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Negotiating Multicultural Difference in a Bicultural Nation: A Focused Case Study¹

This paper explores the ways in which multicultural difference is negotiated in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. While New Zealand is officially a bicultural nation, a major shift in immigration policy in the late 1980s has caused a rapid move towards an increasingly multicultural, and globally networked, nation. However, this is rarely reflected in its national cinema, which largely continues to operate within a bicultural framework. This paper is based on cross-cultural focus group research with three different communities: Maori, Croatian and Chinese. The study took the 1996 film *Broken English* (directed by Gregor Nicholas) as a starting point to analyse the fluid boundaries between national, diasporic and indigenous identities, as they move between public and private spaces. In the process, it draws conclusions about the limitations of official discourses in the management of cultural difference, and debunks many widely-held assumptions about cultural maintenance and integration. The paper applies a framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995, 1998, Laclau, 2000, Van Dijk, 1998, 2000) to the data and, while focused on a New Zealand context, it allows for productive comparison to the Australian one.

In terms of the ethnic composition of its population, New Zealand is clearly a multicultural nation. *Broken English* is an important exception to the dearth of diversified imagery, in that it deliberately sets out to represent a multicultural New Zealand. The film has differed from acclaimed bicultural projects, of which *Once Were Warriors* (1994, Lee Tamahori) and *Whale Rider* (2003, Nikki Caro) are clear examples. It represents a Pakeha perspective on multiculturalism, where otherness is clearly defined against a Pakeha yardstick.

The production personnel of *Broken English* consisted mostly of Pakeha New Zealanders, while the film features virtually no Pakeha characters. This raises issues of power and representation. In other words, who has the power to define whom, and for whose benefit? Although *Broken English* presents a number of different ethnic communities in New Zealand (Croatian, Maori, Chinese and Cook Islands), these communities are ultimately not represented by and for themselves but, rather, on someone else's terms. In addition, these representations are directed mostly at a mainstream (thus, largely Pakeha) audience. This situation may easily lead to 'exotic othering' and, while the film does this to a certain extent, it also retains a certain ambiguity on this aspect. Director Nicholas has argued that he did not want to treat these communities with 'kid gloves.' However, this in turn leads to a situation where these communities are positioned to some extent as a 'social problem' (as carrying 'baggage' into New Zealand), literally removed from mainstream society, with the absence of Pakeha characters. Within this cinematic 'ethnoscape,' the film displays an extraordinary concern with 'cultural detail' (such as food rituals, dance and colourful clothing), which ultimately leads to representations that rarely move beyond stereotypes.

Within the overall context of New Zealand cinema, *Broken English* can be seen as an important text, and as part of a postcolonial negotiation of nationhood and national

identity. The problematic ways in which it engages with its subject matter illustrates the complex nature of such negotiations. The film presents a version of New Zealand that is culturally and ethnically diverse. In this way, it moves away from hegemonic accounts of New Zealand which are still, to a large extent, framed in either monocultural or bicultural terms. This could be attributed to recent changes in immigration policy, which have created an increasingly diverse population, particularly in Auckland where the filmmakers are based, and where the film's story takes place. On one level, *Broken English* is an important attempt to bring different minority groups into the mainstream, and represents an inclusive version of the nation. The problematic ways in which it does this, however, illustrates the complexities involved. Although partially due to the constraints of film as a medium, and the resultant pressures of presenting complex subject matter in approximately one and a half hours, *Broken English* ultimately positions the different ethnic groups it represents outside of the mainstream. Being currently one of the few circulating cinematic versions of New Zealand nationhood that engages with ethnic and cultural diversity, the film bears additional representational weight.

The focus groups for this study were selected according to ethnic background, generational difference, and urban and rural/provincial backgrounds and contexts. *Broken English* represents a number of different ethnic groups that are clearly marked as such. Moreover, their ethnicity can be seen as one of the major organising principles of their respective characterisations. The two main characters are Croatian and Maori, while the supporting characters are of Chinese, Cook Island and Japanese descent. Within the sub-plot, the Chinese characters play the most important part. The selection of participants was based on this recognition, and it became important to select participants who identified themselves according to these categories. There was also the option of choosing only Pakeha participants. However, from the outset, this study was based on a recognition that ethnic minority groups in New Zealand were marginalised in mainstream discourses about the nation, albeit to varying degrees. Therefore, targeting different ethnic minority groups, as opposed to the dominant ethnic group, seemed an obvious way of gaining a range of responses related to the central issues of this study. This influenced the type of knowledge gained; in a sense, ethnic minorities were given a forum to address the mainstream. The study aimed to target the more critical audience members, those likely to be reflective about ethnic characterisation.

The following six groups were selected for the focus group study:

- 1) Croatian: New Zealand born or long-term residents
- 2) Croatian: recent immigrants (arrival after 1990)/mixed
- 3) Chinese: New Zealand born or long-term residents
- 4) Chinese: recent immigrants (arrival after 1990)
- 5) Maori: urban residents
- 6) Maori: rural/ provincial background

The Croatian groups were made up of members of the Croatian Cultural Society in Auckland. One of the Chinese groups was made up of members of the Auckland Chinese Community Centre, while the other consisted of members from various student associations. For the Maori groups, one consisted of media students at Auckland University, the other of family and friends. This selection process clearly demands a strong sense of self-reflexivity and an awareness of the role of the

researcher while employed in the analysis of the data.

The group discussions followed a screening of the film and lasted, in general, between an hour and an hour and a half.

National/ Diasporic Identity and the Bi-/ Multi-culturalism Debate

Discourses of race, ethnicity and culture are highly context-specific, and the focus group discussions were thus intimately related to the way different participants situate themselves, both individually and as a group, within a wider *national* context, and particularly in relation to bicultural and multicultural debates in New Zealand.

Discussions about biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand are often framed in an either/or fashion, and within this, New Zealand has made a ‘choice’ to pursue biculturalism as a state policy (at least in official terms). Since the 1970s, the Treaty of Waitangi has occupied a central place in this official policy. As John Pratt asserts, ‘the Treaty of Waitangi cemented into New Zealand culture and political life the idea that relations between Maori and Pakeha- colonisers and colonised- should be conducted on the basis of a ‘partnership of equals’ (1999, p.316). But, as Nina Nola argues, ‘official biculturalism is a prescriptive rather than descriptive definition, and as such marginalises ethnic minority groups who do not see themselves represented under the umbrella term “Pakeha,” while at the same time presupposing a homogeneous “British” culture as the binary opposite to Maori’ (2000, p.207; see also Mohanram, 1998, Ip, 1998). In other words, biculturalism excludes important sections of New Zealand society, at least in official discourses. It is precisely this underlying binary structure that leads Ramesh Thakur to the following conclusion:

The debate in New Zealand is about biculturalism, not multiculturalism: the two are mutually exclusive. The Maori are the oldest immigrants to New Zealand, and Pakeha the second oldest. Groups which are neither Maori nor European are frozen out of the debate on the identity and future of the country and disenfranchised with respect to the politics of multiculturalism. They are rendered impotent in setting the agenda of the debate or defining its conceptual vocabulary. (1995, p.271/272)

Thakur’s comments raises a number of issues. Firstly, it draws attention to the temporal hierarchy that biculturalism establishes. This hierarchy tends to lead to a situation where:

biculturalism is seen as the central platform from which a future multicultural society will be launched. The argument goes like this: in order to develop a model of ethnic relations that can answer to the democratic demands of a whole range of minority groups, it will first be necessary to develop representational structures that will empower the largest minority group. (Maxwell, 1998, p.199)

It is in the reaction to this argument that the confusion between different ‘culturalisms,’ as official policy and everyday experience, becomes clear. Consider, for instance, the following statement by Rajen Prasad (former Race Relations

Conciliator): ‘I don’t think it’s as simple as saying, “First achieve biculturalism, then we’ll look at multiculturalism.” One can’t wait for the other’ (qtd. in Nola, 2000, p.207). Indeed, everyday multiculturalism does not wait, but official multiculturalism is a political project and, therefore, it is possible to put it on hold, or ‘silence’ it in mainstream discourse. This means that some groups are constructed as ‘latecomers,’ and, in Homi Bhabha’s words, these ‘supplementary’ groups ‘by being “after” the original, or in “addition to,” it gives [them] the advantage of introducing a sense of “secondariness” or belatedness into the structure of the original’ (1990, p.305). They have the ability to ‘disturb the calculation’ (Bhabha, p.305) of meaning and representation.

Whereas a ‘multicultural’ position argues that biculturalism is too limiting and not inclusive enough, an ‘indigenous’ position is often based on the idea that biculturalism does not go far enough in terms of its inherent promise of power sharing. Radhika Mohanram draws attention to this power aspect when she writes that, ‘the concept of equitable power-sharing, so desirable for both Maori and Pakeha, is ultimately revealed to be something that can be initiated only by Pakeha, because it is Pakeha who control the resources’ (1998, p.26). In terms of similarities, both positions could be seen as attacking Eurocentrism, albeit with differing emphases. From a multicultural position, the aim is to ‘graft bits of diversity onto a mainstream core’ (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999, p.246). In other words, it is aimed at creating a space to, firstly, recognise and respect cultural diversity and, secondly, to incorporate this diversity into mainstream society and culture. This is what Charles Taylor has called ‘the politics of recognition’ (1992/1994). From an indigenous position, however, the aim is not so much to be incorporated into an existing political structure, but rather to reconfigure and redefine that structure. This applies to politics, as well as institutions throughout society.

In this section then, the emphasis moves away somewhat from *Broken English* to a more general and political discussion about national identity. As these debates generally followed discussions about the film, they can be partly seen to continue on a particular ‘discursive track’ that each group had already established. However, moving away from the context of the film also created a space in most cases to talk about national and individual identity in a different framework. This generally happened in all groups, but with interesting variations in terms of what aspects were accentuated.

Croatian Groups (Group 1 and Group 2)

Both Croatian groups were initially working towards a consensus on the way ‘Croatians’ were represented in *Broken English*. This entailed the construction of a different version of Croatian culture and identity, one in which ‘history’ meant not only the Croatian homeland, but also the Croatian part of New Zealand’s past. Both groups made frequent references to the earliest Croatian immigrants to New Zealand in the nineteenth century and their history on the gum fields of Northland. There was a strong feeling in these groups that this part of New Zealand’s history has not been adequately represented in mainstream versions of constructing nationhood. In other words, they felt that this part of history was silenced, making the representation in *Broken English* even more difficult to accept. The following exchange, which still

deals with the film, shows the extent to which these kinds of emotions were stirred up in some participants:

Kate: It upset me that in New Zealand, the country we have made what it is...

Mary: Ooohh...

Trish: Helped made...helped made...

Of course, the other two participants recognise here that Kate is getting a little carried away, but this serves to illustrate the very real anger that these groups expressed. Driven by emotions, Kate strongly constructs Croatian immigrants as the primary builders of New Zealand as a nation, which is subsequently modified because of group dynamics.

What is interesting here, from a researcher's point of view, is the complex overlap between concepts of 'nation' and 'culture'; in other words, where can the boundaries between these concepts be located, and how important are perceived views from the 'outside' in a relational sense? For example, consider the following:

Trish: I'm telling you openly and honestly that this film is actually propaganda, to destroy the *image* of Croatian people in New Zealand and also in Croatia. Because you know, when we went through this stage of very recent war, *we were a nation in pain*. And for a long time nobody heard us..alright? We were described as a fascist, as a very, very bad nation. And it took ten years *for the world* to realise who really is a fascist; what's really going on in *our country*. You see, we didn't cry and beg and ask; we fought ourselves. (my emphasis)

There is an interesting 'slippage' here between 'the nation-as-state' and 'the nation-as-people,' which surfaced in all groups at times, but particularly in the Croatian groups. Thus, 'New Zealand' refers here to 'the nation-as state' and to the geographical territory, which is seen as the immediate everyday context, whereas 'a nation in pain' transcends geographical boundaries and appropriates a more cultural sense of nationhood. It refers to an 'imagined community' of Croatians worldwide, with a common 'imagined homeland' ('our country'), and in this way can be seen as an important part of diasporic identity formation. The reference to 'the world' in this extract draws attention to the transnational nature of such an identity. This discursive slippage serves a dual purpose: it functions as a way to claim a space within New Zealand as a nation, and it also differentiates Croatian identity strategically from other ethnic groups within New Zealand. This latter move is one way to resist being subsumed into the larger category of New Zealander, or 'Pakeha.'

The complex ways in which these different functions overlap became more evident when the participants were specifically asked to define New Zealand as a nation, and their own position within it. Interestingly, when these groups talked about New Zealand as a nation, they often drew on mainstream discourses, such as New Zealand being an 'egalitarian society':

Mary: ...love New Zealand; what a wonderful feeling it was that you...like you go into butcher shop. It doesn't matter if you're a farmer, and next to

you there's a specialist, eye specialist or somebody. You are just as important as he is. And sometimes in European countries, it's not like that. New Zealand is just wonderful. And I'm very, very happy, very privileged to get here.

Trish: Wherever you go, there is people from all over the world here; French, Italian, German, Dutch, Chinese, Islanders, Maoris. We've proven that we can all live together in one country.

Jenny: New Zealand is a lovely country, and I love it; most of our Croatian people love it in New Zealand. New Zealand gives us freedom. We can do whatever we like, and as long as we respect the law and pay taxes, there's no problem. And also, we fit very well with other nationalities.

New Zealand is here positively constructed in opposition to Europe, which is characterised by deeply entrenched class structures. It sets up a dichotomy between the 'old world' (Europe) and the 'new' (New Zealand), a dynamic that draws on historical colonial discourse. This shows the flexibility of these discourses in terms of their appropriation for various contexts, as contrasts sharply with earlier constructions of Europe as 'civilised,' rather than 'barbaric.'

In addition, virtually all participants in both groups stressed that this was a multicultural nation. That said, there was an awareness that 'we' don't always represent 'ourselves' as such:

Kate: We very much portray ourselves as a Maori country, don't we? But we are very multicultural.

In this context, 'we' quite clearly refers to 'New Zealanders' in general, rather than 'Croatsians.' Also, 'multicultural' is appropriated in the sense of 'multiculturalism as fact,' rather than 'official multiculturalism.' This was the dominant mode in which the term 'multiculturalism' was used in both groups, with some relatively covert references to its more political implications:

Naomi: We all have equal rights. I think we are multicultural, very multicultural. (.) I think New Zealand is coping very well with multi-ethnic groups. (.) We all respect each other's cultures, which maybe thirty years ago some didn't. (.) People are not having to change their names anymore, Anglicise it; so really, the multi-ethnic people are getting a bit stronger, and they want their rights, including Maoris. You know, they want their language recognised and they want their cultures respected a bit more and so on, and I think that's a good thing.

This qualifies the earlier glowing construction of New Zealand as an 'egalitarian paradise,' as it acknowledges that this has historically not been the case. It also constructs multiculturalism as different ethnic groups living side by side while retaining their differences, the metaphor of a 'mosaic,' rather than a 'melting pot.'

Overall, Group 1 discussed national identity in these relatively general terms. All participants in this group had migrated to New Zealand more than thirty or forty years ago. They were thus firmly settled in New Zealand. All of them were actively

involved in forms of cultural maintenance, as is reflected in their emphasis on their community's reputation *in* New Zealand.

In contrast, most of the participants in Group 2 were relatively recent migrants, and the discussion in this group took quite a different turn. For the more recent immigrants in Group 2, the emphasis in relation to national identity focused on individual identity. Within these expressions of identity formation, some key themes emerged which are typical of diaspora identities, like 'dislocation' and 'in-between' positions. *Broken English* can be seen as an attempt to represent some of these themes. According to these groups, however, the film does not do it very successfully. The following extract is quoted at length because it fittingly captures the main dilemmas and contradictions inherent in these positions:

Lisa: What do I think of New Zealand as a nation?

HH: Yes, how would you describe it? And how do you see your own place within it?

Lisa: It's like asking me what New Zealand culture is. It's still not defined; it's still searching for a nation and searching for a culture, and searching for identity, very much so. And personally, as a passport holder, I hold a New Zealand and Croatian passport. I'm probably searching for identity as well. I feel very much de-rooted from Croatia, and I don't feel completely belonging here, because....One reason is the accent, another reason is that there are things happening in this society that I can't associate with, and I get bitter about And then, you know, I try to distance myself and say I don't really belong here; I should not really get involved. And then I think again and I say, but my daughter is here and she is a kiwi by birth, and I should get involved because I should make it better for her. I'm very confused, and I think I'm in a typical straightjacket of an immigrant, who has lost, you know, the traditional sort of linkages. There are different types of immigrants, or immigrants from Croatia. There is a type of *gastarbeiters* that went to Western Europe and used to work there, but still hold very strong links with back home; you know, they have different sort of problems. And there's us here, very far from Croatia. Although we do keep in contact, physically you're not there and you're forgotten most of the time by your friends and your relatives, except on Christmas and birthdays. And things have changed radically. And you did not take...at least I'm speaking for myself, I did not take part in those changes and so I can't claim ownership over that. And here I also don't feel, you know...So I live in a micro-world. I feel very much at home at my work and at my home, but in between I'm just a visitor. And I very often behave like that.

Firstly, Lisa draws here on a number of elements that influence a sense of national identity and belonging to an 'imagined community': language ('accent') is one factor, birthplace another ('kiwi by birth'). In addition, there are elements like family ties and historical factors, linked to geography. These kind of elements work together to different degrees and in different configurations. Depending on specific contexts, any one of these elements may become salient.

In short, this shows common aspects of diaspora identities and it complicates the notion of hybridity. There are feelings of being ‘in-between’ cultures and feelings of longing for a ‘homeland.’ But, as other participants in this group noted, this ‘imagined homeland’ is often exposed as a myth by what I would call ‘the shock of return.’ At that moment of return, the migrant is fixed in a kind of permanent limbo, or the feeling of being ‘forever foreigner.’ This realisation is not necessarily negative, and can be an advantage in certain contexts, but as the above extract shows (‘I live in a micro-world’), the ‘celebratory’ undertones inherent in some theoretical notions of hybridity are not warranted.

This extract also draws attention to the complexity and heterogeneity of diasporic identities. The term ‘diaspora’ as a homogeneous category is too limited (Sinclair and Cunningham, 2000). While diasporic identity formation, by definition, involves negotiation between ‘the here and there,’ it is highly context-specific and influenced by a wide variety of factors, both in the ‘original homeland’ and the ‘adopted homeland.’ These factors include political developments (e.g. war), but also personal factors like family circumstances (e.g. children), and the level of cultural maintenance.

For example, a couple of participants in Group 2 were born in New Zealand and have lived here all their lives. They nevertheless identify first and foremost as ‘Croatian’:

Ruth: In my own life, I’ve always thought of myself as a Croatian who happened to be born in New Zealand. (.) I feel it goes beyond where you’re born. Going to school not knowing English, hearing all the other children talking about what they did with their grandparents; you’re an outsider, you’re a foreigner. Doesn’t matter whether you’re born here. Going to the shop, speaking with your mother in Croatian, turning to the counter and speaking to the woman in English; that chop and change. You’re not a kiwi, you can’t be and you never will be.

This shows that ‘dislocation’ is not necessarily a prerequisite of diasporic identity formation, although it can be a strong factor in some cases. Ruth constructs national identity as consisting of two main elements: birthright versus language, with language being the dominant factor. The implication is that if one of these two elements is missing, there is no complete sense of national identity.

The participants in this group were aware of my own status as recent immigrant and ‘non-British European.’ This may partly explain why the discussion about ‘national identity’ was mostly framed in terms of personal experience, as there was a sense of common understanding which was often implicitly referred to in terms of ‘you know what I mean.’ The same discussion in the ‘Chinese’ group took quite a different direction.

Chinese Groups (Group 3 and Group 4)

Group 3 was scheduled to be held at the Auckland Chinese Community Centre in Auckland. This group took a long time to organise, around four to five months after first contact was made with the organisation. There were a number of reasons for this,

one of them being that the organisation was preparing celebrations for its thirty year anniversary when I first approached them. My correspondence took place by phone and mail, mostly through the Vice-Chairwoman of the organisation and, in the later stages, through the Chairman, both of whom were present on the evening in question. I explained the aims and objectives of my research thoroughly and repeatedly to both, in writing, in person, and by phone. The focus group consisted of six members of the Community Centre, and one outsider: five men and two women. Their ages ranged from mid-thirties to late-seventies. While one participant was a recent arrival, the majority had settled here thirty to forty years ago. I arrived with a friend who is fluent in both Mandarin and Cantonese, which had been agreed upon beforehand. She was to take part in the discussion as well. On arrival, the participants spoke in Cantonese amongst themselves, but all had a reasonable understanding of English. On this occasion, they had come to the Centre especially to take part in this focus group.

From the moment I started playing the videotape of *Broken English*, most participants talked amongst themselves, apparently not concentrating much on the film. I had introduced myself beforehand and explained what my research entailed. I had also warned them that the film contained some fairly explicit material: sex scenes, violence and offensive language. Although I had on numerous occasions notified the ‘gatekeepers’ of the duration of the film (about one hour and a half), one of them told me he thought that was a little too long, just as we were about to roll the tape. After about five minutes, he called me over and asked whether it was a documentary or a drama. I told him again that it was a drama, set in Auckland. The talking continued until about twenty minutes into the film. This was the start of a rather explicit sex scene between the characters of Nina and Eddie, and something extraordinary happened. Almost immediately, everyone got up and appeared to be highly offended by this scene. The chairman told me this was ‘too much’ and that it offended them greatly. He also told me this was the end of the session, as they were no longer willing to cooperate. I stopped the tape and apologised, saying it was never my intention to offend. My apologies were accepted but I was told that the film was considered pornographic, which causes embarrassment in ‘our culture,’ particularly since there were women in the room. As my friend and I were shown out, I apologised again and I was told that there are ‘too many cultural differences’ for this to work successfully.

Reflecting on events afterwards, a number of factors could have played a role in the ‘failure’ of this particular group. Firstly, my own role could obviously be questioned here. Organising and conducting focus groups put me on a steep learning curve during the course of this research project; I had no first hand experience. Although I thought I had explained my aims and objectives thoroughly, I could perhaps have done more in that respect. Also, in this particular case, cross-cultural factors clearly had an impact on the event and, although I had some assistance, it may have worked better if I had not been present myself. Subsequent conversations with my ‘assistant’ indicated that she was rather surprised as well. She, at first, thought it came down to a ‘generation gap’ and, second, considered this group to be rather ‘rude.’ In terms of the generation gap, Xuelin Zhou argues that the treatment of sex and sexuality in general in Chinese cinema was heavily censored for the entire period since the Communist Revolution until the so-called ‘youth films’ of the late 1980s (2001). Explicitness in this respect was generally regarded as ‘decadent’ and ‘vulgar.’ Considering the age bracket of the participants, this could have been a major influence here. Secondly, on a more practical level, my ‘assistant’ has since made some enquiries at the University of

Auckland, which indicate that researchers have experienced problems before with this particular organisation. In other words, acquiring some background information about this particular organisation beforehand, which I failed to do, could have led to the selection of another organisation. The day after this event, I sent a letter apologising for any offence caused and taking full responsibility for this.

The discussion about national identity in Group 4 centred on political themes, and specifically debates about bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism. This group identified some major contradictions in the way these debates are framed in a New Zealand context. Significantly, the participants felt they were largely excluded from this debate, and felt clearly positioned on the margins. The main difference with the Croatian groups was that Group 4's feeling extended beyond political debates to 'everyday' contexts. Rhetorically, however, a fair amount of effort went into assuring an impression of agency. The personal *choice* element of immigration was stressed repeatedly. On a micro-level, this can be partly related to my position in this group. That is, participants were clearly concerned not to be seen to be complaining to an 'outsider connected to the mainstream,' as the following extract shows:

Jimmy: I mean, I like New Zealand. It was my choice. I chose the country, and I still think...it is a big space with few people, and a lot of nature. Culturally, I don't mind that the culture has become more and more Asian, obviously. (.) People are getting more ambitious, but the average New Zealanders are still relaxed, a rather laid back culture.

Hailey: For New Zealand, most people say, you know, that more and more migrants come from Asia, and that the nation is multicultural. But the reality is...I have to say this...there is the Maori culture and the Pakeha culture. So there's only two cultures. And for the others...ethnic peoples, just like me.

Frank: I don't think New Zealand is a multicultural society, because...what you can see from the film. Yeah, it's quite separate; separate along the lines of mainstream society and minorities...yeah.

Jimmy clearly wants to stress the positive aspects of New Zealand, and emphasises his own *choice* to migrate here. In doing so, he relies extensively on mainstream discourses of national identity such as a 'clean, green country' and a 'laid back attitude,' which is also the core message of the nation's tourist literature. However, through his use of 'New Zealanders,' he clearly positions himself outside of this category, which was particularly common for the more recent migrants in this group. Again, we can see an interesting slippage between 'culture' and 'race' here: when he notes that the 'culture' has become more and more Asian, he is most likely talking about a more visible Asian presence, but this is rather unclear. 'Culture,' then, functions as a nodal point.

The other two participants adopt a more critical position, although in Hailey's case almost apologetically so ('I *have* to say this'). She specifically critiques bicultural imaginings of New Zealand, and implies that these imaginings marginalise different ethnic groups outside the norm (Maori and Pakeha) *as ethnic*. In other words, the norm does not have to be named as such (Dyer, 1997). Similarly, Frank offers a critique of the official version of multiculturalism as a 'mosaic,' by implying that this

itself causes marginalisation.

The participants who have been in New Zealand longer expressed similar concerns, but were more confident about expressing them:

Casey: Even though politicians or the media keep emphasising that New Zealand is a multicultural society...well, I really don't think so, because when we go to schools, even like the subject we study, they just focus on Maori education or Pacific Island education, but they never put the focus on Asians. Like how to accommodate their different learning needs, or even the Greeks or South Africans or other minority groups. So I don't think...I think there is still improvement we can anticipate.

Chanelle: Okay, I think New Zealand is a monocultural country (everyone laughs), honestly. I mean, people are aware of issues like Maori and Pacific Island culture and New Zealanders of different cultural, ethnic groups in this country. But these groups are not involved in any decision making at all, not on any level, national level or community level. And I think until one day that we could really share a partnership with these different cultural groups, or ethnic groups, then we can't really say that it's a multicultural country.

The emphasis shifts from 'national identity' in a general sense to a more political discourse of cultural rights (and note again the slippage with 'ethnic'). On a micro-level, the somewhat nervous laughter at 'a monocultural country' may indicate that the other participants largely agree with this, but feel reluctant to express it in such a strong and straightforward manner, particularly in a semi-public context.

The difference between Casey and Chanelle in the above extract is that Casey expresses frustration with a bicultural discourse, and Chanelle constructs a sharper dichotomy between the 'empty signifier' Pakeha and the rest. The former shows parallels with the way this was discussed in the Croatian groups (a similar frustration with the limitations and marginalising tendencies of bicultural discourses), whereas the latter is more confrontational and more directly concerned with contemporary and historical *sources* of power. In this way, it is closer related to discourses that the Maori groups draw on, albeit for different reasons.

Finally, despite these critiques of bicultural discourses, the Treaty of Waitangi, which is often seen as the document that legitimises these, was never explicitly mentioned in either the Croatian or Chinese groups, nor in the Maori groups. Particularly in the latter case, this was surprising, as both Maori groups drew extensively on bicultural discourses in relation to national identity. It is difficult to gauge the reasons for this, but my hypothesis is that it is due to two reasons: first, the Treaty may have achieved the status of empty signifier and, second, the term could be seen as too overdetermined in terms of its political connotations, thereby hampering the construction of a clear argument. Seen in this way, the former would relate to the Maori groups in that it 'goes without saying' that the arguments are based on the Treaty as 'founding document' (I return to this shortly). The latter would apply to the other groups, in that the Treaty instantly invokes a bicultural version of the nation, on which these groups were at pains to critique.

Maori Groups (5 and 6)

In both Maori groups, as with the Chinese group, general discussions about ‘national identity’ quickly took a political form. Within these discussions, there was an interesting tension between *what is*, and *what should be*. Both groups firmly positioned Maori at the centre, as a group with certain rights which *should* override those of other groups. In a way, they constructed a hierarchy that is historical in nature. Not surprisingly then, the ‘biculturalism first’-discourse was fairly dominant, accompanied necessarily by critiques of immigration policy. To an important extent, multiculturalism can be seen as a strategy to come to terms with a perceived disruption of the ‘homogeneous’ nation, as Jon Stratton argues, ‘[h]omogeneity, of language and culture as well as race, was, throughout the nineteenth century and up until very recently, the most basic concern of the nation’ (1998, p.9). Within this context, there is a crucial distinction to be made between multiculturalism as a lived reality, and multiculturalism as a state policy. Stratton talks about the difference between everyday multiculturalism, ‘the mixing, merging and reworking of cultural forms in people’s everyday lives’ (1998, p.34), and official multiculturalism. This is an important distinction, which can equally be applied to biculturalism: everyday multiculturalism recognises hybridity as part of everyday life. In contrast, official multiculturalism tends to fix cultural identities as a kind of ‘mosaic.’ Official multiculturalism has this ‘fixing’ effect because of its paradoxical need to define cultural identity in a neat and static manner.

Despite the strong critiques of official multiculturalism, and particularly immigration policy, in these groups, there was also a clear recognition that multiculturalism was a ‘fact’ in everyday life, and that this was not necessarily negative. The political implications, however, were read as potentially negative, from a Maori point of view. In short, the emphasis focused on issues of power in relation to these concepts:

Nicole: It’s not a bicultural country; it’s a multicultural country.

Libby: I don’t think New Zealand has ever come to grips with biculturalism.

Moana: No, same, and also it just seems that everyone comes and just hangs out in their own separate groups. And there’s just not that much interaction or mixing between them.

Libby: I don’t think New Zealand is multicultural. You have a lot of different cultures, but they can’t even deal with biculturalism. (.) New Zealand can’t deal with biculturalism, and yet they embrace all these other cultures as a means of diverting biculturalism and going straight to multi. I think it’s a way of forgetting about the biculturalism between tangata whenua [literal translation: people of the land] and Pakeha. And when you have multiculturalism, it sort of pushes biculturalism to the side. That’s my view of it.

Libby: But it kind of lumps minorities together aye?

Margot: Yeah, and also pushes Maori into the multicultural group, do you know what I mean?

Apart from the initial statements in this extract, which refer to ‘everyday

multiculturalism,' the emphasis is clearly on 'official multiculturalism.' Multiculturalism is being criticised as a policy with important implications for national power relations in New Zealand. Libby, in particular, uses language which is central to this process, such as 'diverting' and 'forgetting.' Her critique is highly sophisticated and matches political critiques of biculturalism. Within the power relations thus invoked, there is a concern that Maori are 'pushed to the margins' of the multicultural 'mosaic,' the largest piece of which is seen as Pakeha.

There are clear echoes here of 'Maori sovereignty' discourse, including its essentialist notions of 'culture,' but there is a sense that multiculturalism as an official policy, and by extension immigration policy, is responsible for this situation. This discourse of sovereignty is thus employed for strategic reasons:

Margot: People come into this country and they think that New Zealand is Pakeha, you know what I mean? So they sort of try to integrate into a Pakeha society, whereas I think what they need to realise is that this culture is, and should always be, a Maori cultural society. And they should integrate into that first, and then fit into what their environment is calling for, or what they wanted to.

There are some interesting contradictions in this argument, which appear to arise from discrepancies between 'official' and 'everyday' versions. Margot firstly challenges a bicultural discourse of New Zealand by invoking a monocultural Maori version, which she argues *should* be the dominant 'culture' on which a New Zealand identity is based. She then draws on an assimilationist discourse which demands 'integration' with Maori, *before* cultural maintenance. The former relates to official policy, while the latter refers to everyday contexts. This clearly shows how these two contradictory notions often overlap.

The discussion developed an implicit critique of the power of decision-making in New Zealand and, by extension, to who is included in that process. There was a feeling that Maori do not have enough influence on political decisions, something that quickly became explicit:

Libby: I think we're too small for that [American style 'melting pot']. I think we'd get swallowed up. It's just the dominant culture which has ruled basically, and hasn't really allowed Maori in...except for consultation and on ceremonial occasions. Other than that, they're not there in policy; it's only to consult with ('what do you think of this?'), but they're not there as decision makers. Right through government, except for the Maori Department, which is ultimately run by Pakeha. (.) What we've had is consultation; we've never had a process.

Within this discourse, the first 'we' refers to New Zealanders in general, whereas the second 'we' refers to Maori. These two positions are occupied interchangeably, depending on the context, in a seemingly unproblematic way. On a micro-level, sensing that these views might be perceived as 'radical,' Libby interrupted herself here and almost apologetically said 'sorry, you've stirred me up,' before further developing her argument:

Libby: I've never really agreed with the multiculturalism concept. I think it just comes in, bulldozes over biculturalism, and they say 'hey, what are you worrying about?', you know, 'there's this culture here, and this...', you know? (.) I know there's a lot of people who are sick of Maori moaning and complaining about the same thing. But it's never been addressed properly for any process of healing to take place. In order for healing to take place, you've gotta address the past and what's happened.

This argument was subsequently reinforced by a number of examples of historical grievances, especially in education. Importantly, there is a high level of awareness of mainstream discourses in relation to these grievances, but these are confidently countered. She constructs a version of the nation as a historical organism which can, and needs to be, healed before 'we' as 'an imagined community' can move forward through calendrical time (Anderson, 1991). In this way, Libby talked about the friction between biculturalism and multiculturalism almost exclusively in political terms. Although there was a broad consensus in this group in a political sense, some participants interrupted this political focus on a number of occasions with 'everyday' aspects of multiculturalism, as in the following exchange:

Libby: Just because a lot of different people live here doesn't mean that we all live together.

Nicole: Yeah, but we have to. We live in the same country. We're gonna have to find bridges, you know?

Moana: Yeah, but where is the interaction? I don't know, how many Croatians do you know?

Libby: I mean, it depends what you mean by multiculturalism.

Nicole: Well, we're many nations...

Libby: We are multi...we are many nations, yes, New Zealand is now many nations. However, because we haven't addressed that biculturalism, I don't think it paves the way for a multicultural nation.

Margot: That's the thing; it is multicultural but it is not harmonious.

Nicole: I'm not saying it is. I'm just saying that's just the way it is. That's just what we are. That is the face of New Zealand and many cultures, but yeah, generally it's the Pakeha face that people will see.

Apart from the 'slippage' between 'cultures' and 'nations,' there is a firm recognition of 'multiculturalism as fact,' and a simultaneous engagement with its political implications. Generally, the nation is constructed along a time line. The assumption is that 'we' cannot progress in a linear fashion until biculturalism is 'achieved.' Finally, in relation to Michael Billig's assertion that nationalism is an international ideology (1995), Nicole shows a concern with the way other nations see 'us' and, implicitly, a concern with the 'metropolitan gaze' (Turner, 2000), or what is considered 'the face of New Zealand.'

The critiques in this group were mostly aimed at 'Pakeha' as the main source of power

within New Zealand's social and political context. Although similarly drawing attention to contradictions inherent in bicultural and multicultural discourses, the emphasis in Group 6 veered more towards the *economic* implications of immigration policy, with a particular focus on responsibilities on the part of immigrants, which was largely absent in Group 5.

Initially, the discussion about 'national identity' in Group 6 followed a similar pattern to Group 5. The participants began by questioning the concepts of biculturalism and multiculturalism, and the (im)possibility of their coexistence:

Ellie: I don't know if I should say no to immigration at all. But I just think it's a wrong term to say that we're bicultural, cause we're not to me. We're sort of...there's two...there's like an indigenous people, and then there's Pakehas. But I mean, the Pakehas are all different cultures anyway; they come from different places in the world anyway. There's Irish and English and all sorts...

This extract quite clearly shows the problematic nature of these terms. Initially, Ellie draws on the same 'biculturalism-first' discourse in an apparently unproblematic way, before realising that the two categories that form the basis of this discourse cannot ultimately be sustained in terms of 'culture,' and could be seen as categories of 'race,' which is a more contentious concept.

Her reference to immigration subsequently shifted the focus to a discussion of the merits of immigration, where a similar discursive 'slippage' between 'culture' and 'race' can be discerned. For example, while some participants endorsed 'cultural diversity' as something considered to be 'healthy,' this group also developed a consensus that this should not come at any cost to the nation in economic terms; in other words, immigration should be based on merit in the form of acknowledged qualifications:

Linda: I don't like the formula they use to decide how many people they let in each given year. But I think that a good mix has got to make people more culturally aware, and that can't be a bad thing.

She then went on to tell an anecdote about a qualified Indian doctor who cannot get work in New Zealand because her qualifications are not recognised. There has been a marked increase in these kind of stories in newspapers and on television in the past few years, and she appears to critique this situation. However, she seems to then contradict herself:

Linda: I think those sorts of things need to be ironed out a bit. But I don't think people should be able to come over here and live off the dole, you know? (.) It's gotta benefit somebody. It [immigration] shouldn't just be a drain for services like medicine and all of that; it shouldn't be a drain.

This is taken up by other participants, and a set of conditions is developed for immigration, with a particular focus on language. In this way, the culture aspect of 'cultural diversity' comes to mean culture in the narrow sense of the word. Difference

is fine, and even beneficial, but only in its ‘proper’ time and place and on *our* terms. This is a common discourse when it comes to issues of multiculturalism, and immigration in particular. Within the models of linear national progression, some immigrants (‘they’) are then seen to hold ‘us’ back:

Ellie: I think they [immigrants] should be able to speak English.

Bill: I think if they come here to New Zealand, they talk our language, they learn our language. And there again, it’s up to the individual. If you’re going over there, overseas, it’s up to you to learn theirs. You know, our language was here, has been here ever since we were here. They come here; they learn our language.

Linda: Well, cause it does put a drain on the resources. Like in education resources; that money could be spent on other things.

Ellie: Yeah, and they’ve made that choice to come here from another country, so why should we pay money for them to learn to speak our language?

As mentioned above, this emphasis on responsibilities on the part of immigrants was largely absent in Group 5. One possible explanation for this could be that cultural diversity in Auckland is a part of ‘everyday’ life, particularly for students, whereas Group 6 could be basing their arguments on more *mediated* accounts. This is made explicit in some cases, as in the following extract:

Bill: Well, you look at New Zealand now. You just look *in the papers*; just look *on the news*. You know, there’s people starving in New Zealand overall. There’s people coming from overseas here; they’re taking our jobs. You know, we’ve got no homes, a lot of our kids have no homes, no money; they’re failing in our schools today. (.) So why let them come in and dominate our language and our way of learning? (my emphasis)

Ellie: It’s like, clean up your own backyard first, before you get on with...The construction of New Zealand by Bill here stands in direct contrast to the earlier image of New Zealand as a ‘paradise’ in the Croatian and Chinese groups. In addition, this assumes a win-loss equation in relation to immigration: if immigrants (‘they’) enter, then it ‘naturally’ follows that ‘we’ suffer. This is unproblematically positioned as ‘common sense.’

In line with the hypothesis above, when this group turned to a more general discussion of ‘the nation,’ immigration was largely deleted because the framework became ‘bicultural.’ This could be seen as a more accurate reflection of their ‘everyday’ context. Consider, for example, the following response to my request to describe New Zealand metaphorically as a family:

Linda: Well, the siblings don’t get on (laughter). The older brother thinks that the younger, ‘tanned’ brother isn’t as good as the older, white brother in certain cases, and thinks that the only way to do things is the older brother’s way, you know? They try to get on, but...

Firstly, Linda constructs a common version of the nation as running along a linear time axis, with associated notions of progress. In terms of gender, this progress is constructed as driven by males. She draws specifically on a colonial discourse of progress by positioning Pakeha as ‘older.’ The term ‘younger,’ in Linda’s response, positions ‘Maori’ as further back in time with relation to this progress, and needing to ‘catch up.’ At the same time, she offers a ‘postcolonial’ critique of this situation by constructing Pakeha as implicitly arrogant and unwilling to form a partnership based on equality. This line of argument complements what Aileen Moreton-Robinson has called ‘patriarchal white sovereignty’ (2004).

This was subsequently followed by discussions about a variety of topics, from politicians to the role of the family, from education to teenage pregnancy, but all of these discussions were grounded in a bicultural framework, one which was largely taken for granted, and functioned for the most part as an empty signifier.

Conclusions

Overall, there were significant variations in terms of the kind of discourses on which these different groups drew. They were, to some extent, influenced by the different micro-contexts of individual groups, or group dynamics. However, some of these variations also relate to the positions of these groups on a macro-level, particularly their *perception* of this macro-context.

In some cases, this led to the groups drawing on similar discourses but for differing ends and from various perspectives. For example, when Group 6 argues that immigrants should not be a ‘drain on *our* resources,’ and the Croatian groups stress that *they* work hard and integrate well, they both draw on a similar discourse. The difference is that Group 6 claims a central position, based on historical continuity, against which ‘others’ are defined, whereas the Croatian groups, in this instance, define themselves against ‘other’ non-Croatian immigrants, vis-a-vis this centre.

Again, these positionings are never predictable, nor are they always consistent. They can overlap and appear contradictory, depending on specific contexts. It would, however, be a fallacy to conclude that this is a random process. In a way, it is a highly structured process in terms of the discourses on which these groups draw. These discourses follow certain patterns that are recognisable and relate to positions of power in specific contexts. They are also highly flexible in terms of their combinations and representations, which makes them suitable for appropriation in a wide variety of contexts, and with a wide variety of effects. This paper has attempted to show the complexity of discourses on which different audiences draw when talking about a text such as *Broken English* and its contentious subject matter. This empirical research is not representative, but it clearly shows the fluidity of meanings different audiences attribute to *Broken English*. This fluidity, however, is limited to some extent, and inextricably linked to power relations in a wider social context.

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ENDNOTES:

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