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# **Dimensions of Indigenous journalism culture: Exploring Māori news-making in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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## **Abstract**

Indigenous news media have experienced significant growth across the globe in recent years, but they have received only limited attention in mainstream society or the journalism and communication research community. Yet, Indigenous journalism is playing an arguably increasingly important role in contributing to Indigenous politics and identities, and is worthy of closer analysis. Using in-depth interviews, this paper provides an overview of the main dimensions of Indigenous journalism as they can be found in the journalism culture of Māori journalists in Aotearoa New Zealand. It argues that Māori journalists see their role as providing a counter-narrative to mainstream media reporting and as contributing to Indigenous empowerment and revitalization of their language. At the same time, they view themselves as watchdogs, albeit within a culturally-specific framework that has its own constraints. The paper argues that the identified dimensions are reflective of evidence on Indigenous journalism from across the globe.

## **Key words**

Indigenous; journalism; Maori; New Zealand; journalism culture; native journalism; role perception; Indigenous media

## **Introduction**

Like a variety of so-called alternative types of media, the Indigenous media sector has grown over the past decade in many countries and regions, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Scandinavia and the United States. Partly due to the emergence of new technologies, Indigenous peoples around the world have increasingly been able to reach their own urban, regional and remote communities. Having historically been portrayed mainly through the eyes of non-Indigenous media, this development has provided Indigenous peoples an opportunity to have their own voices heard and to tell their own stories, primarily to their own people but also to non-Indigenous communities. As Meadows (2009: 522-23) has argued, these media “enable Indigenous people to deliberate together, to develop their own counter-discourses, and to interpret their own identities and experiences” and in this way they can act “as a cultural bridge between the parallel universes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous society”.

Yet, while Indigenous media in a broad sense have attracted considerable attention from scholars concerned with the way in which Indigenous peoples adopt their own media strategies, news production and journalistic activities within those media have been examined somewhat more rarely. One reason for this may lie in the fact that the vast majority of scholarly work on Indigenous media has been conducted mostly from a cultural studies or anthropological perspective, while the field has attracted considerably less attention from journalism studies or communication researchers. Yet, the way in which Indigenous journalists think about and practise their work is important in order to understand how the growing number of Indigenous news providers across the globe may be contributing to their

own cultures' identities. Journalism is an important cultural resource and remains culturally contextualised, and it is crucial we examine the way in which Indigenous journalism cultures may constitute and identify themselves in a predominantly non-Indigenous news environment.

This paper explores Indigenous journalism culture in the case of the Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand, a country that boasts a relatively sizeable Indigenous news media landscape, with competing news as well as current affairs programs on two television stations, a syndicated radio news service, as well as a monthly magazine. Based on in-depth interviews with 20 Māori journalists, the paper examines their motivations for pursuing their occupation, as well as their views about their professional roles, identifying a number of important dimensions that constitute Māori journalism culture.

### **Indigenous media**

Indigenous media have existed in many parts of the world for a considerable time, but they had been given relatively little attention in mainstream society or academia until around the 1980s and 1990s (Meadows & Molnar, 2002: 9). The past two decades, however, have seen a rapid rise of Indigenous media around the world, and with it a renewed interest in the role that media which are controlled by Indigenous people can play in contributing to Indigenous public spheres.

Research on Indigenous people and the media can typically be divided into two main approaches. The first approach is concerned with the way Indigenous people are portrayed in the mainstream media, where media content is produced by non-Indigenous people. Some examples include analyses of news media coverage of Aotearoa New Zealand's national day (Abel, 1997), mainstream media coverage of Australian Aborigines (Hartley & McKee, 2000; Meadows, 2001), Hollywood's portrayal of Native Americans (Rollins & O'Connor, 1998; Kilpatrick, 1999), or mainstream news portrayals of the Sámi (Pietikäinen, 2003). All these studies show Indigenous people are repeatedly and consistently marginalized and stereotyped in mainstream media, portrayed through a variety of tropes, and are underrepresented among the number of media workers.

The second approach examines the media strategies of Indigenous people themselves, in their attempt to break out of the stereotypical portrayal by the mainstream and to create a space where they can tell their own stories, in their own ways. An example of this approach is the seminal work of Faye Ginsburg (1991, 1993, 1995). Other studies include: an analysis of Native American media and their struggle for cultural sovereignty (Singer, 2001); Indigenous Canadians' adoption of television (Roth, 2000; 2006; Santo, 2004) as well as other media (Alia, 1999); the impact of satellites on Indigenous communication in Australia, Canada and New Zealand (Molnar & Meadows, 2001), the poetics of Indigenous media in Chile (Salazar, 2004); as well as broader overviews of the state of Indigenous media around the globe (Alia, 2010; Browne, 1996; Ginsburg et al., 2002; Wilson & Stewart, 2008).

These two major perspectives are inherently linked, as Ginsburg (2002: 51) points out when she argues that media technologies such as film, video and television "contain within them a double set of possibilities" (Ginsburg, 2002: 51). On the one hand, they can be "seductive conduits for imposing the values and language of the dominant culture on minoritized people". This has famously been described as the 'neutron bomb' effect, a term coined by Inuit broadcaster Rosemarie Kuptana (1982), who argued that non-Indigenous television "destroys the soul of a people but leaves the shell of a people walking around". Kuptana made this reference in view of the absence of native television, however, and as the subsequent period has shown, media technologies can also "offer possibilities for 'talking back' to and through the categories that have been created to contain Indigenous people"

(Ginsburg, 2002: 51). Thus, Indigenous media are almost always a response to the dominant culture's media treatment of Indigenous people.

Indigenous peoples around the globe have in recent decades experienced an “explosion of Indigenous news media, information technology, film, music, and other artistic and cultural developments” (Alia, 2009: 39). Often a result of different cultural and political renaissance processes, these media have allowed Indigenous societies to tell their own stories in culturally-specific ways, enabling them to engage in (re)building their own identities. Increasingly, this process has occurred in a transnational and global way, with numerous collaborative projects, such as the establishment of the World Indigenous Television Broadcasters Network (WITBN) which currently includes representatives from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Solomon Islands, Taiwan, United States, and Wales. The increasing media collaboration between various Indigenous peoples prompted Alia (2003) to argue that they constituted what she called a “New Media Nation”. “No real ‘nation’ in the political sense, it exists outside the control of any particular nation state, and enables its creators and users to network and engage in transcultural and transnational lobbying, and access information that might otherwise be inaccessible within state borders” (Alia, 2010: 7-8).

### **Indigenous journalism culture**

While much attention has been paid to Indigenous media and the role they can play in revitalizing Indigenous communities and rebuilding their identities, Indigenous journalism has typically been only one of many aspects that were examined. This is surprising considering the long history of Indigenous journalism: the first tribal newspaper in the US began publishing in 1828 (Littlefield and Parins, 1984), the first Aboriginal newspaper in Australia appeared in 1836 (Meadows & Molnar, 2002), the first Māori-language newspaper in 1842 (Curnow, 2002), and the first Sámi political newspaper in 1906 (Lehtola, 2005). Nevertheless, there does exist enough evidence for theorizing about the dimensions of journalism culture – here defined as “a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful” (Hanitzsch, 2007: 369) – in Indigenous societies. In the following, these dimensions, identified as empowerment, counter-narrative, language revitalization, culturally appropriate reporting, and the watchdog function, will be discussed.

As the general literature on Indigenous media has argued, Indigenous journalists play a crucial part in the *empowerment* of Indigenous society. Pietikäinen's (2008: 173) interviews with Sámi journalists working in Finland noted that journalists believed they had an important role to play in “providing an alternative public space”, a space that enables Indigenous peoples access for discussion of their issues, on their terms. Such media can be “symbols of empowerment and means for political mobilization of ethnic communities” (Pietikäinen, 2008: 177). Indeed, this process is crucial for Indigenous politics, with Salazar (2003, 2004), who studied Mapuche media in Chile, arguing that Indigenous media are a critical form of making politics.

Closely connected to empowerment is the ability to offer a *counter-narrative* to mainstream media reporting. Many Indigenous news outlets – though not all – started as activist organizations, with Alia (2010: 110) arguing that “throughout history, Indigenous media projects have often begun in ‘illegal,’ ‘outlaw,’ ‘guerilla,’ ‘rebel,’ or ‘pirate’ ways.” Grixti (2011: 343) notes that they are typically “the work of activists who use Western media technologies in order to counter dominant media misrepresentations of Indigenous people by documenting Indigenous cultural traditions from an Indigenous perspective, and in the process articulate Indigenous cultural identities and futures.” Concerned with negative portrayals in the mainstream news media, many Indigenous journalists aim to provide a

narrative that goes in the opposite direction. This can of course result in biased reporting. For example, interviews with Native American newspaper editors showed most thought their publications needed to counter the negative mainstream portrayals by focusing on positive stories about their own people (Perkins, 2003). Similarly, Alia (2009: 41) has noted that her numerous interviews with Indigenous media practitioners and audiences had shown that there was a strong perception of such media as “operating in the people’s interest.”

*Language revitalization* is an important concern in many countries where the dominant culture is non-Indigenous. Pietikäinen’s study of Sámi journalists found they all recognized the role they played in this process, and Browne (2005) has noted that many minority media have to deal with the issue of whether to help revitalize a language. Often, Indigenous media have emerged out of concerns that an Indigenous language may be threatened with becoming extinct. Surveys with journalists in 10 European minority-language communities – such as Basque, Catalan, Galician, Corsican, Breton, Frisian, Irish, Welsh, Scottish-Galic, and Sámi – have found that more than two-thirds of them “understand professional journalism as an activity in which they incorporate a function of language backing, either at the support or advocacy levels” (Zabaleta et al., 2010: 204).

Mainstream news values are often perceived by Indigenous peoples as being based on values that are in contrast with their own. Hence, Indigenous journalism tends to be practised within a *culturally appropriate* environment that is based in Indigenous values and practices. Grixti (2011) notes that Indigenous value systems are typically oriented more towards the collectivity than the individual-focused values of Western societies. Pietikäinen (2008: 177) argues that having their own media makes it possible for Indigenous journalists to “practise culturally typical ways of communication, to recognize experiences, perspectives and topics often disregarded by other media.” Based on a study of newspaper content as well as in-depth interviews, Loew and Mella (2005) found that journalists working for Native American newspapers invoked cultural values in their reporting of the environment. They argued that “native interpretations of legal disputes, political differences, historical events, and economic decisions are driven by a clear sense of place, which, for Native Americans, embodies identity and culture” (Loew and Mella, 2005: 132). In the Pacific Islands, most notably in Papua New Guinea and Fiji, there have been calls from journalists to reclaim Pacific images away from Western news media which “have failed to seriously take Pacific and Indigenous cultures and their world views into account” (Robie, 2004: 249).

Finally, the *watchdog* function, so synonymous with the development of Western journalism, is also a relevant part of Indigenous journalism. It appears that many Indigenous journalists sense a need for being objective reporters and to be watchdogs of those who are in power in their own societies, even if this is not always easy and sometimes quite difficult to reconcile with the aim of focusing on positive stories. In her account of Inuit and First Nations journalists in northern Canada, Alia (2010) has noted their struggles to remain independent of Indigenous governments. This conflict between journalistic objectives and tribal allegiances is rarely easy to resolve for the journalists. As Kemper (2010: 7) has argued in the context of the US, “native journalists are native *and* journalists, regardless of the order in which you put the words. From their writings, it appears it would be unthinkable to most of them to do anything that would undermine the Indigenous people they serve” (emphasis in original). Based on an extensive review of the literature and interviews with tribal journalists, he argues that “there have been and still are enormous pressures, especially when those media outlets are owned by tribes” (Kemper, 2010: 35). When news media are not owned by particular tribes or Indigenous authorities, they may be more likely to act as watchdogs. For example, the news director at Norwegian Sámi radio has been quoted as saying: “Of course we are independent of Sámediggi (Sámi parliament). We maintain a critical point of view. We can’t be the fan club for Sámediggi” (Buljo in Alia, 2010: 133).

All these dimensions are inter-connected, of course. For example, the ability to practise culturally-specific ways of journalism leads to a sense of empowerment. Indigenous journalists appear to consider as their primary goal the provision of information that is relevant to their audiences, their culture and an overarching goal of contributing to the survival of Indigenous identities and languages (see also Santo, 2004). Against the background of developments in Aotearoa New Zealand, Gixti (2011) has noted the interplay between language, cultural identity and political activism. The dimensions identified above also appear to combine in a complex mix that at first glance may be difficult to reconcile, such as the dimensions of empowerment and watchdog. Native American journalist Paul DeMain (2001) has stated that he regards himself as both a “guerrilla” and a “legitimate” journalist – a position which may appear unusual from a traditionally Western understanding that strongly differentiates between the two. One way to deal with the potential conflict is to declare any biases – an approach practised by Indigenous journalists in Malta (Sammut, 2007).

### **Indigenous journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Before examining Māori journalists’ professional views, it is important to briefly provide some context on Indigenous news media in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the first Māori-language newspaper was established in 1842, it took until 1862 for the first Māori-controlled newspaper to be published (Curnow, 2002). Māori newspapers never lasted for very long, and the continuing subjugation through wars and assimilationist policies, which led to a loss of Māori speakers, meant these newspapers died out during the first two decades of the twentieth century (Walker, 2004). It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that Māori journalism would be practised in a meaningful way again. The creation of the Waitangi Tribunal led to at least partial reparations for past injustices committed against the country’s Indigenous population and it also played a crucial part in establishing what may well be regarded as one of the more vibrant Indigenous media sectors. In a decision in 1986, it established that the Māori language was a taonga (treasured possession) which, under the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi – the country’s founding document establishing relations between Māori and the British Crown – needed to be protected and nurtured (Walker, 2004: 268). The decision soon led to the establishment of the first Māori radio stations in the 1980s and, in 2004, the birth of Māori Television (Middleton, 2010). Māori TV’s mission is “to make a significant contribution to the revitalisation of tikanga Māori (Māori values and customs) and reo Māori (Māori language) by being an independent, secure and successful Māori Television broadcaster” (Māori Television, 2012).

Māori journalism today has a variety of outlets. There are 21 iwi (tribal) radio stations which broadcast a syndicated national radio news program; news and current affairs shows in Māori or with a Māori focus on Māori Television and its second, digital, channel Te Reo, which broadcasts exclusively in the Māori language; news and current affairs in the Māori language or with a Māori focus on the state broadcaster Television New Zealand (TVNZ); as well as a small number of magazines but no regular newspaper. The phenomenal rise of the Māori news media sector in just the past three decades has been well-documented in the scholarly literature in Aotearoa New Zealand. The emergence of modern Māori journalism culture can thus be traced back to the year 1983 when the news program *Te Karere* was first aired on TVNZ. Established by journalist Derek Fox with the help of others, it aimed to take a specifically Māori perspective on the news – an approach reminiscent of evidence already discussed from other Indigenous societies. Fox (1992; 1993) is adamant that this does not mean reporting only positive news, but taking a different perspective to that of Pākehā (of European descent) journalists reporting on Māori issues. One example was the mention of interviewees’ tribal affiliations. “These things are important, because Māori people need to

know someone's tribal affiliation in order to properly consider what they are saying in public" (Fox, 1993: 129).

Stuart (2002: 44) has argued that Māori and Pākehā news cultures are "so different that Māori approaches are nearly impossible to reconcile with western cultural approaches to 'news'." He sees significant differences in reporting decision-making processes, for example, where it may be inappropriate for other Māori to comment on decisions that have been made. Writing styles are another aspect, with cultural traditions necessitating a different approach to the news formats developed within a Western context. Journalist Wena Harawira (2008) notes the importance that the Māori language plays for Māori journalists, and the way in which they are able to help shape the language by developing new terms for which there may not have been a Māori word previously. Further, she argues that there are important cultural concepts for journalists to adhere to, such as when interviewing elders. At the same time, she strongly rejects any accusations of biases, saying she would "only accept that kind of criticism if say Radio New Zealand, TVNZ or TV3 are labelled as biased towards Pākehā" (Harawira, 2008).

Comparing Māori and Pākehā radio news, McGregor and Comrie (1995: 36) found the Māori program focused "not on dissention between people but rather on dilemmas for Māori". Archie (2007) argues that Māori media focus more on issues, provide a wider range of views, and do so in a less confrontational way. Comparative studies of Māori and Pākehā television news programs have also found considerable differences. Comrie (2012) found that news on Māori Television had a stronger public service orientation, for example more in-depth interviews, longer soundbites, and they used a strategy frame less frequently than the mainstream Pākehā channels TVNZ and TV3. Particularly the longer airtime given to sources reflects a Māori cultural notion that everyone is entitled to be heard (Comrie, 2012: 287).

## Methodology

Against the background of the literature on and dimensions of Indigenous journalism culture identified earlier, this study's aim was to paint a picture of modern-day Māori journalism culture. So far, there had been no systematic study of Māori journalists' professional views and only very few comprehensive approaches to studying Indigenous journalism culture at large. For this reason, two main research questions guided the analysis: a) What are the main dimensions of Māori journalists' professional views in Aotearoa New Zealand?; and b) To what extent may these views reflect wider developments in Indigenous journalism cultures around the globe?

Twenty Māori journalists were sampled from the following organizations: from TVNZ, five journalists from news program *Te Karere* (in Māori) and three journalists from current affairs show *Marae Investigates* (mostly in English); three journalists from the Radio Waatea syndicated news service (in Māori); and at Māori Television four each from *Te Kaea* (news in Māori) and *Native Affairs* (current affairs mostly in English). Further, one journalist was interviewed from *Mana Magazine*, a monthly publication in English. These media constitute the main outlets for Māori journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand. Eighteen interviews were conducted in Auckland during the week of August 29 to September 2, 2011. Additional interviews were conducted via Skype, one in late September 2011 and another one in February 2012. Respondents included reporters, directors, producers, news editors and general managers. In terms of their iwi affiliations, journalists mirrored the whole spectrum of Aotearoa New Zealand, with all major tribal groups represented.

Journalists' backgrounds varied widely, ensuring a variety of views on Māori journalism would be heard. The youngest journalist was 24 years old, and the oldest was 64. Half the respondents were aged in their thirties, however, reflecting the relative youth that exists in a media sector which has significantly expanded since the arrival of Māori TV. At

the same time, five journalists were over 50, which allowed for crucial insights from these 'elders' of Māori journalism who had vast experience in the business. At the other end of the spectrum, six journalists had less than 10 years' experience, with the least experienced having worked in the industry for three years. The average work experience was around 15 years. The sample was relatively evenly spread on gender terms: nine women and eleven men. The interviewed journalists were highly educated, with a total of 13 journalists having at least a Bachelor's degree, while five others had a diploma or certificate from a polytechnic. Only two journalists did not have a degree, but both had studied for some time at university. Typically, journalists had studied courses in Māori language and development as well as journalism/media studies. Journalists identified mostly as middle-of-the-road or slightly to the left of centre as regards their political views, and in terms of income, most journalists earned between NZ\$70-90,000, although there was considerable variation. It should be pointed out that the above selection did not aim to provide a representative picture of Māori journalists, but rather to provide a variety of views to assist in theory-building around Indigenous journalism culture and its dimensions.

### **Results and Discussion**

The interviews with Māori journalists point to the existence of a number of dimensions which appear to constitute a distinctly Indigenous journalism culture, and which compares with findings from elsewhere across the globe. The respondents' self-descriptions of their professional views are broadly in line with the dimensions identified earlier, in that roles of empowerment, providing a counter-narrative, playing a part in language revitalization, conducting culturally appropriate journalism, as well as being a watchdog of Indigenous leaders were raised as the most important functions that Māori journalism plays in the country.

The majority of respondents, when asked to define journalism, noted the existence of a Māori perspective of the news. This term, introduced more than 20 years ago by Derek Fox (1990, 1992, 1993), provides a crucial foundational element for Māori journalism culture even today. The Māori perspective is connected closely to the development of Māori broadcasting in the 1980s, the purpose of which was language revitalization as well as a way to empower Māori to tell their own stories in light of the widespread stereotypical reportage of all things Māori in the mainstream, Pākehā media of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Māori perspective can be defined as journalistic practice that explicitly focuses on news in the context of what it means for Māori society. It privileges a Māori point of view, but at the same time aims to do so according to the generally agreed reporting guidelines of fairness and balance. It is grounded in and ideologically closely connected to the imbalance that exists in mainstream reporting of Māori issues, and in the desire to empower Māori and to provide a counter-narrative. If Māori journalism's purpose is to serve Māori society, one Radio Waatea journalist said, it is important to focus on the Māori perspective: "We need to provide our perspective on all sorts of issues, right across the broad spectrum of mainstream journalism. There's always a Māori point of view, and there's always a Māori way of telling it."

A senior Māori TV journalist agreed, pointing out that it was now generally acknowledged that everyone wrote from a perspective.

The difference between us and mainstream is that mainstream will try to make out in their journalism courses that there's no such thing as a Pākehā perspective, that they're neutral. But I would challenge them on that. They're not neutral. They come from a Pākehā perspective and they don't say that they come from a Pākehā perspective, but they do, or they have certainly done in the past. But we're willing to



admit that we write from a Māori perspective and how stories affect Māori and we'll say that.

Mostly the stories deal with Māori events and issues, but they can also be about general world events and their implications for Māori.

Providing a counter-narrative to mainstream media reporting was a prime motivation for many of the respondents. A number of studies have highlighted the stereotypical and negative mainstream media coverage of Māori (Abel 1997; Nairn et al 2009; Rankine et al 2011), and it is this coverage that drives many journalists to work in Māori news media.

You had mainstream media who were quite ignorant of Māori issues and then you had a very badly resourced Māori media through radio and a couple of hours a week, maybe, on TVNZ, who could be doing a better job as well. I felt at the time, rather than sit back and complain and criticize, I suppose, it's just in my nature to want to be a part of it. (TVNZ journalist)

A Māori TV journalist agreed: "I've always perceived our role as balancing the inequity in the way that Māori issues were told previous to things like Māori TV."

The counter-narrative also contributes to an empowerment for Māori, a further strong motivation as expressed by the respondents. For example, one Māori TV journalist made it clear the negative reporting in the mainstream media was not so much a motivation for her, but rather to "bring about an awareness of the truths that run underneath the serious issues and the lifestyle elements of the Māori world [...] so that Māori communities can make informed decisions when making choices in our own lives." This desire to report on Māori politics and society was echoed by a TVNZ journalist, who wanted "to be able to influence decisions we are making, because if we don't do that now, then we'll rely on everyone else still telling the same stories." Another Māori TV journalist always knew she wanted to work in a Māori environment, "telling our people's stories because I think they are the most interesting. And they are the ones who I have a strong connection to."

Providing a counter-narrative and contributing to empowerment on one hand, and performing an advocacy role on the other can lead to a certain tension. While advocacy journalism is often rejected by mainstream journalists in Europe and North America, it is quite openly welcomed by journalists in other societies, as well as alternative journalists in the West, which has a long tradition in and, in some cases, government support for providing alternative viewpoints to mainstream media (Atton & Hamilton, 2008). The Māori journalists interviewed for this study noted the difficulty they had in divorcing themselves from the issues they cover. One Māori TV journalist with more than 20 years' experience said covering the political upheaval in Aotearoa New Zealand during the 1980s and 90s was not easy for many Māori journalists who tried to maintain objectivity, because inherently they were part of the story. "We were part of that change in that political landscape and, I mean, we all have feelings," he said. He recounted an instance where his reporters had been marching with protesters.

They felt that they were very much part of all this and they didn't see their roles as being just reporting the story and divorcing themselves from it completely. They felt it was their right to be able to join their people and become part of the protest.

When he questioned the journalists, arguing they should report the news rather than be part of it, they responded that they had reported the news earlier in the day, but that now, after work, they needed to participate, saying: "Just because we're journalists, we're not

different, and we're not standing away from our people." Such responses resonate with previous evidence that Native American journalists consider themselves both native and journalists at the same time, and do not necessarily regard the two as being in conflict with each other (Kemper, 2010).

General opinion on the issue of whether journalists should perform an advocacy role was somewhat split among the respondents. While some believe there is a definite role to be advocates, others believe it has been resigned to the past, although some of the differences may be due to diverging understandings of what it means to be an advocate. Most typically, advocacy that is permissible is perceived as telling "triumph stories, but those are more personal profile stories, or successful Māori businesses – those triumph stories – but we don't go and advocate for a certain iwi, or a certain political group. You can't do that" (TVNZ journalist). A senior Māori TV journalist said he thought journalists marching with protesters were a thing of the past: "We are reporters, we are not protesters. You choose to be one of the two, you can't be both. You can't carry the flag across the bridge, you record the people carrying the flag across the bridge. You can support them, but you can't come across." In fact, providing balance was now an immensely important component of their journalism. Said a Māori TV journalist:

Now our challenge is to make sure that we talk to everyone in the story as well and that we don't just give the Māori point of view. You know, that we talk to the council or to others that might be at issue with what the story in particular is doing. So it's getting that balance.

Another prime characteristic of Māori journalists is that they want to play a role in language revitalization. This motivation, found in Indigenous journalists elsewhere (Pietikäinen, 2008; Browne, 1996), was cited by a majority of respondents as the primary reason for entering the industry. One Māori TV journalist said she hadn't been brought up in the language and thought journalism provided a good opportunity to help spread it:

After learning te reo, I just knew how important it was to myself, and to society and to New Zealand, and so I wanted to be in a role, have a job or position where I could utilize it daily and get it out there as much as I could.

Some journalists entered the industry simply because they were fluent in te reo: "The boss knew that I had certain language skills and he needed people like that on staff" (Radio Waatea journalist). Similarly, a TVNZ journalist stated: "From high school I identified that journalism was an area that I was interested in, getting into with my te reo Māori ... There was an area there that I thought I'd be able to use my language in a way that was positive and interesting." A Māori TV journalist revealed his primary motivation was to be able to keep practicing the language: "I didn't really do it to be a journalist. I did it because it was all in Māori, because that was my passion."

In terms of the general structure of news stories, most journalists argued that they could get the essence of stories across in English, but the use of te reo allowed them much more poetic license to bring the story into line with Māori culture. Said one Māori TV journalist: "In a lot of ways, it is much easier to tell stories in Māori because you can be a lot more metaphoric and poetic. It conveys more emotion and more beauty." A colleague added that words in Māori had a deeper meaning in their connection to culture and also spiritual aspects. She said she liked being able to combine the spiritual and physical realms in her stories. An advantage of using the language was that Māori journalists could sometimes get better access to sources, as some would only talk to the media if they could speak in Māori. A

number of journalists also cited instances when politicians and community spokespeople had been able to get their points across more appropriately in Māori because of the better context this provided.

Yet, as one senior journalist put it, while the Māori language is the very foundation of Māori broadcasting, it is also one of its biggest limitations. This is particularly the case for the news programs, *Te Karere* and *Te Kaea*, which screen almost exclusively in te reo. Hence, journalists require sources who can speak the language on camera, an undertaking that is often challenging because of the limited number of fluent te reo speakers in the country. A senior Radio Waatea journalist thought the situation was slowly improving, however. “With the growing number of second-language speakers that are becoming more confident speakers, it is becoming not so difficult to find speakers.” To combat language problems, journalists on both *Te Kaea* and *Te Karere* now also conduct interviews in English, and either translate them or sub-title the information. This is possible because *Te Kaea* has a 95 per cent te reo requirement, while *Te Karere*’s is 80 per cent. Radio, on the other hand, cannot simply sub-title, and even voice-overs are rarely appropriate. The solution there is to produce a straight news story, which is read by only the news reader with no interview audio attached.

Closely intertwined with language concerns is the desire to practise journalism within an appropriate cultural framework. As one Māori TV journalist with more than 20 years of experience said:

Journalism is an important genre of programming for my people that allows Māori people to respond to issues on a daily basis in the Māori language in a framework; a cultural framework that they are familiar with and able to respond and have a say in the issues that concern them.

This framework, he believed, was fundamental and the connection of journalists with their respective tribes was, while sometimes challenging, important to maintain cultural identity.

Some journalists pointed out they always took their shoes off when entering someone’s house, or even brought small gifts such as biscuits when interviewing sources. Others would have karakia (incantations and prayers) first, or go through a pōhiri (traditional welcoming ceremony). Personal and work values were thus inextricably linked for the vast majority of respondents. They are quite simply bound up in the collectivist relationships of the Māori world and these relationships often guide their behaviour and values when working as journalists, a finding similar to the situation found among Sámi journalists (Pieitkäinen, 2008). One Māori TV journalist used the analogy of wearing a Māori hat and a journalism hat, in that it was not simply a case of going into an interview as a journalist:

You don’t take the Māori hat off, you put the journalism hat on. Then you take that off once you finish the interview and then you’re Māori again. And I think that’s where our Pākehā colleagues fall short. It’s that they go in and take their person hat off and put it back on when they’re finished and that’s different for us.

In essence, it means always maintaining one’s identity as Māori – including all that entails – and only adding a journalistic identity during work, rather than substituting it.

At the same time, cultural aspects can be limitations as well. In Māori culture, kaumatua, or elders, command utmost respect from those who are younger, which can create difficulties for younger journalists. A number of journalists pointed out that their job was made all the more difficult because at the end of the day they were part of their communities,

which meant they needed to be able to go back to their iwi even after having covered controversial stories about them. Here, attitudes were somewhat divided, in that some journalists felt they would always be able to cover controversial stories about their own iwi, while others thought it could constitute a conflict of interest and it was better to have someone else do a particular story. It is common for news organizations to send journalists to cover stories that relate to their own iwi, because they are deemed to have inside knowledge and good contacts.

At the same time, if journalists are too close to a story, they can be taken off an assignment. Said a Māori TV journalist:

I think we generally have a rule at work that if a story comes from your own area you have the first go at it. If that's your tribal area, the expectation is that you have the contacts in that area. But if it's something like that and you wish to not cover, then there's no expectation that you have to cover it.

According to the respondents, Māori politicians also often exert pressure, arguing journalists should concentrate on doing nice stories.

While journalists do not make any excuses for wanting to provide a counter-narrative to mainstream news as well as being language advocates, this does not mean they do not view their role as watchdogs. In fact, the watchdog role, so synonymous with Western journalism, is very important in the Māori context. As one Māori TV journalist said, it is important to examine the decisions that are made by iwi and party leaders.

I think that is a really important part of our job because no-one is above scrutiny. No Māori organization is above scrutiny and I absolutely believe that – just like the mainstream media in NZ do a very good job at holding their leadership, and their government departments accountable – our Māori audience deserves exactly the same thing. So I don't think that any Māori in a leadership position, or any Māori organization or government organization, should get a free ride just because they happen to be Māori.

It appears possible to marry the advocacy role with a commitment to being a watchdog for Māori society. A Radio Waatea journalist, who was adamant that Māori journalism's role was to provide a counter-narrative, said it was just as crucial to hold those in power to account. "Absolutely, good or bad, we are not here to be a propaganda [tool] for our people. We are here to make sure that we are portrayed in the correct light. There are no shenanigans or undermining going on behind the scenes, we don't have hidden agendas." He cited cases of child abuse where the reporting had not shied away from asking the tough questions and essentially was very much similar to what was reported in the mainstream media.

Nevertheless, especially younger journalists found it could be quite challenging to question those in power. Said a TVNZ journalist:

There's an expectation on Māori journalists to not be the watchdog in a lot of the cases [...] That can be frustrating at times, because while you want to ask them the hard questions, there's that expectation that as a Māori journalist you won't ask those hard questions.

However, a senior TVNZ journalist said while it could be tough covering a controversy around one's own aunt and one always seemed to have to explain and justify

one's stories, he found they would typically understand once that explanation had been given. Similarly, a young Māori TV journalist said even though she was probably related to a number of the leaders, she was "still not afraid to question them because they've been paid to do their work".

### Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the ways in which Māori journalists in Aotearoa New Zealand make sense of their work. Through the interviews with 20 news workers in various Māori media, five main dimensions of Indigenous journalism culture in the country could be identified. Māori journalists see themselves primarily as providing a counter-narrative to balance negative mainstream media reporting, and are interested in aiding Māori empowerment and the maintenance of identity. They believe in providing a Māori perspective of the news, which also includes journalistic practices that follow cultural values and customs. While many see themselves as advocates, they are also adamant that they have a crucial watchdog role to play for the benefit of Māori society. In this regard, it is extremely important to hold Māori politicians and other leaders to account. Finally, the vast majority of Māori journalists view the revitalization of the Māori language as an enormously significant part of their role. Many entered the news industry mainly because they could speak the language and thought they could play a positive part in nurturing its growth.

The dimensions identified here are also reflective of literature from across the globe, which has touched on Indigenous news-making practices. In fact, Pietikäinen's (2008: 188) description of Sámi journalists – who she said "consider their primary goal to be to provide relevant Sámi information in the Sámi language from a Sámi perspective and, by doing this, to help guarantee the survival of the Sámi community" – could easily be applied to Aotearoa New Zealand if one substituted Sámi with Māori. As noted earlier, Alia (2010) has argued that a "new media nation" has emerged, which is characterised by increased transnational cooperation between Indigenous media organisations. Based on the evidence presented here, it would appear that Indigenous journalism culture is also characterised by dimensions which can be applied transnationally. Whether this necessarily equates to a transnational consciousness among Indigenous journalists across the globe is yet to be analysed, however.

As noted earlier, the field of Indigenous journalism is still somewhat underexplored, yet the dimensions which have been identified here may be able to lead us to a more nuanced understanding of the various tensions in and opportunities for its practices across the globe. At the same time, it must be stressed that this study represents only a pilot study of the Māori context – more research with a larger sample of Māori journalists is necessary in order to determine whether the trends and dimensions identified here are representative of this particular journalistic field at large. Similarly, more research on journalism practices among Indigenous societies in other parts of the globe will be necessary to validate the argument that Indigenous journalism culture is transnational in nature. It is possible that the dimensions highlighted may be present to different degrees in different Indigenous contexts, or that additional dimensions may emerge through such research. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this study can provide some useful ideas for such examinations.

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