STORYTELLER AS THE CULTURAL INTERMEDIARY IN PERSUASIVE NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

In today's multi-ethnic cities, where media consumption habits are constantly evolving and the range of communication platforms expanding, it has become even more challenging for communication programmes to achieve their desired outcomes. One of the issues appears to be perceptions of appropriate ethnic representations, irrespective of the medium.

Storytelling is an integral part of public relations and narrative persuasion is often used in communication campaigns. Narratives can sometimes validate existing stereotypes about an ethnicity, some of which might not be positive. This reinforcement of negative perceptions about their culture might result in the audiences' dissociation with the narrative, resulting in poor perceptions of the communication in traditional media and criticism on new media.

In New Zealand, some campaigns use narratives in such a way that they appear to be persuading only particular ethnicities towards certain behaviour changes. However, the extent to which the targeted ethnicities understand, accept and action key messages might depend on how they (and other ethnicities) identify with and interpret the narrative. It therefore becomes critical for practitioners to carefully construct stories that can be perceived as a 'true' reflection of their audiences. But what is it that makes the narrative seem real and the storyteller plausible? Whose reality should the narrative be based on – the communicator or the audience?

Understanding the effect of narrative ownership and the responsibility of the storyteller as the cultural intermediary is crucial for public relations practitioners, especially when persuasion is used to elicit positive societal change. This paper examines if persuasive communication can have a better impact when the narrative is owned or co-created by the audiences. It discusses and compares four persuasive advertising campaigns through content analysis – New Zealand Transport Authority's '*Ghost chip* or *Legend*', Quitline's '*Crayons',* Health Promotion Agency's '*Y Tribe Challenge*' and Unitec Institute of Technology's '*That's Us'*. These campaigns represent people who could be identified as Māori or Pacific Islander. In *That's Us* and *Y Tribe,* the narrative is either owned or co-created with the audience, sometimes using new media. Does this shift of power to the audience have any impact on how the ethnicities are represented? Does it affect how meanings are derived from the communication?

INTRODUCTION

Persuasive narratives are common in communication campaigns. They tell a convincing, relatable story to influence behaviour and encourage change. Often, these stories concern a target group and mirror aspects of a culture. The issue of misrepresentation arises if the culture concerned is depicted in a way that is unrecognisable or offensive to the cultural group. More importantly, this means the communication plan has failed as the message is lost to this group. Thus the role of the storyteller then is to capture and relay culturally recognisable stories, serving as a reliable cultural intermediary for the target group.

In order to analyse the role of the storyteller as cultural intermediary, some definitions are required to ensure an understanding of terms. At a superficial level, culture is often linked to specific ethnicities and limited to identity features such as clothes and cuisines. In reality, culture is far more complex and refers to shared belief systems and social rules of a group which create perceptions of unity and guide behaviour. Culture is not static either. In a globalised world where cultural diasporas are a growing trend, values once considered distinct, have merged and blurred the lines of differences. For example Hofstede's (1980) collectivist and individualist cultures are not to be seen as mutually exclusive. With the introduction of Western education in once colonised countries and the growth of competitive markets worldwide, individualism has taken root in previously collectivist cultures. Culture then becomes a set of changing frames of reference that define the identity of a group. According to Ting-Toomey (2006), these "consists of a pattern of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of an identity group" (p. 691). Understanding a culture it seems involve more than knowing the history, origins and established rules that define the culture. It includes keeping up to date with changes that shape a group's cultural development.

In the context of campaigns, appropriate culturally-loaded persuasive messages are often used to influence the target audience. In public relations theory, persuasion is a common communication approach traditionally viewed as unethical in its unbalanced and asymmetrical nature. Although it privileges the publicist with more control in the communication that does not necessarily make persuasion inherently unethical. A more contemporary approach views persuasion as potentially ethical and effectively structured to achieve its objective (Fawkes, 2007; Messina, 2007). One clearly defined view of persuasion is the Aristotelian components of *ethos* (the credibility of the speaker), *logos* (the logical argument) and *pathos* (the addressing the emotional need of the audience). In terms of communication outcomes, the success of the storyteller in persuasive narratives rests on the last of these components – *pathos*, or what Fawkes (2007) described as the "response of the audience" (p. 317). Thus, any analysis of persuasive narratives must take into account the three components with a focus on meeting the audience's needs.

UNDERSTANDING PERSUASIVE NARRATIVES

Persuasive narratives have become subject to increasing research, with studies corroborating that the use of storytelling can escalate the effect of persuasion. This format has been witnessed (and studied) in entertainment-education and health communication and often found to be more impactful than the laded persuasive techniques of traditional mass communication messages. Whether considered in a short television commercial, a long drama or an interactive format; persuasive narratives are known to have an effect on the audience's beliefs, values, behaviours and attitudes (Dunlop, Wakefield & Kashima, 2010; Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders & Beentjes, 2009).

An important area of interest for the researchers has been to explore what accentuates this effect. Several models have been developed and discussed over the past decade that examine the mediators of the persuasive impact of narratives. Based on Gerrig's (1993) description of *transportation* Green and Brock (2000) suggested that it was this psychological experience of surrendering attention, imagery and emotion to the narrative that was a primary mediator. The Transportation-Imagery Model proposed that when the cognitive resources of the audience are focused on the events of the narrative, they lose the capacity to counter the persuasive elements of the story (Green & Brock, 2000; Mazzocco, Green, Sasota & Jones, 2010). Following the lead from this model, Slater and Rouner (2002) developed the Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model that claimed that *absorption* into the story was a mediator. Absorption was defined as "vicariously experiencing the characters' emotions and personality" (Slater & Rouer, 2002, p. 178). Apparently, *transportation* and *absorption* were two terms coined by different researchers to explain the concept of engagement with the narrative. However, Slater and Rouner (2002) discussed an additional dimension called *identification*. Their model considered *identification* as a partial mediator and defined it as an experience where "an individual perceives another person as similar or at least as a person with whom they might have a social relationship" (Slater & Rouner, 2002, p. 178).

Identification as a mediator in the persuasive effect of narratives has since been subject to more examination. It is understood that when the reader/viewer identifies with a character in the narrative, the reader/viewer assumes the perspective of this character at a psychological level and empathises with the character's situation, motives and goals (Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders & Beentjes, 2012). Tal-Or and Cohen (2010) found that *identification* appeared to be impacted more by positive attribution and emotional bonding with a character whereas the unity of perspective with that character was more of a consequence. Further to this, Cho, Shen and Wilson (2012) suggest that *identification* is heightened if the audience perceives the character and the events in the narrative to be closer to its own reality. Their study that examined the role of *perceived realism* in persuasive narratives found that *perceived typicality* (a dimension of perceived realism) impacted on *identification*. The authors cite Hall (2003) to explain typicality as "the degree to which narrative portrayals appear to fall within the parameter of the audience's past and present experiences" (Cho et al., 2012, p. 831),thus implying that *perceived typicality*, an element of *perceived realism*, increases persuasive effect by aiding *identification*. Simply put, the more real the character or events of the story are perceived to be, the more the audience will identify with the narrative; thereby resulting in the persuasive effect of the desired change in behaviour and attitudes.

To understand this further, we must first examine which identity and whose reality impact on the audience to result in behavioural changes.

IDENTITY AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS IN NARRATIVES

A person's identity is understood as an amalgamation of both individual and social identity. While individual identity is centred around the "self" in terms of values, beliefs, physical and psychological characteristics; social identity is developed through societal exchanges including (but not limited to) membership of religious and ethnic groups (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015). The development of identity therefore depends on the differences created by the interplays of self and society. Curtin and Gaither (2009, p. 102) cite Woodward (1997) who says, "often, identity is most clearly defined by differences, that is by what it is not".

Ethnic identity is one such cultural construct that categorises people in terms of their differences. As a group category, it develops as a shared social identity based on the role and meaning that the membership of a certain ethnic group hold in a person's life (Curtin &

Gaither, 2009; Gevorgyan & Manucharova, 2015; Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015). According to Bennett's stages of inter-cultural sensitivity, majority of the stereotyping occurs at the stage of *defense against differences* (Minnema, 2014), whereby there is an attitude of tolerance of the other's ethnicity in a juxtaposition of superiority of one's own.

It may be suggested that when targeting a specific ethnicity, storytellers draw upon ethnic identity for shaping their narratives in order to elicit the perceived realism impact. However, it might be safe to argue that for the character and events to create a meaning that can be perceived as real, the storyteller must first have an understanding of the ethnic identity it is attempting to represent. Much significance has been assigned to such representation in the circuit of culture model which comprises of five moments – representation, production, consumption, identity and regulation. Though these are explained to be independent moments of meaning creation and negotiation, they are understood to often overlap (Curtin & Gaither, 2009). Therefore, while storytellers might operate in the production moment, they would also be creating ethnic meaning in the representation moment through their understanding and exchange with the identity moment. These storytellers serve as creators of symbolic cultural meaning, which have been discussed in the literature as cultural intermediaries (Curtin & Gaither, 2009; Negus, 2002).

Negus (2002, p. 503) cites a popular quote from French author Bourdieu's book *Distinction* (1984) to define cultural intermediaries as -

> The new petite bourgeoisie comes into its own in all the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all institutions providing symbolic goods and services…and in cultural production and organization which have expanded considerably in recent years.

Curtin and Gaither (2005, p.107) reference to cultural intermediaries as agents who "generate representations at the articulation of production and consumption to help structure how publics think, feel, and act within a particular regulatory context." However, they also suggested that future researchers must explore the role and power of cultural intermediaries in context to the dynamic nature of the circuit of culture and its several overlapping articulations.

STORYTELLERS AS CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES

The term "cultural intermediary" was originally used in cultural production literature to identify those whose work involves "the mediation of production and consumption" (Maguire & Matthews, 2012, p. 551. citing Bourdieu, 1984, 1996) and "the qualification of goods, mediating between economy and culture (Maguire & Matthews, 2012, citing Callon et al., 2002; Muniesa et al., 2007). However, the term has been used rather indiscriminately to describe any cultural work, "a descriptive catch-all for seemingly any creative or cultural occupation or institution" (Maguire & Matthews, 2012, p. 552). In an attempt to clarify the "conceptual muddle" and to contest the notion that "we are all cultural intermediaries now", Maguire and Matthews (2012) identifies "three dimensions of investigation that highlight the contextual specificity of cultural intermediaries, what they do and why they matter" (p. 554).

These dimensions are applied to the context of storytelling in persuasive narratives as they relate directly to this specific role of the public relations practitioner. The first dimension is "the framing of goods" which in this context refers to the production of the message. It answers the "how, to whom and with what degree of constraint" the storyteller puts the

message together. This defines where they are in relation to their audience. The second relates to expertise or "claims of authority" the storyteller has in terms of professional knowledge and relevant personal experience in the persuasive role. The final dimension is impact that is the extent of the storyteller's persuasive power demonstrated by how the audience accept and connect to the stories as legitimate.

It may be said that the storyteller as the cultural intermediary achieves the narrative's persuasive effect through framing, expertise and impact. In doing his role, the cultural intermediary is influenced by his own lifeworld as well as occupational and societal structure (Maguire & Matthews, 2012; Hodges, 2006). These influences come into play when storytellers target a particular ethnicity through their persuasive narratives. The storytellers' own ethnic identity, and the beliefs they have of the ethnicity they are attempting to represent, is part of their lifeworld. Additionally, the stereotypes held by the society and reinforced by their occupational practice might interfere with the storytellers' representation of an ethnicity. Theunissen and Rahman (2012, p.13) suggest that storytellers must ask "whose reality they are presenting" and practice the art of mindfulness when creating such campaigns. Mindfulness is explained as developing awareness about any ethnic biases arising due to self, societal and occupational constraints. Such mindfulness would help in increasing the perceived realism and identification with the narrative by actively avoiding stereotypes (Theunissen & Rahman, 2012).

In the light of the above discussions, it is worth exploring if it would be more effective to include the targeted ethnic audience in the production of the narrative. Would such an inclusion aid mindfulness during production thereby increasing perceived realism and identification during consumption?

For the purpose of our study, we therefore present the following hypotheses:

H1: A mindful inclusion of the target group's members in storytelling is directly related to the target group's perceived realism and identification with the narrative.

H2: The storyteller's own lifeworld influences the production of culturally congruent narrative through legitimate framing, expertise and impact.

These two hypotheses will be analysed across four persuasive narrative campaigns in New Zealand that target specific ethnicities - *Legend or Ghost Chips, Crayons, That's Us and Y Tribe. In Ghost Chips and Crayons*, the narrative is crafted and told by organisations. Whereas in *That's Us* and *Y Tribe*, the narrative is either owned or co-created with the audience, with members of the audience being the primary storyteller.

CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

An overview of each campaign is given in terms of purpose, message and the target group. The analyses will take into account three areas:

1. *Elements of persuasion – logos, ethos and pathos*
Ethos refers to the authority behind the message as well as the credibility of the message sender. *Logos* refers to the argument or appeal in the specific cultural context while *pathos* has to do with the cultural and emotional content that the audiences connect with. These elements are analysed in terms of their collective effect in grabbing attention and influencing action.

2. *Identification and perceived realism*

Since the target audience must relate to the campaign story, there needs to be some way for them to recognise the characters as belonging to their cultural group. Often, cultural stereotypes are used to enable immediate recognition of a culture such as the obvious physical outer appearances and other cultural behaviours. As Theunissen and Rahman (2012) note, "Public relations practitioners are conditioned to create campaigns that appeal to their targeted publics, and this may involve using stereotypes that ring true to its audiences" (p. 95). For example in New Zealand, a tanned lady with a flower tucked in her hair is recognisably identified as Pasifika (someone from the Pacific islands) while two people who greet each other by pressing their noses together are identified as Māori. Stereotypes are not inherently bad. These are beliefs that people have of cultural groups, including their own, based on general social influence, personal observations and perceptions.

Stereotypes can be either positive or negative, by attribution and interpretation. For example, in the cervical cancer health campaign that targeted Pacific women, (Theunissen & Rahman, 2012), these women were placed in domestic and recreational settings and appeared to go about in groups. The flower-in-hair stereotype was also used. The positive internal attribution interpreted from this may be that the women are by nature gregarious and supportive of one another while the negative internal attribution may be that they lack the confidence to seek medical care independently. "Internal" attribution refers to something either positive or negative within the culture. On the other hand, "external" attribution refers to what is outside of the culture. For example a positive external attribution might be that the medical centre made the environment welcoming to the Pacific women by allowing them to come in groups while the negative external attribution might be that the women were reluctant to be medically examined because the actual process was unfamiliar and not well explained to them.

Another effect of stereotype on identity and perceived realism is the implied truth. The audience may well take recognisable representations of themselves as indicative of the real situation, which may not always be the case. For example, in a campaign against family violence cited by Theunissen and Rahman (2012), the ethnic groups targeted were not in proportion to the crime recorded in their communities. More Māori and Pasifika characters were shown in the anti-domestic violence stories than Pākehā (New Zealanders of European origin) and there was only one Asian, represented by an Indian. This is curious since there were nearly as many Pākehā victims of family violence as Māori with Pacifica and Asians having the same number of victims. The four campaign analyses in this study will take into consideration how such representations of cultural groups may perpetuate biased perceptions, discriminating against these groups by reinforcing unfounded negative stereotypes. This is critical contribution to cultural intermediary research where the cultural intermediary role has the power to influence mass cultural perception.

3. *The cultural production criteria*

Aside from stereotypes, identity and perceived realism are also reinforced by the credibility of the message, story, setting, music, visuals and the medium in which the message is delivered. The effective application of these criteria defines the demanding role that the practitioner must play as cultural intermediary. A successful role will mean that the story is familiar to the target group and also believable because they identify with the characters. Interestingly, identity is defined by what we are as much as what we are not. Any contrastive ethnic representation that an audience cannot relate to will be rejected, consequently resulting in the audience removing themselves from the target group. Theunissen and Rahman (2012) observed this effect on younger well-educated Pacifica women who took offense at the representation of their womenfolk as largely housewives who tell crass jokes:

> They [Pacifica women] are depicted as unsophisticated and seem to need support from other women to get their health checked. Anecdotal evidence from younger Pacific women has shown that while these images may appeal to more traditional audiences, the younger social group view such images as patronising. (2012, p. 98).

Analyses of the four campaigns will consider the message, story, setting, music, visuals and the medium in relation to the target cultural group. This will explain the complex considerations made by the public relations practitioners as cultural intermediaries, applying their own world views while mindfully involving the target group to produce a culturally relatable, accurate and credible story.

CAMPAIGN 1 – THAT'S US

Auckland based Unitec Institute of Technology considers New Zealand's indigenous Māori people as a priority audience. However, in their last mainstream campaign *My Success* (https://youtu.be/KwWJaIDl6s4) which featured recent graduates talking about their ideas of success, the lack of Māori representation is conspicuous.

Following the overall theme of My Success, Unitec created a television campaign called, *That's Us*, to specifically target Māori audiences. The campaign aired on ethnic media channel - Māori TV - between May and August 2014. The objective was to raise awareness of the institute and it's *kaupapa* among the targeted ethnicity. *That's Us* used narrative style of persuasion through two stories focusing on ethnically congruent appeal of collectivism. One (https://youtu.be/V1JUFCopyx8) is of Social Practice graduate Jaycee and her mother Vicki (Business student), and the other (https://youtu.be/Pbab5FwxrSk) of Dance graduate Te Arahi. Jaycee's story is about how the mother-daughter duo want to use their knowledge and skills (gained at Unitec) for benefit of their *iwi* and *hapu*. Te Arahi's story is that of his evolution from a nervous student to a professional dancer, who can now showcase his Māori culture across the world through his dance.

Persuasive elements

Both the stories are laden with elements of pathos. Jaycee's story shows her and mother Vicki with the rest of the *whānau* sharing moments of bonding, laughter and pride during Jaycee's graduation. The story ends with the mother-daughter exchange (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2014a) –

> Vicki – We're whānau
> Jaycee – Aye mum, that's us.

Te Arahi's story plays on the emotional journey of finding success after initial disbelief in one's own capability. "…I didn't think I was good enough, I didn't think I was going to make the cut. Well…turns out I did" (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2014b). He goes on to talk about feeling at home at Unitec with visuals of him dancing with his mates, and the marae bathed in sunshine in the backdrop. Te Arahi's voiceover says "…three years studying here, the people love me, they're like family".

It's evident that both the stories are an overt play on emotions. However, on further examination we found that these emotions were elicited in real situations, which suggests on the use of ethos. Unitec's former Māori and Pacific Marketing and Communications Manager explains:

> In the Te Arahi video, we let him choose the friends who'll feature with him. That was all his idea. He was in his element. With the shot of the boys hanging out at the marae, that's not crafted. That's what these boys do, it's their place, and it's real. In Vicki and Jaycee's video, there were shots from the real graduation. The emotion that got captured was real. Those beautiful moments with *whānau* were real, not crafted,

and therefore others in the community are able to relate with it. (V. Merito, personal communication, August 24, 2015).

It may be argued that Merito's mindful inclusion of the target group's members in storytelling could possibly have impacted on the ingenuity of the pathos application. Since the emotions displayed by the characters were real, the narrative possibly appears closer to reality.

Perceived realism and identification

A recent study (Michelle, 2012) of 2120 New Zealand television advertisements noted that the media representation of Māori identity continues to rest in predominant stereotypes. The study found Māori men to be often depicted as 'comic bufoons' better suited for physical labour rather than intellectual activities, while the Māori women were found to be significantly under-represented. Māori are also often understood in societal stereotypes as low in warmth and competence (Sibley et al., 2011). However, *That's Us*, shows both Māori men and women as positive, warm and competent characters with educational achievements. To an extent this breaks away from the stereotypical representations of the past. Some of this attribution could be made to the fact that the stories represented real characters and events, not fictional constructions of stereotypical understanding of such characters and events.

Perceived realism, and consequently identification, gets influenced by perceived typicality and in context of *That's Us* the characters and events portrayed in the narrative seem typical of a Māori audience. In Jaycee's video, the presence of the full *whānau* at the graduation ceremony at the marae and the message about working for the benefit of the iwi and the hapu are depictions of such typicality.

A post campaign analysis done by Unitec suggests that 83% of the respondents felt the people in the ads were genuine and authentic and 79% felt that the points made in the ads were believable (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2014). This somewhat signals to the audience's identification with the narratives through their perceptions of realism. Further to this, 66% felt the ads made Unitec seem more appealing.

This identification, created due to the inclusion of the target group's members in the narrative, heightens persuasive impact. Joyce and Harwood (2014) explain this concept:

> If you and I constitute "we", this implies a shared interest which decreases the probability that you will give me unreliable or false information. For these reasons (and undoubtedly others), shared social identity is directly associated with persuasion (p. 56).

Cultural production

Both the advertisements are rich in terms of generating cultural meaning through the production moment of the circuit of culture. There is evident integration of language, visuals, settings and subtle cultural nuances that aids this meaning creation.

The characters introduce themselves in Te Reo Māori (not English) while the English translation appears as a ticker at the bottom of the screen. The introduction includes information about their *iwi*, which again reinforces their ethnic group identity.

From here on, some Māori words are effortlessly woven into the narrative. Whether it is Te Arahi's reference to himself and his mates as "creative rangatahi" or Jaycee's metaphorical reference to her mum jumping on the "waka", language is used as a tool to create cultural meaning.

The setting for both the stories includes shots of Unitec's marae, respectful of the significance held by the marae in Māori culture. The presence of this cultural institution in an education set-up is also known to increase engagement with Māori parents, *whānau* and community (Lee, 2012).

While nuances of ethnic culture such as verbal mentions as well as physical shots of the kapahaka are used, the effect is not always stereotypical. Vivienne Merito explains:

You have to accept when you don't know a community that you are targeting and take advice of those who do. We sat down and brainstormed with Māori TV who were able to translate it to their production crew (who were Pākehā). We were able to combine the commercial reality of shooting a TV spot along with a basic cultural understanding to come across as authentic without compromising on the production quality of the TVC. (Personal communication, August 24, 2015).

It may be argued that her own lifeworld (ethnicity, professional expertise et al) was integral to the production of a culturally congruent narrative.

She recalls:

We followed *Manaaki Tanga* all the way through. We looked after our talent and their *whānau. That's Us* was playing behind the scenes as much as it was before the camera. Through these gestures, our talent and their family could relate to Unitec even more, the whole point of the campaign. Marketing and communications professionals must understand that nothing will go right till you get the fundamentals of the people and their stories right. (V. Merito, personal communication, August 24, 2015)

CAMPAIGN 2 – Y Tribe

In 2013, Health Promotion Agency (HPA) ran an 'ease up on the drink' campaign called *Say yeah, nah,* targeting 18-39 year olds. The campaign features a persuasive narrative of two male friends having a good time together. One of the friends refuses to binge drink by saying "Yeah, nah". The story suggests 'yeah, nah' as a socially acceptable phrase to deal with peer pressure. The campaign featured two apparently Pākehā men, closer to the older demographic in the targeted 18-39 year group ("Say 'Yeah Nah' campaign – permission to Ease up on the drink", 2013)

Following the lead of this mainstream campaign, HPA approached a specialist agency 4Pi to target New Zealand's Pacific youth. However, in this case, the output of the campaign was not a television commercial but community driven YouTube videos. This campaign called *Y Tribe Challenge* encouraged nine *tribes,* who were select members of the targeted ethnicity and age group, to create (and share with peers) their own version of the *Say Yeah, Nah* TVC. The video with the highest views within 14 days was the winner of the challenge (Y Tribe Challenge, 2014a). It can be said that in this campaign the story is owned and told entirely by members of the target group, making them the storytellers and the cultural intermediaries.

For the purpose of this paper, the winning video is analysed. The winning video, created by the #TYOTEZ tribe, was a story of a young Pacific boy attending a party held at a friend's garage. He is offered a drink. Following this, the screen splits and we get to see two versions of the story; one where he accepts the drink and one where he doesn't. The story ends with the protagonist refusing the drink (Y Tribe Challenge, 2014a).

Persuasive elements
The video predominantly uses logos to persuade the audience to say 'yeah, nah'. Logical appeal is presented by visualising two different stories based on the choice made by the protagonist. Saying 'yeah' to alcohol follows the sequence of being avoided by female friends, vomiting in the toilet, picking fights with male friends, passing out and eventually being thrown out of the party. Contrastively, saying 'nah' follows the sequence of the protagonist gaining more self-esteem by being the life of the party.

The findings of a study commissioned by HPA endorse such an appeal. The study conducted focus groups and interviews with 99 secondary school students, of which the majority (28)

were of Pacific ethnicity. It found that young people who wish to quit or had successfully done so were motivated by negative consequences. These included having near-death experiences, throwing-up, waking up with a stranger and being embarrassing in front of friends (Clark et al., 2013)

It may be argued that since the #TYOTEZ tribe storytellers belong to the target group (Pacific youth), they have a fair understanding of what appeal will work on their peers. Therefore having them as storytellers also adds to the credibility of the message, playing on ethos.

However, there are no post-campaign results, other than social media engagement, to verify the effectiveness of the appeal used.

Perceived realism and identification
Joyce and Harwood (2014) argue that narratives using the medium of user-generated videos are more identifiable than persuasive mass communication messages. They found that a youth target group identifies more with producers of YouTube videos as, "the ability to effectively satirize, use slang, or comment upon logically reflect a common understanding" whereas "PSA producers might be seen as using an outdated mode of communication" (Joyce & Harwood, p. 55).

This understanding along with knowledge of the Pacific ethnicity has been applied in the concept of Y Tribe. Richard Kahotea, Creative Director of Y Tribe Challenge recalls:

> It works because they used a medium they understand and relate to and used characters or language that their peers relate to. They got their friends on board, wrote their scripts, shot it, produced it, it was all them, their voice. It works because the community looks at that video and thinks – 'OK, I know this person, now what is he saying and what is this video is about?' That's the hook. (Personal communication, August 28, 2015).

Another observation is that the events depicted in the narrative are perhaps typical of the target group and therefore enhance the perceived realism of the narrative. When questioned by a Tagata Pasikia journalist about the narrative in the video, one of the tribal leaders says, "A lot of our people in the Pacific world will have a setting in the garage scene, the host would always offer drinks" (Tagata Pasifika, 2014). The #TYOTEZ tribe's video is also set in a garage, with the host offering the drink to the protagonist. Such typicality appears to have been aided by the inclusion of the target group's members in storytelling.

Cultural production
The Y Tribe challenge empowered members of the target group to become storytellers. This implies that they also became cultural intermediaries creating symbolic cultural meaning through their participation in the narrative. However, it should be noted that sharing these videos within the Pacific community was an integral part of this meaning creation process. Joyce and Harwood (2014) suggest that sharing user-generated videos is an act of reinforcing culture. The persuasive impact is understood to be heightened by utilising the storyteller's community networks to spread the narrative's message.

Y Tribe Challenge's social media results show that winning video was viewed 11, 821 times within 14 days of launch (Y Tribe Challenge, 2014b). It is apparent that the storytellers used their online social networks to spread the message of the narrative and this is where the commonality of ethnic identity helps them.

While the numbers might not be as staggering as some mainstream HPA campaigns, it must be remembered that there are no precedents (using a similar medium) to compare with.

Tweets generated included the likes of the following tweeted by popular Pacific hip-hop group (Mystik, 2014):

> Yeah nah…that's pretty cool, made by our people, for our people…view, like, share!! #PacificYouth #Ytribe…fb.me/6w8Qr2vEy

Mystik (2014) has over 5000 followers and would be considered an influencer in the Pacific community. Reference in the tweet to "our people" could be considered as an emotional appeal (pathos) to engage the community.

Additionally, the music, the characters and the setting of each video (including the #TYOTEZ) are characteristic of the Pacific community. Perhaps, it may be attributed to the fact that the communications practitioners planning this campaign were mindful of letting the members of the target group shape the narrative. Additionally, the practitioners' own knowledge and access to the community enabled a more mindful approach to the campaign. Richard Kahotea shares:

> We didn't want to preach or talk down to them. Instead, we got them to start a conversation themselves, talk about the issue, share it, and act on it. We needed to find influencers who could do that. Who had a community around them and were like mini celebrities in their own small community. These people could kickstart the conversation and take it far. The benefit of our agency is that we are from that community, so we know the people, we have connections and that makes us real and sets us apart (personal communication, August 28, 2015).

4Pi has been recruited by HPA again in 2015 to run the second season of the campaign. This along with the social media results are the only two measures of success of the 2014 campaign. The lack of substantial research to verify and support their success could be viewed as a drawback when compared with mainstream campaigns.

CAMPAIGN 3: THE "LEGEND OR GHOST CHIPS" CAMPAIGN

This New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) campaign clearly sets out to curb drink-driving and is targeted at younger Māori audiences:

> It was certainly warranted because they're a big part of the problem: over 40 percent of all drink-driving crashes involve drivers under the age of 24, 82 percent of drinking drivers in all fatal or serious injury-related crashes in 2008-2010 were male, and 34 percent of those were Māori. (Fahy, 2012, citing NZTA's advertising manager, Rachel Prince).

The advertisement was well regarded for its ingenuity in using authentic linguistic terms, relatable characters and humour to reach out to its target audiences. Reports indicate that this campaign is unusually popular within the communications and creative industries as well as the target audiences (Backhouse, 2011; Fahy, 2012 ; Hurley, 2012; Johnston, 2011).

Persuasive elements
Marketing communications company, Clemenger BBDO and the production company, The Sweet Shop, are responsible for the persuasive narrative in this campaign. *Ethos* is achieved through the main character who is depicted to be a regular Māori youth having a good time with his "mates" and clearly in a dilemma. He wants to stop his best friend from driving drunk after a party but worries about how his effort might be interpreted. The authority and credibility of the message bearer comes from the character being seen in the moment of

difficulty, caught between good intentions and awkward perceptions. In sharing his decision and action with the viewers through clever narrative, the character becomes not just relatable but a hero as well.

In fact the memorable line at the end reinforces the *logos* and the value of the main character: "Stop a mate from driving drunk. Bloody Legend." The language also connects with the target group by being informal and familiar. The appeal of the narrative is found in the dialogue where the protagonist says "I've been internalising a really complicated situation in my head". Unlike the stereotypical depiction of Māori as "comic buffoons" in advertisements (Michelle, 2012) or low in warmth and competence (Sibley et al., 2011), the main character exudes intelligence, thoughtfulness and concern for others. There is a conscious effort by the creators of the narrative to steer clear of mindless stereotypes.

Another persuasive feature is the comic element when the main character envisions having a conversation with his dead friend who tries to offer him some "ghost chips". He declines saying, "You know I can't grab your ghost chips." He also envisions his dead friend appearing to comically haunt him when he's alone with "boo!" This defines the nature of such friendships which are light-hearted, spontaneous and supportive. So while there is a comic element in an otherwise serious situation, the characters are shown to be thoughtful, warm and caring rather than silly and unaffected. When the main character finally tries to stop his friend from driving, those who may be resistant to anti- drink and drive messages is able to appreciate why. Aside from avoiding negative stereotypes, the complex depiction of the main character's struggles in the context of this critical cultural setting is also successfully achieved through incorporating the target group's perspective. The advertising and creative leaders of the anti-drink and drive campaign used feedback from their research with the target group and authentic dialogue to shape the narrative and final script (Fahy, 2012).

In terms of the pathos or overall outcome through influencing action, it would be difficult to credit any improvement in figures to this campaign alone as "it's just one campaign in a series that has been running for many years and advertising alone doesn't change behaviour" (Fahy, 2012, citing NZTA's advertising manager, Rachel Prince). However, in terms of generating emotional and cultural content that resonate with the audience, there is clear indication that the persuasive message is effective, judging by the high volume of likes, shares and positive comments on social media (Backhouse, 2011; Fahy, 2012; Johnston, 2011). Clearly, through inclusion of the target group's perspective, the narrative has successively connected with their target audience.

Perceived realism and identification
Perceived typicality is strongly captured in this persuasive narrative, successfully achieving perceived realism and identification with the target group. This perceived typicality interestingly avoids mindless stereotyping in an effort to identify with the group. Instead of resorting to stereotypical portrayals of Māoris as unintelligent, lacking warmth and clumsy, this target group is depicted as witty, reflective and caring. The creative team achieved this by including input from the target demographic in order to communicate the message and change behaviour (Fahy, 2011). Clearly, an effective message can only be achieved when the target group identifies with its representation in a narrative, both in terms of character qualities as well as socially acceptable communication of the message. So instead of many traditional shock tactic narrations warning audiences with visions of blood and gore in accidents, the creators focused on concern through thoughtfulness and humour. One study revealed that "whenever there was an ad full of dead fullas, this group just switched off" (Fahy, 2011). Appropriately, this narrative shared the internal musings and social concerns of

the main character, torn between his concern for a friend and the impact of a socially unacceptable action:

> Aye, George is driving. He's too wasted. I should say something. But I'll look dumb in front of Monique. [Inserts a vision of someone saying Monique thinks he's dumb]. But if he crashes, I'll have to live with his family (NZ Anti-Drink Driving Commercial – Legend, 2011).

By incorporating target group perceptions and mindfully steering away from heavily biased and stereotypical ideas about the target group, the creators were able to produce a narrative that is perceived to be realistic, as echoed in this comment by a target group member on social media: ""Man, they got us reeeeaal good" (Fahy, 2011).

Cultural production

One notable role of the cultural intermediary is packaging the cultural element into a creatively recognisable and meaningful product for social consumption. Indeed, the *Ghost chips* advertisement is regarded as a cultural phenomenon often cited as relatable, hugely successful and entertaining. The message is embedded in the emotional appeal of a friend and the sincerity of the main character. The settings are typical "hangouts" for these target groups such as a party in someone's home and by the side of a road. The focus is on the characters' reactions and actions as the background is intentionally blurred at times. The only 'music' are drumbeats which occur at the start during the scene of the party and end of the advertisement as the main character walks out to the voiceover calling him a legend. These sounds seem to herald the anxiety and triumphant moods of the main character, marking the opening act and the grand finale.

The overall effect of the visuals, setting, music, message and story is one that resonates with the target group, gaining 940,000 likes on Youtube within 10 days of its first persuasive narrative broadcast. (Backhouse, 2011). Feedback from the public was also overwhelmingly supportive, attracting more than 2.1 million hits on YouTube within a year of its broadcast (Hurley, 2012). Trends indicate that the target group had moved from a position of sympathy to disgust when viewing someone who gets caught drink-driving. The message was so successful that the target group was actually promoting the message in their parties, acting as ambassadors for the campaign (Fahy, 2012). While it could be argued that popularity of a persuasive message may not translate into action, research into trend studies in this area would be able to establish the impact on action for such persuasive narratives. Preliminary observations indicate that the *Ghost chips* "has been partially credited for a 50 per cent drop in the number of teenagers caught drink-driving in the past five years" (Hurley, 2012).

CAMPAIGN 4: CRAYON: QUITLINE ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN

Quitline is a charitable trust aimed at helping smokers quit the habit and funded by the Ministry of Health in New Zealand. In 2014, Quitline commissioned an independent research in high smoking prevalence communities to understand the attitude towards quitting and responsiveness to quitting messages (Quitline, 2015). While the New Zealand Health survey indicated that people living in high deprivation communities are most susceptible to smoking, it also highlighted that "Māori people are considerably more likely to smoke tobacco than other New Zealanders" and that "Māori are 2.7 times more likely than non-Māori to be daily smokers" (Premium Research, July 2014). In order to reach this target group, Quitline involved people in the target communities to develop their communication campaign.

Their research included those who had troubled backgrounds, difficult childhood and limited social upward mobility. They also found that smokers are more receptive to quitting when considering the impact that their habit might have on their children. Although children were

not the target group of the campaign, feedback from children was sought in terms of the final narrative to gauge the clarity of the intended message. Subsequently, in August 2014, the *Crayons* campaign was then developed by Māori Television. The campaign consists of four persuasive narratives publicised between 2014 and 2015. Phase one involved television and radio advertisements, a series of online banners, images for online use and in print publications in local newspapers and a flyer drop in target areas. (Quitline, 2015). Phase two is less expansive with two television advertisements and a series of online banners. Both phases aim to encourage quitting by showing the negative impact that adult smoking habits have on children. For the purpose of this study, the first advertisement named *Crayons* will be analysed.

Persuasive elements

The storytellers in this narrative are children who share their observations of the adults in the family. The audience see the adults who smoke from their children's eyes. There is credibility and authority in the *ethos* which is from the perspective of the innocent. The message is easily driven by the perceptible truth of the matter. *Logos* relates to the logical progression of action. The children seem to come from a happy home and view smoking as normal behaviour. The narrative takes place in a home where the adults are smoking on the deck outside. A little girl is told to go inside by her mother who closes the door. She goes to a couple of children who appear to be doing art work at a table and asks them why she is not allowed outside. The children hold up their crayons and mimic the adults smoking. An older girl pretends to puff on her crayon and suggests that smoking releases tension by saying, "Finally, some peace and quiet." The young boy proceeds to offer a crayon to the little girl who goes to the window and gazes at her mother. This image is accompanied by the voiceover of a child saying, "We can't wait to be just like you."

The story persuades adults that children see them as role-models and are ready to take up the habit. Based on the research commissioned by Quitline, the cultural and emotional content of the narrative was designed to appeal directly to the target group who was concerned about the impact of their habit on children. Unsurprisingly, the *pathos* successfully connects with the audience, resulting in an overall increase of quit attempts by 30.7% for September and 17.9% for October 2014 (Crayons Quitline Advertising campaign, 2015).

Perceived realism and identification

The high numbers of quit attempts suggest that the advertisement was able to reach its target group. In fact, the parent in the advertisement decided to quit after production as "she recognised herself in the campaign and she does not want her young daughter to think smoking is normal because Mum does it" (Quitline, 2015). Involving participants and gathering feedback in order to inform and shape the communication programme have clearly influenced the creative process in an effective way. Although the communication practitioners were from Māori television, they relied on feedback from the target group.

The final narrative is a product of choice in representations. While there are many realities found from the Quitline research, the challenge was to use one that would persuade their target public to quit smoking. So instead of using feedback that played on the insecurities of the target group such as lack of community support to quit smoking, *Crayons* played on their sense of guilt. By presenting the story from the perspective of a child in that community, *Crayons* appealed to the sense of adult responsibility, as supported in the preliminary study. The strong connection with this typical reality comes from not just including the target group's interpretation of their identity but also from the media creators' perceptive choices applied from their own worldview.

Cultural production

The "role-model" depiction of the adult is the motivational message in this narrative, urging adults in the target group to quit smoking. This appeal to the sense of moral responsibility is delivered in the setting of a family home, the nucleus of the social unit. The joyous background sounds are made by children laughing and mimicking their parents. The visual of the young girl encouraged to smoke by example and the supporting voiceover complete the emotional and cultural content of the narrative. The target group can see the vicious cycle of the smoking habit which research has shown is intergenerational (Premium Research, 2015).

The persuasive message is also made available on various platforms including radio and social media. There is a Quitline *Crayons* facebook page with over 6,000 likes of their youtube video. The result of this campaign is well tracked with members of the community registering their commitment to quit smoking with Quitline, showing that "increases [to quit smoking] for priority populations were particularly significant with registrations from Māori clients up 35% in September [2014]" (Quitline, 2015). The overall credibility of the message in the narrative may be demonstrated by this strong commitment of the target group to take action. Quitline's facebook page announced that "Crayons Phase One was one of Quitline's most successful advertising campaigns ever, leading to a 30% increase in quit attempts in the months after the first advertisements in the series went to air." (Quitline facebook, 2015). Once again, the use of the target group input and participation has given the creators of the persuasive narrative scope to make appropriate choices to influence action. Despite research showing that the affected group come from difficult backgrounds and face various challenges, *Crayon* did not portray the cycle of despair. Instead it appeals to the idea of healing the community by presenting the negative visual impact of continued smoking on young minds.

One aspect that the producers did not count on was some children thinking that the advertisement encouraged them to smoke. Despite Quitline's policy of only airing the message at adult viewing times, some children inadvertently watched the advertisement and parents were quick to take the organisation to task. In fact, Quitline's independent research of children's response to the advertisement prior to broadcast, found that a small number thought that the advertisement encouraged smoking (Bridgeman, 2015). Despite this, the advertisement went on air. It is unclear why the children thought the message encouraged smoking or if the producers attempted to overturn this perception by improving elements in the message. Perhaps the obvious gap in their communication planning is the absence of children as a target group from the start.

Although children are only used as characters and are not the obvious target audience of the narrative, telling a story from the children's perspective requires authentic representation. In discounting the children's input from the start, the communication practitioner as hidden storyteller and cultural intermediary fails to make an honest representation. Expectedly, child viewers who could not relate to the acting children's reactions failed to discern the message meant for the adults. As cultural intermediary and storyteller, the communication practitioner has a responsibility to also take on board the children's perceptions from the outset to honestly and accurately shape the persuasive message.

CONCLUSION

The public relations practitioner's role as cultural intermediary is unquestionable in all the suggested dimensions - framing of the message, professional knowledge of cultural material inclusion and the impact factor of message consumption. Communication practitioners are able to reach their target audience through their use of persuasive elements, depictions of

perceived realism and identification with the target groups as well as mindful choices in the cultural production criteria. Whether or not the practitioner tells a story belonging to their own culture, it is clear that an inclusive approach to incorporate the collective voices of the cultural group is essential as culture belongs to a shared identity. However, target audience perspectives differ in terms of perceived cultural response to campaign messages such as the views on positive and negative role modelling.

As shown in the case of the *Crayons* advertisement, when the communication planners failed to include the children's authentic views on adult smokers, some children misread the message and the ethical practice becomes questioned.

Also, considering the various voices in cultural groups can be challenging as members are not homogenous e.g. age gap, gender and status differences. The communication practitioner must then rely on their own worldview to make the appropriate information selection for a persuasive message. For example in *That's Us*, the mother and daughter narrative was chosen to address the under-representation of Māori women in tertiary education media stories. In *Ghost chips*, the young Māori men were mindfully stereotyped for their sense of humour but also un-stereotypically characterised as intelligent, thoughtful and warm. This careful balance between incorporating appropriate cultural input and applying one's own lifeworld views relies on expert knowledge. This knowledge includes the effective use of the persuasive elements (ethos, logos, pathos), relating to the target's group perceived realism and identification as well as appropriately addressing the cultural production criteria (setting, characters, visuals, music and message).

One creative application of expert knowledge is the communication plan for *Y Tribe* which saw the surrender of cultural and persuasive contents of the narrative and the message sharing to the target group using Twitter. This creative handing over of the role of cultural intermediary ensures that the message matches perfectly with the target audience's perceived realism and identification. In *Crayons*, mindful use of cultural content was also apparent. Instead of depicting the smoker stereotypically from a deprived and troubled setting, she was placed in an orderly home with children seated at a table, doing some art work. The focus seems to be on altering the current reality, which is changing the adult behaviour into a positive role-model.

The role of the storyteller as cultural intermediary is a complex exercise of repackaging the collective cultural perspectives in persuasive narratives to effectively convey an acceptable version of cultural representation. While communication practitioners are often the hidden storytellers, they can also be the initiators or drivers as seen in *Y Tribe*. Persuasive narratives created by the communication practitioner however must select a visibly credible storyteller to gain group identification. A persuasive narrative is successful when the target group can relate to or identifies with the story. It falls short when the target group sees the story as culturally offensive and an inaccurate depiction of themselves. To persuade a target group, the communication practitioner as storyteller should not impose their "voice" in the content but rather co-create meaning that aligns with the target group's perspective. The sooner they accept their role as cultural intermediaries and become mindful of the complexities, the more informed, prepared and effective they are likely to be in telling someone else's story.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There is much scope in this area of study. Trends study of successful and ineffective campaigns targeting specific cultural groups will inform the practice. A study of the communication practitioner going through the cultural intermediary process would throw light on how meaning is negotiated and co-created. There is also a need to establish the basis

on which target group participants are selected to shape a persuasive message and their experience of the process. Does it add or alter their identity perception and self-concept? What aspects of the practitioner's lifeworld are applied to conceive the final persuasive message? While these suggested studies are largely qualitative, findings will be invaluable in helping both target groups and the communication practitioner prepare for future participation in co-creating persuasive messages in a more structured, considered and effective way.

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