



Colonial coverage

Media reporting of a bicultural health research partnership

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ABSTRACT

Discursive and content analyses of media coverage of a 1998 Aotearoa/New Zealand partnership research project on the genetics of inherited stomach cancer show a decided preference for stories that depict the discoveries as the achievement of only one research partner, a genetics research team at Otago University. The coverage downplayed the major contribution of the genealogical research carried out by indigenous Maori researchers for families affected by the cancer. This contribution was included in a news release from the research funding agency, the Health Research Council of New Zealand. Through an array of discursive constructions and omissions, the media stories obscure the role of the Maori researchers in initiating and contributing to the genetics research and applying the findings of the overall project. We argue that what has been lost here is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate a major Maori contribution to international scientific advance and the health of people. Instead the media delivered another example of marginalizing colonial coverage of Maori achievement, denigrating existing work and potentially discouraging other such cutting-edge collaborative health research.

KEY WORDS ■ colonialism ■ discursive analysis ■ genetics ■ indigenous research ■ Maori ■ marginalization ■ media ■ partnership ■ racism ■ representation ■ science

Introduction

Critical¹ social science has a long history of study and analysis of mass media and the implications of the practices and processes involved in the production of news and other forms of media products (Hartman and Husband, 1974; Gans, 1978; Hall, 1980; van Dijk, 1987; Bell, 1991). These endeavours build on theoretical foundations provided by Althusser (1971), Gramsci (1971) and Foucault (1972), pointing to the roles of ideology, language and discourse as

they operate in producing and reproducing the social relations of contemporary societies. Feminist critiques of mass media and media practices have also contributed to contemporary understanding of the ways in which these institutions operate to produce and reproduce the gendered social order (Gray, 1983; Davies et al., 1987; Young, 1990; Allen et al., 1996; Baehr and Gray, 1996; Carter et al., 1998). From these diverse approaches emerges a view of the mass media as a critical component of established technologies of power and control that operate to focus and organize people's everyday interpretation and understanding of their lived experience (Tuchman, 1978; Kress and Hodge, 1979; Fairclough, 1992). Yet the relationships between media and power are complex and subtle at many levels and as Hall (1985: 111) noted:

We cannot adequately explain the structured biases of the media in terms of their being instructed by the state what to print . . . how is it that such large numbers of journalists . . . tend to reproduce again and again, accounts constructed within fundamentally the same ideological categories?

In theoretical terms Hall (1980) proposed an 'encoding/decoding' framework that placed news production and consumption within its sociopolitical context. Empirical investigation on the decoding side (Morley, 1992) concluded that the reading of media text is dependent upon the discursive resources available to the audience. We acknowledge that meaning is negotiated in 'the encounter of audience/subject and text' (Money, 1985) and our particular interest here is in using our decoding skills to try to shed light on the encoding side of this interaction.

To understand how media products evoke the meanings that they do, it is crucial to use multi-layered interpretative research methods that can consider constructive media processes from the global economic/political to the fine-grained linguistic, in systematic ways. One such established approach to media study within the broad critical tradition is known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and is described by Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (1993a). According to Teo (2000: 13), CDA is concerned with 'prejudice, power, dominance and hegemony and the discursive processes of their enactment, concealment, legitimation and reproduction in the domain of newspaper reporting'. Henry and Tator (2002: 35) endorse this idea, arguing that CDA can be used systematically to demonstrate ways in which the abuse of power in matters of race and ethnicity 'are enacted by "talk" and "text" within systems of representation', in general, and the media, in particular.

CDA urges media researchers to attend to the interlinked analytic fields of textual characteristics, discourse practices and social contexts, in our efforts to explicate the meanings available through news materials. Textual analysis could include the lexicon, syntax, grammar and semantics in combinations

relevant to the text and the purpose of study. It may be enhanced by evaluation of the use of graphic and auditory modalities (e.g. photographs, diagrams and sound-clips), interactions between modalities, layout, genre and other salient aspects of text that can aid the understanding of mechanisms by which various meanings are achieved. CDA is thus able, on the basis of evidence and analysis, to prefer one version of events over others and, therefore, to study the character and processes of production in competing versions.

In this instance, this seems useful to us because we have an account of the events and relationships within the research project derived from news releases and personal communication with the actual researchers. We argue that this account provides a valuable resource in deconstructing the bulk of the coverage generated.

In general terms the programme of CDA is congruent with the broad sweep of language-oriented studies of social life that Edley (2001) refers to as 'critical discursive' approaches and we intend to draw eclectically on the traditions of discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992), rhetorical analysis (Billig et al., 1988) and thematic analysis (Silverman, 1993; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Colonial invasion of Aotearoa from 1840, following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, has seen indigenous Maori² sovereignty and control supplanted by British style culture, politics and economics to the detriment of the Maori world. The Treaty was widely seen by the Maori as a confirmation of their sovereignty but was interpreted by imperial Britain and subsequent colonial governments as an extinction of such rights and a licence to colonize. Maori resistance to the subsequent dispossession has been strong and sustained but has been unable to avert deep negative impacts in the health, education, economics and cultures of Maori populations. Established demographic dominance (Maori made up approximately 15 percent of the population in 1998) makes democratic change a hard fought battle in this ongoing ideological struggle. As Pakeha³ living within this unjust political context, our work is focused firmly upon Pakeha media treatment of Maori and Maori/Pakeha relations. We believe that our study may be of relevance to the struggles of indigenous peoples in other parts of the world such as Canada and Australia and have reviewed literatures that arise from those situations.

We are less sure of the similarities between media depictions of migrant and other marginalized groups and those of indigenous peoples suffering under colonial domination. We acknowledge a literature that deals with media depictions of migrant groups (e.g. Essed, 1990; Campbell, 1995; Teo, 2000; Fleras and Kunz, 2001) which van Dijk (1993b: 278) summarizes eloquently:

the very topics of news on ethnic affairs convey an overall impression that associate minorities and immigrants with problems, conflicts, deviance or even threats.

In this article we will provide a fine-grained, critical deconstruction of media coverage generated within Aotearoa/New Zealand about a locally based discovery of a gene for inherited stomach cancer, within an extended Maori family. Our research question focuses Hall's general concern into a highly specific instance of media coverage to ask: What are the processes by which Maori are constructed in ways that reproduce the colonial relations of the setting? The aim is to show that, by discursive practices of lexical choice, clause and sentence construction, error, omission, subject positioning, source use and appeal to ideological categories, the active and positive contributions of whanau⁴ researchers are lost to the observer and replaced by a construction of the Maori researchers in a subordinate relationship to the Pakeha geneticists who worked on this particular project.

Media representations of indigenous people under colonial rule

Jakubowicz et al. (1994) have studied a range of genres including advertising, news and fiction in newspapers and television to report specifically on the coverage of aboriginal issues (within a broader corpus on 'minority group depiction'). They are particularly critical of the absence of aboriginal sourcing of news and commentary and also draw attention to themes such as the emphasis on 'factions' (and the contingent portrayal of internal dissent) among aboriginal populations as a means of discrediting and marginalizing indigenous criticism of the status quo. Weston (1996), in her studies of 70 years of coverage of indigenous American peoples in the USA, highlights the role of the media in the presentation and fixing of these groups and their issues in a racist and paternalistic interpretative frame that reproduces the established social order of dispossession and marginalization. Meadows (1999) reports a study of depictions of indigenous peoples in both Australia and Canada. Through a range of media practices, especially source use, the predominance of sensationalizing news coverage and the poverty of background information, newspaper coverage amounts to 'racism' and contributes to the systematic marginalization of indigenous people in these societies. Interestingly he counts the omission of indigenous voices from the coverage of issues as at least as significant as overtly discriminatory coverage in supporting the 'dominant ideas and assumptions' of those in power.

Henry and Tator (2002) provide a literature review which cites multiple studies that show unreasonable criticism of minority groups (including indige-

nous peoples) in a wide range of instances and that media depictions focus stereotypically on apathy, violence, threat and problems. Henry and Tator adopt a strong CDA programme to evaluate Canadian media coverage of minorities, including specific sections on depictions of First Nation Canadians. They use their multi-level discursive analyses to deconstruct the form and impact of media practices in the production of discriminatory and often racist accounts. As well as the familiar critique of source bias, superficiality and sensationalism, the discourse analytic work describes both discursive practices at the level of text structure and word choice, and the existence of a range of discursive resources which together are named as 'discourses of democratic racism' (Henry and Tator, 2002: 228). These interlocking elements are combined with more technical media practices in producing the oppressive and marginalizing effects on indigenous people through decoding in such mechanisms as public opinion, government policy and political practice.

Media representations of Maori/Pakeha relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Judgements about newsworthiness influence not only what is published or broadcast but the ways in which materials are presented to achieve the wider economic and political aims of newspapers. One theory of newsworthiness is that newsworthy events disrupt or restore equilibrium. Fiske (1987: 139) argues: 'The state of equilibrium is not itself newsworthy, and is never described except implicitly in its opposition to the state of disequilibrium, which, typically, is described in detail'. However, the decision about what to identify as equilibrium and disequilibrium is an ideological one. For example, the story we have analyzed in the present article could have been seen as newsworthy through its disruption of received ideologies about Maori failure. In the situation of Aotearoa/New Zealand a number of critics have drawn attention to patterns in the way in which Maori and Maori issues intersect with criteria of newsworthiness.

Maori commentators make the point forcefully. O'Regan (1990), commenting on proceedings of the court set up to deal with historic grievances (especially over land) between Maori and the New Zealand Government, states: 'If a Waitangi Tribunal case involves disturbance of, or indeed merely threatens to disturb, existing property rights of Pakeha, then that's news – especially for television and radio'. Walker (1990) elaborates on media coverage of Maori land claims, especially those pursued outside the judicial process:

There is little interest in why the case has been brought or the roots of the injustice lying behind the claim. Emphasis is placed on the present conflict, which inevitably puts the responsibility for raising the issue on the complainant. The injured party thus becomes the cause of the problem . . . in any contest between Maori and Pakeha over land, resources or cultural space, media coverage functions, unwittingly or otherwise, to maintain Pakeha dominance.

Ramsden and Spoonley's (1993: 170) analysis of media coverage of the cultural safety issue in nursing 'questions the role of the media in defending traditional Pakeha values against any change which might provide Maori with different and more appropriate services'. The results of studies of media reporting about issues involving Maori are consistent with these analyses. For example, Spoonley (1989) and Kernot (1990) pointed to the way media crime reports use race labels such as Maori, Polynesian or Pacific Islander up to four times more often than labels such as Pakeha, European or Caucasian. Through a combination of over- and under-description, this creates an inaccurate association between crime and ethnicity. Wilson (1990) puts it bluntly:

there's nothing [the media] handle quite so badly [as Maori news]. They bungle it in all sorts of ways – playing down big issues (Maori language teaching), missing Maori implications in other issues (immigration), ignoring stories completely (major hui⁵ and festivals), quoting people who aren't Maori authorities (Winston Peters or Bob Jones)⁶ and neglecting those who are, blowing up negative stories, getting them wrong and denying they did.

McGregor and Comrie (1995) found that Maori stories made up 5.5 percent of 915 television and radio news stories analyzed between 1985 and 1994. Such stories showed 'an overwhelming reliance on Pakeha newsmakers', using them as sources for 61.7 percent of stories while Maori sources were used in 12.8 percent. Bad news, often expressed as conflict, prevailed in television news about Maori. McGregor and Te Awa (1996) comment elsewhere: 'The amount of news coverage of Maori reflects a very bleak outcome when compared to the proportion of New Zealand's population which is Maori'.

A core problem with news coverage of issues involving Maori is Pakeha concepts of race relations, which pervade the media and Pakeha society. Nairn and McCreanor (1990) identified 10 common discursive patterns in the talk of Pakeha about Maori people and race relations, from public submissions to the Human Rights Commission on the 1979 'haka party' incident at Auckland University.⁷ They argue that these patterns – termed interpretative repertoires in discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) – are part of a durable Pakeha 'common sense' about race relations which assumes and recreates Pakeha dominance. Such patterns 'limit representations of Maori/Pakeha relations by ignoring our colonial history, our social structures and the distribution of power' (Nairn and McCreanor, 1991). Examples include the 'Privilege' repertoire, which claims Maori have special privileges which are

unfair and racist; the 'Good Maori/Bad Maori' repertoire, which flexibly divides Maori into those who fit into society and those who don't; and the 'One people' repertoire, which assumes that Maori unrest arises solely from the politically motivated actions of a minority of agitators.

From subsequent analyses of newspaper coverage, McCreanor (1993: 91) concludes that:

media stories both construct and are constructed by those commonsense ideological patterns and associations shared by their audience. The patterns act as boundaries or fields within which the commonsense of a social group can flow with ease and beyond which a speaker's discourse can be expected to meet with hostility or incomprehension.

Those who want to argue, for example, that 'activists' are thoroughly justified in calling for redress for Maori grievances have to explain their underlying assumptions as well as make their point. However, with only a 10 second soundbite they are at a disadvantage, because, unlike their opponents, they cannot rely on existing understandings embedded in previous media constructions.

Detailed media studies bear out these assertions. Abel (1997) gives an example in her analysis of television coverage of Waitangi Day⁸ in 1990. Then the equilibrium was identified as celebration and consensus: the disequilibrium was initiated by the protesters and order needed to be restored at the end of the report. Abel identified four discourses which were ranked hierarchically in Waitangi Day television news coverage: "The dominant discourse, the "one people" ideology is treated as "common sense", while the oppositional discourse and the "Maori-centred" point of view are scarcely heard' (Abel, 1997: 41). Maori were positioned in the coverage as either 'wild' or 'tame', obscuring the breadth of Maori support for Treaty protests. The focus was on the protest tactics rather than the issues and injustices which protesters sought to raise.

Together these studies support the notion that Maori are newsworthy when their actions can be constructed as negative and that there are many ways by which they can be so constructed.

Research background

The coverage was sparked by two news releases in March 1998. One was issued by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC), the Government health-research funding agency that supported the project.⁹ It was distributed to every major daily newspaper and all main centre radio and television newsrooms. The other was distributed widely in New Zealand and overseas by

Nature, the UK-based scientific journal that published the report of the genetic identification research. The following account of events surrounding the research project that led to the discovery is drawn from the HRC release and from information supplied by research team members to one of the present authors (JR).

The project was initiated in 1994 within the whanau, because they had experienced a high rate of an aggressive gastric cancer that affected members as early as their teens over several generations. Their experience is unusual as gastric cancer usually occurs in people over retirement age. In 1995 the whanau asked the HRC for information about the availability of genetics research teams. They then initiated a partnership with researchers from the Cancer Genetics Laboratory at the University of Otago in Dunedin.

The process for identifying genes for inherited diseases typically involves two complementary teams. One team, usually led by a scientist, visits members of the affected families, explains the process, gets consent for participation, collects tissue samples and develops a genealogy which specifies causes of death. This work is usually done as a defined part of the larger genetics project and the results handed to the second team (Guilford, personal communication to JR, 1998). Using the tissue samples, the team of geneticists searches for and identifies variations in the genetic code between those family members with the condition and those who have not developed it. The geneticists usually manage and develop the project.

This project was remarkable because the whanau team compiled their own genealogy and collected the tissue samples, being an active research partner rather than accepting the subject position more usual for affected families. The two teams negotiated an agreement involving culturally appropriate management and ownership of tissue samples, a shared patent for the genetic test and regular reporting by the genetics team at whanau hui.

The whanau was awarded two seeding HRC grants and were co-researchers on a three-year grant (worth almost \$1 million) to the whole project in 1998. For this project the whanau team compiled a database of more than 3000 people and a five-generation genealogy listing those who had definitely and probably died from gastric cancer. The whakapapa¹⁰ and tissue collection was a culturally sensitive process, involving tapu¹¹ information that would not otherwise have been shared with outsiders. The geneticists were not involved in the monitoring of these whanau researchers.

After testing the samples, in June 1997 the genetics team found a variation in the E-cadherin gene that was present in all the whanau members known to have had gastric cancer and not present in most of those who had not developed cancer. This variation promotes tumour cell invasion and may be involved in other cancers. In January 1998, the whanau formed the Aotearoa

Stomach Cancer Susceptibility Project to identify other affected whanau around the country and negotiate testing protocols and monitoring programmes for members with the gene variant.

The HRC news release said the project had been initiated by the whanau, they had compiled the whakapapa, and would be negotiating protocols for screening family members. The *Nature* release concentrated on the role of the genetics team, identifying the whanau only as 'patients'. At the time of the news releases, members of the whanau research team were the only family representatives available for media interviews.

The media coverage of the gene identification was extensive within New Zealand and internationally. New Zealand city and provincial newspapers, radio and television news programmes and Teletext ran items on the day of the release, as did overseas newspapers and medical publications. Two months later the discovery was the subject of two television current affairs programmes and two other newspaper articles.

Method

This analysis concentrates only on New Zealand media reports. The story ran in at least 22 city and provincial newspapers. We analyzed the 10 which were original articles or which contained some original content and one article sourced from Australian Associated Press (AAP). The others were reprinted from two of the city newspapers through the New Zealand Press Association (NZPA) and were not analyzed.

We also analyzed 10 radio news items, one radio current affairs interview, the text from a television news item and two television current affairs programmes, making a total of 25 media reports. We did not analyze the images in the television coverage. We were not able to obtain transcripts of independent Maori radio news coverage due to financial constraints within the organization (Porter, personal communication to JR, 2000), which is a significant gap as these may have articulated an alternative reportage of the findings. Therefore, with the exception of one of the television documentaries that was made for a Maori current affairs programme, we have accessed Pakeha-controlled media coverage from state and commercial outlets. The bulk of the analyzed coverage was from the day of the news release but four items were published or broadcast up to two months later.

We investigated the news stories in two ways. First, we used a thematic analysis of content, starting with an examination of the lexicon and phrases used to represent the genetics researchers, the whanau, the research significance and the partnership across 23 of the stories. We also assessed the use

of sources, the structure and content of headlines and introductory paragraphs and ethnic labelling. The findings are presented as a palette of themes evident in the coverage.

Second, we investigated the discursive features – grammar, syntax, phrase structure, image and meaning – in depth in the two other newspaper stories using a form of discourse analysis (Taylor, 2001). The findings are presented as detailed commentaries on the two sample texts. The findings of the thematic and discourse analyses complement each other to support common conclusions. We excluded these items from the content analysis because their impact is outlined in the detailed discursive analyses and because, since they are so similar to the content database, their inclusion would not have substantively altered the already saturated categories from the content study.

Thematic analysis findings

This aspect of the research consisted of multiple readings of the 23 texts to examine the patterns that recur through the coverage. We outline the common themes and focus on the linguistic details through which these are constituted, reporting both frequency and content of themes by reference to the terms and phrases upon which they draw.

Activities of the two research teams

There were 87 references to the activities of the genetics team and 72 references to the whanau team activities but they present very different pictures. A summary of terms used to describe the activities of the genetics and whanau researchers is presented in Table 1 in part to offer readers a closer understanding of our process. The scientists ‘identified’ a gene or a genetic mutation, searched DNA, ‘developed a test’, ‘saved lives worldwide’, studied the whanau, tackled the cancer, ‘monitored’, ‘patented’ and ‘achieved’. These are active, controlled, expert actions – the descriptors of the scientists’ agency and purpose are unequivocal.

References to the whanau are far more mixed and more than half of them came from just three sources. One was a Bay of Plenty (BOP) daily paper (eight references) which focused on the local family that had contributed to a world breakthrough. The others were two television programmes (30 references), one of which was produced by a current affairs team that spent several days with the whanau two months after the media announcement. The current affairs story was the only one to describe the whanau as recruiting the scientists after some ‘rigorous scrutiny’, which has very different connotations from asking

Table 1 Terms used in 23 news stories to describe genetics and whakapapa research teams

Terms associated with whanau team	Terms associated with genetics team
'Compiled' a whakapapa (10)	'Discovered' gene/odds against the whanau (18)
'Initiated' project (6)	'Identified' gene/mutation/other whanau (12)
'Talking/told' (4)	'Compared' DNA/genetic makeup (6)
'Discovery' of gene (2)	'Developed' blood test (5)
'Made discovery possible' (2)	'Study' of a Maori family (5)
'Devising' a solution (2)	'Screen'/set up screening programme (4)
'Reported' in journal (2)	'Able to detect' cancer early (4)
'Convince' family (2)	'Isolated' a gene (3)
'Involved' in study (2)	'Improve' treatment options (3)
'Represented' whanau (2)	'Produced' genealogical record (2)
'Decided' to take/fight (2)	'Published' paper (2)
'Doing/done something' (2)	'Confirmed' role of gene (2)
'Wanted' to know/some control (2)	'Present' findings (2)
'Approached' scientists/government (2)	'Save lives worldwide'
'Asked' scientists/about credentials (2)	'Bring new hope'
'Sought/cry for' help (2)	'Shed more light'
'Determined/resolved' to find out (2)	'Provide further insight'
'Directed' project	'Monitoring' a Maori family
'Driven' project	'Pinpointed' mutant gene
'Played a vital role'	'Patented' gene test
'Faced/perceiving' a problem	'Searching' through DNA
'Set a benchmark'	'Traced' family history
'Set up . . . clinic'	'Conducted' research
'Wasn't prepared to accept . . . deaths'	'Describe' a molecular basis
'Rigorous scrutiny'	'Announced' breakthrough
'Didn't just wait'	'Carried out' a genetic linkage analysis
'Providing' research	'Plan' to reverse the mutation
'Became' researchers overnight	'Show' Maori
'Footslogging' through cemeteries	'Prepared' to listen
'Identified' lines struck by cancer	'Discuss' things
'Prepared' application	'Learned' to act diplomatically
'Concerned' about . . . deaths	
At the family's 'invitation'	
'Attend' conference	
'Came' to Dunedin	
'Ensuring' cultural sensitivity	
'Desperate' for . . . explanation	
'Suspected' . . . was hereditary	
'Rang' . . . for spare scientists	
'Celebrated'	
'Making [family members] feel relaxed'	

Note: The items in quotation marks are the actual words or terms used in the data. Numbers in brackets are frequencies higher than 1. Three dots mean a few words are omitted. Square brackets indicate words added to restore meaning.

for help. The documentary said the whanau wanted some control over the process, ‘footslogged’ through cemeteries, constructed a whakapapa, convinced members to give DNA samples and compiled a database. These positive descriptions of the Maori contribution to the research are in a minority.

In the 20 remaining stories, only two accounts described the whanau as directing (another BOP article) or driving (radio interview) the project, while another four stories said the whanau had initiated the project. Seven stories said the whanau ‘wanted to know’, ‘suspected’ the cancer may be hereditary, ‘asked’, ‘invited’, ‘sought the help’ or ‘approached’ the scientists. While these are all activities that could reasonably be expected of researchers at the beginning of a project, on their own these descriptors give little indication of the scope of the whanau involvement in the research. Where these accounts mention whanau activity, they include compiling a genealogy and ‘being involved’ as the Maori contributions to the research. Also included were liaison, acting as intermediaries, ensuring cultural sensitivity, preparing an application for funding and gathering information. Again these activities could be expected of researchers on a project of this kind but they give scant indication of the extent of whanau research involvement.

Characteristics of the whanau

The majority of the stories position the scientists as active and competent and the whanau as passive, dependent and diseased. Fourteen of the 23 stories did not mention the whanau role in constructing the whakapapa at all. When the actions of the whanau are described, the words used are rarely as strong and dynamic as the words used for the scientists.

There were 98 references in the 23 stories to whanau disease, dying and grief. Six stories describe the whanau as losing more than 20 members to stomach cancer, leaving the reader or listener to imagine the impact on their lives. Five others describe the whanau as ‘afflicted’, ‘cursed’, ‘struck down’, ‘ravaged’, ‘singled out’ or ‘dying of cancer for the last thirty years’. One said ‘cancer was their destiny’. These terms stigmatize the family, portraying the disease as a characteristic of the whanau (and, therefore, perhaps Maori in general), rather than something that happens to some members. Only three stories described positive whanau characteristics, such as bravery, courage and optimism.

Significance of the research

The language of scientific achievement and health impact – ‘world-first’, ‘breakthrough’, ‘save lives worldwide’, ‘international significance’ – was com-

monly used in the 23 stories (79 references) but unequally distributed. The breakthrough was ascribed to both teams in five stories. In the other 18 stories (39 references), the breakthrough belonged to the genetics team alone.

Partnership

Only four of the 23 stories made it clear, in the terms they used and the space given to both research teams, that the whanau initiated the project, compiled the essential genealogy and were partners in the project. They were the *60 Minutes* story, two articles in the *Bay of Plenty Times* and a *Dominion* article.

One *Good Morning NZ* radio item mentioned the partnership several times but did not specify the whanau's contribution. The only mention of the whakapapa was in an interview with a scientist, who implied that the geneticists had done that work as well. The one whanau member interviewed, represented by only two comments, compared with 10 by scientists, was reported as being pleased with the speed of the geneticists' discovery.

Twelve other accounts used terms that minimized the role of the whanau and five of the 23 stories did not mention the research partnership. The 12 accounts said the project 'involved' a Maori family, that the scientists 'worked with' or had studied a Maori whanau or that the family provided 'help' in the research. Although two of these stories mentioned the whanau initiation of the project, in most reports the family's role was implicitly that of research subjects.

The greatest contrast between the whanau contribution and its depiction is found in a *Nelson Mail* story, sourced from the *Christchurch Press* and used by three other regional papers through NZPA. The article focuses on cancer prevalence and treatment. It starts by saying that 'Maori with a family history of stomach cancer will benefit from world-first research by the University of Otago'. The whanau initiation, research and screening work is reduced to one phrase in the third to last paragraph – 'the Bay of Plenty family who helped in the research'. This account depicts the researchers (implicitly Pakeha) as altruistic workers on behalf of Maori, because stomach cancer is 'relatively uncommon in Caucasian New Zealanders'.

Sources

The 19 stories from 26 and 27 March, when the discovery was released, used almost three times as many sources from the genetics team, other scientists and medical spokespeople as from the whanau or related interests. Seventeen stories used a total of nine scientific and medical sources and five of them used two members of the whanau team and a Maori cabinet minister. Scientists

included two genetics team members, the *Nature* article, two staff in the university department where the genetics team is based, an Auckland geneticist, two Cancer Society spokespeople and three scientists from research funding agencies. The genetics team leaders had left the country to present their findings overseas when the story broke, which may have contributed to the number of other scientific sources quoted. The stories used 45 quoted or paraphrased sentences from the science sources and 12 sentences from the whanau team.

This weighting is somewhat reversed in the later current affairs television programmes, where 88 sentences from whanau members and related spokespeople were used and 40 from scientists. However, the context had changed from the scientific discovery story to the family's experience of living with cancer.

Headlines and introductions

Information in newspaper headlines, first paragraphs and the introductions to broadcast news is likely to be recalled best (van Dijk, 1987) so we paid specific attention to these items. The only headline or title that depicted Maori as active in the discovery was on the BOP newspaper front page – 'Gene find down to Bay whanau'. There are many ways in which headlines could have been written to include the whanau role in the discovery; for example 'Maori research prompts gene discovery'.

Only three stories mentioned the role of the whanau in the partnership in the first sentence – the *Dominion*, the *BOP Times* and one IRN (Independent Radio News) item. The *Dominion* introduction read: 'A partnership between a team of Otago University scientists and a Maori family has led to a cancer breakthrough – the discovery of the gene that causes stomach cancer'. The *Marae* television programme introduction had the 'dying' family 'approaching' the scientists.

None of the stories mentioned the genealogy in the headline, first sentence or introduction. An introduction which includes this contribution could have read: 'A family tree compiled by a Maori whanau has led New Zealand scientists to a breakthrough – the discovery of a gene which causes inherited stomach cancer'.

Ethnic labelling

In the coverage, the family with inherited cancer was always identified as Maori but the scientists and doctors were not ethnically labelled. In numerous subtle ways – names, institutional affiliations, photographs, absence of cultural markers – the inference was made that the geneticist and other medical

scientists were Pakeha. Barthes (1973) has called this process of labelling the margins to naturalize the centre 'exnomination' and cites it as a key way in which the social relations of domination are reproduced. In the media coverage, this move effectively claims science and medicine as part of the modern (Pakeha) world and not something belonging to Maori, who are subtly positioned as outsiders. One example is the *Marae* documentary which said that 'whakapapa and modern science proved the mutant gene was hereditary'.

Discursive analysis findings

In this section we present our readings of two complete newspaper items to explicate how, in these exemplars at least, the themes evident from the first stage of the analysis hang together in a coherent story. The approach is eclectically critical and discursive, engaging a combination of deconstructive, rhetorical, and discourse analytic techniques. The items were chosen because one (*Otago Daily Times*) became a NZ Press Association source for 10 regional newspaper stories and the other (*New Zealand Herald*) was printed in the largest circulation daily newspaper in the country.

***Otago Daily Times* – 26 March 1998**

This front-page lead article is headlined 'Cancer Breakthrough'. The headline and photograph are common to medical science success stories: the former asserting success in an important research field; the latter showing the genetics team beaming in their laboratory.

Only two of the 14 paragraphs mention the Maori contribution to the research and these are located late in the story in paragraphs 9 and 10. In paragraph 9, we are told that the research involved a 'research partnership' with a Maori extended family but this statement is complicated by a clause extension that notes their high rate of contracting the condition. The effect is to confound the status of the whanau members as research partners and sufferers of cancer. The failure to clarify this unhelpful elision in the next paragraph compounds the confusion – the reader is informed that 'research assistance' was provided by a 'nurse' at Kimihauora Health Clinic in Mt Maunganui and 'other helpers in the area'.

The term 'nurse' in this medicalized context is a hierarchical marker of occupation that reinforces the subordinate role implied in 'research assistance' for Maybelle McLeod. It is not clear that she is part of the whanau and, therefore, the reader has very little information about the nature of the 'research partnership' mentioned in paragraph 9. The Maori name of the

health clinic is similarly unrevealing as it is a commonplace in the contemporary setting for mainstream clinics to have Maori or dual Maori and English names and the identity of the other helpers was never specified. Paragraph 11 mentions Maori only as passive targets of the genetic screening programme.

Neither Maybelle McLeod nor the locals who are the only non-geneticists mentioned as associated with the project are identified as Maori, so the Maori research input to the partnership is unclear. There is also no way of knowing what contribution the partnership made to the 'breakthrough'.

This obscuring of the Maori research contribution contrasts sharply with the treatment of the geneticists who are introduced with titles (in paragraphs 5 and 6) or descriptions of their laboratory roles ('junior research fellow') in paragraph 8 and have most of the article given over to unequivocal recognition of their work. The grammar and lexicon constructs a strongly positive, active, competent position for the genetics team. They are described as presenting the research overseas, developing blood tests and identifying the genetic 'mutations'.

The article quotes two senior Otago University staff members who praise the discovery, which is described as the result of 26 months of work in the university laboratory. However, this construction neglects the contribution of the whanau researchers who worked on critical aspects of the project, especially the genealogy, for longer than this and in sites far removed from Otago University laboratories.

New Zealand Herald – 26 March 1998

Again this was a front-page lead article. It is headlined: 'Gene research leads to cancer breakthrough', with a captioned close-up of the genetics team leader and a subheading underneath: 'A whanau's cry for help points New Zealand scientists to a world first'. While the headline and photograph celebrate only the genetics research, Maori are introduced to the story in the prominent subheading in a supplicatory though possibly productive role. The phrase 'gene research' invokes standard discourses of medical science and its beneficial effects, which are supported by the depiction of the whanau as turning to the experts for help. In the 17 paragraphs of text more coverage was given to the role and contributions of the Maori researchers but the article remains unclear about exactly what they contributed.

The first two paragraphs immediately position the geneticists ('doctors') in the active role, reinforcing the work done by the headline: they have 'achieved a breakthrough' by 'isolating a gene' that may help save lives and produce a cure for 'one of the world's biggest killers'. These are all markers of effectiveness and success. The third paragraph introduces the importance of

the 'unique partnership' between the geneticists and 'a Bay of Plenty whanau' to the success of the project, reiterating the positive potential of the whanau suggested by the subheading. However, at this stage the only information as to what the nature of this relationship might be is that the family 'approached' the scientists 'to help to tackle' their high mortality rate. This last phrase carries some sense of agency on the part of the whanau but it has to be worked for. For example, it is a more self-determining construction than the 'cry for help' of the subheading, with the idea that the family had the intention to 'tackle' their problem but this is still a far cry from the reality of their initiation of the research and screening.

Partnership usually implies equivalent or, at least, significant contributions from both parties but the article provides little information about the whanau contribution. Rather, we are given only indications that the whanau need help, an action which indicates an inability to solve problems, dependence or inadequacy. In the first four paragraphs there is a strong imbalance in the portrayals of the two groups despite the early reference to partnership.

This imbalance is compounded by the failure in paragraph 5 to specify which 'researchers' are credited with producing 'the world's largest genealogical record of the disease'. The only researchers introduced so far are the genetics team, which creates the impression that the geneticists constructed the genealogy. This interpretation would be supported by the casting of family members in the role of passive victims, through descriptions of the family having been 'plagued' by its genetic makeup.

The failure to identify clearly which researchers were carrying out particular tasks is repeated in paragraph 9, which says of the genealogy researchers that 'they' traced cases from 1915. The only plural noun in the previous paragraph is 'the scientists', which reinforces the understanding of the geneticists as responsible for compiling the genealogy. The whanau members are portrayed as passive for the remainder of the article – too sick to survive when they go to their doctor, put on monitoring programmes, being given tests. In the light of this description, Guilford's insistence in paragraph 15 that none of the progress 'would have been possible without the Maori family's input' is puzzling, as their contribution has not been adequately described. Likewise the allocation of returns from the work in paragraph 17 indicates the unexplicated division of labour in the research.

Discussion

Discourse in all its multi-layered complexity is used in the production of the media stories about the Aotearoa/New Zealand discovery of a gene that causes

inherited stomach cancers to produce positions, relations and meanings concerning those involved. News journalism discourse practices have constructed the whanau as sick, passive and subordinate to Pakeha expertise. We would argue that these subject positions are a subset of those produced in the similar but differently focused studies of Henry and Tator (2002), which show media depictions of Canadian indigenous peoples as problematic and unhealthy.

From the HRC news release and other sources we know of the agency of the whanau in initiating, directing, contributing to and applying the findings of the research. However, our critical discursive analyses of these data reveal that the main corpus of the press coverage elects to tell the story as if Maori were involved as victims of a terrible disease rather than innovative participants in developing the understanding of and responses to inherited stomach cancer.

We argue that there is a factor centred on the colonial relationship that Pakeha have maintained over Maori since the mid-19th century, in addition to whatever other effects are operating. Several features can be put forward in support of this claim. The consistent elision of whanau, cancer victims and researchers is one of the key mechanisms by which the Maori contribution to the research is lost in the coverage we studied. The effect is achieved in part by providing too little or ambiguous background material to facilitate readers' understandings of the roles of different parties to an action and we believe that we deconstructed this process at work in both of the newspaper articles analyzed in detail. A small minority of journalists managed to find and transmit this information from the HRC news release. Again there is a strong congruence with the available comparable studies (Jakubowicz et al., 1994; Weston, 1996; Meadows, 1999; Henry and Tator, 2002) from which this is a major critique of existing media practices.

The matter of source use is a telling marker of the underlying power relations that are operating in this case, with news reports at the time the story broke quoting Pakeha over Maori at a rate of almost four to one. These observations are entirely consistent with the study by Meadows (1999) which is strongly focused on the matter of source and fits with many of the publications reviewed earlier (e.g. van Dijk, 1993b; Jakubowicz et al., 1994; Campbell, 1995). Despite their naming in the HRC press release and co-authorship of the scientific paper in *Nature* (Guilford et al., 1998), the vast number of media outlets made very little use of the Maori sources that were available. Where they did use the Maori sources, it was largely to give the experience of the family rather than accounts of involvement and contributions to the research discoveries. It is hard not to conclude that they regarded the geneticists as more authoritative than the Maori researchers, despite the role of the latter at the heart of the project.

We believe there are also strong linkages with prior ideological categories and resources that earlier research argues are centrally implicated in a set of deep-seated oppressive discourses of Maori/Pakeha relations (Nairn and McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Wetherell and Potter, 1992; McCreanor, 1997) or First Nation/Canadian relations (Henry and Tator, 2002). For example, recurrent depiction of the whanau as incapacitated by illness resonates strongly with discourses of morbidity and mortality among Maori which imply that they are ill adapted to living in the modern world and suffer disproportionate levels of health problems because of this weakness (McCreanor and Nairn, 2002). The consistent under-description of Maori activity is congruent with a discourse of the Maori population that flexibly dichotomizes it as 'good' or 'bad' allowing groups and individuals to be rhetorically positioned according to the needs of the speaker (Nairn and McCreanor, 1991). There is also an overall association with a profoundly perjorative view of Maori culture as inherently inferior to Pakeha culture (Wetherell and Potter, 1992; McCreanor, 1993) and, therefore, incapable of making an equal or even significant contribution to Pakeha knowledge creation activities.

These studies and commentators cited earlier indicate a consistent construction of Maori issues in mainstream media. Maori are under-represented and positioned as a problem in stories of conflict or bad news. News stories construct images of Maori as dependent, incompetent and burdensome in ways that resonate with the embedded discourses and which therefore reinforce Pakeha dominance.

Our analysis of newsworthiness also fits with these observations. The combined coverage suggests that news-workers identified the disequilibrium as the high rate of inherited stomach cancer among Maori, which the stories assume will be reduced by the Pakeha scientists' gene discovery. Thus, the bulk of the stories cast the Maori family as a problem that Pakeha scientists had to fix. The facts of Maori initiative, research, collaboration and management were incompatible with Pakeha 'common sense' and are managed by writing them out of stories in ways which restore the general expectation that it will be Pakeha excellence and competence in knowledge creation that solves the problem. The existence of the BOP story and two television documentaries that concentrated on the whanau's experience highlights the predominant negative positioning of Maori.

This is colonial coverage – it functions to reinforce and reproduce the subordinate position of Maori and their position of 'other' to the norm of modern Pakeha society. It weakens voices that assert an active and positive role for Maori. The colonial power imbalance between helpful Pakeha scientists and a problem Maori whanau is made to seem natural, normal and unchangeable.

Media workers regularly describe their activities as holding a mirror to society, reflecting back what is happening in a neutral and objective way. In the light of this case study and these examples, this is naïve. The media construct stories about how the world works. As Maharey (1990) noted, the media:

decide what are important issues, who should be listened to and who should be marginalized, ignored, ridiculed and stereotyped. The agenda the media construct is overwhelmingly oriented towards the status quo view of the world.

A key exception to the colonial media construction of Maori appears to be independent Maori media such as *Mana News*. Unfortunately we were unable to analyze *Mana News* coverage of the stomach cancer story, as archive copies were not available. Te Awa (1996) found in a study of this radio service that it allowed sources more time and opportunities to speak in news stories, included background and context in more than 90 percent of stories and that 'reference to something positive' was a core news value. 'This variation away from single-minded emphasis on negativity represents the difference in news perspectives of traditional mainstream media to that of Maori media.'

One way to reduce colonial media constructions of Maori is to foster and resource the development of more Maori-controlled media outlets. These initiatives will enable alternative constructions of Maori activities and issues that will challenge the entrenched Pakeha ideology of race relations in Aotearoa. The first broadcast in late 2003 from a national Maori television service will be a positive step along this road. However, as Ranginui Walker (2002: 231) says, colonial reportage will not cease without 'a radical change in the culture of the mainstream media'.

One such radical change would be for journalists to abandon the sinking ship of objectivity and acknowledge that they swim in the currents of competing ideologies. Journalists should taste the water and recognize that in rejecting one set of ideas, they reproduce another, usually dominant, ideology.

Local commentators (e.g. Morrison, 2002) may acknowledge the subjective nature of journalism but see fairness in terms of avoiding 'personal agendas', rather than a systemic colonial news framework. Journalists need to become more reflexive about their work, to question collective, internalized racist mindsets and cultural blinkers. It is only through doing so that they will see a Pakeha perspective as one among many, partial rather than universal.

Other commentators (Wilson, 1990; Jakubowicz et al., 1994; Henry and Tator, 2002) have stressed the importance of recruitment strategies to ensure Maori and other indigenous people are in decision-making positions in newsrooms and media management. McGregor (1991b: 8) said that newspaper editors 'apparently lack the commitment for affirmative action' and little

seems to have changed. One New Zealand polytechnic has a long-running Maori journalism course and three run a shorter introductory course but the only scholarships for Maori journalism students guarantee jobs for two students a year at Independent Newspapers Limited publications.

In this country official media watchdogs, the New Zealand Press Council and the Broadcasting Standards Authority, have had no impact on poor media performance on Maori issues. The NZ Press Council's response to a complaint about irrelevant race-tagging in crime reporting, which broke the existing house rules of the editors concerned, was to 'invite' the editors to avoid the practice. It did not issue its usual press statement about its finding and as an industry-funded body has been allowed no power to sanction or penalize publications. More recent statements of ethical principles including representation of diversity by the NZ Press Council and INL have been described as 'superficial' and 'inadequate' by local commentators (Tully and Elsaka, 2002).

An independent watchdog, resourced to monitor the media's performance on Maori issues annually, would also contribute to better media performance. International examples include the UK National Union of Journalists' race relations working party (cited in McGregor, 1991a) and the annual report card issued by the Canadian Islamic Congress (cited in Henry and Tator, 2002).

Although we are clear that our analysis and commentary belong to the issue of Maori/Pakeha relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand, we are also hopeful that the approach and techniques used may be of more general interest. In particular, we feel that work in this vein can be of use to indigenous and marginalized groups, and others who work with them, where the struggle for voice and social justice is often crucially aided or undermined in media processes and products.

Notes

- 1 In this sense those traditions of social science that are committed to the systematic interrogation of 'naturalized' dominant discourses of social life that play a crucial role in the reproduction of oppression.
- 2 Maori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand.
- 3 Pakeha is a Maori term for non-Maori New Zealanders.
- 4 Whanau is a Maori term for extended family.
- 5 Hui is a Maori term for meeting.
- 6 Maori rightwing politician and Pakeha property magnate respectively.
- 7 The Haka Party Incident was a physical confrontation between young Maori and Pakeha, over an obscene caricature of a Maori cultural icon, the haka.
- 8 Waitangi Day is an annual commemoration of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between the British Crown and the Maori people in 1840. Contested

interpretations of the Treaty as alternatively ratifying or extinguishing Maori sovereignty make the day a focus for opposed celebration and protest.

- 9 News releases are available from corresponding author (JR).
- 10 Whakapapa is a Maori term that is similar in meaning to the English word genealogy.
- 11 Tapu is a Maori term that means sacred or forbidden.

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