

## The Maori Cultural Institution of *Hui*: When Meeting Means More Than a Meeting

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**ABSTRACT:** Within all societies individuals gather together for various reasons and in a variety of ways for events that can be collectively termed “meetings”. The Māori cultural institution termed *hui* is often translated into English as a meeting (Cormack, 2000, Ryan, 2001). Using Volkema and Niederman’s (1996) input/context-process-output model of the meeting, *hui*, as described by expert Māori informants, is compared with how Western corporate meetings are depicted in management and communication textbooks used in New Zealand universities over the last decade. The analysis shows that, while the Western approach to meetings and *hui* share common features, equating the two forms of communication event is inappropriate and results in the key cultural dimensions of *hui* being ignored. The authors propose that a more thorough explanation of the forms, functions, and cultural underpinnings of both *hui* and Western style meetings is required in our tertiary textbooks to ensure our students are adequately prepared for their future roles, which in Aotearoa New Zealand will entail working across Western and Māori group communication settings in an appreciative and informed manner.

**KEYWORDS:** cultural meeting forms, academic texts, Māori perspectives, cultural values, *hui*

### The First *Hui*

*In the beginning Ranginui, the Sky father and Papatūānuku, the Earth mother held each other in a close embrace which denied their children light and space. Their children however desired to end this world of darkness and confinement and so they gathered together to determine how they could let light into the world. This gathering of Ranginui and Papatūānuku’s children was the first hui.* (Ministry of Justice, 2001)

The above story is a *kōrero tawhito* (myth and legend) of Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. Such stories reflect the philosophies, ideals and norms of Māori *tipuna* (elders, ancestors) providing an outward projection of an ideal against which human performance can be measured and perfected (Walker, 1978). This first *hui* sought to find ways to bring light into a world of darkness and metaphorically *hui* are still used for this purpose.

### Introduction

The key functions of those gathering to participate in contemporary *hui* are to collect, generate and disperse information and in so doing generate enlightenment. These functions are common to many gatherings, including those that fall under the rubric of ‘the meeting’. This commonality of purpose has led the term *hui* to be translated as meeting (Cormack, 2000; Ryan, 2001). This paper explores the concept of *hui* and

compares it to the way the Western style of meeting is described in textbooks that are or have been used in the last decade in New Zealand tertiary classrooms in order to analyse whether simply translating *hui* as a meeting is appropriate and accurately captures its cultural dimensions. In so doing, it examines and compares the key cultural values that underpin both types of communication. It utilises the comprehensive input/context-process-output model of Volkema and Niederman (1996) for meetings and the work of Mead and Mead (2003), Salmond (2004), and McQueen (1995) to produce an input/context-process-output model for *hui*.

An understanding of the operation and outcome from *hui* was developed using data provided by interviews with Māori mentors from the *rohe* (tribal estate) of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (the governing body of Ngāi Tahu, which is the major Māori tribe residing in the South Island of New Zealand). Volkema and Niederman's (1996) model was utilised by the authors as a framework to compare and contrast meetings and *hui* because it allows both forms of communication to be deconstructed in a way that enhances understanding of their similarities and differences. The model addresses inputs and context, processes and outcomes. *Inputs* are what are brought to the communication event by participants while context is the background to the communication event. *Processes* are actions taken by participants that occur during the communication event. Inputs and context and processes are recognised as impacting upon each other. *Outcomes* are what the communication event manages to achieve for participants. Processes and outcomes are viewed as impacting on each other in the model.

### The Process of Hui

The *hui* is a sophisticated New Zealand Māori tradition which involves bringing people together for a specific purpose or *take* (*cause for gathering*). "Traditionally *hui* were conducted on a *marae* (a traditional meeting place for Maori), which denotes the area in front of the meeting house (*whare hui*) or council house (*whare rūnanga*) at Māori settlements (*pā* or *kāinga*)" (Metge, 1976, p. 8-9). The form of *hui* can vary from one tribal area to another and from one occasion to another. The authors wish to acknowledge this and urge the reader to view descriptions of *hui* given in this paper within the context and purposes of the study described and where the interview data is drawn from; specifically the *rohe* of Ngāi Tahu.

According to Salmond (2004)

*take* fall into one of two main classes, those where the main event is a life crisis centring on an individual; and those where the main event is centred on a group. Life crises include funerals (*tangi*), *kawe mate* (literally, 'carry the death'), the unveiling of memorial tombstones (*hurahanga kōhatu*), twenty-first birthdays, weddings (*mārenatanga*) and anniversaries. Group events include the opening of new *marae*, the welcome given distinguished visitors . . . and the gatherings of Māori organisations. (p. 179)

Many contemporary Māori groups meet at a range of venues other than *marae*. Any public venue such as a conference room, public hall, or class room as a school, or university can be appropriate. To meet on a *marae* is not crucial for a gathering to be considered a *hui*. "The feature that marks these gatherings as *hui*, however,

are the rituals of welcome or at least some version of them, that formally open the proceedings” (Salmond, 2004, p. 208).

*Hui* have come to prominence for non-Māori New Zealanders, particularly those working for local and central government agencies, as *hui* have increasingly been recognised as a culturally appropriate way for individuals or institutions to engage with Māori. The impetus for greater and more effective engagement with Māori, particularly on such matters as economic development, health provision and education, has been influenced in part by the changing demographics in New Zealand. Māori are a youthful and growing population. In 2001, the number of working age Māori (16-64years) was 350,000. By 2021 this figure will be 468,000, an increase of 34% (Department of Labour, 2004). In comparison, New Zealand’s non-Māori population of European ancestry, which makes up the majority of the population, is aging. This means that by 2021 most new entrants to the labour force in New Zealand will be Māori (Department of Labour, 2004). Thus, the terms of engagement (communication) within New Zealand organisations and between these organisations and their communities are likely to be aligned more with *tikanga Māori* (Māori etiquette or way of doing things).

### **The Process of Meetings**

According to O’Rourke and Barnett (2008) the process of organising a meeting begins with planning. In the planning stage the meeting organiser determines the purpose of the meeting, who should be invited, when and where the meeting should be held and prepares a notice of meeting and an agenda. Sligo and Bathurst (2005), in a case study of how not to run an effective meeting, also emphasise the importance of planning and setting an agenda. An agenda is a written list of topics to be discussed at the meeting and is circulated to participants prior to the meeting (Sligo & Bathurst, 2005; O’Rourke & Barnett, 2008).

Several authors such as O’Rourke and Barnett (2008), Sligo and Bathurst (2005) and Mohan, McGregor, Saunders and Archee (2008) agree on the importance of appointing a facilitator or chairperson prior to the meeting. This person then co-ordinates the communication during the meeting and ensures that the participants adhere to the agenda. O’Rourke and Barnett (2008), Sligo and Bathurst (2005) and Mohan, McGregor, Saunders and Archee (2008) also mention the role of recording the content or minutes of a meeting. This person who records these minutes is titled the ‘minutes secretary’ by O’Rourke and Barnett (2008), and ‘secretary’ by Sligo and Bathurst (2005) and Mohan, McGregor, Saunders, and Archee (2008).

O’Rourke and Barnett (2008) believe a meeting has three clear stages; the beginning, middle and end. In the beginning stage it is important that the facilitator or chairperson starts the meeting on time, welcomes everyone, draws participants’ attention to the agenda and clarifies the purpose of the meeting. In the middle stage the facilitator or chairperson will introduce new topics following the agenda, seek feedback, ensure participants stay focused, keep track of time passing and advise those who have been allocated actions to complete prior to the next meeting. Ending a meeting involves the facilitator or chairperson thanking participants for their time, confirming the date, time and place of the next meeting, ensuring the minutes secretary has all the information

they need, noting agenda items for the next meeting in consultation with the group and officially declaring the meeting closed.

## Research Approach

To study any social phenomenon a culturally appropriate strategy is required. In this study the strategy employed to gather data about the nature of *hui* from Māori followed Smith's (1992) *tiaki* (mentor) model. This involved collaborating with Māori authorities who, through their mentorship and advocacy on behalf of the researcher, facilitated the sample selection and guided the research process. Interviews rather than texts were selected as the means for tapping Māori knowledge as much of this knowledge is undocumented, being passed on from one generation to another orally and through shared experiences. This is typical of cultural groups with strong oral traditions even today when print forms are an integral part of modern living.

Two types of data were analysed. The first type was orally given data which addressed the nature of *hui*. These data were gathered using semi-structured interviews undertaken as part of a study that explored Māori economic development and ways of appropriately engaging with Māori communities. Interviews lasted approximately an hour, were conducted in English and were not taped. Careful notes were taken during the interview to record the information shared. The interviewees were Māori individuals identified by the Māori mentors as possessing significant *mana* (respect and status in their Māori communities) that entitled them to speak on the topics being researched. This matter of sufficient *mana* to speak on a topic is an issue of concern to Māori (Murchie, 1984) and so it was considered important to this research that those interviewed were appropriately mandated. Each interviewee was considered to be a leader within his or her organisation and community. This ensured their responses not only represented their own views but also those of their organisation and community (Murchie, 1984; Smith, 1992).

Approaches were made to 16 individuals identified by the mentors as possessing the necessary *mana* to present a Māori perspective on the topic of Māori economic development. Fourteen agreed to participate. Given that judgement sampling method was utilised, 14 was considered an adequate sample size (Mendenhall, Reinmuth & Beaver, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2000). Each individual was involved in a management capacity within a Māori organisation concerned with economic development. A variety of views was obtained by interviewing individuals working in both iwi-based and non-iwi-based organisations.

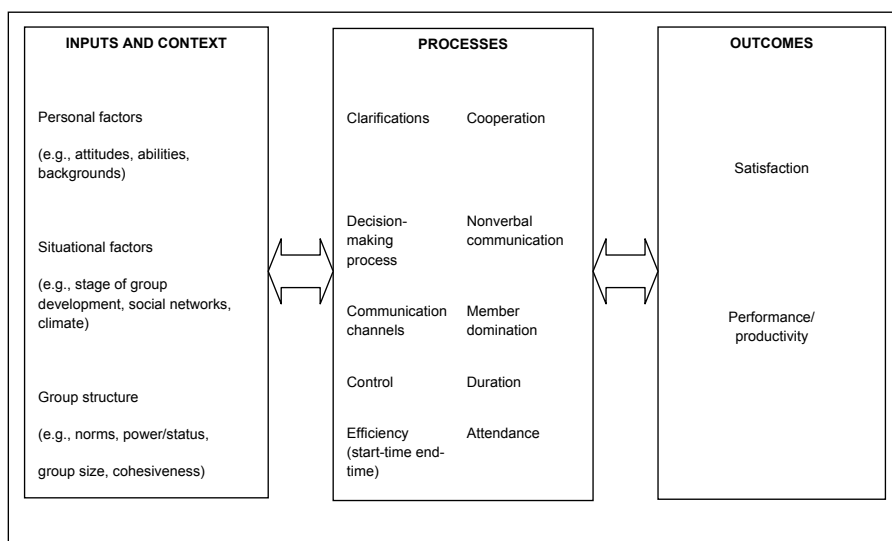
Six were female, ranging in age from mid thirties to late fifties, and eight were male, ranging in age from mid thirties to early sixties. Traditionally only two of the male individuals would be considered a *kaumātua* (elder) by virtue of their age.

The second form of data was written text gathered from academic texts used in university courses in management and communication courses in New Zealand universities that described meeting processes. Particular care was taken to include texts written specifically for the New Zealand context. The list of textbooks examined is given in Table 2 (See Appendix). This includes the names of universities where the textbook is currently or has previously been employed. This list of universities was compiled with the assistance of university bookshops, publishers and teaching staff but should not be taken as exhaustive.

For each textbook (See Appendix ), an index search was conducted for the following terms “New Zealand culture”, “Maori”, “meetings”, “*hui*”, “*powhiri*”, “*mihi*” and “*marae*”. Any text that related to these terms was gathered from these publications and subjected to content analysis. This included a thematic analysis to identify the portrayal of distinguishing features of the meeting and the values that were implied by they way these features were portrayed.

The comparative analysis included interpreting the data gathered on *hui* and meetings in terms of Volkema and Niederman’s (1996) input/context-process-output model. This model outlines five categories of inputs or contextual factors, twelve processes and two outcomes that Volkema and Niederman believe occur within meetings. The model is given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Volkema and Niederman’s (1996)’s Model**



In comparing and contrasting *hui* to meetings this paper will focus on the variables in this model that differ between the two socio-cultural traditions.

## Findings

The analysis of the textbooks’ content revealed that few dedicated a great deal of text to the topic of meetings and even fewer addressed *hui*. Table 2 (Appendix) presents the results of this analysis so that a comparison can be made. It also shows the universities where the texts have been used. The following sections present the findings from the interviews with Māori spokespersons and the results of comparing these findings with the textbook analysis.

## Inputs or Contextual Factors

According to Volkema and Niederman (1996), the first factors that shape meeting

processes are personal factors such as personality and private agendas. For example, the aggressive attitude of an individual present at a meeting may affect the nature of cooperation within that meeting. Reduced cooperation resulting in less information being shared among those present may then affect the attitude of individuals present at the meeting and discourage them from subsequent participation in the group.

Personal factors also influence the processes conducted within *hui*. In the words of one participant, *“I have seen people decide how they want a decision to go before a hui and then they have manipulated the hui to achieve the result they want.”*

Just as in the Māori world, some non-Māori have personalities that prompt them to seek to dominate in a group situation. However a Māori individual seeking to influence the decision within a *hui* can utilise an added cultural dimension to personal factors; their *whakapapa* or genealogy. Most Māori communities are based around a kinship group and so those organising or participating in gatherings involving groups bound together by *whakapapa* need to understand the reality of this situation.

According to one interviewee, the maintenance of kinship bonds may take priority over financial concerns for many individual members of the kinship group, which can result in decisions being made on the basis of *whanaungatanga* (the maintenance of family bonds) as opposed to sound financial principles pertaining to the situation. The great emphasis that is placed on being a good group member can also result in a community rallying behind the ideas proposed by members of their community, even when many members of that community have reservations about enacting those ideas. Kinship is not a factor mentioned in any of the texts examined when they address the nature and operation of meetings. This finding implies that such social bonds have no place in meeting processes. Instead, the implication is that people gather together because of their expertise, status and interests. These are very Western (e.g., North American, British, or *Pākehā* [New Zealander of European descent or non-Māori] New Zealander) cultural considerations that are consistent with an individualistic orientation. Kinship, which is a consideration much more aligned with a collectivistic orientation, was not a consideration particularly in work-related meetings, which are what the textbooks examined primarily address.

*Hui*, like meetings conducted in ways consistent with the models promoted in the textbooks in this study, are influenced by group structure and leadership. The leadership of many kinship-based Māori communities is hereditary and contains a hierarchy based on *whakapapa*. This hierarchy of senior and junior families is often referred to as the *tuakana* system and this system can affect how *hui* are conducted. The implication of the *tuakana* system for *hui* is that views of individuals from a senior family are often given more weight by attendees than the views of individuals from a junior family. An individual from a junior family may also not feel comfortable contradicting or criticising the expressed views of a member from a senior family.

In traditional Māori society power and status are conferred by *whakapapa* and age commands respect (Durie, 2003). Traditionally younger people were expected to listen to the words of their elders and often their views were discounted because they were perceived to lack wisdom, which can only be gained through age. As one participant lamented about the lack of attendance by young people at *rūnanga hui*: *“Those under 35-45 don’t want to be involved in rūnanga affairs because they are generally perceived as children by elders.”*

Group structure is not a topic the texts examined dealt with. Instead, the focus was on the roles people play and whether the people present at a meeting can make a contribution. As Sligo and Bathurst (2005) note, “Choosing the right people to attend the meeting is very important. Each participant should be invited because they have a specific contribution to make; otherwise it is not a good use of their time” (p. 238).

Bostrom (1989) states that the inputs to a meeting occur at three stages: pre-meeting activities, set-up functions, and meeting execution. At each of these stages input is solicited by specific communication channels and the data collected is then aggregated, filtered, and presented as information to the group. The process of convening a *hui* to discuss an issue of importance to a group begins with the formulation of a *kaupapa* (philosophy) which will guide the development of a *ngātake* (agenda) which may be open or closed, depending on the occasion. The *ngātake* is then circulated using a variety of communication channels to ensure participation. This communication can be directed either at the group or the individual. Group communication channels include public notices in newspapers, or announcements at other *hui*. Individual communication channels include letters of invitation, phone calls or *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face visits).

*Ngātake* are also disseminated using electronic communication tools, like electronic mail and electronic group communication (McQueen, 1995). Electronic communication tools such as e-mail, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and websites will increasingly play an important role in disseminating information, especially as Māori communities become more geographically dispersed. An invitation extended through *kanohi ki te kanohi* is still, however, seen as the most respectful way of recognising the mana or status of the individual being invited to a *hui*. Māori place far more importance on face-to-face communication than non-Māori and therefore convening a *hui* requires consideration of the most culturally appropriate communication channel to encourage participation. For this reason, *kanohi ki te kanohi*, while possibly more time consuming and expensive than other forms of communication, normally results in higher levels of attendance than mediated techniques. Certain individuals will also expect that their invitation to attend a *hui* is extended through a *kanohi ki te kanohi* approach because of their *mana*.

This is at odds with the typical means used for convening work-related meetings, which involve mediated approaches such as a notice posted on a noticeboard, a mail drop or general email. In the Māori world a combination of face-to-face and mediated approaches are used. For instance, prior to a *hui*, a *pānui* (notice) can be sent out through communication channels such as community newsletters or *papatipu rūnanga hui*. The first *pānui* would outline the *kaupapa* of the *hui* and request that individuals register their interest in attending the *hui*. Further *pānui* would outline the *hui*'s *ngātake* and provide information about the issues to be discussed in order to stimulate thinking about these issues. These *pānui* may also pose questions to the community for which the *hui* is seeking answers. The nature and orientation of these *hui* planning processes were not specifically mentioned in the textbooks examined. Instead all the textbooks (that addressed meetings) presented meetings as needing similar planning. For instance Inkson and Kolb (2000, p. 191) state that, “An agenda should be supplied in advance, supportive documentation should be supplied, and the norm should be that members coming to the meeting must be well prepared.”

## Processes

Unlike meetings, convening a *hui* usually requires the organiser to arrange a *pōwhiri* (formal traditional welcome). A *pōwhiri* removes the *tapu* (in this context the ‘potential danger’) of the *manuhiri* (visitors) to make them one with *tangata whenua* (hosts). The process of doing this is grounded in traditions that have been passed on from generation to generation, have deep spiritual and cultural significance, and are rich in symbolic meaning. De Vito, O’Rourke, and O’Neil ( 1996, p. 505-506) was the only textbook that took time to outline in detail the form of a *pōwhiri*, drawing on the writings of Ranginui Walker, an esteemed scholar and Māori elder. However, this was done within the context of public speaking on the *marae* rather than in terms of the processes served by *hui*.

A traditional *pōwhiri* can involve up to ten stages, which can take forms unique to particular tribal areas. These stages include:

- The assembling of the *manuhiri* and *tangata whenua*
- The saying of *inoi* or prayers by both sides before the start of the *pōwhiri*
- A ceremonial challenge or *wero* to the *manuhiri* by a male from the *tangata whenua* side
- The calling of the *manuhiri* onto the *marae* by a woman from the *tangata whenua* side. This is called a *karanga*, and it is responded to by a woman from the *manuhiri*
- The *tangata whenua* may then perform a welcoming dance or *haka pōwhiri*
- Both sides then make speeches of welcome (*whai kōrero*) and/or introductions called *mihi*
- At the conclusion of each *mihi* a *waiata* or song is sung by the women supporting the speaker
- At the conclusion of their last speech the *manuhiri* present the *tangata whenua* with a *koha* or gift
- The *tangata whenua* indicate to the *manuhiri* to come in a certain direction, in line, to shake hands and to *hongi* or press noses.
- *Kai* or food is then shared which lifts the final *tapu* of the *pōwhiri* ceremony

If all those attending the *hui* are familiar with each other or the gathering is a regular event then a less formal welcome will be used; such as a *mihimihi* (sharing of names and brief personal introduction) or *whakatau* ( speeches of welcome). However, a full *pōwhiri* will be conducted if an important guest comes to participate in a *hui*.

The Western institution of a meeting, as described in the texts studied, does not generally involve a formal welcome of those attending the meeting. The convenor may allow some time for informal pre-meeting greetings to be exchanged. Alternatively, prior to starting the meeting an opportunity for brief introductions may be provided, but there is no formal opportunity such as provided by a *mihi* to establish linkages between the participants. Therefore, in a meeting the only information participants may know about each other initially can be their names. The most appropriate communication channel for conveying a message to a *hui* is face-to-face, *kanohi ki te*



*kanohi*, as being physically present to communicate your message is important if you wish to engage in communication with a Māori community. There is a strong cultural preference amongst Māori for this type of communication. The need for *kanohi ki te kanohi* is viewed as especially important when wishing to commence a working relationship with someone and when serious issues need to be discussed. As one participant commented, “*Maori like to see who they are dealing with.*” Initially Māori need to engage in *kanohi ki te kanohi* to develop a relationship with the other parties. The Māori interviewees considered the *hui* as the most appropriate communication framework for facilitating this face-to-face communication between representatives of an organisation and members of the community. However, once a representative of these parties has established a relationship with members of the community then other types of communication become more acceptable. Even so, when it comes to making decisions, interviewees suggested that the preference is for these to occur within *hui*. However, these *hui* differ from the textbooks’ descriptions of meetings which consider time management to be a key part of effectively running meetings. Traditionally when an issue is examined at a *hui* a time limit on discussions is not imposed because a consensus decision is expected and there is an understanding that the time needed to achieve this is not easily predicted. The following comment captures this expectation: “*There are no constraints on time when an issue has to be ‘hui-ed’. The hui is there until the issue has been solved.*”

This differs from decision-making processes at the meetings described in many textbooks, which generally promote majority as opposed to consensus decision-making strategies and usually suggest or imply that meetings should finish at an agreed time. This is not surprising as efficient use of time is a major theme in most of the textbooks. The following quote from Sligo (1988, p. 216) captures this time efficiency orientation well: “*Start the meeting on time, and right at the beginning state when it will end. Then finish when you say you will, even if you have not worked through the agenda.*”

De Vito et al. (1996), however, acknowledged that consensus is sought in marae discussions, and that this “may take some time” and that “the whole process is very different from Pakeha ideas of argumentativeness” (p. 364).

The desire for a Māori community to reach a consensus decision during a *hui* contrasts with Volkema and Niederman (1996)’s variable of efficiency as *hui* tend to last longer than meetings and often make fewer final decisions. Decisions reached within a *hui*, however, generally have a high degree of community ownership and so over the long term may lead to greater efficiency as less time is used revisiting issues than is possible as a result of running the time-constrained Western-style meeting.

## Outcomes

Volkema and Niederman’s (1996) model contains two outcomes from meetings, which are termed Satisfaction and Performance/productivity. The inclusion of these outcomes in the model suggests that individuals who attended a meeting are satisfied if the meeting achieves a specific measurable objective determined before the meeting began (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1993). *Hui* also produce outputs related to Performance/productivity although ideally *hui* are a synergistic process, that involve both social and task-oriented agenda. Few individuals would view Western-style meetings that seek to achieve task satisfaction and performance/productivity objectives as particularly

pleasurable. In contrast, *hui* are viewed by Māori communities as being pleasurable events. As one interviewee commented: “Communities love hui, they love the debate.”

At times information disclosed by *hui* participants is often not widely known within a community and may be completely unknown to an outside institution convening a *hui*. *Hui*, therefore, have the capacity to facilitate both the dissemination of information within a community and the exchange of information between a community and outsiders. This can be different in meetings run along the lines detailed in the textbooks examined where there is an expectation that information will be pre-circulated as well as gleaned through the meeting process if a meeting is well-planned. For instance, Inkson and Kolb (2000, p. 285) suggest: “Two particularly important control information sources are documents and meetings. All managers need to ensure that they receive the right documents, and attend, or organise the right meetings.”

Convening a *hui* is also a way of facilitating community ownership of the issues discussed. A community that has discussed an issue at a *hui* is generally interested in any future decisions that may be made regarding those issues. Thus, *hui* create community participation in the matter under discussion through generating community awareness and facilitating involvement in decision-making and strategy formation.

*Hui* were seen by the Māori participants to have other more subtle community benefits. Several explained that Māori communities can have low expectations of themselves as communities, as do some individuals within these communities, and that *hui* can contribute to raising a community’s expectations for itself and the personal sense of value of the individuals within this community. This is because *hui* provide a forum in which individual and collective success stories can be shared and people can be encouraged to identify with these stories.

*Hui* provide a forum in which all views are heard and a consensus decision is reached so they provide a forum for soliciting the ideas and opinions of a community and identifying and prioritising desired outcomes. Other communication forms are less likely to deliver appropriately mandated consensus outcomes. This observation about meetings (as opposed to *hui*) was captured by one participant who commented that: “*Sometimes people think they are asking but they are not asking in the right place.*”

The data identified other contrasts between *hui* as described by the participants and meetings as portrayed in the textbooks. For instance, according to the participants *hui* can be more expensive to convene than a meeting because the convenor of the *hui* is expected under *tikanga* to provide *manaakitanga* (hospitality) to those attending the *hui*, although those attending the *hui* are expected under *tikanga* to bring a *koha* (gift of money or food) in recognition of the convenor’s hospitality. Despite this relative costliness, the expenses involved in holding a *hui* are seldom among the first considerations for those organising a *hui*. In contrast, the convenors of a meeting, will often first consider the cost of organising the meeting before deciding to hold it. This is captured by Sligo and Bathurst (2005, p. 235): “*Meetings have costs. The person calling the meeting must be satisfied that the benefit of the meeting will outweigh its total cost*”.

This analysis should not lead the reader to conclude that *hui* and meetings are incompatible forms of gathering. Certainly, the Māori participants in this study did not dismiss the textbook-style meeting as lacking utility, but were clear a meeting was not

an alternative to well-run *hui*. They saw the (Western) textbook form of meeting as a useful precursor to *hui* as this form of gathering allowed representatives to meet with various groups within a community over a short period of time to gather proposals and suggestions that could be collated and then analysed to produce ideas to be taken back to the community at a *hui* to initiate and inform discussion.

### Exploring Cultural Values

Social and cultural institutions are a manifestation of the cultural values existing within that society. McIntyre and Zhang (2003) state that Western values, while often not explicitly stated, can be equated to the dimensions used in the Rokeach Value Survey, developed by Milton Rokeach (1968). This scale includes measures of the belief in personal freedom, equality, ambition, competitiveness and individualism, which are seen as key Western cultural values.

Hofstede's (1979) widely cited cross-cultural research identified four cultural dimensions across which national cultures differ. These dimensions were individualism versus collectivism (ID), power distance (PD), uncertainty avoidance versus uncertainty tolerance (UA), and masculinity versus femininity (MAS). Power distance refers to the extent that power differences are accepted and sanctioned in a society. Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which a society focuses on ways to reduce uncertainty and create stability. Masculinity-femininity refers to the extent to which 'traditional' male orientations of ambition and achievement are emphasized over 'traditional' female orientations of nurturance and interpersonal harmony.

By giving respondents from various countries a score, ranging from 0 to 120 on each of the four dimensions, Hofstede derived a classification of national cultures. Table 1 details a selection of countries that Hofstede studied which can be considered as Western.

*Table 1*

***Cultural value scores by country (Source: Hofstede, 1980)***

Country	UA	PD	IDV	MAS
Australia	51	36	90	61
France	86	68	71	43
Germany	65	35	67	66
Great Britain	35	35	89	66
New Zealand	49	22	79	58
Sweden	29	31	71	5
USA	46	40	91	62

Hofstede's scores presented in Table 1 show there are clear differences between national cultures within the Western countries listed. However, within Western countries there is a preference for low power distance and for individualism over collectivism. New Zealand is presented in textbooks as individualistic (e.g., De Vito et al., 1996; Elkin & Inkson, 2000) and exhibiting low power distance (e.g., Campling, Poole, Weisner, Ang, Chan, Tan & Schermerhorn, 2006; De Vito et al., 1996; Mohan et al., 2008). New Zealand's cultural values profile across all four of Hofstede's dimensions is individualistic and masculine with low power distance and weak uncertainty avoidance. This clearly positions its values among countries deemed to be Western.

When examining how meetings are described in textbooks in terms of Rokeach's (1968) values of personal freedom, equality, ambition, competitiveness, and individualism and Hofstede's dimensions of low power distance and individualism, it is clear that meetings are described in ways that reflect these Western values. There is no evidence that the authors consider the meeting to be a culturally defined communication event. It is treated as culturally neutral yet there is evidence in the descriptions to confirm that it is enacting Western cultural values. For instance, at the pre-meeting stage within an organisation any individual attending the meeting is entitled to request an issue be placed on the agenda and their formal position within the organisation or status outside of the organisation does not preclude them from making this request. During the meeting any individual attending may contribute to the discussion and a culture of equality generally exists; in that ideas contributed to the discussion are largely judged on the quality of their reasoning or strength of logical argument as opposed to the background or status of the person who proposed the idea. The encouragement of ideas from everyone attending a meeting is seen as one of the crucial roles of the individual facilitating or chairing (Bens, 2000). These are protocols that align with individualism and relatively low power distance, which are features of the dominant cultures of Western societies such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Meetings are often forums for competitiveness and individualism in that individuals view them as a way of achieving support or approval for personal goals or improving their status within the group through being able to publicly state personal achievements or the achieving of group adoption of personal ideas, strategies or projects (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1993). Individuals will often view a meeting as a way of achieving group support for their individual goals that may or may not be beneficial for the group. In contrast, *Hui* are a manifestation of *whanaungatanga*, a value that embraces *whakapapa* and focuses on relationships (Mead & Mead, 2003). *Whanaungatanga* creates obligations on the individual to support their kinship group, and on the kinship group to support and help the individual. *Whanaungatanga* is extended to those outside of *whakapapa* relationships to include non-kin persons, who through shared experiences become like kin. A common interest or goal can also create what is termed a '*whanau* of interest'; a group of people who are not connected by *whakapapa* but who seek to increase the mana of their group and extend *manaakitanga* (hospitality) to each other. Thus individual goals are subjugated to those of the group. This is consistent with a collectivistic value orientation.

The process of organising the *hui* and the social interaction that occurs during the *hui* reinforce relationships. This is not surprising as organising a *hui* requires the combined efforts of many individuals. It is a significant undertaking, even when only a relatively

small number of people are expected to attend, because it requires the integration of roles that require specialist knowledge and the ability to perform certain tasks. Thus, by virtue of the collaboration that is required to make the event occur and the style of process that occurs during a *hui*, existing relationships are renewed or strengthened and new ones established in a way that encourages a sense of *whakapapa* or a common interest.

The *whanaungatanga* generated can, however, place constraints on when and how individuals contribute their personal views or ideas to a *hui*. Younger individuals may feel they need to wait till older people have shared their views or ideas before contributing. Likewise, individuals from junior family lines may feel compelled to wait until individuals from senior family lines have expressed their views, while an individual whose personal views or ideas are not supported by senior family members or the majority of those attending the *hui* may feel they cannot publicly express their disagreement. Thus, the strong cultural values of maintaining family ties and respecting seniority can result in individuals supporting ideas or views that they do not agree with. These or any similar patterns of behaviour, which are common in cultures with relatively high power distance, are not addressed in the textbooks examined.

The expert Māori opinion gathered from within a Māori community confirmed that *hui* is more than just a meeting, for while it shares some of the characteristics of meetings with regard to input and context, such as having a purpose and an agenda, it differs in terms of the key values that underpins it. *Hui* are a manifestation of *whanaungatanga*, a value that embraces *whakapapa* and focuses on relationships. *Hui*, like Western meetings, are both a communication event and can be used as decision-making forums. However, the relational aspects intrinsic to *hui* mean they have greater complexity and provide a trusted framework for the people who attend them to assert and confirm their cultural and community identity.

As a unique Māori cultural institution and a significant method of communication within the Māori community, the participants saw *hui* as continuing to be the most effective communication event available to ascertain Māori views and to facilitate community engagement in such processes as Māori economic development. This is because *hui* enact the cultural values intrinsic to *tikanga* Māori and provide a framework to:

- Engage in community consultation
- Determine where a community is now
- Raise a community's expectations
- Provide considerable scope for listening to a range of a community's members
- Facilitate community control over decisions
- Reinforce community and cultural identity

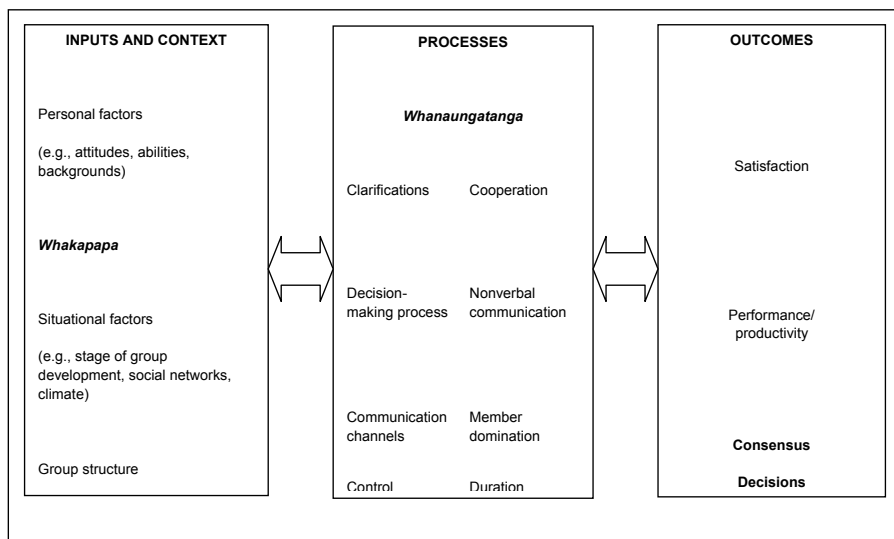
## Discussion

This comparison of expert opinion on *hui* and the way *hui* and meetings are depicted in past and present textbooks in New Zealand raises some interesting issues. First, given the officially declared commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, which is a template for biculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is surprising that textbooks currently or

recently used to educate future managers give so little consideration to one cultural partner's preferred means of undertaking the important cultural and communication functions associated with doing business in this country. Of the texts examined just three devoted text to elaborate on the nature of *hui*, and one of these only in relation to public speaking and the form of the *pōwhiri* or *mihi* that marks the commencement of *hui* (i.e., De Vito et al., 1996).

Furthermore, in nearly all the textbooks meetings received limited or no attention despite meetings being an integral part of organisational life. When meetings were mentioned, their features were presented uncritically. Opportunities to compare and contrast Western-style meetings with other forms of collective action were not taken. Similarly, the many opportunities available within the contexts of management and organisational communication scholarship to integrate *hui* into a general model of group communication processes were not taken. Volkema and Niederman's (1996) comprehensive input/context-process-output model with adaptation could provide a framework for such integration. In particular, it provides a framework for integrating the unique cultural dimensions of *hui* such as *whakapapa*, the *tuakana* system, practicing of *whanaungatanga*, consensus decision-making, community ownership of decisions, and maintenance of *whanaungatanga*. The result would be a model that acknowledges the key differences between the Western institution of meeting and the Māori institution of *hui* and allows them both to be valued and their differences to be appreciated. Such a model, adapted from Volkema and Niederman's (1996) model is shown in Figure 2. It incorporates the key dimensions raised by the Māori spokespersons who provided the data on *hui* that is discussed in this paper while at the same time using the originators' organising framework of inputs and contexts, processes and outcomes so comparisons with Western-style meetings can be made.

**Figure 2. Model for Hui Adapted from Volkema and Niederman's (1996)'s Model.**



## Conclusion

This paper has explored the process of *hui* from the view-point of respected Māori spokespersons and compared it to the way the Western-style of meeting is described (or not) in textbooks that are or have been used in the last decade in New Zealand's university classrooms to see whether anything is gained or lost by not explicitly distinguishing between these two forms of communication. The findings clearly show that much is lost by a failure to specifically address *hui* as a distinctive and complex form of social engagement. The paper does not profess to provide a comprehensive discussion of the form and function of *hui* but we believe it does still show that, while the Western approach to meetings and *hui* can share common features, equating the two forms of communication event is inappropriate and encourages key cultural dimensions of both to be ignored.

The worry is that not one of the textbooks that were examined provides a comprehensive foundation for students to appreciate one of the most important means of Māori social engagement (i.e., the *hui*). We believe a more thorough exploration of the forms, functions, and cultural underpinnings of both *hui* and Western style meetings is required in our tertiary textbooks to ensure our students are adequately prepared for their future roles, which in Aotearoa New Zealand will entail working across Western and Māori settings in an appreciative and informed manner.

Raising this concern while at the same time offering a framework for incorporating a comparison of meeting and *hui* into future university Management and Communication texts is, we believe, this paper's major contribution to the field of communication in Aotearoa New Zealand. Hopefully, the adaptation of Volkema and Niederman's (1996)'s model will prove to be a useful inclusion in those texts that seek to address the cultural context that is uniquely Aotearoa New Zealand.

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## APPENDIX A

**Table 2.**

*Past and Present 100 and 200 Level Management and Communication Textbooks  
Used in New Zealand Universities*

Textbook	Content relating to meetings and <i>hui</i>	Where and at what level used
Bartol, K., Tein, M., Matthews, G., Sharma, B., Ritson, P., & Scott-Ladd, B. (2008). <i>Management foundations: A Pacific rim focus</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sydney: McGraw-Hill	Nothing about NZ culture. Definition provided for indigenous. Nothing about Māori, meetings, <i>hui</i> , <i>pōwhiri</i> , <i>mihi</i> or <i>marae</i> .	UO 100 level
Campling, J., Poole, D., Wiesner, R., & Schermerhorn, J. (2008) <i>Management</i> (3rd Asia-Pacific ed.). Wiley & Sons.	NZ culture briefly mentioned in discussion of Hofstede's cultural value dimensions and in a discussion of the universal applicability of management theories. Nothing on Māori, meetings, <i>hui</i> , <i>pōwhiri</i> , <i>mihi</i> or <i>marae</i> .	UC 100 level
Cheney, G., Christensen, L.T., Zorn, T.E. & Ganesh, S. (2004). <i>Organisational Communication in an age of globalisation</i> . Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc	NZ culture only mentioned in the context of rugby being New Zealand's national sport and a central element of the national culture. Nothing about meetings, Māori, <i>hui</i> , <i>pōwhiri</i> , <i>mihi</i> or <i>marae</i> .	MU 200 level
De Vito, J. A., O'Rourke, S. & O'Neil, L. (1996). <i>Human Communication: New Zealand Edition</i> . Auckland: Pearson Education NZ	NZ cultural values explicitly mentioned (individualistic, low power distance, egalitarian myth etc). Māori communication discussed (use of metaphorical language, use of silence and eye contact). Nothing mentioned about <i>marae</i> management but <i>marae</i> explained. There is no specific mention of <i>hui</i> , <i>pōwhiri</i> , or <i>mihi</i> in the index but <i>mihi</i> is addressed in the text. The only reference to meetings is a self test for 'Apprehensiveness in meetings'.	LU 100 level (until 2000)

<p>Elkin, G., Jackson, B. &amp; Inkson, K. (2004). <i>Organisational behaviour in New Zealand: Theory and practice</i> (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Auckland: Pearson Education NZ</p>	<p>NZ's cultural values explicitly mentioned (individualistic, low power distance, moderate on uncertainty avoidance, above average on masculinity.) Māori are mentioned in the context of their population growing faster than the European population, possessing different cultural concepts/values (<i>mana, koha, aroha, hongi, tangata whenua, manuhiri</i>, collectivist, respect elders, extended family, outwardly acknowledge and respect people in accordance with their position in a hierarchy) and utilising different English syntax. Māori leadership is discussed and Māori learning preferences are outlined. The fact that Māori face discrimination is acknowledged. The process of a <i>hui</i> is briefly explained. The authors do however make the assumption that all <i>hui</i> are held on <i>marae</i>. No specific mention of <i>pōwhiri, mihi</i> or <i>marae</i>.</p>	<p>OU 200 level VUW 200 level</p>
<p>Elkin, G. &amp; Inkson, K. (2000). <i>Organisational behaviour in New Zealand: Theory and practice</i>. Auckland: Pearson Education NZ</p>	<p>Nothing specific about NZ culture. Mentions that the Māori population is growing faster than European, faces discrimination, and larger employers encourage Māori staff to network among themselves. Observes that Māori utilise different English syntax. The process of a <i>hui</i> is briefly explained and several Māori cultural concepts related to this event are mentioned. (i.e., <i>koha, aroha, hongi, tangata whenua, manuhiri</i>). The authors do however make the assumption that all <i>hui</i> are held on <i>marae</i> and Māori job satisfaction is largely based on pay. Māori learning preferences are outlined. No specific mention of <i>pōwhiri, mihi</i> or <i>marae</i>.</p>	<p>UO (previously)</p>

	Meetings are only discussed in the context of principles for effective meetings and how new technology is making virtual or electronic meetings possible that don't require participants to all be physically present in the same geographic location.	
Inkson, K. & Kolb, D. (2000). <i>Management perspectives for New Zealand</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.). Auckland: Addison-Wesley-Longman.	Nothing about NZ culture. Māori acknowledged as first inhabitants. Treaty of Waitangi mentioned as the basis of biculturalism in NZ Meetings mentioned only in the context of virtual meetings. Nothing about <i>hui, pōwhiri, mihi or marae</i> .	UC 100 level (until 2004)
Inkson, K. & Kolb, D. (2002). <i>Management perspectives for New Zealand</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.). Auckland: Addison-Wesley-Longman.	Nothing about NZ culture. Māori discussed as having a different cultural perspective. Māori values or culture not discussed. Meetings not mentioned. Nothing about <i>hui, pōwhiri, mihi or marae</i> .	UA (Previously)
Locker, K. O., & Kaczmarek, (2008). <i>Business communication: Building critical skills</i> (4 <sup>th</sup> ed.). McGraw-Hill.  University of Otago customised version.	Unable to obtain a copy of the custom version but regular version has a chapter (i.e., module) dedicated to planning, preparing and running meetings. No mention of Māori or any Māori traditions but does consider the way culture affects communication in a module on communicating across cultures.	UO 200 level
McShane, S. & Travaglione, T. (2007). <i>Organisational behaviour on the Pacific Rim</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin.	Nothing about NZ culture. Nothing about meetings, indigenous, Māori, <i>hui, pōwhiri, mihi or marae</i> .	AUT 200 level UW 200 level MU 200 level UC 200 level All in OB

<p>Mohan, T., McGregor, H., Saunders, S. &amp; Archie, R.. (2008). <i>Communciating as professionals</i>. South Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia.</p>	<p>NZ cultural values explicitly mentioned (i.e., low power distance, and egalitarianism). Indigenous Australian cultural values briefly mentioned. Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating's apology to Indigenous Australians is included in the text. Maoris [sic] are referred to once when authors discuss qualities of a credible and competent Māori communicator. This involves knowing correct behaviours and procedures for the context and utilising rich and poetic language. Meetings mentioned in the context of the definition of informal meetings, a six step structure for meetings, a four phase model, meeting skills for the three stages of meetings. Agenda and minutes are mentioned and defined by context. The process and advantages of formal meetings are discussed. Nothing about <i>hui, pōwhiri, mihi or marae</i>.</p>	<p>UA 200 level</p>
<p>O'Rourke, S., &amp; Barnett, S. (2008). <i>Communication, organisation and innovation</i> (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). North Shore, NZ: Pearson.</p>	<p>NZ cultural values are not explicitly mentioned. Discussion about how Māori prefer face-to-face communication. Various Māori cultural concepts mentioned but not discussed and not in the reference list. Meeting topics included agendas, technology, ethical guidelines for, goals of, "good" versus "bad", minutes, notice of meeting, norms or rules for, preparation for, process of, projects resulting from, purpose of, roles and responsibilities in and types of meetings.</p>	<p>UO level 100</p>
<p>Page, D., &amp; Zorn, T. (2007). <i>Management Communication: New Zealand and Australian case studies</i>. North Shore, NZ: Pearson.</p>	<p>No index. No case studies about meetings. One case study about a Māori organisation. Kaupapa and tikanga were defined. Nothing about <i>hui, pōwhiri, mihi or marae</i></p>	<p>UA 200 level BUS</p>

<p>Sligo, F. &amp; Bathhurst, R. (2005). <i>Communication in the New Zealand Workplace: Theory and practice</i>. Wellington: Software Technology (NZ) Ltd.</p>	<p>Nothing about NZ culture. Nothing about Indigenous. Māori mentioned in the context of the need to consider bicultural issues and kaupapa Māori research. Meetings content discusses: whether you should meet, the role of a facilitator, planning a meeting, the purpose and format of an agenda, the role and behaviours of a participant, closing the meeting, purpose and process of minutes, and brainstorming. Nothing specific about <i>hui</i>, <i>pōwhiri</i>, <i>mihi</i> or <i>marae</i>.</p>	<p>MU200 level</p>
<p>Varner, I. &amp; Beamer, L. (2005). <i>Intercultural communication in the workplace</i> (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill Irwin.</p>	<p>NZ cultural values mentioned (equalitarian, flexible, horizontal society). Māori acknowledged as first people and authors state Māori enjoy higher status in NZ than pre-conquest cultures in the Americas. State that NZ law pays respect to Māori law. Mention hongi and karanga in the context of Māori business meetings. Nothing specific about meetings, <i>hui</i>, <i>pōwhiri</i>, <i>mihi</i> or <i>marae</i>.</p>	<p>UA 100 level UO 200 level</p>

Key: AUT Auckland University of Technology; LU Lincoln University; MU Massey University; UA University of Auckland; UC University of Canterbury; UO University of Otago; UW University of Waikato; VUW Victoria University of Wellington.