

Mass Media in Aotearoa: An Obstacle to Cultural Competence

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Studies of mass media news materials show that the dominant culture is not recognised as a culture and that its role in shaping society is thereby naturalised. In marked contrast, portrayals of indigenous peoples and minority ethnic groups present individuals as (negatively) different and their culture is trivialised. This article describes how these patterns sabotage psychology practitioners' efforts to develop and maintain cultural competence.

"Systems that are established by the newcomers [settlers] then ensure this redistribution continues until colonization is explicitly acknowledged and addressed" (Cram, 2009, p.210)

Building on the findings of our studies of New Zealand media (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005; Rankine et al., 2008) and the HRC funded project "Media, health and wellbeing in Aotearoa" (Gregory et al., 2011); this article aims to encourage psychologists to see and act on the implications of identified media practices for efforts to develop and sustain cultural competence. We outline the HRC study, briefly review relevant international media research, before describing how mass media routinely mask and normalise Pākehā culture. We show how the disparaging portrayals of Māori appear to justify the fragmented representations of Māori culture in the mass media and conclude with a discussion of how these practices threaten or undermine efforts to develop and sustain culturally competent practice.

For "Media, health and wellbeing in Aotearoa" the authors collected a three-week, representative sample of New Zealand news media – print (metropolitan, regional and local

newspapers), radio (RNZ, Radio Live, ZB network), and television (TVNZ, TV3, Prime, and MTS) that was analysed for content and themes. Those analyses were supplemented by focus group discussions about New Zealand media with Māori and non-Māori groups and interviews with journalists and media managers that were analysed thematically. The aim of the project was to explore the mass media treatment of Māori in national life, and to assess the impact of negative discourses about Māori on Māori wellbeing and on Māori/Pakeha relations.

Mass media in modern societies

As the storytellers of our society, mass media are simultaneously products and reproducers of the dominant culture (Silverstone, 2007). Across factual and fictional genres, mass media routinely construct the world within which all, practitioners and clients, live. That construction, shaped by and utilising cultural and discursive resources developed by the dominant culture, owes much to the homogenous society imagined in the 19th century rush of nation-building (Anderson, 1991). Analysing media the authors, like other researchers (Barclay & Liu, 2003; Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008; Smith

& Abel, 2008) assume that discourse – language in use – is both shaped by and, concurrently, gives meaning and structure to people's social and experiential worlds. Consequently, we all, always, live in a cultural world (Black & Huygens, 2007; McHoul & Rapley, 2001), because the world we experience, know, and understand is framed within and depends upon the regnant culture. In this "mediated environment" (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008, p.1109), the mass media, by focusing on the deviant, the marginal, and the novel, routinely implicate and thereby re-affirm and re-imagine dominant understandings of what is normal (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987, 1991; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1998). Effectively, mass media stories naturalise the real world as imagined by the dominant, culture-defining group (Black & Huygens, 2007); yet, and this of particular importance for practitioners, the mass media are the primary basis of our knowledge about citizens whom we do not know personally. This was trenchantly expressed by Hartley, "The only *real* (sic), contact with others is, paradoxically, *symbolic* (sic), and rendered in the form of stories, both factual and fictional, in the electronic and print media" (1996, p.207).

A vital implication of Hartley's argument is that while practitioners probably do not intentionally look to the mass media for knowledge about their own or others' cultures, they are routinely exposed to that mediated 'knowing'. That exposure to portrayals of other people that have both an apparent

obviousness and a taken-for-granted authority is so relentless it becomes difficult to recognise that experiences of our own and other people's actions are, in these ways, located within "culture, and discourse and history" (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008, p.xix). For cultural competence this understanding of media identifies two areas of concern: how is the dominant culture represented, and how are the members and cultures of non-dominant groups characterised?

Cultural competence

Since 2006 cultural competence has been part of core competencies for the practice of psychology in New Zealand (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2006a). There are three elements in this specification of cultural competence: understanding of one's self as a culture-bearer, recognition of the "historical, social and political influences on health" (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2006a, p.5), and being open to the cultural world of clients (Love & Waitoki, 2007; Ramsden & Spoonley, 1993). Culturally competent practitioners are expected to modify their practice according to the situation and their client's needs (Love & Waitoki, 2007). Understanding one's self as a culture-bearer requires practitioners to identify and reflect on both their personal preconceptions - their cultural standpoint - and the culture of the discipline of psychology, tasks made more difficult by any masking or misrepresenting of one's own or the discipline's culture. Similarly, being able to recognise historical, social and political influences of health will be less likely if the influences are denied or obscured, and if portrayals of a client's cultural world have been fragmented - lacking coherence and context - it may be very difficult for a practitioner to be open to that world. The vast majority of psychologists practising in New Zealand, some 90% of trainees and practitioners, self-identify as "NZ European" or "Other European" placing themselves in the culture defining group (New Zealand Health Information Service, 2006) who are particularly affected by these three difficulties.

In a just society, culturally competent practice would be supported by the society and its mass media

(Silverstone, 2007). That would mean that all cultures, including the dominant, would be identified as cultural and media, especially in former colonies, would represent the cultures of the indigenous people and other groups with the same assumption of normality and richness with which the dominant culture is represented. Unfortunately that is not the case in New Zealand (ECOSOC United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2006; Ramsden, 2000, 2002; Wepa, 2005, 2007) and consequently, at all times, psychologists must be alert to that which undermines their efforts to develop cultural competence so they can resist effectively. Individuals who are monocultural and monolingual, like the majority of Pākehā New Zealanders (Bellett, 1995), are especially vulnerable to such impacts as they have no easily accessible point from which they can identify the "media saturated world" (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008) as cultural and, therefore, struggle to identify the framing culture.

News media and the culture defining group

Analysing our representative samples of news stories about Māori in newspapers, radio and television we found no themes concerning Pākehā as a group, although there were many negative themes about Māori (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005; Rankine et al., 2008). That absence of discourse about Pākehā as a group occurs because Pākehā individuals, groups, and situations are routinely depicted as ordinary or normal so that the values, beliefs, and practices of the hegemonic culture appear natural, commonplace and consequently not 'newsworthy'. Telling stories in this way presumes readers know, endorse, and will utilise whatever cultural elements are required without needing to have those elements identified for them, so the dominant culture is simultaneously affirmed and masked. The myriad mundane repetitions of this practice that constitute discursive practice in newsmaking (and other social domains) construct the culturally dominant group as the norm, the standard community against which other groups are identified and evaluated. Masking the dominant culture in this way, allows speakers and thinkers to insist that ethnic identity is

irrelevant to the way in which society is structured or managed (Moewaka Barnes, et al., 2005; Rankine, et al., 2008). Insisting that cultural or ethnic identity is irrelevant is manifest in Pākehā resistance to ethnic definition (Statistics New Zealand, 2006), the monitoring of Māori outcomes (Nairn et al., 2009), and opposition to steps to rectify social and health disparities (Brash, 2004).

Three brief print media examples show these processes at work. First, from the lead paragraph of a *Daily Post* story (October 2004): "Most of us know it as Lake Rotorua, but to many local Māori it is Te Rotorua nui a Kahumatamomoe". The writer identifies with the majority of readers: "most of us", who call this body of water 'Lake, Two lakes'. That unmarked commonplace naming is contrasted to that used by "many local Māori" who have been grammatically segregated by the 'but'.

Second, the cover of *Metro* magazine (November 2004) asked: "Hone Harawira and the Māori Party: what have we got to fear?" Here the colon separates the "we" of the readers from those Māori who may threaten them. The ambiguity of the tag question - it may be read either as dismissive or deeply concerned - offers Pakeha only two options both of which evaluate Māori negatively.

A third example is drawn from the cover of *North & South* magazine (June 2008): "They're not rugby heroes, not gang members. They're the fast growing Māori middle class. Prepare to adjust your stereotypes". Here the writer, in mobilising the readers' - "your" - stereotypes to summarise the story has also segregated those readers from the "fast growing Māori middle class". Each example encodes a social positioning that separates Māori and Pakeha assigning the latter normality and some superiority. For Māori and other ethnic minorities, being constructed as outside the dominant culture in these ways is a painful everyday experience (Essed, 1991).

Readers should not be misled by the apparent slightness of these examples; the pronouns - "most of us", "we", "your" - are routinely used in constructing the dominant cultural group as a simple

a-cultural aggregation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Other phrases widely used for the same purpose include: 'the public', 'New Zealanders', 'the nation', 'taxpayers', 'Kiwis', 'us', or 'our'. In Pou Kōrerō (2007, p.90), Carol Archie summarised the practice: "...we don't write about 'Pākehā leaders', 'Pākehā activists' or 'Pākehā MPs'. But 'Māori leaders', 'Māori activists' and 'Māori MPs' are part of the everyday news language." That is particularly true in crime reporting, where a compliant news media persistently reproduce Police over-labelling of Māori and people from minority ethnic groups, while ignoring or under-labelling Pākehā ethnicity (Kernot, 1990; McCreanor et al., 2011; Rankine et al., 2008). News media are extremely resistant to labelling Pākehā spokespeople as such, or identifying systems or organisations as Pākehā-dominated (personal communications, Suburban Newspapers, 2008; New Zealand Herald, 2009).

Another documented example of marking-off other peoples from the dominant group is provided by Phelan and Shearer's (2009) analysis of newspaper reports of the foreshore and seabed debate in 2003 and 2004. They found the phrase 'Māori issue' was used 55 times, while the phrase 'Pākehā issue' appeared only twice, both in the phrase 'Māori versus Pākehā issue'. Examining editorials about the topic, they found that 'Māori' was used 44 times and Pākehā group or ethnicity was never mentioned - always being subsumed in a larger national category. Unsurprisingly, Phelan and Shearer (2009) found that the politically-loaded labels 'activist' and 'radical' were overwhelmingly applied to Māori and their supporters during this debate by journalists who used 64% of the 'radical' and 73% of the 'activist' labels. The authors described the lack of any alternative framing of the event in news media as ironic, "since arguably the most 'active' and decisive political energy in the ... conflict was a heavily mediated sense of a 'Pākehā' backlash to the Court of Appeal ruling" (p.231).

There are published accounts of Pākehā culture - its concepts and practices - that describe how it differs from those of Māori or other ethnic minorities (e.g. Abel, 2006; Fleming, Taiapa, Pasikale & Easting, 1997;

Metge, 2001; Metge & Kinloch, 1984). Cultural concepts in which the dominant culture and practices differ from those of other groups include, among others: the emphasis on the nuclear family rather than whānau; how time is understood; the use of money; making decisions; how to run meetings; and expectations about eye contact and silence in conversation. However, such descriptions of Pākehā culture have had restricted circulation and, as mass media neither routinely identify such practices as cultural nor utilise such descriptions in telling news stories, the culture of the dominant group is masked, an absence that underpins the "taken for grantedness of particular constructions of national identity" (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, p.222).

The news media construction of Pākehā as the norm also refuses to acknowledge the unequal power relations between Pākehā, indigenous, and minority cultural groups (Robson & Reid, 2001). A practice that renders invisible the privilege Pākehā receive from living in a system based on their values and encourages defensive reactions among Pākehā when challenged about Pākehā power and control. The mass media-promoted challenges to cultural safety initiatives provide a clear example of this (Ramsden, 2000, 2002). Those challenges were grounded in the subjective responses of particular students whose interpretations of their training were granted sufficient authority to support the story and to encourage fears that Māori were taking over the training of nurses and midwives. Those assaults on the integrity of cultural safety were particular instances of the creation of 'news'. Fiske (1987) summarised the process:

"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."

Disequilibrium is identified by and in relation to the dominant culture (Fiske, 2000; Gabriel, 2000). In many mass media stories about Māori issues, the disequilibrium is a challenge to existing Pākehā control, while a Māori approach often defines the disequilibrium as originating in the expropriation of Māori

resources (Abel, 2006; Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005; Rankine et al., 2008; Smith, 2006).

Mass media and the 'Others'

Mass media project and sustain a relatively homogeneous imagining of their society (Anderson, 1991; Belich, 1996): effectively inviting readers and audiences to construct a sense of who "we" are through the contrasting portrayals of the "Others", the people and groups who are characterised as "not us" because of different beliefs, practices and behaviour (Cottle, 2000). Those differences of culture are mostly accomplished by emphasising negatives such as failing to fit in and alleged threats to the majority's security or way of life. Further, the impact of those topic choices is compounded by a preference for White sources (McGregor & Comrie, 1995; Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005; Rankine et al., 2008; Van Dijk, 2007). These production practices offer their audiences the reassurance that the strangers are being monitored, what Fiske (2000) terms "White watch", while confirming derogatory, commonsense representations of them as "Other" (Couldry, 2004; Couldry & McCarthy, 2004; Silverstone, 2007). Consequently:

..., the marginalized and the excluded can be ontologically disenfranchised from humanity, misrecognized as 'Other', exploited and oppressed... (Cottle, 2000, p.2).

Clearly such portrayals are unlikely to inform audiences about minority cultures, because reported actions are rarely placed in context. Instead, the offered explanations emphasise personal characteristics, deviance from dominant practices and values, and routinely associate actions with 'race' further obscuring the culture of those depicted.

Indigenous peoples

Mass media portrayals of indigenous peoples in contemporary colonial societies: Australia, (Banerjee & Osuri, 2000; Simmons & LeCouteur, 2008), Canada (Alia & Bull, 2005; Furniss,

2001; Harding, 2006), New Zealand (Barclay & Liu, 2003; Thompson, 1953, 1954a, 1954b; Walker, 1990), and the United States (Daniels, 2006; Poindexter, Smith & Haider, 2003) construct the indigenous as ongoing threats to and drains on the established social order. Central to construction of that threat is the surveillance of indigenous peoples, their organisations and practices; what Harding (2006, p.231) calls “keeping aboriginal people ‘in their place’” (Nairn, et al., 2009). Consistent with that sense of threat are representations of indigenous people as primitive and violent, achieved through telling stories about actual violence (Budarick & King, 2008; Harding, 2006) or stories in which violence is latent but available for readers’ interpretative work (Daniels, 2006; Simmons & LeCouteur, 2008). Mass media have been shown to utilise other negative personal characteristics in their constructions of indigenous people such as: laziness, improvidence, and grasping opportunism (Furniss, 2001; Thompson, 1954a). McCallum (2007, p.7) described such news items as “routine but not regular”: they were not common but those that appeared were regularly framed in these pejorative ways.

In New Zealand only a small proportion of daily mass media news items, generally less than two per cent whatever the medium, are stories about Māori people (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005; Rankine, et al., 2008) and the items that appear are usually not about Māori achievements, priorities and culture. For example, in our representative sample (21 days) of mass media television news, collected between November 2007 and April 2008, we identified only 17 Māori stories in mass television news, a total of 28 items out of the 1757 items broadcast by the five evening bulletins. Seven of those 17 stories concerned implied or acknowledged abuse of or violence to Māori children and a further two alluded to Māori men as violent. Three stories were the deaths of older Māori men and another three depicted Māori reaction to actions of members of the dominant group. Across these items Māori culture was represented by fragments: practices excerpted from their cultural context, and occasional words of te reo. Over the same 21 days, the sampled New

Zealand newspapers averaged one item of Māori news per day (Rankine et al., 2011), while for state radio such items were about 4.6% of total coverage (McCreanor et al., 2011).

More than fifty years earlier, Richard Thompson (1953, 1954a, 1954b) analysed a representative corpus of New Zealand newspaper items from 1950. He found that Māori, when represented, were portrayed as: lazy, irresponsible, dole-bludging, dirty, socially and morally lax, ignorant, superstitious, and opportunist, living in over-crowded accommodation and failing to cultivate or care for their land (Thompson, 1954a). He also reported that race-labelling was almost wholly confined to the reporting of Māori news (Thompson, 1954b).

More recent researchers identified similar patterns: selective reporting of negative events using anti-Māori themes, reliance on non-Māori sources, and unequal use of race labels creating and sustaining disparaging, one-sided representations of Māori (Kernot, 1990; McGregor & Comrie, 1995; Rankine & McCreanor, 2004; Spoonley & Hirsh, 1990). Māori culture and language appeared rarely and only in attenuated forms in two representative samples of television news and newspapers. A relatively common instance of such attenuation is provided by the television images of the wero (challenge) and pukana (grimaces in haka), that, because they routinely appear excerpted from the cultural context, are easily co-opted to exemplify the primitive aggression stereotypically associated with Māori. Similarly, stories reporting claims that women are silenced within powhiri, often include no comments from Māori women, while the initiating event that occasioned the claim is not contextualised within tikanga Māori (Moewaka Barnes, et al., 2005; Rankine, et al., 2008). In summary, the research shows that Māori are routinely monitored for deviance, and that Māori events, Māori people, and tikanga Māori are marginalised in their own land (Abel, 2006; Barclay & Liu, 2003; McGregor & Te Awa, 1996; Ramsden & Spoonley, 1993; Walker, 2004; Wilson, 1990). In the words of Rodolfo Stavenhagen:

“These findings [...] highlight a systemic negative description of

Māori in media coverage”, United Nations Special Rapporteur, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, reporting on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people in Aotearoa New Zealand, (ECOSOC United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2006, p.17)

Clearly anyone exposed to this monotonously negative construction of Māori people and their culture will be adversely affected unless they take active steps to acquire more reliable information and the means to understand it constructively.

Mass media and Māori health

Mass media representations of Māori health provide a particularly important example of the processes described above. Many ‘Māori health’ stories in the mass media, like so much of the research on which they are based, are framed within the deficit model (Robson & Reid, 2001). In that framework there is no recognition that the health system and the practices of health professionals influence outcomes (Hodgetts, Masters, & Robertson, 2004). Rather, reports focus on differences between Māori and Pākehā, or the non-Māori population, and define those differences as the problem. In an analysis of 44 ‘Māori health’ newspaper items, Māori were routinely reported as over-represented in national disease statistics (Rankine et al., 2008). By consistently focusing on individuals and their lifestyles and, by neither exploring nor explaining the importance of social context and the contribution of the health system, the items effectively blamed Māori people for that crisis. That construction enabled items discussing treatment plans or intervention costs to imply that Māori, represented as failing to take responsibility for their own health, were an unnecessary charge on “us”, the presumed non-Māori audience.

An earlier study of newspaper items about Māori health found that Māori were persistently constructed as sicker and poorer than members of the dominant cultural group; a long sustained echo of the earlier settler talk of Māori as a “dying race” (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005, p.23). Similarly, an analysis of media coverage of

the 2003 report *Decade of Disparity* (Hodgetts et al., 2004) showed that views blaming individual Māori and Māori health services for Māori health status were widespread. Initial coverage did report both structural and lifestyle explanations for health disparities but later commentaries ignored the structural explanations offered in the report, preferring to blame lifestyle choices and the ineffectiveness of Māori health services. Commentators did not question whether public health services were effective for their Māori clients. The authors noted a disturbing pattern in the analysed items. Where a Māori person offered a structural explanation there was always another speaker who presented an opposing, lifestyle focused account but there was no such 'balance' when non-Māori sources blamed the disparities on a putative Māori refusal to take personal responsibility. Evidence that might contradict this Māori-blaming - for example, that Māori exercised more than Pākehā and ate less fast food was ignored, as were the more holistic and culturally grounded Māori models of health (Hodgetts et al., 2004).

Some health research has placed Māori health data within its historical, social, and political context. Those researchers have compared current and historical Māori data to show trends, have emphasised the role of contextual variables like location and socio-economic status, and have explored the roles of colonisation and marginalisation in creating and maintaining health disparities (Ajwani, Blakely, Robson, Tobias & Bonne, 2003; Ministry of Social Development, 2003; Public Health Advisory Committee, 2004). Such reports would enable practitioners to understand the "historical, social and political influences on health" (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2006a, p.3). Regrettably that interpretative context was largely absent from news media items about those reports that continued comparing indigenous health outcomes with those of the privileged, dominant group in stories that implicitly assumed the existence of the mythic 'level playing field' and failed to acknowledge the cumulative structural advantages colonisation brought and continues to bring to Pākehā.

It is instructive to look at a particular

instance of such reporting to see how those patterns are realised. On February 5, 2007 the Ministry of Health launched a "chart book profiling health of New Zealanders 65 and older" prepared by an "Epidemiology Group Public Health Intelligence" (*Manawatu Standard*, 6 Feb. 2007). Headlined, "Govt chart book looks at Māori health", the item refocused "Extensive data about New Zealand's elderly..." (para. 1) onto journalist-chosen comparisons between three sub-groups in the data. The sub-groups the journalist(s) chose were: 50-64 vs 65+, women vs men, and non-Māori vs Māori. Consequently, the first paragraph continued: "...women live longer, Māori die younger and people older than 65 are more likely to have visited a GP...". Six of the other seven newspapers reporting the launch: *Bay of Plenty Times*, *Dominion Post*, *Hawkes Bay Today*, *Marlborough Express*, *Northern Advocate*, and *The Press*, included the same information in their first paragraph. Readers were also told that: "At 50 Māori women and men had shorter life expectancy than non-Māori", had higher rates of mortality and hospitalisation for "almost all types of cardiovascular disease", most cancers, and "chronic obstructive pulmonary disease". Further reported comparisons with non-Māori were: Māori men (50-64) more than 2.5 times more likely to have diagnosed diabetes, and Māori women were three times more likely to smoke.

This instance of choosing to highlight such Māori/non-Māori comparisons exemplifies the routine nature and content of the 'sicker and poorer' construction of Māori that appears to be deeply entrenched in New Zealand media representations of the world. Further, as lifestyle factors, such as smoking, are seen as risk factors for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and some cancers coverage that highlights differences in the rates for those conditions enables journalists and commentators who portray Māori as not taking care of their health and therefore burdening 'us', the non-Māori audience. The depth to which that pattern is entrenched was shown by the only item, in three substantial media samples, where Māori were

reported to be healthier than Pākehā (Moewaka Barnes, et al., 2005). In that item the journalist, writing about campylobacter food poisoning, reported that: "Unlike many other diseases, it is more common in Europeans" (*New Zealand Herald*, p.1, 25 September, 2004). As reported the 'European' rate was nearly three times the Māori rate giving New Zealand the highest rate in the developed world. Because, as described earlier, the dominant culture is not acknowledged the suggested explanation for the differential rates focused on "the barbecue a New Zealand institution" without explaining how apparently nation-wide practices could account for the reported differences.

Consequences for cultural competence

In making our judgements about the impact of the media news practices on the core elements of cultural competence we have not assumed that people rely on media stories for knowledge of their own or other peoples' cultures. Rather, our judgement is grounded in two features of modern, complex, fragmented societies. In such societies media representations are practically inescapable: and, in the absence of pro-active efforts to be informed, media provide most of what we 'know' about other members of that society (Hartley, 1996). We have argued that news media practices affect each of the three elements of cultural competence that trainees and practitioners require to be able to step back from and think critically about the assumptions and practices nurtured by their culture and the discipline in which they have been socialised. That stepping back and thinking critically is a fundamental component of culturally competent practice and should be an integral part of vocational training in psychology (Herbert, 1998a, 1998b; Pakeha Treaty Action, 1997). Yet, for members of the dominant, culture-defining group, media practices that routinely mask and naturalise that dominant culture - presenting its values, beliefs and practices as 'how things are' or 'how things are done' - make it significantly more difficult for them to recognise their culture. Even the most generous would acknowledge this hinders efforts

to develop an informed appreciation of one's own culture, or of the cultural basis of psychology. Practitioners who are Māori or who identify with other non-dominant groups may find it easier to 'see' the dominant culture but they still have to contend with its naturalised dominance and ubiquity. Concurrently, media representations of Māori, by giving priority to unattractive and anti-social individuals and presenting actions bereft of their cultural and historical contexts trivialises and mystifies Māori culture making it both less attractive and less able to be known.

What might psychologists do?

Reflecting on media research, both our own and that which we cited, the authors conclude that media practices are unlikely to change in the immediate future. Consequently, if psychologists want to be culturally competent practitioners they, individually and collectively, will have to take responsibility for counteracting the destructive effects of routine media portrayals. To complement the obvious response of seeking out alternative sources of news we outline two actions that, if undertaken in a disciplined manner, would create a firmer foundation for culturally competent practice. The more defensive is suitable for individuals, the more assertive requires collective action.

Evidence of the central role played by named social categories in everybody's social world and social identity makes it clear that they cannot be simply eliminated (Condor, 1996; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; Reicher, Haslam, & Rath, 2008; Turner, 2005) meaning that use of named social categories must be part of any effort to counteract effects of media portrayals. Consequently, the assertive action is to strip the dominant culture of its taken for granted character and consequent invisibility, by calling into question the construction of Pākehā as normative: an action that is best done collectively. This action would contribute to the creation of a speech community in which a more culturally just (Nikora, 1993) way of representing events, situations and people is developed and routinely used. In essence it involves: acknowledging

the dominant, Pākehā culture as one culture among many in New Zealand and identifying it as a regional variant of Western culture with its polyglot origins, elements, and traditions. The obverse of that acknowledgement is that Pākehā are identified as one ethnic group among many, and are not treated as the unmarked normal. Speakers and writers would be even-handed, identifying Pākehā spokespeople, Pākehā MPs, Pākehā priorities, and Pakeha offenders, just as Māori spokespeople, Māori MPs, Māori priorities, and Māori offenders currently are. There are a number of areas that are or could be under our control as psychologists where we might implement this strategy. In such areas: publications, workshops, conferences and other professional meetings, we, collectively, could encourage and support these more culturally just representations. The changes are possible for groups and individuals who are motivated, disciplined and self-reflective and they, in time, can change the talk and thought of others.

The defensive action is routine critical assessment of mass media as an everyday prophylactic. Effective critical assessment is built upon a series of questions:

- From whose point of view is this story told?
- Who is present? How are they named and/or described?
- Who, of those present, is allowed to give their take on the matter?
- Who is absent?
- Whose interests are served by telling the story this way?

These questions, and others that will come from experience with such assessments, disrupt the superficial factuality of news and its framing within the dominant culture. From personal experience the authors know that disruption can motivate one in a number of ways including: searching out indigenous and minority community media. Those media not only provide access to stories and cultural perspectives absent from mass media but, by telling the stories differently, they reinforce the importance of the framing identified through one's critical assessments.

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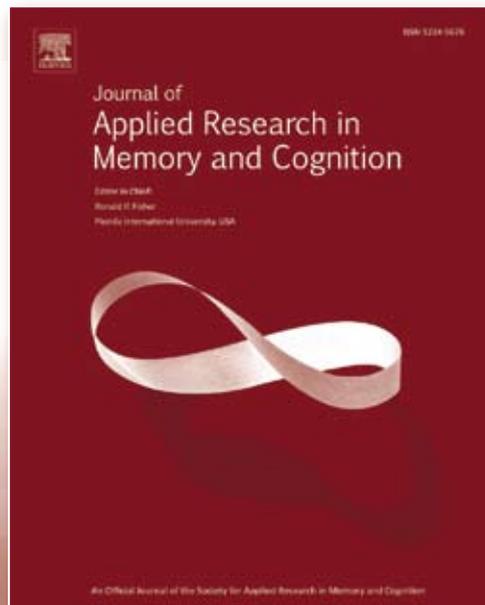


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