‘Honouring the Treaty’ in New Zealand organisations: New discourses for change

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Research questions

? Are there alternatives to New Zealand’s dominant discourse of race relations in use in New Zealand organisations?

? What themes do organisational speakers use in their discourse?
The Treaty of Waitangi guaranteed ongoing indigenous authority in all realms of life in Aotearoa New Zealand.
National campaign from 1986 by Treaty activist groups intended to:

- educate Pakeha about the Treaty

- address institutional racism towards Maori

- support organisations to implement the Treaty in structures & practices
Treaty Conference 2000

For non-Maori to affirm the future of the Treaty

Invited accounts of Treaty efforts in workplaces
Data & Informants

• *Proceedings of Treaty Conference 2000*
  – 18 accounts of Treaty focussed changes carried out in organisations over 20 years

• *Narrators were organisational leaders and senior staff from*
  – tertiary education providers,
  – local councils & libraries,
  – women’s organisations,
  – religious orders,
  – literacy services & performing arts groups
Discourse analysis following Nairn & McCreanor (1991)

My reading as a Treaty educator & organisational worker for Treaty-based change.
Main discursive themes & resources

• Affirming Maori authority
• Dissonance between ‘what ought to be’ and ‘what is’
• Discomfort & struggle
• We, the change workers
• Working towards a ‘right’ relationship between Maori and Pakeha
Affirming Maori authority

“The most important thing Pakeha can do is consult – recognise *rangatiratanga* and respect it. Our consulting the tribe before we bought land was the most significant thing we have done – it has set the tone for our on-going relationship...”

- Earthtalk women’s organic farm
Affirming Maori authority

“We consensually affirm the right of approval by Maori caucus… especially re: Maori controlling the decision-making”
- National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges

“The absence of the Treaty… [in] a strategic approach… is nothing short of irresponsible.”
- Auckland City Council Library
Dissonance

“…finding out that discrimination against Maori was legal disturbs people’s notion of ‘good race relations’.”
- Manukau Institute of Technology

“…there are large gaps between what CIT currently delivers in terms of its Treaty obligation, and what staff expect or believe should be happening.”
- Central Institute of Technology
Discomfort & struggle

“...a growing sense of discomfort & tension around Treaty issues, and a call [by Maori] to move from aroha to tika...”
- Sisters of Mercy

“...the Treaty Team is feeling under-resourced and overworked”
- Manukau City Council
We, the change workers on a long, hard journey

“...we began this project as a collection of individuals, Tangata Whenua, Pakeha/Tauiwi, with strong personal connections to each other and to each other’s work and certain shared beliefs or desires...”

- Magdalena Aotearoa women’s performance network

“These actions heralded the beginnings of a ten-year journey to a paradigm shift from a colonial model to one founded on Tino Rangatiratanga.”

- Literacy Aotearoa adult literacy organisation
Working towards a ‘right’ relationship between Maori and Pakeha

“Does there have to be a relationship at all? Yet there is a strong desire for that… What can we offer each other?…”
- Magdalena Aotearoa women’s performance network

“We’ve learnt that it’s ok for us to say no to some Ngaati Te Ata requests, as it is for them to say no to ours”
Earhttalk women’s organic farm
A coherent, bounded, internally consistent discourse
Validation by participants

- All themes credible & affirming
  - made sense
  - affirmed experiences difficult to describe in the dominant discourse
- Extended my analysis
  - themes keep returning in a cyclic way
  - same themes as in all voluntary social change
- Relationship with dominant discourse
  - difficult for a government agency to communicate with dual authorities in Treaty-based organisations
Speaking of ‘Treaty journeys’ where ‘we’ ‘affirm Maori authority’ & ‘struggle’ towards ‘right relationships’...

• Uses key resources developed in 1970s/80s by Maori & non-Maori activists & theorists.
• Provides non-resistant response to the challenging ‘assertive Maori face’.
• Functions as a sustained alternative to dominant colonial discourse.

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Methodology: Discourse analysis following

