

**Indigeneity, multi-culturalism and unconscious bias
WCMT Fellowship Report 2018**

Anton Blank (Ngāti Porou-Ngāti Kahungunu)

BACKGROUND

As we move out of the post-colonial period, diversity and multi-culturalism are critical issues for all New Zealanders. Within this discussion unconscious bias has emerged as a paradigm that helps explain some of the uneven social and health outcomes we see between population groups. Māori and Pasifika, for example, experience hardship at twice the rate of other groups. Research also tells us that these groups have less access to the health and social services they need. In justice, Māori make up 12-15% of the NZ population, and:

- they constitute 73% of residents in youth justice facilities are Māori
- Māori are 3-5 times more likely to be arrested than other groups
- they are 4 times more likely to be prosecuted
- they are 4 times more likely to be convicted
- Māori are then 7-9 times more likely to be imprisoned than other New Zealanders

Since the 1970s institutional racism has been a central theme in the literature that explores and explains some of these patterns. Having worked in the field since 1987 I felt that the framework had its limitations. Institutional racism is effective in identifying the history and impact of colonisation but fails to offer any remedies for the patterns discussed here. Further my experience of a range of workforces including social services, education and health was that workers are generally very well-intentioned – they are not consciously racist and in fact they want good outcomes for Māori clients and communities.

The bias paradigm argues that bias is a normal aspect of human behaviour. Socialised into us through culture and the media, bias helps us recognise our allies and friendly relationships – which social psychology calls our ‘in-group.’ It is a protective mechanism. Over time, however, we develop unhelpful stereotypes about groups that are different to us. These are ‘outgroups.’ It is widely recognised that unconscious bias and stereotyping influence decision-making across police, justice, health, education and social services. For me, the framework which has been studied for over fifty years, was somewhat of a revelation. It helped me make sense of the inequities clearly evident and the behaviour of the workforces I have been part of for decades.

REWIRE: the little book about bias is written in plain English and is an entry-level introduction to these concepts. The book is co-authored by Dr Carla Houkamau and myself. The book was launched at the *Indigenous Diversity Forum* in Wellington on 5 May 2017. This day-long workshop explored diversity issues within the Māori population. A range of models to address racism and bias were also presented. The study tour during 2018, supported by the Churchill Fellowship, built on this work. I met with experts, project managers and allied professionals in Taiwan and Europe to:

- Explore the unconscious bias paradigm in more detail
- See how the unconscious bias model is being applied in other settings
- Explore the issues for indigenous populations living in multi-cultural settings
- Explore multi-culturalism and its policy implications

Living in Auckland, which is now the fifth most diverse city in the world. Many Māori are suspicious of the concept of multi-culturalism. They are worried the biculturalism that sits at the heart of our national identity and is articulated in Te Tiriti ō Waitangi will be eroded by increasing multi-culturalism. As well as unconscious bias, I also wanted to see how other countries navigate multi-culturalism and develop policy solutions to address it.

TAIWAN

From 3-9 September, I met with the following experts and groups in Taiwan:

1. Etan Pavavalung, a Taiwanese artist and art director. Author and illustrator of children's books. Contributor to the Māori literary journal *Ora Nui*.
2. Mr. Leo Wang, publisher of Liyan Books. He has worked with Etan for many years. He publishes educational children's books about Taiwanese culture and indigenous culture.
3. Elise Tseng, director and CEO of TICA (Taiwan Indigenous Culture Association). An art space exhibiting contemporary indigenous art from Taiwan.

4. Tony Coolidge, Founder of Austronesian Culture and Economic Cooperation Association, Atayal Organisation, a film-maker and a member of BGBAT.
5. Dr. Cheng Yiu Cheong, a doctor and an award-winning novelist. His work *DNA of the Island* was published by Ink in Taiwan in 2015. Using his medical expertise and historical evidence to study the DNA of Taiwanese people. He discovered some genetic diseases trace back to Austronesian ancestry, while others trace back to regions of China.
6. Jerome Su, President of Bookman Books and BK Norton, associate professor of translation at National Taiwan Normal University. Jerome has worked in publishing for 40 years. All books were censored in the 1970s under Taiwan's martial law. Bookman bookshop offered a selection of left-leaning titles and carved out a strong support base.
7. Joyce Sun, a national and international award-winning illustrator. Joyce's work has been published widely in Taiwan and her books have been translated into Korean, French and Spanish. Her collection of illustrated books deals with the migration of Mainland Chinese moving to Taiwan during or after the Chinese civil war and the culture they bring with them.

I developed a power-point presentation outlining the issues for Māori and the impact of unconscious bias across the data. The Taiwanese look to New Zealand as an exemplar of progressive indigeneity, so the data was a reality check about the social profile of Māori and the issues we need to address.

Salient points from the discussions

- Taiwan has a complex history and has been colonised by European nations, China and Japan.
- 60% of the Taiwanese population have indigenous heritage but they don't identify strongly with this aspect of their ethnicity. The indigenous Taiwanese do not sit centrally in the country's nationhood.
- The theory of the Austronesian migration posits that Māori descend from the indigenous Taiwanese, who migrated from Taiwan across the Pacific to South East

Asia, South America and the Antipodes. There are visible similarities between Māori and indigenous Taiwanese cultures. A strong spiritual connection to the land and the elements, shared cultural symbols like the fern frond, cultural capital like canoes all point to this historical connection.

- DNA science supports the theory of the Austronesian migration.
- Elevating indigenous art commercially has helped raise the profile of the indigenous populations. These artworks are sought after in Taiwan and other parts of Asia.
- Overall, experts want to see the indigenous Taiwanese experience showcased – brought in from the periphery where it is currently located.
- Everyone wants to see the relationship between Māori and the indigenous Taiwanese develop. The groups are interested in collaborative projects.
- Everyone was very interested in the science of unconscious bias. Most had limited knowledge of the paradigm.

UNITED KINGDOM

24 September – 6 October 2018

Arts Council Diversity Director Abid Hussain.

The Arts Council's diversity and equality work is integrated in the framework of *Achieving great art for everyone*. It is informed by the creative case for diversity, which is an arts-driven approach that seeks to find the best approaches to liberating artists from imposed labels. The framework builds on the case for diversity as culturally productive for artists, audiences and communities.

Smita Tharoor, Tharoor Associates

Tharoor Associates delivers Unconscious Bias Training in the United Kingdom and India.

Dr Aneeta Rattan, Associate Professor, London Business School

Aneeta is a Social Psychologist whose interests are inequality, prejudice, gender and diversity.

Salient points from the discussions

- Migrant cultures have a unique contribution to make to national arts and culture. After two generations they will call their new country home and arts leaders will emerge.
- Legal imperatives are required to address diversity across the public and private sectors. Diversity leadership positions are needed.
- Stereotypes are malleable, they change over time.
- Safe spaces need to be created where bias and prejudice can be discussed. People don't want to feel judged.
- In terms of unconscious bias focus on behaviour change, not attitude change. In any workforce, choose a very specific behaviour as the focus. Create barriers for bad, unwanted behaviour.
- Solutions need to be co-designed with workforces and communities.
- Unconscious bias is very nuanced and subtle.

SUMMARY

As well as the itinerary outlined, which was funded by the Churchill Fellowship, I met with diversity leaders and partners in Belgium and Germany.

The contexts of Taiwan and Europe are very complex, shaped by colonial histories and centuries of migration. In terms of indigenous development the Taiwanese engagement was an interesting comparison. Māori sit very centrally in our national identity. While, compared to New Zealanders, more Taiwanese have indigenous heritage it has less influence on the Taiwanese national identity and culture. There is lots of opportunity to strengthen the relationship between Māori and indigenous Taiwanese groups.

In Europe I learned about the importance of legislation, policy and leadership that supports diversity and multi-culturalism. Also, well-planned interventions can successfully address issues of bias and discrimination.

Since I returned from the fellowship, my work has focused almost entirely on diversity and unconscious bias. Across projects in arts, justice, health and education, unconscious bias is becoming a central driver. I have recently completed a pilot project to reduce bias towards Māori in the justice sector and am currently delivering training and developing unconscious bias resources and tools for health workers. I am taking my learning from the fellowship into these projects. The fellowship has also increased my credibility as a diversity and bias expert.

Two projects have emerged out of the fellowship study tour:

- I am collaborating with Bookman Publishers to produce a journal of indigenous Taiwanese and Māori literature, which will be published later this year. The journal will explore the Austronesian migration.
- I have partnered with two German gallerists to take an exhibition of contemporary Māori art to Switzerland and Germany. The exhibition will provide opportunities for public discussion about diversity, prejudice and bias.