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**The Occupation of Moutoa Gardens-Pakaitore Marae:  
A Discourse Analysis**

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In 1995, inter-ethnic relations between Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and the New Zealand Government came to a head when a group of Maori occupied a public reserve in Wanganui. Issues of colonial injustice in the form of land and sovereignty claims were brought to the fore. The aims of this research were to identify and critically analyse the arguments Pakeha (people of European descent) employed to make sense of the protest and these issues. Interview texts of twenty Pakeha who were interested in, or involved with resolving the occupation were examined. Participants' constructions of sovereignty, land, local concerns and the law were explicated using the discourse analytic suggestions of Potter and Wetherell (1987), Parker (1992) and Foucault (1982). Analyses focused on the constitution of objects, subject positions and power relations in participant's texts. Three constructions of Maori sovereignty emerged. Two constituted Maori sovereignty as Maori desire to govern New Zealand or share sovereignty with the Crown, and the third construed Maori sovereignty as a process of consultation between Maori and the Crown. Land claims were generally construed as significant and in need of redress, although the claim to the land under occupation was contested. The implications of constructing the land under occupation as a marae or public gardens were explored. Examination of the debate surrounding the future of monuments offensive to local Whanganui Iwi located in the public reserve, revealed that accountability for Council's failure to attend to the monuments was differentially attributed to Council or Iwi. Law and order issues were construed as the paramount concern of the citizens of Wanganui. Varying constructions of the law in relation to the occupation allowed for its continuation or called for its conclusion. Analyses demonstrated that the occupiers concerns were undermined or warranted through appeals to rationality, knowledge and equality arguments. The social and political implications of these arguments were explored.

## Preface

For much of Aotearoa/New Zealand's colonial history, the process of building an equitable and harmonious relationship between the colonists and Maori was thwarted by the practices and policies of the British Crown and Settler Governments. These policies undermined and usurped Maori authority and institutions while denying Maori a significant place in the newly established political and social order. Maori became subject to the indivisible sovereignty of the Crown, and their rights to self-determination, affirmed by the second article of the Treaty of Waitangi, were largely ignored. The injustices perpetrated by this emergent political and social order, are the inheritance of current generations, both Maori and Tauwiwi (non-Maori). While Maori have struggled for over 150 years to make their voices heard, Tauwiwi have only recently begun to examine the ways in which our historical and current social, economic and political practices are party to continuing injustice.

The occupation of Moutoa Gardens/Pakaitore Marae may be seen as part of the continuing process to re-define the relationship between Maori, the Crown and Tauwiwi. Moutoa Gardens, a small reserve in the centre of Wanganui City, was occupied by members of Te Ati Haunui a Paparangi Iwi from the 28th of February to 18th of May, 1995. Iwi renamed the gardens Pakaitore Marae and asserted their authority over the gardens and lands adjacent to and including the Whanganui River. Claims by Iwi that they were celebrating their Whanganuitanga brought the concept of Maori local self-determination into the public domain.

Extensive media coverage of the occupation engaged public attention for nearly three months. Members of Parliament, police, local government, and various interest groups, all became involved in explicating/interpreting the issues of the protest and dealing with the protesters. Constructions of the issues and the linguistic resources that constituted those constructions provided the social and political context for the

occupation. Without a particular understanding of the issues, Iwi would not have protested and others would not have taken exception to the protest. The wider significance of this debate stems from its position in the ongoing process of negotiation between Maori, the Crown and Tauwi and the way in which discourse shapes our collective futures. In this thesis I examine the arguments and themes that structured the debate using discourse analysis.

The theory and practice of discourse analysis is part of the growing challenge to the individually reductive theories and positivist methodologies of traditional psychology. From a discursive perspective, language is taken to be a constitutive and material force, producing the concepts that shape our understandings of the world, the people, and the situations we encounter every day. Accounts of the occupation are not seen as objective reflections of 'the facts'; rather they are seen as constructions, negotiable and contestable, with attending political and material consequences. Post-structuralist theories broaden the focus of discursive research to include the analysis of power. The question then becomes one of which account will be accepted as truthful and acted upon, and which will become vilified and disregarded.

Drawing upon these theories and methodologies I have identified and critically analysed the arguments and themes Pakeha employed to make sense of the protest. The texts used for analyses were drawn from a series of interviews conducted with people involved with or interested in the occupation. Participants included members of the Wanganui District Council, the police, One Wanganui (a group opposed to the occupation), and members of the public who supported or opposed the occupation. My analysis juxtaposes the broad patterns of argument and themes constituting various claims and examines the social, political and material consequences of them. I have been particularly interested in the way talk constitutes and positions people involved with the protest and have specifically sought to identify constructions which undermine and uphold the claims of the occupiers. My interest in talk that

supports the claims of occupiers, distinguishes this study from previous research which has focused on the oppressive functions of text.

Chapter One discusses the theoretical influences of this thesis and examines the implications of the “turn to the text” for traditional psychological approaches to the study of inter-group relations. In addition, I attempt to address the consequences of employing constructionist and post-structural approaches for the work I produce, through an examination of reflexivity. In Chapter Two, the method and methodologies of my research practice are outlined.

A version of the historical and contemporary context of the occupation is offered in Chapter Three. This version provides my understanding of the conditions from which the occupation emerged and also informs my analysis of the issues. I discuss some of the policies for Maori enacted by the New Zealand Government and Maori responses to them. A history of Wanganui in relation to Moutoa/Pakaitore is outlined and claims to the land are discussed.

Chapter Four is the first of five analytic chapters. In this chapter a selection of previous studies examining the resources and repertoires used to oppress Maori are presented as a discursive history of Maori/Pakeha relations. These studies inform my analysis of the general argumentative forms used to undermine and uphold the claims of the occupiers of Moutoa Gardens/Pakaitore Marae. Analysis in this chapter is broadly focused, drawing out the general themes which structure arguments and their attendant implications.

Chapter Five tackles the issue of sovereignty. What was meant by the term sovereignty was a source of great confusion in the media and in my interviews. This chapter represents my effort to distinguish the varying nuances brought to the term and examine the implications of each construction. The analysis is fine-grained focusing not only on the definitions of sovereignty, but on how the various accounts advocated or undermined Maori rights to sovereignty and positioned Maori, Tauwiwi and the Crown.

Chapter Six begins with the observation that Maori claims to land were generally construed as legitimate, and redress constituted as an issue of justice. One of the goals of this chapter is to demonstrate how construing land as an issue of justice allows this issue to be addressed. A further goal is to examine the implications of naming the reserve in Wanganui Moutoa Gardens or Pakaitore Marae. Moutoa Gardens and Pakaitore Marae are objects constructed by different discourses with differential rights ascribed to the subjects occupying each discourse.

The dispute over the location and wording on the statues at Moutoa is briefly explored in Chapter Seven. Analysis focuses on the accounts of two Councillors and their divergent ascriptions of responsibility for the failure to address the statues issue.

The focus of Chapter Eight moves from constructions of the occupiers claims, to talk of law and order. Law and order was constituted as a major concern for the citizens of Wanganui. Varying constructions of the occupation in relation to the law are contrasted, and the implications of these constructions for the supporters of, and objectors to the occupation are discussed.

Finally, in Chapter Nine, I offer my thoughts and reflections about engaging with discourse analysis in the field of Maori/Pakeha relations.

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