Just *journalism* or *just* journalism:
practising safe text

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Abstract

Foucault (1972) argued that an object of knowledge, an episteme, is the result of orders of discourse or discursive formations. Such formations have been clearly established within media texts, and particularly within print media. The critical consensus now holds that the media, in all forms, have become social and cultural regulators which too often impact negatively on non-mainstream cultural and societal groups (see Barker 2003; Cunningham & Turner 2006; Fairclough 1995; Hall 1997; van Dijk 2000). This suggests that journalists must become more aware of the power bases from within which the institutions of the media operate, to ensure that their professional activities are culturally safe for all citizens. The concept of cultural safety began to evolve within the health field in 1989 in New Zealand (Ramsden 1990), and was underpinned by the establishment of relations of trust between institutional representatives and those they serve, for example, between a nurse and patient. Cultural safety is more than mere awareness of, or sensitivity to, other cultures (Ramsden 2000). This paper will define how aspects of the cultural safety concept might be applied to journalism.

Introduction

Media representation of Indigenous Australians has been on the official agenda since 1991. The media, institutional racism and Indigenous Australians have been invariably linked since the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) (RCIADIC

1991). When this is considered alongside the notion that the social construction of Indigenous Australians is largely subjective, based on personal points of view that are juxtaposed with media representation, it is perhaps not surprising that there is little real knowledge about Indigenous Australians by their non-Indigenous counterparts. As '(m)ost white readers have few daily experiences with minorities', they accept as true those representations of the Other[1] found in the print media (van Dijk 2000, p. 36; see also Fairclough 1995, p. 47, Lowe 1995, p. 38 & Meadows 2001, p. ix). In 1996, during the National Media Forum, broadcaster Bill Thaiday noted that the mainstream press

> … go ahead and write about us … the press don't know us, they go ahead
> and do stories about us, never caring who in the hell they hurt. (1996, cited
> in Hartley & McKee 2000, pp. 179-180)

This has created mistrust between media and Indigenous Australians to the extent that, in some cases, mainstream media and non-Indigenous journalists have been banned from covering important Indigenous issues[2]. If such issues remain unknown to those who represent and consequently construct them, then Thaiday's criticism will remain as relevant today as it was over a decade ago (1996, cited in Hartley & McKee 2000, pp. 179-180).

When media representation extends to include, for example, representations of mental health and suicide among Indigenous Australians, and such representations are produced by those uninformed about historical events, then the idea of institutional control through cultural regulation (see, for example, Mickler 1998) gains further support. Such representations rarely include the impact of colonisation as either a contributing factor or a catalyst. There is an emerging argument that journalism education should include ways of informing students on a deeper level about the society in which they live. Some further suggest that this may be an obligation (Dates 2004, cited in Green 2005; Gans 2004; Skinner,

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Gasher & Compton 2001; Turner 2000). It is not unreasonable to advocate that journalism/media studies students require some awareness about the history of the country and its citizens whom they will eventually represent. As Foucault commented in relation to social transformation,

> [t]he problem is not changing people's consciousnesses – or what's in their
> heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production
> of truth. (1980, p. 133)

To understand and to represent the reality of the Other is to understand and so take into one's act of representation the political, economic and institutional conditions which have produced both their experience, and your own position in relation to it (Bollinger 2003, cited in Green 2005; Gans 2004; see also Turner 1994). Also to be considered is the idea that to operate from outside one's own culture only serves to reinforce 'otherness'. Therefore, deeper understandings of the position of the 'self' within one's own culture may provide a springboard for becoming a 'culturally safe' practitioner.

The notion of cultural safety, or *Kawa Whakaruruhau* in the Aotearoa-New Zealand context, should be defined in juxtaposition to concepts that preceded it: cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. It is, therefore, both necessary and pertinent to briefly explain these here. As the term suggests, cultural awareness is the beginning of an awareness of different cultures, that is, it is an understanding that there are differences between cultures, which also involves being aware of one's own reaction to those from different cultures (Ramsden 1992; Weaver 1999). Cultural sensitivity alerts one to the legitimacy of difference and directs one to look closely at personal prejudices and the effect that these might have on others. It is the beginning of looking deeply into one's own realities and the personal power afforded by one's own culture when one is a member of the dominant culture. Cultural competence begins the process of self-judgment, building on

one's knowledge of different cultures and adaptive skills until an acceptable level of competence is reached. One is then considered competently able to engage in successful interaction with the Other (Cross, Barzon, Dennis & Isaacs 1989; Kleinman, Eisenberg & Good 1978; Weaver 1999). It is the rarity of totemic texts, such as the Treaty of Waitangi, that acknowledge functional pre-colonial cultures, that has seen the idea of cultural competence, rather than of cultural safety, more widely assumed in countries outside New Zealand (Weaver 1999).

Cultural safety, then, is more than being culturally aware, sensitive or competent, although these qualities are not excluded from its formulae. There are many debates about the difference between the former concepts and cultural safety; in particular, whether there is actually any difference at all. Therefore, it is worth noting that becoming a culturally safe practitioner involves all of the processes inherent in becoming culturally aware, sensitive and competent, but the main outcome of cultural safety is the empowerment of so called 'minority' cultures, and recognition of the impact of colonisation (Johnstone & Kanitsaki 2007; Ramsden 2002; Richardson & Carryer 2005; Wepa 2003). Further, culturally safe practice is decided by the receiver of the service rather than the practitioner and thus, the concept may be applied to both education and practice (Ramsden 1992).

Originating from within Maori nurse education, cultural safety evolved within the health field as a response to poor health care for Maori patients. Originally, the concept was located within a framework of bi-culturalism[3]. In New Zealand, Maori knowledge and worldviews were not considered in important decision making and, therefore, legislation, education initiatives and policies have been biased towards non-Maori people (pakeha) (Bishop & Glynn 1999). In this sense, cultural safety was a political response to such ongoing failures in cross-cultural awareness. The term 'cultural safety' was initially coined by student Hinerangi Mohi in 1988[4] (Ramsden 2002) and the guidelines for culturally safe practice first

written in 1991 by Irihapeti Ramsden, who developed several key objectives on which to model the concept (see Figure 1). The guidelines were then incorporated into curriculum assessment documents in 1992, and in 2005 the model was revised to take into account a broader definition of culture. However, the basic premise of cultural safety remains that of trust between the nurse and the patient.

Figure 1. Cultural Safety Model Pre-2005
(SOURCE: NURSING COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND, 2005)

Figure 1. The original cultural safety model

While the initial model concentrated cultural safety within the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori health, of interest here are responses to recent reviews which have made it clear that those providers offering cultural safety education within their programs have a variety of ways of delivering the concept. This suggests that the application of the initial model created confusion (Nursing Council of New Zealand 2005). In 2005, as a way of moving towards a consistent national approach, the Nursing Council of New Zealand revised the model. The new model, delivered in three parts, ensures that cultural safety is enacted according to the Council's definition of culture (see Figure 2). This definition is broad enough to include age or generation; gender; sexual orientation; occupation; origin or migrant experience; religion

or spirituality and disability. Further, the new model concentrates the content of cultural safety education within the understanding of the 'self' as cultural bearer, and takes into account historical, social and political contexts and how these influence health; and the development of relationships that engender trust and respect (Nursing Council of New Zealand 2005). However, what is more pertinent is that the new model also situates cultural safety outside Maori health practice, which means that it can now be applied to other health practices and, more importantly for this study, there is the possibility that it can, with some education of the concept, be adapted to suit other professions.

Figure 2. Revised Model
(SOURCE: NURSING COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND, 2005)
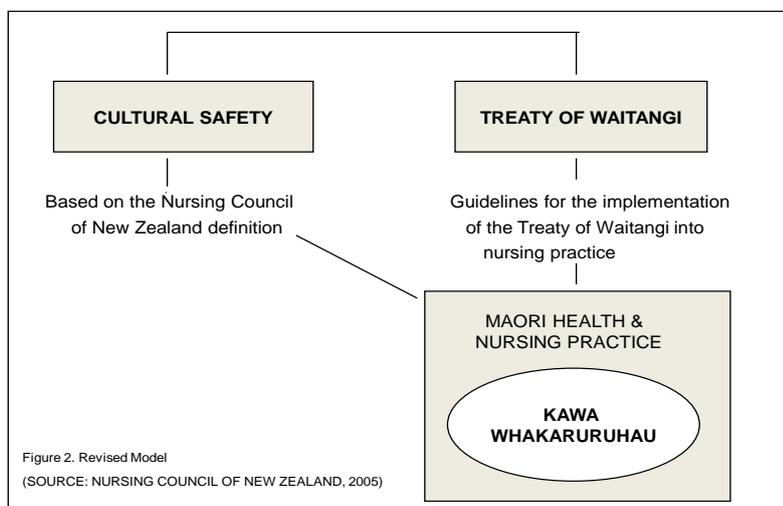
Figure 2. Revised version of cultural safety model

Currently, cultural safety education focuses on teaching students about colonial history and the impact of colonisation on Indigenous people. In this way, students become aware of the places of power and privilege of the majority culture, rather than increasing their knowledge of Indigenous beliefs and customs. From here, students embark on a voyage of self-discovery, that is, they begin to situate themselves within that locus of power and privilege. This journey also requires students to evaluate their own attitudes, beliefs and values—their invisible baggage. Present cultural safety education also aims to identify those attitudes, conscious and unconscious, that exist towards cultural and social difference in health care,

and transform those attitudes by reflection and action (Nursing Council of New Zealand 2005). This means determining from where such attitudes stem, and being aware of the effects of these attitudes on practice.

This revised model, which situates cultural safety outside the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori health practice, may have the potential to be adapted to other professions. In the case of journalism, the concept of cultural safety can be located within the epistemological practice of language and how it is used to represent the Other. Language, or discourse, is involved in the politics of power by its very characteristics, that is, the use of language in certain ways affects social structures. Discourse, when juxtaposed with social practices and institutions, creates a logical argument that brings an understanding about the world. In other words, language, discourse and society form an 'internal and dialectical relationship' (Fairclough 1989, p. 23). With the critical consensus now holding that the media, in all forms, have become social and cultural regulators, which too often impact negatively on non-mainstream cultural and societal groups, there is the suggestion that language 'brokers' such as journalists must become more aware of the power bases from within which the institutions of the media operate, thus ensuring that their professional activities are culturally safe for all citizens.

The same concepts that apply to cultural safety in health education might also be applied to journalism education. Locating the student 'self' within the reality of colonial history and its sustained impact may create an awareness of personal privilege, particularly in the Australian context, when juxtaposed with some understanding of the classical cultures that existed prior to colonisation. The inherent institutional and social power bases within which the student is immersed begin to become apparent when viewed from such privileged places and the student should be able to evaluate where his or her attitudes, beliefs and values lie. When examining attitudes, it is important that students are conscious of and

evaluate both negative and positive attitudes and act accordingly. Reflection is a continual process within cultural safety education and practice. Even those who consider themselves unbiased should practice continual self-reflection to remain so.

It is not enough for the journalist to consider that they are engaging in culturally safe practice; in this context, that distinction should be awarded by the Indigenous communities whom they seek to represent (Ramsden 1992). In the extreme, culturally safe practice implies that if, for instance, a journalist is aware of a personal prejudice towards Indigenous people, then that journalist should not report on Indigenous issues. Unfortunately, this may not be possible in the 'real world' of media journalism, but there is a way that journalism practice might still apply some of the aspects of cultural safety, and that is in the writing and structuring of media reports.

There are many ways in which media reporting favours the majority culture in its representation of a specific event. *Framing analysis*, with its focus on the journalistic convention of *inverted pyramid* writing (Bell 1991; van Dijk 1985), is often used to observe which orders of discourse are being privileged in media reports to keep the news relevant for the intended audience (Fairclough 1995; Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew 1979). The convention of inverted pyramid writing further maintains as its focus information that is important, or relevant to the majority culture. Headlines and leads provide the reader with a concise form of the story, drawing attention and leading the reader through the text, layering the information appropriately. This is referred to by Allan Bell as 'the story in microcosm' (1991, p. 174).

Rhetorical techniques are also common in press reporting. Such techniques include generalisations and 'scare tactics' (van Dijk 1993), which are used to exploit and exaggerate information in such a way as to discredit non-dominant or minority groups and to keep the news relevant for the intended audience. A good example of this is the recent media hype

surrounding the 'Gang of 49' in South Australia in 2007, which prompted headlines such as 'Terror reign', 'Web of fear' and 'Jail gang of 49 to protect our society'.

The technique of generalisation (Teo 2000; van Dijk 1993) or stereotyping can attribute certain negative characteristics, for example, drunkenness or criminality, to a particular cultural group. Such representations may create what Cohen (1972) describes as 'moral panics', leading to the assumption that civil order is at risk from certain cultural groups. Tuchman (1978) and Fairclough (1995) further allude to the rhetorical technique of quotation patterns. This technique employs so-called 'experts' such as government ministers to speak on behalf of the subjects of the story. This serves to provide authenticity to the discourse. A final technique is *over-lexicalisation*. This refers to the practice of using extra, usually unnecessary words, to describe a person in a news story, for example, 'Indigenous youth' and 'female Indigenous lawyer'. It is problematic in that it identifies the subject, sometimes unnecessarily, further contributing to generalisation. Each of these techniques is positioned within the 'truth/power' claims of relevant discursive affiliations.

Through a rejection of these traditional conventions, journalists, by way of their writing and reporting, may begin to address some of the concepts inherent within cultural safety thus: by highlighting the social impacts of colonisation and the subsequent cultural issues that impact on Indigenous Australians and Indigenous health. Culturally safe reporting may also address the issue of the importance of land, or 'country' in the Indigenous sense, to Indigenous Australians, and further draw attention to the link between alcohol related illnesses and removal from 'country'. Additional actions may be as simple as not identifying the subject as Indigenous at all, or the inclusion of an Indigenous voice, perhaps a community leader, within the text. Having said this, it is important for the journalist to ensure that the person to whom they are speaking has authority to speak on behalf of the community (Stockwell & Scott 2000). In these small ways, print media reporting can begin to break down the stereotypes that have existed for so long and journalism may begin to become a culturally safe practice.

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The concept behind cultural safety is the empowerment of the Other (Ramsden 1992). If the multiplicity of cultures in Australia indicates that it is impossible for any one journalist to be sensitively aware of the specific protocols of each, then at least an understanding that such protocols do exist and must be honoured, needs to be produced. The impact of colonisation has had far reaching negative effects for the first peoples of many colonised countries—perhaps none more so than the first Australians. When the often negative representation of Indigenous Australians is considered, it is not unreasonable to advocate that journalism/media studies students require some awareness about the history of the country and its citizens whom they will eventually represent. One way to attempt this is through education and the encouragement of continual self-reflection within both education and practice.

In her thesis, Irihapeti Ramsden argues that:

> [T]he story of cultural safety is a personal story, but also a very public one… It is about human samenesses and human differences, but is also a story about all interactions between nurses and patients because all are power laden. Finally, although it is about nursing, it is also relevant to all encounters, all exchanges between health care workers and patients. (2002, pp. ii-iii).

And, it may be further argued, culturally safe practice is important not just to health professionals, but to all of those working with, and representing human samenesses and human differences.

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Notes

1. See Said, E 1995, *Orientalism,* 2nd edn, Penguin, London.
2. See for example Meadows' (2001) account of the Eva Valley Station native title discussions.
3. In New Zealand, bi-culturalism is the result of the Treaty of Waitangi, a document that was intended to divide sovereignty evenly between the Maori nation and the British Crown. Bi-culturalism does not ignore the fact of multiculturalism, but rather, places first nation peoples before all others.
4. Mohi was a first year student from Te Arawa studying nursing at Christchurch Polytechnic. At the Hui Waimanawa, having listened to conversation around her, she rose to her feet and stated that legal safety, ethical safety, safe practice/clinical base and a safe knowledge base were all very well to expect from graduate nurses, 'but what about Cultural Safety?' Ramsden picked up what she said and with Mohi's permission, from that time adopted the term Cultural Safety to refer to work which has since emerged from the *hui.* A *hui* is a meeting within a Maori community.