

# CULTURAL FORCES IN JOURNALISM

## The impact of cultural values on Māori journalists' professional views

Accepted for publication in *Journalism Studies*

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### ABSTRACT

*Social system-level analyses of journalism have tended to focus on political and economic influences, at the expense of other factors, such as the role that culture and cultural values play in shaping journalists' professional views and practices. This paper identifies cultural values as a particularly fruitful area for providing a more nuanced analysis of journalism culture. It examines this issue in the context of in-depth interviews with 20 Māori journalists from Aotearoa New Zealand. The study finds that Indigenous journalism in that country is strongly influenced by Māori cultural values, such as showing respect to others, following cultural protocols, and making use of culturally-specific language. Cultural limitations are also identified in the form of the social structures of Māori society, and journalists' strategies in working around these are discussed. The paper highlights the implications a renewed focus on cultural values can have for the study of journalism culture more broadly.*

### KEYWORDS

Journalism culture; professional views; role perception; culture; values; Indigenous; Maori; New Zealand

### Introduction

The study of the various influences on journalists' professional views and practices has a long and rich history, spanning more than 60 years. Scholars have theorised about and examined a number of different levels, ranging from influences on the individual level to those on the structural level. In relation to the structural or systems-level influences, studies have tended to focus in particular on political and economic aspects of social systems (see, for example, Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Siebert et al., 1956; Weaver, 1998). In addition, cultural studies approaches have focussed on aspects of ideology and hegemony, interested in the power relations that shape the news (for example, Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Hall, 1989).

While political and economic determinants are of unquestionable importance in understanding journalism and news culture, this paper argues that additional variables are crucial to consider. One such variable relates to a nation's or community's cultural environment and how this impacts journalistic practice and news content. The relative lack of research in this area is somewhat surprising, because it is often acknowledged in existing research that cultural differences can account for variation in journalists' professional views as well as news content. Yet, such acknowledgments are often tacit, broad and somewhat murky, as the role of culture is very rarely examined in detail.

In order to shed more light on the ways in which culture – and cultural values more specifically – impact on journalism, this paper reports on a study of Māori journalism culture in Aotearoa New Zealand. Based on 20 in-depth interviews with Indigenous journalists, it focuses on the role that various well-documented cultural values and practices play in Māori

journalism today. In so doing, the study demonstrates the opportunities which the consideration of cultural values can present for studying journalism culture more broadly.

### **Journalism and cultural values**

Culture is a very broad term that is often used in a wide variety of contexts. It can, for example, mean anything between broad (culture is everything) and narrow (cultural institutions such as the opera) understandings. Further, there are national cultures, organizational cultures, sub-cultures and cultures of shared social practices such as the cultures of consumption or beauty makeovers (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, 104). At the social systems level, culture is often defined as relating to shared social practices on a national level. One example is Schwartz's (2004, 43) definition of culture as the "rich complex of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms and values prevalent among people in a society". The study of culture and cultural values has a rich tradition particularly in the fields of anthropology and cross-cultural psychology, and includes such work as conceptualisations of instrumental and terminal values (Rokeach 1973), traditional vs. secular and survival vs. self-expression values (Inglehart 1997), as well as Hofstede's (2001) five cultural value dimensions (masculinity, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, long-term orientation) and Schwartz's (2004) seven cultural value orientations (intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, embeddedness, egalitarianism, hierarchy, harmony and mastery).

Despite this wealth of knowledge, only a limited number of studies have attempted to explicitly link cultural values with journalistic practice. The work that does exist has mostly applied Hofstede's (2001) work, such as a comparison of German and Australian newspapers' reporting of foreign death, which linked differences in visual treatment, language conventions and ethical codes to differences in the two countries' scores on two of Hofstede's cultural value dimensions (Hanusch 2009). An analysis of the framing of news stories about the Internet in China which appeared in the Hong Kong, Singapore, US and UK press argued that Hofstede's (2001) long- versus short-term dimension was a significant factor in determining most types of news frames, and often more than one cultural value dimension was influential (Zhou 2008). Ravi's (2005) cross-cultural study of newspaper reporting in the lead-up to the Iraq War found that Pakistani and Indian newspapers were more focussed on aggregates of fatal events, while British and US newspapers focussed more on individual events. Ravi argued that the reason for this difference may lie in societal values, as the Asian countries placed a higher value on the community, while the Western countries were more individualist.

Cultural value research in journalism also extends to photojournalistic coverage, with a study of news and feature photographs in 10 elite American and Korean newspapers finding significant differences in photographic style (Kim and Kelly 2008). American photojournalists displayed more individualist tendencies, while their Korean counterparts worked more strictly in line with their societal obligations, acting "according to the group's interest rather than according to their own interpretations" (Kim and Kelly 2008, 171). Similarly, an analysis of the newspaper coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake in 15 countries has argued that the degree of graphic photographs could be traced to socio-cultural differences, such as individual countries' religious traditions and levels of societal violence (Hanusch 2012).

A survey of Taiwanese and US journalists' work motivations also showed significant variations in job satisfaction along Hofstede's (2001) individualism dimensions (Chang and Massey 2010), and Winfield, Mizuno and Beaudoin (2000) have argued that collectivist values play an important role in Chinese and Japanese press systems. Despite the political and economic differences that exist between the two systems on the surface, the authors argued that "the concepts of group harmony, collectivism and the place of the individual

within the group explain similar aspects of both press systems at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (Winfield et al. 2000, 347). Kanayama and Cooper-Chen’s (2005) study of Japanese and international newspaper coverage of the pregnancy of Princess Masako argued that countries with a higher Masculinity score on Hofstede’s (2001) scale tended to portray her in a more traditional frame and with a stronger focus on pregnancy than countries with a low Masculinity score. Hanitzsch’s (2007) much-cited theoretical discussion of journalism culture also accounts for cultural values by linking Hofstede’s power distance dimension to journalists’ attitudes towards power.

While empirical analyses of cultural values in news have been limited, proponents of normative media models have regularly cited culture and cultural values as crucial, such as during the debate over Asian values in journalism (Xu 2005). During the 1980s and 90s, the political leadership of Singapore and Malaysia argued for Asian nations to draw on their traditional beliefs and values in building modern and economically strong societies (Massey and Chang 2002, 992). In line with such an approach, journalism should also be based in Asian values, such as respect for authority, group dynamics and an emphasis on communalism (collectivism) rather than a focus on individualist values (Xu 2005). Subsequent studies did find evidence that key values such as harmony and supportiveness were present in news reporting of Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore (Massey and Chang 2002, 999). On the African continent, proponents of an Afro-centric approach to journalism have similarly argued that what they see as individualism and divisionism in Western journalism does not accord with local contexts and is unhealthy (Kasoma 1996). Lately, attention has been paid to an Indigenous African approach to journalism, based on the tradition of *ubuntuism* (for example, Blankenberg 1999; Fourie 2008), which can be understood as a community-focussed approach that expresses “compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring” (Fourie 2008, 62). Objectivity may not be a necessary component of ubuntu journalism because it is impossible for journalists to be spectators, as they are always defined through group relations and their membership of the community. Thus, “active involvement and dialogue with the community rather than detachment in the name of objectivity and neutrality may be required” (Fourie 2008, 65). At the same time, such normative models have been criticised for failing to take account of the distinct cultural variations among Asian and African nations, and the fact they can be (and often are) easily misused to prevent criticism of those in political power (Tomaselli 2003; Xu 2005).

### **Indigenous news media**

A further area where culture has been identified as influential in shaping journalism is the Indigenous media sector. Improvements in and better access to information technology over recent decades have contributed to a significant growth of Indigenous media outlets, leading to an “explosion” of such media around the world (Alia 2010, 7). The rapid development of Indigenous media had been aided by technological advances in the latter part of the twentieth century, as well as trans-national efforts by Indigenous peoples for recognition in the 1970s and 80s. While the term “Indigenous” is itself problematic, as it may “collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different” (Smith 1999, 6), it is often employed at the global level, especially by Indigenous movements and organisations themselves. The World Indigenous Television Broadcasters Network, for example, has been one highly visible trans-national effort by Indigenous journalists to raise their profile. Indigenous journalism tends to occur in two broad varieties: the first relates to Indigenous-owned and operated news media organisations, while the second includes Indigenous-focussed news within mainstream news organisations, in particular public broadcasters. In both cases, however, Indigenous journalism can be

defined as the “production and dissemination of information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance, by Indigenous peoples for the benefit of Indigenous but also non-Indigenous communities” (Hanusch, 2013b, in press).

While such media are not new – Indigenous newspapers, for example, have existed in a number of countries since the 1800s (Curnow 2002; Littefield and Parins 1984; Meadows and Molnar 2002) – little attention had been given to this sector until the late 1990s (Meadows and Molnar 2002, 9). The twenty-first century has, however, seen a burgeoning amount of studies concerned with Indigenous media (see, for example, Alia 2010; Molnar and Meadows 2001; Wilson and Stewart 2008). Much attention has been paid to the political aspects of Indigenous journalism and its role, in wanting to provide a counter-narrative to mainstream news reporting, which repeatedly stereotypes Indigenous people (Alia 2009, 41). Another focus has been the role that journalists can play in empowering Indigenous societies and acting as means for politically mobilising their communities (Pietikäinen 2008; Salazar 2003). A further prominent aspect, however, has been the role that cultural values play in Indigenous media practices. Indigenous news media therefore provide a unique opportunity to shed more light on the various ways in which culture and cultural values affect, enhance and challenge journalists’ professional views and their practices.

For example, in northern Europe Pietikäinen (2008) identified a “Sámi Way” of doing journalism. This, she argued, was deeply entrenched in local cultural values and worldviews, in particular as Indigenous news media made it “possible to practise culturally typical ways of communication, to recognize experiences, perspectives and topics often disregarded by other media” (Pietikäinen 2008, 177). Such an approach resonates strongly with research in developing societies around the globe which have advocated culture-specific ways of doing journalism. In this sense, Indigenous journalists appear to consider as their primary goal the provision of information that is relevant to their audiences, their culture and the overarching goal of contributing to the survival of Indigenous identities (see also Hanusch 2013a; Santo 2004).

Grixti (2011), in examining Indigenous approaches to journalism, highlighted the fact that in societies that hold predominantly individualist values – such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US – Indigenous societies tend to hold collectivist values, which results in a journalism that is focussed more on the community, rather than individual success. This aspect is reminiscent of the previously discussed studies which have found significant differences in the journalism of individualist and collectivist national societies. Indigenous journalists also often have a different relationship with the land, an aspect highlighted in a study of Native American newspapers, which were found to have invoked traditional cultural values when reporting on the environment (Loew and Mella 2005).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, a country that has – compared to many other countries – a relatively burgeoning Indigenous news sector, a number of analyses have found similar aspects that contribute to this discussion. Māori journalists have for some considerable time employed culturally-specific ways to news-making. For example, early newspapers took names of local birds, because they represented qualities that were similar to those of traditional orators and singers, who were colloquially known as ‘talking birds’ (‘manu korero’ in Māori) (McRae 2002, 44-6). In a further sign of the continuation of tikanga Māori (Māori cultural values) through nineteenth century journalism, Ka’ai-Mahuta (2010) points out that waiata (traditional songs) and haka (traditional posture dances) often served as forms of political critiques, demonstrating the way in which culture is also employed strategically for political purposes.

When Māori journalism began appearing on television in the 1980s, the producers of the news program *Te Karere* made a point of practising a culturally-specific journalism which reported from a Māori perspective. For example, interviewees’ tribal affiliations were

regularly mentioned: “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). This practice still continues today (Rankine et al. 2007). *Te Karere* also incorporated a wider range of news values and gave a wider variety of people a voice, in line with the Māori belief that everyone deserves their say (Fox 1992). Te Awa’s (1996) study of the radio program *Mana News* also showed sources were given more airtime than on mainstream news media, and stories focussed less on news values like conflict, but rather offered solutions in so-called bad news stories (see also McGregor and Comrie 1995). Interviews on television are often introduced with more or less short mihi (greetings), subjects are treated with much respect, and journalists frequently use whakataukī and pepeha (which can be described as proverbs, although their meaning is broader in Māori) (Addis et al. 2005). Stuart (2002) has noted that some journalists only report final decisions of hui (meetings), so as not to contravene the idea that discussions held at marae (traditional meeting grounds) should remain there once resolved. In addition, Māori journalist Wena Harawira (2008) has argued that there are cultural concepts which are important for journalists to adhere to, such as when interviewing elders, where certain cultural protocols are applied.

The examples discussed here show that paying more attention to cultural influences on journalism practices can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of journalism culture. Yet, cultural aspects have often been incidental to such studies, rather than their focus. Further, the vast majority of studies, especially in the context of Māori journalism, have been concerned with analyses of published news content and linking it to cultural values. In order to arrive at a more complete picture, however, it is also necessary to study the producers of such content and to inquire into their professional views.

## Methodology

Assuming that culture and cultural values affect the way journalists think about and practise their work, this study’s main purpose was to identify in more detail how and to what extent these factors play a role. To do so, this paper focusses on Māori journalists in Aotearoa New Zealand. Māori journalism has a long history and advances in recent decades – both in terms of technological improvements as well as improved access and funding – have resulted in an increase in Māori news and current affairs.

Māori journalism is present in a variety of formats in Aotearoa New Zealand. Its development over the past 30 years or so has been partly due to the country’s government showing a willingness to – belatedly – honour agreements made in the Treaty of Waitangi, which had been signed by the English Crown and Māori chiefs in 1840. When the Waitangi Tribunal – a permanent commission of inquiry that makes recommendations on claims brought by Māori relating to actions or omissions of the Crown that breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal 2013) – ruled in 1986 that the Māori language was a taonga (a treasured possession) that needed to be protected and nurtured (Walker 2004, 268), it led to renewed government funding for the broadcasting sector, which was seen as crucial to the revitalisation of the language. In 2004, it led to the establishment of Māori Television, a wholly Indigenous-operated station with the aim of revitalising Māori language and culture (Middleton 2010). Five years into its existence, the channel was reaching half of the 100,000 Māori living in the country, and one-third of New Zealanders overall (Maori Television 2009).

Māori Television produces more than 250 hours of local programming, including a daily news program in the Māori language (*Te Kaea*), as well as current affairs shows in English (*Native Affairs*) and in Māori (*Te Tepu*). The state broadcaster Television New Zealand (TVNZ) is home to the nation’s longest-running Māori-language news program *Te*

*Karere*, which began in 1983, as well as the English-language current affairs program *Marae Investigates*. News and current affairs in Māori is also broadcast on radio around the nation, provided by Radio Waatea and distributed through the 21-station iwi network, a collective of tribal stations. While Māori print media are far from being as prominent as they were during the nineteenth century, magazines such as *Mana*, *Te Karaka* and *Tū Mai* provide some level of current affairs from a Māori perspective. These news outlets typically aim for Māori audiences, yet in the recent past, some have become increasingly popular with non-Māori. The program *Native Affairs* has proved especially successful, winning numerous awards, including Best Current Affairs Series at the 2011 Aotearoa Film and Television Awards.

In order to examine the way in which journalists experience cultural influences in their work, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 Māori journalists, working across the Māori media spectrum. Respondents were drawn from Māori Television (eight journalists involved in the production of *Te Kaea* and *Native Affairs*), Television New Zealand (eight journalists reporting and producing for *Te Karere* and *Marae Investigates*), Radio Waatea (three journalists) and *Mana* magazine (one journalist). All but two respondents were interviewed in person at their news organisations in Auckland between August 29 and September 2, 2011. Two additional interviews were conducted via Skype, one in late September 2011 and another in February 2012. The study purposively selected respondents from a wide variety of editorial roles, and included reporters, directors, producers, news editors and general managers. The interviewed journalists further represented a wide variety of iwi (tribes), an important consideration due to persistent differences in individual tribal values and worldviews.

Attention was also paid to having a mix of demographics and backgrounds represented in the study. In terms of age, one quarter of the sample was over 50, while half were aged in their thirties. The youngest respondent was 24 years old, the oldest was 64. Six journalists had more than 20 years of experience, while another six had worked in the industry for less than 10 years. Nine of the respondents were women, and eleven men. Men had generally been in journalism for longer. Interviewees were highly educated, with 13 journalists holding at least a Bachelor's degree from a New Zealand university, while five others had a diploma or certificate from a polytechnic. Only two journalists did not have a degree, but had studied at university for a few years. Typically, journalists had studied courses in Māori language and development as well as journalism/media studies. At least half had studied journalism or media studies.

## Results and Discussion

Māori culture can perhaps best be described through the prism of tikanga Māori, which is on a very basic legal level defined as "Māori customary values and practices" (Mead 2003, 11). At the same time, Mead (2003, 12) argues that the concept of tikanga is more than that and defines it as "the set of beliefs associated with practices and procedures to be followed in conducting the affairs of a group or an individual". Tikanga, which can vary widely in terms of scale, governing large ceremonies to small individual actions, can help organise social behaviour and guide people on how to act in certain circumstances. "They provide templates and frameworks to guide our actions and help steer us through some huge gatherings of people and some tense moments in our ceremonial life. They help us differentiate between right and wrong in everything we do and in all of the activities that we engage in" (Mead 2003, 12). While many aspects of tikanga are the same throughout the country, there is also a significant degree of variation between the different iwi which reside in the country, making it necessary in most cases to refer to the tikanga of the local people (Mead 2003, 8).

Tikanga still play an extremely important role in Māori society today, and it was very quickly clear that, for the vast majority of journalists interviewed for this study, they were a crucial consideration in their personal as well as professional behaviour. All were committed to their role in revitalizing the Māori language and culture more broadly, and many of the younger journalists had been educated at the total immersion schools which have existed in Aotearoa New Zealand since the early 1980s. Many of the older journalists were sending their children to these schools. Almost every journalist noted that they lived by tikanga and while this was often not a conscious process, it was nevertheless ingrained in them through their upbringing, giving them a strong connection to their culture. As one Māori TV journalist said: “I am a Māori, I cannot have tikanga not be a part of my life.” She cited examples such as not wearing shoes in the house, not sitting on tables or playing with food and not putting a hairbrush on the table as expressions of her living by tikanga Māori in a very practical sense.

When asked about cultural influences in general, all journalists acknowledged that their particular cultural values shaped what they did in their job. In fact, it was extremely difficult, if not impossible for them to separate their values from their work. A Māori TV journalist thought that journalists, particularly at a station like Māori TV, even had a responsibility to show these values in action, and more broadly assist in the maintenance of culture. “It is important for us to be seen to be – as much as we can be – applying tikanga in what we do. Because television being a platform that engages so many people and that has the ability to bring in so many people to watch it – if we’re not doing it, why would anyone else bother?” Examples of adherence to tikanga included going through incantations or traditional welcoming ceremonies before interviewing sources. One Radio Waatea journalist also noted the importance of humility for Māori. He said while most people answered the question of what was most important with “he tangata, he tangata, he tangata” (“it is people, it is people, it is people”), an elderly lady had told him she thought it was actually “me tū whakaiti” (“make yourself small”). “That’s a metaphor for humility. If you got humility, you, your descendants, your family will never get hurt. You’ll go through life and you’ll never get hurt ... so those sort of things can permeate down to the year 2011 and actually in some small way be seen in the way you write your stories.”

Journalists’ responses thus show a close link between personal and professional values, which demonstrates the way in which culture and cultural can be important influences on journalistic culture more broadly.

### *Journalism and manaakitanga*

A much-noted principle for both personal and professional behaviour was manaakitanga, which can be defined as “nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being very careful about how others are treated” (Mead 2003, 29) – an important characteristic of a collectivist culture. All journalists also expressed a strong commitment to passing these values on to their children. Manaakitanga is a particularly important value in dealing with other people, as it applies even in cases of conflict. As Mead (2003, 29) points out, “it cannot be stressed enough that manaakitanga is always important no matter what the circumstances might be”. The interviewed journalists repeatedly highlighted that it was important to respect their sources and, in a way, care for them so they would be represented accurately in their stories. They did not see a need to be particularly confrontational in their approach to get stories.

Journalists said they felt it was their responsibility to provide their sources with a certain level of protection when reporting controversial stories, and it was important to treat stories and sources with dignity and integrity. A TVNZ journalist explicitly said she cared for her sources: “I think my approach to story-telling is Māori, so it’s kaupapa Māori [a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori

society]. I treat my talent – and the way I treat the story, is in a kaupapa Māori context. So it's about caring about the subject, about our talent, about the end result." A colleague at the same program pointed out that he thought sources felt safe with them. "I think we get more access to our people, because they feel safe with us. And they feel comfortable with us that we will tell their story from their perspective and how they want to tell it."

The respect that journalists generally accord their sources also allows them to gain better access to sources. A young Māori TV journalist thought that sources were more open to them because "we haven't hounded them, or not listened to them". This respect also extends to people who journalists might have a personal dislike for. As one Māori TV journalist pointed out:

We have a view that everyone's got a brother, everyone's got a sister, everyone's got a daughter, everyone's got a mother, and everyone therefore has mana [a supernatural force in a person, place or object, which can equate somewhat to prestige, power, charisma or authority]. You can't disrespect someone's mana. I mean, Don Brash [a controversial politician known for conservative views and who has been very critical of Māori], personally, I might have an issue with. But you can't go out there and 'have him'. You've got to bring him in, you got to treat him like you treat everyone else, and I think, people, Māori generally, don't like the idea of ... going at them just for the sake of going at them, because that's not how we do it.

Such comments resonate with the earlier discussed evidence from studies that have pointed to the importance of collectivist values in the journalism of a number of Asian and African countries. Māori culture places a high degree of importance on collectivist values, aligning it with other collectivist cultures identified by Hofstede (2001) as well as cultures characterised by values such as embeddedness and hierarchy (Schwartz 2004).

#### *Reporting on marae and hui*

Existing studies have focussed on the way in which Māori journalists report on events at marae (traditional meeting grounds) and hui (meetings) in showing differences in journalistic practice. Even after more than 200 years of European settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand, marae form the cultural centre of Māori life (Mead 2003, 216). Here, elaborate hui are held, in accordance with various rules that govern their procedure. As sites of public deliberation among Māori, they also form important news sources for journalists, for whom it is extremely important to be fluent in protocol to avoid upsetting those who are gathered. As such, hui have been sources of much frustration for mainstream journalists who have failed to follow the rules, either out of ignorance or wilful disobedience. Yet, for Māori journalists, it is much easier to adhere to the rules that are set on marae. Journalists interviewed for this study spoke at length about the importance of first going through the appropriate protocols when entering marae, such as participating in pōhiri (welcome ceremonies). While this can be a tedious process, it is considered crucial. Said one Māori TV journalist with more than 20 years of experience:

As journalists we need to go through that process as well. We started to skirt them because it takes so bloody long, so that by the time you got your story, you almost missed your deadline. But I think there is a way to be able to do it with respect, with dignity; and not be too much of a journalist where you ignore all those things.

Most journalists said they would adhere to the rules, because at the end of the day, conduct on marae was just like at parliament, as one experienced journalist pointed out:



“They have tikanga down there, which sometimes restricts you as a journalist. Where you can film, where you can’t film; who you can access, who you can’t access; but you as a journalist have to make good decisions and find the best way to get the story done. And that’s what you have to do on a marae as well.” Nevertheless, as a number of journalists pointed out, this didn’t necessarily prevent them from getting a story, and the fact they were Māori meant they could often get better access or move more freely on marae, due to their better understanding of the rules. At the same time, different iwi have varying tikanga at hui, and journalists noted it was important to adhere to the local tikanga wherever they went. This is an important aspect which also demonstrates that Māori culture is not monolithic and varies between different iwi, as well as social groupings, further complicating cultural influences.

### *The influence of language*

Māori media play a crucial role in revitalising the Māori language, a function ascribed to broadcast media through government funding. A large number of the respondents said they entered journalism because of the opportunity this gave them to contribute to increased use of the language. Language and culture are intertwined inextricably, and many journalists noted the way in which using their own language allowed them to express themselves in a culture-specific way. As discussed previously, early newspapers adopted and adapted Māori language to the new circumstances, and this has continued into the modern day (Adds et al. 2005; Harawira 2008; McRae 2002). Most respondents argued that the ability to use the Māori language provided them with poetic licence, which conveyed more emotion and beauty. A TVNZ journalist said she particularly liked using it in “feel good” stories, “because there are so many proverbial sayings that you could use. Māori is so metaphoric and it’s a waste if you don’t use it.” A Māori TV journalist also thought using the language allowed journalists to make reference to the way in which their ancestors used to think and operate.

In this context, one experienced journalist related a story he had produced 25 years ago, which here serves to express the essence of the way in which journalists can tell stories differently in Māori and use cultural context. The journalist had travelled to the anniversary of the 1886 eruption of Mt Tarawera, during which more than 400 people had been killed. He travelled there by plane with a mainstream journalist, sharing a camera crew. When they arrived at the lake, the mountain was shrouded in mist and the journalists were stranded because the plane could not take off again in the conditions. The mainstream journalist was upset at the weather, arguing he wasn’t able to report the story because one could not see anything. But for the Māori journalist, this was a unique opportunity:

You see, to us, fog or mist is a very sacred thing. And there were lots of stories you could tell around mist. When mist covers the mountain, there are stories around that. So when he [the mainstream journalist] went away, I said to the cameraman: ‘No, no, we’re going to tell the story, this is a great story’. We call it tohu – I don’t know what it is in English; a sign, I suppose. And it was like it was being cloaked in grief. That mist cloaked the whole mountain, that one day 100 years ago when we lost over 400 people. So my story was focussed like that ... Those are just some of the things that you can do, because it’s not just the language, but what the language does is – it allows you to bring the whole cultural perspective.

### *Culture as a limiting factor*

The fact that culture and cultural values play such an important role in affecting journalists’ practices also means that culture is a limiting influence on journalism. Because Māori society is relatively small, and journalists are often closely connected to their iwi, they are confronted with ethical dilemma when covering controversial stories about their own

community. Māori journalists are well-embedded in their communities and often need to take account of their obligations to family members in this collectivist culture. This can clash with journalistic declarations of wanting to be a watchdog on Māori leaders. In Māori culture, elders command utmost respect from those who are younger, which creates difficulties especially for junior journalists. A number of respondents pointed out that their job was made more difficult because 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 argued they would always be able to cover controversial stories about their own iwi, while others deemed it a conflict of interest and it was better to have someone else do a particular story. This demonstrates how culture is also a limitation in journalism, and points to the cultural coercion Cohen (1974, 85) notes when he argues that “the constraints that culture exerts on the individual come ultimately not from the culture itself, but from the collectivity of the group”.

A number of journalists noted there was often pressure from elders or Māori politicians on Māori journalists, expecting positive treatment. A Māori TV journalist said politicians often felt a sense of entitlement about their work. “So if you’re a Māori journalist, you are expected to only do nice stories about Māori politicians. You’re not allowed to ask them hard questions or scrutinise them or hold them to account, because you’re Māori.” Another colleague mentioned the fact that she was a woman also sometimes made her work harder, noting it was “a man’s world in Māori”. However, a fellow Māori TV journalist said elders sometimes simply avoided the question rather than telling journalists they could not ask certain questions, or that they were not allowed to interview them because they were female. In addition, a number of the younger journalists interviewed for this study saw their primary purpose as aiding the revitalisation of the Māori language, rather than being a watchdog. For those journalists, it could be argued that playing an oppositional role towards those in power would be even more difficult.

A senior TVNZ journalist said one problem for younger journalists was the hierarchy in Māori society. “It goes back to Māori belief that the older you are, the more right you have to speak. So obviously the younger you are the less right you have to speak, let alone ask me questions.” Thus, older journalists found it certainly easier to criticise those in power, with a Radio Waatea journalist mentioning the fact that older journalists had been criticising those in power probably all their lives because they were of the same generation. On the other hand, he knew to expect mainly propaganda pieces from some of the junior reporters because they were so close to their tribe and may not want to offend their uncle. He said some journalists did not want to compromise their families and tribes, and that was fine. “We understand that because we know how the Māori world works.”

## **Conclusion**

While often acknowledged implicitly, the role culture and cultural values play in shaping journalists’ professional views and practices has still only rarely gained detailed consideration. Yet, as this study of Māori journalists has shown, paying close attention to these social systems-level influences on news work can provide us with rich insight into the ways in which culture shapes journalistic work. The journalists interviewed for this study displayed an acute awareness of their own culture, and the need for them to be both true to that culture as well as the professional demands of journalism. As a result, a kind of journalism is practised that is unique to the cultural context of Māori, with particular emphasis on aspects such as showing respect to others, following cultural protocols, and making use of culturally-specific language. At the same time, journalists are restricted by these very same values and the social structure of Māori society.

There is of course a political motivation for some of this, as demonstrated by Māori Television's stated aim of contributing to the revitalisation of Māori language and culture. But it is arguably also a more natural way of practising journalism for Māori journalists, and in many ways a subconscious influence. Many of the findings here resonate with the previously discussed literature on cultural values in journalism, in particular as it relates to differences between individualist and collectivist cultures. In identifying and focusing on those cultural values that play a crucial role in Māori journalism, this analysis also identifies strategies for conducting similar analyses in other contexts, be their focus Indigenous, alternative or mainstream in nature. Culture – and cultural values more specifically – provide a key prism through which to analyse journalism. The way these values operate is often difficult to ascertain, and a comparative view is crucial to establish some of the different approaches. In the case discussed in this paper, the difference was in Indigenous values vis-à-vis mainstream, western news values within one country. This, in addition to the experience of having their own culture colonised, may have made Māori journalists more aware of their own culture and arguably more likely to use their own culture strategically to differentiate their journalism from mainstream. This is less likely to be the case in cross-national comparisons, where culture may be a much less visible and especially less articulated influence, making it harder to ascertain these influences.

It may be argued that the focus of this paper has been culture-centric, and political and economic influences are ignored or underestimated. This is far from the author's intention, and in fact it is important to point out here that political and economic considerations play a crucial role also in Māori journalism, as the respondents in this study indicated. These have been outlined elsewhere (Hanusch 2013a). Māori journalists operate very much with political goals – such as the view to balancing the negative coverage and contributing to a sense of empowerment for their people. Economic considerations, such as limited state funding, also influence Māori journalism to a great extent. Indeed, it has been argued that there are various dimensions in Indigenous journalism that interplay with each other, such as language advocacy, cultural identity and political activism (Grixti 2011). Culture and cultural values which guide journalists' behaviour come naturally into this mix, and it is important to see them as such – as one part of a larger, more complex mix of influences.

Further, this paper does not propose to argue that one approach – Māori or western – is the better approach to journalism. The aim is merely to show how different cultures may have different values that influence the way they practise their journalism, rather than passing judgment about the relative value of any one approach. Cultures and cultural values change over time (Inglehart 1997) and the relatively long history of the co-existence of Indigenous and western journalism approaches in Aotearoa New Zealand would suggest there have been influences in both directions. The modern-day success of Māori Television's Native Affairs program, for example, demonstrates that the Māori approach to current affairs is successful with non-Indigenous audiences, and may well be influencing broader New Zealand journalism culture. For instance, there has been a trend for some years now for mainstream journalism to properly pronounce Māori place names and to improve behaviour at hui. Such developments demonstrate the complexity in researching the influence of culture and cultural values on journalism.

There are some limitations to this study, of course. Firstly, the relatively small sample only allowed for the exploration of general themes as they relate to cultural influences. Other aspects, such as social or age group membership may additionally influence journalistic practice, yet analysis of these was beyond the scope of this paper. Further, as with any interviews-based study, what journalists say they do may not always actually be what they do. At the same time, much of the evidence provided by the journalists interviewed here aligns with the existing literature on Māori journalism. It would nevertheless appear

important to examine the news produced by these journalists in further detail to triangulate some of the evidence discussed here. This also applies to further generalisations and studies of national values and their influence on news-making. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this study can help inspire similar studies which focus on the influence of culture and cultural values on journalism. One particularly fruitful area may lie in comparative journalism and communication studies. As discussed early in this paper, most of the evidence in this area has come from comparative studies in showing potential cultural factors in differences in journalistic practice. Taking cultural value systems into account may thus help expand journalism studies, opening up added complexity for the study of journalistic culture.

### Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank all the journalists who were so generous with their time and participated in this study. A large thank-you also goes to Maatakiri Te Ruki, who worked as a research assistant on this project and whose help was invaluable.

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