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**The usage of traditional Māori narratives as cognitive models
and educational tools**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Social Anthropology
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Abstract

The present research consists of an interdisciplinary approach which combines mainly sub-disciplines from the anthropological and psychological perspectives as theoretical background. Regarding the latter, from the cognitive anthropology perspective the research highlights Bradd Shore's (1996) view on cognitive models, together with the theories put forward by the sociocultural approach in psychology based on Vygotsky's school of thought.

The main objective of the study is to achieve a broad view on the use of traditional *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales/legends and myths) as pedagogical tools and as cognitive models. The latter includes a bibliographical review which covers the analysis of narratives and their usage from different areas, such as Māori epistemology and education, cultural psychology and cognitive anthropology.

Being a research stemmed from an anthropological concern –how do people from different sociocultural backgrounds construct and transmit knowledge- it considered as a fundamental element an empirical or “fieldwork” approach to the matter. Therefore, the research analyses –based on semi-structured interviews- the perspectives and understanding of the usage of traditional Māori narratives as educational tools of scholars in the Māori studies/education field and of a sample of Māori teachers, most of them connected to a *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school, constituting a “study case” for this qualitative study.

A period of complementary participant observation was also carried out, focusing on the pedagogical practises and styles of the participant teachers. Through this, the research aims to contextualise the bibliographical and theoretical findings, considering the contemporary applications, limitations and understandings encountered through concrete experience.

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“Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou ka ora te manuwhiri ”

(With your food basket and my food basket the guests will have enough)

Table of Contents:

- Title	p.i
-Abstract	p.ii
-Acknowledgements	p.iii
- List of figures	p.vii
- Chapter 1: Introduction	p.1
- Chapter 2: Methodology	p.8
- Chapter 3:	
I) Traditional Narratives and Mythology	p.17
I.I) The concept of “traditional”	p.17
I.II) The concept of “Narrative”	p.19
I.III) Distinction among narratives	p.20
II) Māori Epistemology and Education	p.25
II.I) Epistemology	p.25
II.Ia) Māori epistemological models	p.31
II.II) Māori education and traditional narratives	p.38
II.IIa) Traditional Māori education	p.39
II.IIb) Modern initiatives in Māori education	p.41
II.IIc) A Māori model of the educational process	p.49
III) The Approach of Cognitive Anthropology and Cultural Psychology	p.52
III.I) The perspective of cognitive anthropology	p.52
III.Ia) Instituted models	p.58
III.Ib) General classification of models	p.61
III.II) Traditional narratives, cultural psychology and education	p.66

III.IIa) The Vygotskyan and Neo-Vygotskyan perspectives	p.69
- Chapter 4: Data Analysis	
A) Importance: functions, benefits and effects	p.76
B) Usage in the Institution: 'concrete' use and objectives of their usage	p.85
B.1) Settings and procedures	p.90
C) Perceived differences with the “ancient” usage	p.99
D) Most popular stories	p.102
E) Possible improvements	p.107
F) Social axis: personal experience with stories	p.111
G) Connection with <i>whakataukī</i> and other cultural expressions	p.114
- Chapter 5: Discussion	
The multiple functions of traditional narratives	p.116
The case of <i>whakapapa</i>	p.118
The power of narrative and its influence	p.121
The interplay between the “ideal” and the “material”	p.124
Modifications and adaptations in the usage of traditional narratives	p.129
Māori stories and “History”	p.132
An alternative “Cognitive style”	p.134
Final remarks	p.137
-Appendices	
Appendix 1: Interview schedules	p.140
Appendix 2: Glossary	p.145
Appendix 3:	
A) Māori Mythology and other Traditional Narratives	p.147
A.1) Polynesian mythology background	p.150
A.2) The Māori traditional narrative corpus	p.151
A.3) The main Māori mythological accounts	p.154
A.4) Māori proverbs and traditional sayings	p.168
A.5) Final remarks	p.169

B) Anthropology and the academic development of Mythology	p.171
- Bibliography	p.180

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Cultural expressions diagram	p.131
Figure 2: Māori concepts table	p.136
Figure 3: Venn diagram	p.137
Figure 4: Central aspects in the usage of stories	p.142
Figure 5: Spider web configuration	p.143