the culture order (see Holmes 2018b). Majority group members typically take them for granted and simply assume their ways of behaving are normal. Inequalities are unavoidably built into the social order when one group is the dominant cultural group in a society, as is often the case, and the workplace is a prime site for the enactment of cultural inequalities: workplace ideologies typically maintain and reinforce majority group cultural values.

Many sociologists have pointed to ways in which macro-level societal structures are instantiated at the micro-level through concepts such as agency (Giddens 1984) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977), while sociolinguists who espouse a social realist approach have described how societal norms constrain appropriate language use in different contexts, and how they are negotiated in face-to-face interaction (eg Wodak 2008; Cameron 2009; Bell 2016; Coupland 2016; Schnurr and Zayts 2017). This article explores the insights that can be gained by examining the stories people tell in workplace interaction and interviews. Our focus in particular is the enactment and strengths of Māori approaches to leadership (in contrast to the Pākehā norms which dominate the New Zealand corporate world) and which often go unrecognised or underappreciated in New Zealand society (see also Holmes et al. 2011). Some narratives indicate how cultural norms influence the way stories are constructed; some provide information about the specific values to which different groups or individuals orient; and most contribute in some way to aspects of identity construction, including ethnic and professional identity. We discuss ways in which narratives elicited in workplace interviews may provide evidence of subtle differences in Māori and Pākehā ways of interacting with others, and the evidence this provides of the influence of distinct culture orders and their associated values in Aotearoa/New Zealand workplaces.

## Narrative research in sociolinguistics

Narrative has been the focus of research in a wide range of disciplines. Within sociolinguistics, researchers have explored many aspects of the structure and content of narratives (eg Labov 1972; Bell 1991; Linde 1993; Coates 1996), as well as the contribution of narrative to identity construction (eg Schiffrin 1996; De Fina 2003; Mullany 2006) and positioning (eg De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012, 2015).

A narrative was defined in early sociolinguistic work by Labov (1972, p. 359–60) as a sequence of temporally ordered clauses used to recapitulate past experience, with six potential components: abstract (what the story is about), orientation (the characters, time, place and circumstances), complicating action (what happened), evaluation (the point), resolution (how it ended), coda (wrap up and return to present time). Of these six components, the complicating action is technically the only component which needs to be explicit – what Toolan (1988, p. 153) calls the 'obligatory nucleus' – but most stories also include at least an evaluative component – a response to the question 'so what?' as Labov notes (1972, p. 366).

While this structure provides a useful starting point, our earlier research (Holmes 1998a, 1998b) established that what counts as a story differs between social and cultural groups (cf. Heath 1983; Polanyi 1989; Goodwin 1990). So, for example, the most obvious area of contrast between Pākehā and Māori stories in a corpus of informal

conversations was the range of ways of expressing the evaluation (Holmes 1998a). In particular, from a Pākehā perspective, the evaluative component in a number of Māori stories seemed relatively inexplicit; evaluation was often conveyed prosodically or paralinguistically, through gesture or facial expression, rather than by an explicit evaluative phrase. Moreover, a number of the Māori stories had no explicit resolution or coda and as a result, from a Pākehā perspective, the story seemed to have been left unfinished. Narrators in such cases tended to assume that the contextualisation of the story supplied all that was needed in order to evaluate its point, and the responses of their Māori interlocuters confirmed this was so. This tendency to leave the story 'unfinished' or open-ended (from a Pākehā viewpoint) is typical of Māori narratives, myths or 'life stories' told in Māori contexts (Thornton 1985, 1999). One never finishes a story because the narrative continues and is continually up-dated. On the next appropriate occasion, speakers may pick up and continue the on-going narrative.

Turning to values and identity construction, narratives are widely recognised as a means of expressing social and cultural values and constructing social identities, and are typically interactively accomplished (eg Schiffrin 1984; Ochs and Capps 2001; Bamberg 2012; Slembrouck 2015). Hero stories, for example, are one well-documented genre of relevance to our analysis (eg Jackson and Parry 2001), often used to valorise power and construct masculinity (eg Coates 2000, 2003; Georgakopoulou 2005). Our own analyses of workplace discourse have amply demonstrated how narrative may serve as a means to maintain power and construct leadership identity within organisations (Marra and Holmes 2005, 2008; Holmes 2009; Holmes et al. 2011). In what follows we examine the structure, the values, and the identity construction demonstrated in workplace narratives; but first the methodology and database of the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project are briefly outlined.

## Collecting workplace narratives

Over the past two decades the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) team (www.victoria.ac.nz/lwp) has argued that detailed qualitative analysis of authentic workplace discourse is an invaluable means of relating macro-level social constraints to micro-level face-to-face interactions in specific contexts (see also Nielsen 2009; Clifton 2012). Our basic methodology involves a modified ethnographic approach and a commitment to working with those in our participating workplaces as co-researchers. After a period of participant observation, we ask volunteers to collect recordings of samples of their normal everyday workplace interactions over a period of two to three weeks. This is followed by debriefing interviews to collect comments and reflections on this process. Where possible we video-record meetings of groups, using small cameras which are fixed in place, switched on, and left running for the whole meeting (see Marra 2008; Holmes and Stubbe 2015).

The current Wellington Language in the Workplace Project Corpus comprises more than 2000 interactions, involving 700 participants from 30 different New Zealand workplaces ranging from commercial organisations and government departments, through small businesses, factories and building sites, to eldercare facilities and medical settings. In the data chosen for analysis below we focus specifically on professional, white-collar contexts in companies which self-identify as Māori organisations. Our excerpts are selected from data involving leaders in two workplaces where the majority of employees

identify as Māori, where the *kaupapa* (objectives/priorities) is Māori-oriented, where *tikanga Māori* (Māori custom or traditions) plays a significant role in the day-to-day operations, and where the objectives of the workplace teams include achieving good outcomes for Māori people in general. In particular, we explore how components of the culture order play out in these organisations where, unusually, from a Pākehā perspective, the dominant ways of doing things are guided by Māori values and interactional norms. And while we focus on the concept of a Māori culture order for the purposes of the analysis in this article, it is important to recognise that all workplaces have cultural underpinnings, though western norms are generally taken for granted and go unnoticed. Furthermore, in many contexts, Māori people identify with their *iwi* or tribal groups, rather than as a homogeneous ethnic group. The gradual domination of New Zealand by Pākehā immigrants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the imposition of Pākehā ways of doing things in public spheres (the Pākehā culture order), led to a recognition by Māori people of what the different iwi shared – Te Ao Māori with its distinctive cultural values and ways of doing things compared to Pākehā (here designated the Māori culture order).

## Constructing identity in narrative

The first four examples selected for analysis comprise interviews with leaders, examples 1–3 from an organisation concerned with production and example 4 from a second organisation with a focus on consultation (see Holmes et al. 2011, p. 27–31). Janet Holmes, Professor of Linguistics, interviewed the first three leaders; Brad Jackson, Professor of Leadership, interviewed the fourth leader. These interviews served as a debriefing process after the participants had been recording their naturally occurring talk for a number of weeks. They were asked various questions related to their leadership approaches. Examples 1–3 have been selected as a particularly valuable dataset since they are all responses to a question about the leadership provided by Hone, one of the focus leaders. All three interviewees describe Hone's actions around the same event, though from rather different perspectives. The relevant event was the *tangi* (funeral) of the daughter of an employee at the organisation, pseudonymed Kiwi Productions. The first example involves a Pākehā narrator and listener.

**Example 1 (Transcription conventions can be found at the end of the article)**
*Context*: Kiwi Productions: interview by Janet Holmes with Gretel, Pākehā Communications Manager

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Gretel: | one example is one of our staff last year |
| 2. | | in fact almost yeah in April last year lost a child |
| 3. | | um and + the arrangements around you know all the stuff |
| 4. | | that happened after Deb died |
| 5. | | Hone played a huge role in that you know |
| 6. | | he was at the house every day um + |
| 7. | | you know he went out and bought food |
| 8. | | he and various other people went up there and cleaned **...** |
| 9. | | it's an example of the way his role kind of |
| 10. | | transcends the day to day work stuff |
| 11. | | like you know when at at Deb's at Deb's tangi [funeral] |
| 12. | | he was there he was there |
| 13. | | well we we were all most of us were there all day |
| 14. | | but you know he actually I watched him |

| | |
|---|---|
| 15. | in terms of the role he played you know |
| 16. | when we had a cup of tea after the service |
| 17. | when when Ben and Madeline had taken |
| 18. | Deb to the crematorium |
| 19. | and you know he got round everybody |
| 20. | in Ben and Madeline's extended family and spoke to them |
| 21. | he was looking after people from our work |
| 22. | who were clearly + well we were all very upset |
| 23. | but there were some people who were having |
| 24. | a really hard time with the whole thing you know |
| 25. | and after afterwards he would basically go up |
| 26. | and and see Ben and Madeline you know |
| 27. | he blessed the house he did all that |
| 28. | well he organised the blessing of the house |
| 29. | so he kind of plays a role like this here |
| 30. | if there's something that happens |
| 31. | within the kind of the extended whānau if you like |
| 32. | Hone plays a big part in actually |
| 33. | helping everybody through that |
| 34. | and actually um + making sure |
| 35. | that Kiwi Productions is contributing |
| 36. | to to to helping in that situation |
| 37. | in the right kind of way |

Gretel provides a detailed account of how in a situation of great stress, Hone provided extensive practical support (buying food and cleaning, lines 7–8) as well as culturally appropriate support to the bereaved family: *he organised the blessing of the house* (line 28), as required by Māori protocol after a death. Furthermore, he talked to all the family members of the bereaved couple, and provided psychological support to other company staff who were upset by the death of their colleague's child.

Gretel comments very explicitly on the extent to which Hone's support went well beyond what might be expected of a typical company manager, transcending *the day to day work stuff* (line 10). However, this is appropriate behaviour from a leader in a Māori organisation where traditional Māori values are paramount, and this is reflected in the subsequent two examples in which the Māori Managing Director, Yvonne, and Hone himself, comment on this event as part of their response to the question about Hone's leadership contribution in the organisation.

In terms of structure, this narrative broadly conforms to the widely adopted framework provided by Labov (1972). It opens with an abstract or outline of the story (lines 1–5), including an orientation describing when the event occurred (*last year, in April last year*), and identifying Hone as the subject of the story (line 5). The bulk of the narrative comprises the complicating action (lines 6–28), with the evaluation and result components quite explicit but integrated with each other in lines 29–37.

Turning to the interview with the Managing Director, Yvonne, the same event is presented rather more succinctly.

## Example 2

*Context*: Kiwi Productions: interview by Janet Holmes with Yvonne, Managing Director

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Yvonne: | um Hone of course plays a really important part in our company |
| 2. | | with regard to tikanga Māori um |
| 3. | | in that he and he takes quite a leadership role in that |
| 4. | | and that has increased as well over time |
| 5. | Janet: | oh that's interesting |
| 6. | Yvonne: | er and so for example when we had that problem |

| | |
|---|---|
| 7. | with Deb when Deb died and when I got sick- |
| 8. | when I um injured my leg um |
| 9. | Hone just stood up and said I'll run this |
| 10. | you know I mean they decided I mean |
| 11. | I was st- still in hospital and the man- the managers decided |
| 12. | that Hone should be the acting chief executive while I was away |
| 13. | and Hone stood right up and led the company |
| 14. | I think not just in a business sense |
| 15. | but in a more in a real leadership sense |
| 16. | because I mean the comp- you know |
| 17. | everybody was devastated we had to |
| 18. | but everyone had to carry on with their work |
| 19. | and meet all their commitments to clients |
| 20. | and things um but you know |
| 21. | there was a lot of personal sort of soul searching |
| 22. | [laughs] inside the company but I think Hone |
| 23. | he you know we had formal like little karakia sessions |
| 24. | and things and and um yeah |
| 25. | and he sort of got people through that |
| 26. | because I mean I wasn't here to do it |
| | [Lines 27–46: *Description of her accident which generated the leadership crisis*] |
| 47. | I think our clients and most of our stakeholders |
| 48. | would have had no idea of the of the turmoil |
| 49. | inside the company and I think that's just cos |
| 50. | Hone got everyone through it |
| 51. | they all got you know |
| 52. | we didn't miss any deadlines or anything |

Yvonne's narrative, like Gretel's, uses the tragedy of the young person's death as an illustration of Hone's leadership qualities. However, it is much less detailed in relation to his precise actions in caring for the family around the tangi arrangements, although Yvonne would have been well aware of these, because of her knowledge of tikanga Māori, as well from the accounts of his colleagues. She appears to take for granted that the interviewer, as addressee, will also be familiar with the appropriate behaviour in this situation, and focusses in her narrative on how Hone's leadership enabled the company to meet its transactional and economic goals: *we didn't miss any deadlines* (line 52). She describes how Hone achieved this, responding to the managers' request that he be the acting chief executive in Yvonne's absence (lines 11–12), first by stepping up (*Hone stood right up and led the company,* line 13), and then by looking after people's emotional needs (*everybody was devastated … a lot of personal sort of soul searching,* lines 17, 21). Interestingly, although she was in hospital, Yvonne describes one of the strategies use by Hone as if she were present, *we had formal like little karakia sessions* (line 23), clearly implying these were very helpful, and then emphasising how their clients would have been unaware of the *turmoil inside of the company* (lines 48–49).

As Managing Director, the focus of Yvonne's narrative is not only Hone's contribution as a 'cultural leader' (the label assigned to him regularly by members of this organisation), who provides emotional support to the staff in a culturally appropriate way, but also on his orientation to the company's economic goals which were crucial to the small organisation's survival. His role at the tangi, of which Yvonne was well aware, is left implicit.

Focussing on the narrative of what happened when the death occurred, which both Gretel and Yvonne introduce as an example of Hone's leadership skills, Yvonne's story contains an abstract, describing what the story is about, namely, Hone's *leadership role* in relation to *tikanga Māori* (lines 1–3), and an orientation describing when it happened, *when I got sick- when I um injured my leg* (lines 6–8). The complicating action, however, is

complexly integrated with the evaluation (lines 9–26) and followed by a description of the result (lines 47–52), with Yvonne noting *Hone got everyone through it … we didn't miss any deadlines or anything.* In other words, the outcome was positive in both relational terms (the staff's needs were looked after) and transactional (deadlines were met).

Yvonne knows the interviewer well. The research team had actively embraced a philosophy of being *kanohi kitea* (a seen/present face) around the workplace for some time (see Marra 2008), especially the interviewer; she had also supervised the theses of two of Yvonne's employees, and been consulted for advice regularly, as well as for references to support funding applications. So, Yvonne can assume she does not need to spell out details to this addressee. Her story takes for granted many of the details that Gretel spells out.

The third account of Hone's role in relation to Yvonne's accident and the tragic death is provided by Hone, himself, in relation to a question about his role as a leader in the company.

**Example 3**

*Context*: Kiwi Productions: interview by Janet Holmes with Hone, Deputy Director/Senior Manager

| 1. | Hone: | it is a it is a leadership role |
|---|---|---|
| 2. | | of a different kind in terms that |
| 3. | | it's er it's cultural leadership |
| | | [Lines 4–11 omitted] |
| 12. | | I just see those things are important |
| 13. | | in terms of relationship development |
| 14. | | maintenance of relationships |
| 15. | | and um really you know helping Kiwi Productions |
| 16. | | walk the talk really … |
| 17. | | and also you know providing er er |
| 18. | | some guide for the staff as well |
| 19. | | because we we you know |
| 20. | | th- this year's been a really interesting year |
| 21. | | in terms of the things that we've had to deal with |
| 22. | | um you know we had d- |
| 23. | | one of our s- er colleagues |
| 24. | | lost her b- er young daughter |
| 25. | | and um so we've worked through a lot of things |
| 26. | | Yvonne had an accident [laughs] you know |
| 27. | | so we've had to work through all of those things |
| 28. | | and then you know as as you do staff lose a relative |
| 29. | | and things like that so we sort of you know |
| 30. | | I see that as part and parcel of us being we are |
| 31. | | while we are staff we're also a family |
| 32. | | and these things happen to families you know |

Hone answers the question about his leadership role with an extended account of the importance of tikanga to his leadership, abridged here due to space constraints. However, he too refers to the traumatic death as an example of when this kind of leadership is important in a Māori organisation, where values such as *whanaungatanga* (relationships), looking after family, 'and being very careful about how others are treated' (Mead 2016, p. 31) are paramount. The incident is described succinctly: *one of our s- er colleagues lost her b- er young daughter* (lines 23–24), and his role, which we know from Gretel's account was relationally extensive, and from Yvonne's account was crucial to the company's continued smooth running, is conveyed through the brief clause *so we've had to*

*work through all of those things* (line 27). By contrast, the importance of whanaungatanga is made quite explicit: *and then you know as as you do staff lose a relative and things like that so we sort of you know I see that as part and parcel of us being we are while we are staff we're also a family and these things happen to families you know* (lines 28–32). Throughout his narrative it is also interesting to see that he regularly chooses the pronoun *we*, orienting to a collective perspective wherever relevant.

The contrast between Hone's leadership narrative, with its focus on Māori values and his cultural responsibilities, and those of other leaders in our data is discussed in some detail in Holmes et al. (2011). Their 'hero' stories of how they saved their organisation from disaster contrast markedly with Hone's focus on the welfare of those he works with and his responsibility to support and care for them. One of these other leaders is Daniel, a Māori leader working in an organisation pseudonymed Kiwi Consultations with similar values and kaupapa to those of Kiwi Productions. However, Daniel is an example of a leader who actively melds Pākehā and Māori ways of behaving (and arguably drawing on different Te Ao Māori (worldview) concepts to Hone) in order to achieve his organisation's goals. His response to the question about his leadership in the context of a formal interview with a leadership scholar (Brad Jackson) illustrates his awareness of the demands of the Pākehā culture order.

**Example 4**
*Context*: Kiwi Consultations: Interview by Brad Jackson with Daniel, CEO

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Daniel: | I reshaped the the er the um |
| 2. | | the reporting lines you know |
| 3. | | the previous CEO had eight people |
| 4. | | reporting to him directly |
| 5. | | and that just comes about from when you start an outfit |
| 6. | | it just expands and expands and it m- |
| 7. | | they may as well report to you |
| 8. | | um and you don't you don't notice |
| 9. | | with an incremental increase like that |
| 10. | | just how how much more work you've got |
| 11. | | and when people come you know titles |
| 12. | | and reporting lines are a big deal to them you know |
| 13. | | [voc] I wouldn't want to be reporting to anyone else except the CEO |
| 14. | | (    ) so when I did that we had a few casualties |
| 15. | | er in terms of you know people who felt that they'd been |
| 16. | | + um treated less respectfully than they'd thought |
| 17. | | and they don't work here anymore |

Orienting here to the need to provide new direction and authoritative leadership in his organisation, he reports that he began by restructuring the senior management. His analysis of the changes needed is incisive, and it is clear that Daniel's leadership philosophy, as expressed to the non-Māori expert, is rather different from Hone's which is much more person-oriented and sympathetic than the decisive, hard-nosed approach which Daniel depicts here. Daniel goes on to describe how he re-shaped the senior management, creating *an elite group*, and then proceeded to dramatically change the ways of interacting which obtained between the CEO and the management team. The structure is a canonical narrative with an abstract (lines 1–2), a detailed orientation (lines 3–13), contextualising his subsequent actions (line 14), an implied evaluation (the casualties felt they had been treated less respectfully than they deserved), and result (line 17).

In discussing the theme of leadership, Daniel constructs himself as a modern leader, familiar with current western conceptions of management theory (that he trained in the US is perhaps relevant here too). Interestingly his style of leadership is compatible with a less recognised, but increasingly acknowledged entrepreneurial approach which is emerging in discussions of Māori leaders and tribal economies (see Reid and Rout 2016; Mrabure et al. 2018). The choice of these features constructs a different kind of leadership, one that also aligns quite overtly with Pākehā ways of operating in New Zealand workplaces. A number of features of his discourse contribute to this construction, such as his choice of lexical items (eg *reshaped the reporting lines*, *incremental increase*), and his preference for simple syntactic constructions (eg *they don't work here anymore*). These all encode a decisive and unsentimental stance, indexing an authoritative leadership identity.

However, as our detailed analyses demonstrated (Holmes et al. 2011), in his day-to-day interactions with staff in his organisation, Daniel behaves in ways which are quite consistent with Māori values and beliefs, ways that are salient in indexing tikanga and a Māori worldview within his organisation, and indeed the wider New Zealand society. As noted earlier, our core data set is typically naturally-occurring interactions in everyday workplace talk. Example 5 is used to illustrate how identity presentation is strongly influenced by context and addressee (ie illustrating Bell's 2001 'audience design'). One way in which this is evident is Daniel's method of managing the tension between the need to appear authoritative and leader-like on the one hand, and the Māori cultural requirement to behave in an unpretentious way on the other. In interaction with his staff Daniel adopts a distinctly informal leadership style; he manages even the most formal meetings with a light hand and uses many linguistic devices to emphasise the lack of formality. For example, he makes extensive use of the New Zealand pragmatic tag, *eh,* a feature associated with both informality and Māori ethnicity (Meyerhoff 1994; Vine and Marsden 2016).

Illustrating this point, example 5 constitutes the coda to a long story about a North Island marae which is located in the midst of a new suburb of upper middle-class Pākehā holiday homes. At this point the team is making fun of possible Pākehā responses to the large gathering of Māori for a weekend *hui* (meeting) which will take place on the marae.

**Example 5**

*Context*: Kiwi Consultations: Management meeting (5 Māori + 2 Pākehā participants).

| 1. | Caleb: | multimillion dollar properties up //(　)\ |
|---|---|---|
| 2. | Daniel: | /[laughs]\\ oh they'll have have a happy weekend |
| 3. | | then won't they |
| 4. | Hari: | yeah |
| 5. | Daniel: | [laughs]: the neighbours hey: |
| 6. | Caleb: | //[laughs]\ |
| 7. | Hari: | /that's good\\ they love it eh |
| 8. | Daniel: | [laughs]: yeah: I bet they love it |
| 9. | Hari: | they love they love that stuff |
| 10. | | //that Māori dynamic\ |
| 11. | Daniel: | /that cultural colour\\ |
| 12. | Hari: | yeah |
| 13. | Hinerau: | [name] was //saying that they've been\ |
| 14. | Hari: | /the property values go up\\ |
| 15. | Hinerau: | coming round to offer offer what they can do |
| 16. | | whether they can bake or |

| 17. | Daniel: | //[laughs] [laughs]: yeah yeah kia ora:\ |
| 18. | Hari: | /yeah oh yeah yeah straight up eh\\ |
| 19. | | Māori is the new black eh Caleb? |
| 20. | Caleb: | yeah it is |
| 21. | | [laughter] |
| 22. | | it is it is the new black bro [laughs] |
| 23. | | [extended group laughter] |

Daniel takes the lead here in making fun of rich Pākehā who find the neighbouring marae is planning a big weekend hui: *they'll have a happy weekend then … I bet they love it … that cultural colour* (lines 2–3, 8, 11). Hari's comment that *the property values go up* (line 14) is especially telling since the traditional cultural stereotype entails depressed house prices in Māori neighbourhoods. Hari follows this up with another witty comment, using a rich metaphor, *Māori is the new black eh Caleb?* (line 19) indexing the current vogue of the colour black in the clothing industry, and more subtly perhaps black power movements. Daniel leads the humour and encourages his team in mocking what they construct as Pākehā hypocrisy – offering to bake for a gathering which will disrupt their peaceful holiday weekend. The example is marked discursively as informal in-group Māori interaction through features such as the pragmatic tag *eh* (lines 7, 18, 19), the greeting *kia ora* (line 17), and the address term *bro* (line 22) which is strongly associated with Polynesian identity (Bell 2000). Repetition (evident in lines 7, 8, 9 and lines 19, 22) is another feature which has been identified as characterising Māori discourse (Metge 1995). The implicitness of the evaluative component is especially apparent in this interaction, where the in-group metaphor together with the extensive laughter throughout are the most obvious signals of irony and parody.

These examples thus illustrate the potential influence of cultural norms on the structure of narratives, whilst also indicating how workplace stories may convey deeply rooted values in the process of contributing to social, cultural, and professional identity construction.

## A hybridised identity: a sophisticated manifestation of long-term encounter?

In the context of an interview on the subject of leadership, the first four examples demonstrated very different ways of telling a story, both structurally and in terms of cultural values and identity construction. Hone's leadership role is the focus of the first three examples, but the ways the 'same' story is structured clearly indicate the importance of the narrator's perceptions of what is important, as well as what they can assume their addressee knows about Māori cultural norms, values, and the specific events being discussed. The main contrast is between Gretel's account which implicitly evaluates Hone's behaviour from a Pākehā perspective, where care for colleagues is not necessarily expected to extend beyond work to the extent that Hone's does, and Yvonne and Hone's accounts which simply assume that Hone's role as cultural leader will encompass the support and care that he exercises. The three examples thus nicely illustrate the contrast between the expectations of, and values espoused in, the Pākehā and Māori culture order in this context.

Daniel's narrative in the context of an interview with a leadership expert (example 4) provides another contrast, illustrating how he has absorbed western commercial and

economic imperatives, presenting them in a way which aligns with an entrepreneurial orientation, even if this orientation is somewhat in tension with the collectivist goals of Māori society (Mika et al. 2019). These choices mean he can provide a compelling account of his actions as a leader. But he is also skilled in recognising when it is appropriate to espouse this style of leadership, and when to negotiate an identity which pays greater attention to wider tikanga and the organisational values which underpin his team's culture (demonstrated in example 5).

Our extensive analyses suggest that Daniel uses his considerable discursive skills to construct a hybrid identity, deftly walking the line between the demands of the Pākehā culture order and those of the Māori culture order. He is aware of the economic pressures which require him to restructure his organisation, paring down a top-heavy senior management team. But within the organisation his very positive and supportive approach is based on trust and respect for the expertise of his team members. He practises Māori tikanga in opening large meetings, respecting whanaungatanga, and treating clients with Māori hospitality (Holmes et al. 2011), whilst also deliberately downplaying hierarchy and encouraging informality in workplace interaction. Yvonne's orientation to business and the importance of meeting the needs of clients suggests a similar ability to balance competing demands, and to navigate cultural norms of leadership and arguably gender (see Holmes and Marra 2011).

The skilful communicators represented in our analysis provide evidence of a sophisticated melding of aspects of both Pākehā and a range of Māori ways of doing things. The identities these leaders construct allow for a positive orientation to Māori culture and Te Ao Māori while navigating a Pākehā-dominant corporate world. Encouragingly, our analyses of the interactions of Māori leaders in the workplace indicate that Māori ways of doing things are acknowledged as important, valuable and productive in the corporate world, as elsewhere. After 250 years of encounter, this suggests a new hybridised New Zealand culture order may be possible.

## Transcription conventions:

| [laughs]: : | Paralinguistic features and editorial information in square brackets; colons indicate beginning and end |
| --- | --- |
| + | Pause of up to one second |
| … // … … \ / … … .\\ … | Simultaneous speech |
| ( ) | Unclear utterance |
| - | Utterance cut off |
| … | Section of transcript omitted |
| [voc] | Vocalisation |

Names of workplace participants and workplaces are pseudonyms.

In order to save space, minimal feedback from the interviewer has been omitted where it comprises only *mm* and *yeah/yes/right*

warranting to support our claims. We also offer our thanks to two anonymous reviewers who provided us with very useful feedback which without doubt enhanced the nuance we could bring to our analysis.

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