The power and peril of pathos
THE POWER AND PERIL OF PATHOS: AN ANALYSIS OF RHETORIC IN THE NEW ZEALAND RACE RELATIONS COMMISSIONERS’ SPEECH TO MARK THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Su Olsson and Marianne Tremaine
Massey University

Introduction

New Zealand race relations seem to be a topic doomed to provoke strong emotions and divisive debate. On 4 December 2002 New Zealand Race Relations Commissioner, Joris de Bres, presented a speech at the dawn ceremony to mark the United Nations’ day of Cultural Heritage. In the speech he juxtaposed the Taliban’s destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas with the impact of colonialism on Maori culture and values. In a subsequent press release UNESCO NZ Chair, the Hon Margaret Austin made it clear that when briefing de Bres, “UNESCO told him that the United Nations proclamation of 2002 as the Year of Cultural Heritage followed on from a resolution adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference last year [2001] in response to the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan” (Defending Joris de Bres, *Press Release UNESCO*, Monday 9 December 2002). Seized upon by the media, who either ignored or were unaware of the UNESCO resolution, de Bres’ apparent analogy generated public outrage and political calls for his resignation.

This paper examines the use of pathos or emotional appeals in the rhetoric of the race relations debate surrounding de Bres’ cultural heritage speech. Most immediately, we analyse the speech to show how it takes the form of a secular sermon which delivers a ‘moral lesson’ through ‘texts’ or stories of oppression that scapegoat the oppressors. We argue that these texts serve as emotional appeals to elicit catharsis or purification and so persuade an
audience to identify with and adopt the lesson of cultural respect and tolerance. We then examine the ensuing responses to pathos in de Bres’ speech. In particular, we suggest how the political and media responses contribute to controversy and represent an emotional backlash that involves an almost complete by-passing of the message through a ‘scapegoating’ of the messenger.

An approach to rhetoric: Theory and methodology

Hart (1997) defines rhetoric as “the art of using language to help people to narrow their choices among specifiable, if not specified, policy options” (p.2). InBurkean terms, “Rhetoric is concerned with persuasion and identification” (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2002, p.191). The rhetor constructs subjective truths that he/she attempts to persuade an audience to identify with (through either association or disassociation) so that these ‘truths’ appear to be “a natural extension of thoughts and feelings the listener already possesses” (Hart, 1997, p.16). Cherwitz (1995) suggests that rhetoric deals with “intersubjective certainty” by “evoking truth” through “persuasion” to achieve “adherence (intersubjective validation)” (p.456). These definitions point to the way rhetoric is both a social art and a social transaction reliant for its ‘truth’ on the judgement of a majority, however slim, as test of “demonstratedness” (Hart, 1997, p.9). Thus, Covino and Jollife (1995) point out that rhetoric is “located in the realm of uncertainty and probable truth, in which conclusions are arguable rather than incontrovertible” (p.8). In this sense, rhetoric is the material of debate.

In this paper our concern is with the rhetoric of the race relations debate initiated by de Bres’ speech, rather than with an assessment of the arguments. We view rhetoric as a process, which employs specific verbal strategies in an attempt to achieve persuasion and identification. More specifically, we draw on Aristotle’s three tenets of ethos, logos and pathos, not in a return to classical rhetoric, but rather as theoretical categories for the verbal strategies which make up the persuasive appeals of a text. Ethos refers to the credibility of the source; it includes allusions to elements such
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as status, image and expertise, which attempt to persuade an audience of the rhetor’s trustworthiness, practical wisdom or common sense, and good will. Logos constitutes the appeal to patterns of reasoning, which an audience may find convincing. Pathos refers to the emotional appeals of a text, which seek to activate the sympathies and emotions of an audience (Makay, 1995). In practice, Aristotle’s *pisteis* or appeals are interdependent, they “interact and intersect” to reinforce the persuasive power of the rhetoric:

Just as *ethos* moves an audience by activating their faith in the credibility of the rhetor and *pathos* stimulates their feelings and seeks a change in their attitudes and actions, so *logos*, accompanied by the other two appeals, mobilizes the powers of reasoning. (Covino and Joliffe, 1995, p.17)

For the purposes of analysis, we treat ethos, logos and pathos as a theoretical framework for examining the strategies of persuasion.

At the same time, our particular focus is on de Bres’ use of pathos. Pathos consists of the emotional appeals to people’s feelings and values and often harnesses “the force of narration as contributing value justification for human action”, rather than “logical fitness” (Stutts and Barker, 1999, p.214). Emotional appeals are also to be discerned in the non-literal language of the text, the patterns of imagery, particularly the dominant metaphors of the discourse. In theatrical dramas appeals to pathos can result in catharsis, “the purging or purification of emotions through the evocation of pity and fear, as in tragedy” (NCCED, 1982, p.175). Similarly, in the sermon form, narration and imagery contribute to a dramatic scenario or opposition of good and evil, in which catharsis or purification are often arrived at through the device of the scapegoat who takes on the collective guilt for the ‘evil’: “Rhetoric has reduced evil to a scapegoat, a person, group or idea treated as the incarnation of evil” (Hart, 1997, p.270). Thus, an effective use of pathos that includes scapegoating assists the adoption of the message or ‘lesson’ of the sermon. Equally, however, the use of pathos may over-ride the desired catharsis or purification to produce an emotional backlash that is turned on either the speaker or the message.
The Study data
A copy of de Bres’ cultural heritage speech was supplied by de Bres himself. He also supplied the researchers with a complete dossier of the Human Rights Commission’s press monitoring of all news reports and articles to do with de Bres or his speech from the date of the speech on 4 December 2002 up until 8 May 2003, a total of 88 newsprint items. The bulk of these items occurred in the month of the speech (59), but a further flurry appeared in March of the next year following National MP, Murray McCully’s lodging of a case against de Bres with the Human Rights Commission, the dismissal of the complaint, and McCully’s subsequent plans to go to the High Court to seek a declaratory judgement (29 items). In addition, the researchers were supplied with all party political press releases in response to de Bres’ speech, a copy of questions in the house where de Bres’ conduct was raised, letters to the editor, transcripts of relevant radio and on-line commentaries on the speech, and phone calls, letters and email sent by the public about the speech to the Human Rights Commission. The compiler of this dossier included the following note about the responses from the general public that were sent to the Human Rights Commission:

Verbal and written comments in the first 3-5 days after the speech were predominantly negative.... By comparison, comments received in the 5-10 days were predominantly positive, submitted in writing via email.

[In this respect, it is also noted that the full text of de Bres’ speech was published by The Otago Daily Times 6-12-02, p. 17.]

A secular sermon - Joris de Bres, Blowing Up the Bamiyan Buddhas: It Makes You Think

De Bres’ title prefigures the form of his speech as a secular sermon. Most immediately, the destruction of cultural icons is highlighted. The use of the present participle “blowing up” hints at ongoing acts of destruction. The specific image of the Buddhas points to the spiritual dimension of these
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icons to reinforce sacrilegious overtones. And the subtitle, again using the present tense, suggests a moral lesson.

At the outset de Bres announces the gathering to mark a global day of observance:

We are here in Wellington at the dawn of the International Day of Cultural Heritage.

The use of the first person plural pronoun is an appeal to similitude which draws speaker and audience together as a congregation united in purpose. The word “dawn” evokes the New Zealand `sacred’ dawn ceremonies held annually to mark ANZAC day. New Zealand was also the first country to see the dawn of the new millennium and de Bres plays upon this past source of national pride to position New Zealand as now leading the way in a global movement:

We are the first in the world to celebrate it, but will be followed by people throughout the world in the next 24 hours.

Both credibility and the promise of transcendence are appealed to in the image of the day as “the culmination of the United Nations Year of Cultural Heritage”.

De Bres introduces the text or ‘reading’ for the day with an appeal to the credibility of his sources or authorities:

It is timely to recall why UNESCO and the United Nations decided to focus this year on cultural heritage.

He then commences the reading, which contains the dominant metaphor and appeal to pathos while subtly distancing the act through the use of past tense for the first time in his speech:

It was in response to the cultural vandalism that led to the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. This was an appalling example of people of one culture wielding their power to destroy a site that was special to people of another. The world was outraged. (Our italics).
The central dramatic scenario of the rhetoric is thus set up as a conflict between the forces of evil the forces of good. The appeal to pathos in the image of cultural vandalism is extended by the use of “appalling example” and the physicality of the verb “wielding” which suggests the abuse of power involved in the destruction of a site sacred to a subordinated group. Thus the rhetoric constitutes an archetypal image of the oppression of one people by another that points to a spiritual and emotional, as well as a physical, abuse of power. The strength of this appeal to pathos intersects with appeals both to credibility and to logos in the claiming of the global, hence majority, reaction to the specific act of destruction, “The world was outraged”. The example together with the reaction constitutes a recreation of catharsis, “the purging the purging or purification of the emotions through the evocation of pity and fear” (NCCED, 1982, p.175).

As in the traditional sermon, de Bres then initiates the transition from the ‘reading’ or scripture for the day, to the ‘lesson’ to be drawn from that reading. Most immediately, the use of similitude and the present tense draws speaker and listeners together in a moral congregation, “While we rightfully shake our heads in incomprehension and condemnation...” And as so often in the sermon form, the example of the reading forms a basis for the examination of the congregation’s own possible transgressions, “The destruction of the Buddhas challenges us to think of our own country and to examine our own record.” The use of the verb “challenges” hints at a possible transcendence or moral betterment from engaging in this collective consideration of the lesson.

The major claim of the lesson reverts to past tense to distance the transgressions of the past, while at the same time turning the pathos of the reading upon the congregation:

The colonisation of New Zealand was a sorry litany of cultural vandalism.
The word litany draws on Christian ritual and is defined as “a form of prayer consisting of a series of invocations, each followed by an unvarying response” (The New Collins Concise English Dictionary, 1982, p. 657). The image of “a sorry litany” continues the moral condemnation of oppression from the reading while suggesting a continued and almost habitual process of “cultural vandalism”, the deliberate destruction of the culture of one people by people of another culture, as in the Taliban reading. Thus emotional impact of the reading is repeated in the rhetoric that depicts the colonisation of New Zealand. And as with the Taliban example, the warrant underlying the claim is that cultural oppression is to be condemned.

The appeal to logos of the warrant is backed up by the data of history. At the same time, the line up of significant symbols continues the appeal to pathos by representing the conflict at the centre of the historical scenario as an abuse of human rights:

Governments egged on by land-hungry settlers rode roughshod over Maori cultural relationships with their environment, threw some of their most visionary and peaceful leaders and elders into goal without trial, belittled their culture and actively discouraged the use of their language.

“Governments” in collusion with “land-hungry settlers” constitute a scapegoat for the collective guilt attaching to wrongs of the past. Thus, by drawing on New Zealand’s historical record, de Bres allows his listeners the opportunity to distance themselves from the claim, while purging themselves through condemnation of the past or ‘the sins of the fathers’. As in the Taliban example, the process seeks catharsis.

The bridge from the wrongs of the past to the race relations debate of contemporary New Zealand is initiated by appeals to ethos and logos based on jurisprudence which aligns the Treaty of Waitangi with the contemporary Resource Management Act:

The Treaty was arguably the first legal agreement on natural and cultural heritage in New Zealand. It was the precursor of the Resource Management Act.
A brief account of how the Treaty was largely ignored or dismissed up until its enactment in legislation in 1975 and the New Zealand Maori Council landmark case in 1987 when “the Treaty finally began to assume its proper place in modern jurisprudence” forms the context for a more muted image of the dramatic conflict as debate. De Bres moves to first person plural present tense to position himself as part of his congregation involved in a secular moral question of rights:

We are still struggling to come to terms with this new and unfamiliar state of affairs. In the past fifteen years we have seen an affirmation of the Treaty in an increasing number of statutes, and calls either for greater statutory definition of the “principles of the Treaty” or for an end to any further statutory recognition.

In this contemporary context of debate the target of De Bres’ condemnation is some of the public and media commentators.

When you combine the Treaty and the RMA [Resource Management Act] you have a powerful cocktail that can almost instantly reduce some public commentators to severe monocultural apoplexy. While the unease of landowners is understandable in this new legal environment, the extreme response from some such commentators is regrettable.

The main message of the lesson goes back to the question of cultural heritage. De Bres appeals to the ethos of his world sources to argue that, even if the Treaty did not have contemporary as well as historical significance, the moral majority acknowledges the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage:

What the world is saying through UNESCO and the United Nations is the cultural heritage, like natural heritage, is in need of protection and nourishment.

Citing both New Zealand’s and the French Prime Minister in a play upon triple bottom line reporting of business social responsibility, De Bres joins his congregation in an injunction to action:

We need to turn our attention as a global community to adding a fourth pillar, the cultural, alongside the environmental, the economic and the social pillars of sustainability. We need a quadruple bottom line.
The claim of the lesson is not of cultural vandalism, but rather of the dismissal of the need for this fourth cultural pillar of sustainability:

When it comes to the Treaty or respect for Maori culture, people complain of Treaty fatigue or accuse Maori of holding the country or private landowners to ransom.

The data to support the claim are three examples of Maori cultural concerns to do with taniwha, the removal of sand from the Coromandel, the registration of a wahi tapu area. De Bres suggests the conflict surrounding these concerns has been magnified by public commentators: “All these have been greeted with political and media outrage”.

Underlying the claim and example is the warrant, which de Bres presents as a personal statement of faith. While he acknowledges that taniwha and wahi tapu are not part of his own belief system, his credo is respect and tolerance for other cultures: “What I do believe in is respect for cultures other than my own”. Similitude is used to draw his audience into this credo:

If there is a conflict between cultures or beliefs then we should not throw up our hands in horror or mockery, but look for solutions and compromises. That is what Transit New Zealand is doing, very much to their credit over the taniwha.

By contrast public commentators are depicted as lacking in the patience or professionalism to investigate Maori concerns. As in the reading that initiated the sermon, an appeal to pathos is mounted through the specific example of public broadcaster, Paul Holmes’ coverage of the wahi tapu area on Kopukairo Maunga:

If Paul Holmes had looked at the facts he had been given of the Maori Council’s registration of the wahi tapu area on Kopukairoa Maunga, he wouldn’t have started with the statement, “Wait till you hear this. Be prepared to go ballistic.” I wonder how Maori viewers felt when they heard that? Or how Maori children react when what they learn from their parents is derided publicly in this way?

The legislation has enshrined the principles of the Treaty, now all that is required is that people talk and listen to each other.
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The warning of the lesson is that New Zealanders ignore or continue to destroy Maori culture at their peril:

If we continue to destroy it, we destroy the ability of people to live successful lives and to transmit recipes for successful living to their children. We then end up with alienation and failure. We cannot afford this in our social environment, any more than we can afford to neglect our physical environment.

Against this threat of failure is the message of Cultural Heritage day, the promise of transcendence is “to recognise that the protection of Maori cultural heritage and the implementation of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are the new frontier”.

The end of the secular sermon circles back to the beginning with a series of invocations to better action that once more unites speaker and audience in a new litany of inclinations to succeed:

Let us remember to listen before we leap ... Let us practise cultural protection and nourishment, not cultural vandalism. Let us celebrate bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism in New Zealand... Let that be the lesson of the Taliban’s wanton destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas which prompted this establishment of this international day of cultural heritage, te ra whakanui i nga taonga tuku iho.

In summation, the central ideal of de Bres’ ‘sermon’ is cultural respect and the central theme is the preservation of cultural heritage through “real tolerance” that “requires us to respect and engage with people different beliefs ... and who have the right to live their own culture”. The credibility of this ideal is presented as a global movement, and the appeal to logos is based on the warrant that the oppression of one people by another is an infringement of human rights.

In the manner of the traditional sermon, the appeal to pathos is presented through the ‘texts’ or stories which illustrate oppression: the destruction of the Buddhas, examples of oppression of Maori in the colonisation of New Zealand, the current lack of respect for Maori cultural issues. Again in the
manner of the sermon, these texts operate to posit an opposition of good and bad in which catharsis and hence purification is achievable through the device of the scapegoat who takes on the collective guilt for the ‘evil’. In de Bres’ sermon the ‘scapegoats’ are the Taliban, Governments egged on by land-hungry settlers, and “some public commentators”. Hart points out, “while rhetoric often scapegoats others ... it can also scapegoat the self....In either case, rhetoric cleanses the soul of sin and provides new ‘attitudes’ for use in daily decision making” (1997, p..271). The dominant metaphor of the first two ‘texts’ or stories of “cultural vandalism” is distanced for current listeners by geography and history, which further enable the scapegoating. The lesser charge of lack of tolerance or respect for Maori cultural issues is more easily cleansed through the scapegoat of “some public commentators” and through the self that can accept the charge and be persuaded through the rhetoric of the sermon to achieve transcendence by adopting attitudes of increased tolerance in their daily decision-making. These desired results are premised on the effectiveness of the rhetoric to persuade and to create identification with the speaker’s message.

**The rhetoric of public responses to de Bres’ speech**

The public outcry occasioned by de Bres’ speech revolved around the metaphor of “cultural vandalism”. Released to the media the previous day, the first newspaper reports of de Bres’ speech fused the two texts to suggest an explicit analogy between the actions of the Taliban and the actions of some colonial settlers rather than to depict two different forms of cultural oppression. The headers of the two leading national newspapers on the morning of the speech read as follows:

Colonial Kiwis likened to Taliban (Groser, C., *The Dominion Post*, (4/12/02)

and

Pakeha settlers ‘like Taliban’ (*The New Zealand Herald*, 4/12/02).

This analogy ignored the fact that the Buddha’s ‘text’ was taken directly from the UNESCO resolve for forming the day of cultural heritage, while the colonial ‘text’ was de Bres’ representation of the behaviours of some New
Zealand settlers. Thus the emotional appeals of both texts resulted not in identification with the oppressed and a purification of guilt leading to increased tolerance and acceptance of the ideal of cultural respect. Instead, de Bres’ illustrative stories produced an emotional backlash that involved an almost complete bypassing of the message through ‘scapegoating’ the messenger.

The rhetoric of the political responses
The political scapegoating of de Bres attacked his credibility and questioned the need for a race relations conciliator. The first press release on the morning of the speech was a call from the then National Party leader, Bill English, for de Bres to be sacked:

To compare New Zealand’s colonial history with that of the Taliban in Afghanistan is an insult and shows that he [de Bres] is not fit to hold the job. (Race relations commissioner should resign, National Party Press Release, 4 December, 2002, 10:55am)

Using similitude to align his stance with “all fair thinking New Zealanders, English went on to call for de Bres to “either apologise or resign” (Ibid).

The New Zealand First Party’s response followed almost immediately and employed similar tactics of attacking de Bres’ credibility and through him the government. Describing de Bres’ speech as “an absolute outrage”, Winston Peters claimed de Bres was a government puppet who was “preparing New Zealanders for a flood of racially based legislation”. Peters suggested that Maori did not need an advocate like de Bres who was inciting racial tensions by returning to historical “accusations” against European settlers:

“The last thing Maori need is a hand wringing, guilt ridden, sickly white liberal as their self-appointed flag carrier” said Mr Peters. (Conciliator not fit for the job, NZ First Press Release, 4 December, 10:58am)

While all three centre right parties predictably sought to attack the Government through denigrating the conciliator, ACT Party leader, Richard Prebble, used satire rather than outrage to discredit De Bres as a figure of
fun. Pointing to De Bres’ postgraduate degree at the University of East Berlin on the writing of Marx, Engels and Lenin, Prebble comments:

I was expecting his [de Bres’] first speech to be explaining how Maori had been victims of some imperialist class war. To liken the settlers to the Taliban shows an imagination which I don’t think any of us expected. (Prebble supports Commissioner, ACT Party Press Release, 4 December, 2.12pm)

Prebble also took the opportunity for a satiric jibe at the other political parties:

The only thing funnier than Mr de Bres is the politicians who are taking his pronouncements seriously, Mr Prebble said. (Ibid)

Speaking for Prime Minister Helen Clarke in her absence, deputy Michael Cullen delivered a mild rebuke which, for the first time, suggested the problem was with context:

To place those comments of that history [NZ colonisation] in the context of the recent experience of the Taliban in Afghanistan seems to the Prime Minister to be unnecessarily provocative to many New Zealanders, Dr Cullen said. (McNicholas, Taliban comments earn government rebuke, 4 December, 2002, 15:50pm)

The only political party to come out in support of de Bres was the Greens. They argued that the only way forward to conciliation as a nation was through “a willingness to address the wounds of the past”. In expressing their support they also pointed to the rhetoric of abuse that de Bres was being subjected to:

“This week, Joris de Bres made a thoughtful and timely contribution to the debate over race relations in this country,” said Meteria Turei. “It is sad that instead of sparking the debate that he was urging, he has had to suffer ill-informed and personal abuse at the hands of a redneck minority.” Green Party Press Release, Racists in Denial Over Colonial Past, 15:04, 5/12/2002.

Neither the Greens’ nor the UNESCO NZ press releases in support of de Bres were picked up by the press. Instead, the press preferred to quote the confrontational political statements of outrage at de Bres and the government. While many such statements were aimed at embarrassing the
government and its policies, including its creation of the position of a race relations conciliator and the not always fortunate previous appointments, the rhetoric of personal attack constituted a form of scapegoating de Bres as a messenger both of the government and of unpalatable truths. The major theme of tolerance at the centre of de Bres speech was ignored in favour of the rhetoric of political point-scoring.

**Newsprint coverage and public responses**

McGregor (1992) points out that the values of “newsworthiness” include “immediacy” “status” and “personalisation”; personalisation is about personalities and is linked “with the commercial rationale of the media and entertainment” (p.186). Even without the so-called ‘Taliban analogy’, the charge of cultural vandalism levelled at the early settlers by a leading public figure such as the Race Relations Conciliator together with the ensuing political point-scoring combined personalities and controversy. As the late Michael King stated, “Joris let off a bomb and people have come back throwing grenades” (Watkins, K., Historians clash over speech, *The New Zealand Herald*, 7/12/2002). The situation had the prime elements of ‘newsworthiness’ and all the press had to do was to sit back and report other people’s engagement in the rhetoric of confrontation.

At the same time, we suggest that the news media contributed to and fuelled divisiveness in a number of ways.

**Newsprint headers**

Most immediately, the newsprint coverage fuelled the controversy through the framing of their editorials and news stories. Our sample consisted of 80 stories. Of these 80 stories the headers of 55 image some aspect of ongoing conflict, 13 are neutral with headers such as “Race Relations” (*Otago Daily Times*, 18/12/2002) and “Shouldering Responsibility” (*The Dominion Post*, 12/12/2002), and one indicates a need to support de Bres, “De Bres deserves support” (*Otago Daily Times*, 16/12/2002). In addition to the two headers quoted previously (4 December), a selection of further headers
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from the period suggests how the framing of the bulk of editorials and stories either keeps alive the ‘Taliban analogy’ or contributes to the scapegoating of de Bres by undermining his credibility. We have arranged these headlines in groups according to dates:

- 5 December, 2002
  Unfortunate absurdity
  -The Press
  Watchdog stands by Taliban comments
  -The Dominion Post
  Talkback airways run hot over speech
  -The New Zealand Herald

- 6 December, 2002
  Controversial Speech
  -Otago Daily Times

- 7 December, 2002
  De Bres breaches Human Rights Act
  -Nelson Mail
  Speech ‘insulting and abusive’ McCully’s complaint
  -Otago Daily Times
  No place for loose cannons
  -The NZ Herald

- 8 December, 2002
  Comments divide us all
  -Sunday News
  Safe hands look slippery now
  -Sunday Star Times

- 9 December, 2002
  Open mind, empty head
  -The NZ Herald

- 11 December, 2002
  ‘Pakeha as Taliban justifies a new form of oppression
  -The Independent

- 13 December, 2002
  Just watch it Santa Claus, they can’t wait to do you
  -The NZ Herald

- 15 December, 2002
  Race relations man must resign
  -Sunday Star Times
  ‘Taliban’ speech row simmers
  -The Dominion Post
In effect, then, the bulk of the headers reinforced a sense of ongoing conflict and division. There is little indication from any of the headlines of an attempt to address the current questions de Bres had raised about tolerance and respect for cultural heritage concerns.

**News stories and commentary**

The range of news stories and commentary is wide-ranging and, as the headlines already suggest, they largely reflect a rejection of the appeals to pathos de Bres had mounted through the examples of the oppression of one people by another. Significantly perhaps, no mention is made of de Bres' charges against some current media commentators and their treatment of Maori cultural issues.

At the same time, some recurrent types of stories emerged. The first group consists of stories that reported politician’s reactions form Michael Cullen’s censure of de Bres (Cullen raps de Bres on Taliban, *The Dominion Post*, 5/12/02) to Murray McCully’s complaint to the Human Rights Commission (McCully continues fight against commissioner, *The Daily Post Rotorua*, 13/3/03). A second group of stories seek out conflicting views from ‘experts’ and from the general public and these stories reflect a division along racial lines. A third group purport to be social or political commentary, and include humorous pieces such as Michael Law’s, “Joris joins games as calls come in for his head” (*Sunday Star Times*, 8/12/02). We have selected some brief examples from these three groups to indicate some of the ways in which the press coverage contributed to the controversy.
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Our first example is from the reporting of political responses and as with many other such stories, Winston Peters features prominently. Writing in *The Herald* the day after the speech, Katherine Hoby provides a potted history of de Bres, which covers his migration to New Zealand with his parents and six brothers and sisters, his father’s position as a minister of the Presbyterian Maori Synod, his participation in Human Rights activities while at Auckland University, and his post-graduate study in East Germany. Whether intentionally or not, these details position de Bres as an activist and an outsider or foreigner, and set the context for the reporting of Winston Peter’s more inflammatory rhetoric:

“He [de Bres] has the breathtaking audacity to describe part of my heritage as akin to the actions of iconoclastic thugs who staged public executions, mutilations and harboured terrorists,” said Mr Peters.

“We are not going to have the new version of the white man’s burden foisted on the Maori people of this country.” (Hoby, K. De Bres not afraid of controversy, *The NZ Herald*, 5/12/02).

The same issue of *The Herald* contains an example of our second group of stories, which initiate accounts of a racial division of views arrived at from seeking the views of academics: The first paragraphs of the story set it up as a debate over the Taliban analogy of “cultural vandalism”. The story then presents the views of two pakeha historians. University of Auckland lecturer in history is quoted first. Somewhat ironically in terms of his own use of rhetoric, Dr Laracy states:

“What we’ve got here is the folly of cheap rhetoric...it discredits whatever case Mr de Bres is meant to be spouting...His comments are appalling glib and misleading. (Perrot, A., Cheap rhetoric or brave words, *The NZ Herald*, 5/12/02)

The second historian quoted makes some attempt to address the issue rather than the person but is equally dismissive:

Emeritus Professor Russell Stone said Mr de Bres’ comments support “an old fashioned, highly political” idea of an idyllic Maori past which perpetuated the view of Maori “martyrdom and victim hood”.
“Colonisation was inevitable and as carried out by the British was as benign as any, even if that’s not saying much. But Maori did not always resist and in some places embraced it.” (Ibid)

The view put forward by Maori academic, Dr Margaret Mutu, presents a diametrically opposite view without engaging in the rhetoric of denigration or dismissal to state her agreement with de Bres:

He’s [de Bres’] picked up on a metaphor that is current and grabs the headlines, but frankly, the pain Maoridom had endured is probably not too dissimilar. We have literally watched our ancestors being destroyed. (Ibid).

A story that is said to reflect public opinion is of interest because it provides direct quotes from people in the street and on talkback radio which also reflect some of the themes taken in published letters to the editor. In these comments there is a rejection of an assumed guilt:

“Fifty years ago, many Maori moved from their country towns to the cities because they wanted the better life style of Europeans, so I don’t think it’s fair to say we destroyed their culture,” said one elderly man. (Perrot, A. & Harris, N., Talk back airwaves run hot over speech, The NZ Herald, 5/12/20).

Similarly, the “treaty fatigue” mentioned by de Bres in his speech is demonstrated by one woman respondent:

“I’m fed up with the Treaty of Waitangi. We’re all living together so why favour one side. Anyhow we wouldn’t have got this far without the English.” (Ibid)

The talk back radio direct quote selected was a threat from one caller:

“If this is what we’ve got to come from that man I suggest he might want to check his house insurance.” (Ibid)

What is interesting about this story is that only 7 lines out of a total of 35 lines are given to Maori responses and no Maori responses are quoted directly. Instead it is stated that “several Maori callers voiced support for Mr de Bres’ comments” and the following indirect quotation is supplied:

Pare Keiha, dean of the Faculty of Maori Development at Auckland University of Technology said the commissioner had been at pains to
make clear he was referring to cultural destruction which was not an unreasonable point.

The story makes no comment on this point.

The third group of stories represent social and political commentary. One of the implications of de Bres speech advanced in an otherwise unreported press release by opposition National Party leader, Bill English, was that “the Taliban outburst by Labour’s man in the Race Relations Commissioner’s job” was breaking down trust, and an example of the way “Labour’s Treaty Mullahs” are moving towards a separatist agenda, which in terms of the Local Government Bill allows separate representation for Maori and special consultation for Maori (NZ National Party, Labour’s Treaty Mullahs Creating Mistrust, Press Release, 9 December, 2002, 2.49pm). The dictionary defines mullah as “a Muslim scholar, teacher, or religious leader: also used as a title of respect” (Gordon, I.A., 1982, The New Collins English Dictionary, p. 740). The racist overtones of English’s disrespectful use of Mullah evoked no mention from the press, in contrast to de Bres’ ‘analogy’. However, a number of stories did pick up on the public fear of a ‘separatist agenda’ and different ‘rights’ for Maori and Pakeha. Typical of this reaction is a story that claimed “the public outrage in the pages of this newspaper” revealed “the abyss between public opinion and the government-funded cultural industry” (The Otago Daily Times, Time to push for one standard of citizenship, 9/12/2002). Perhaps even more disturbing, because it presents as informed political commentary, is Chris Trotter’s article in The Independent, 11/12/2002. Trotter explains at some length that the government is engaging in a form of social engineering:

Instead of the “customs, manners, residential living patterns, folkways, even laws of the Pakeha imposing their impressive structural influences upon the Maori, it is the cultural heritage that now impresses itself upon the Pakeha. (Trotter, C., ‘Pakeha as Taliban’ justifies new form of oppression, The Independent, 11/12.2002)

Trotter answers what he sees as de Bres charges against Pakeha by pointing to Maori extermination of the moa and deforestation by fire of South Island
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hill country. His statements are confrontational and foster racial division as the following excerpt illustrates:

One feels like asking the Race Relations Commissioner whether the cultural “vandalism” of the Pakeha should be considered more or less acceptable than the genocide of the Moriori of the Chatham Islands, or the wholesale slaughter and enslavement visited upon Maori, by Maori, during the Musket Wars. (Ibid).

Of course, not all commentaries were divisive and some recognised the distorted political and public reactions to de Bres’ speech. For example, Anne Else in her column, Letter from Elsewhere (11/12/02) carries out a careful discussion of the factors surrounding the implicit ‘Taliban’ parallel and Chris Laidlaw comments on the “politics of race” in New Zealand (Joris stirs up fear and loathing, Malborough Express, 8/5/03).

Conclusion

Rhetorical analysis of de Bres’ speech and of the immediate political and media responses to the speech provide a critical lens on both the political opportunism and the public sensitivities that surround the race relations debate in New Zealand. In examining the persuasive strategies of the rhetoric our particular focus has been on the emotional appeals of the text and reactions to these appeals.

Most immediately, our analysis suggests de Bres’ use of the form and rhetorical conventions of the sermon were largely unrecognised and failed to persuade listeners to adopt his message of respect for a culture other than one’s own. Specifically, de Bres’ use of pathos in stories of the oppression of one people by another did not lead to catharsis. Thus, even though the rhetoric constructed scapegoats for any collective, audience self-guilt, there is little evidence to support Hart’s claim that such rhetoric “cleans the soul of sin and provides new ‘attitudes’ for daily decision-making” (1997, p. 271). Instead, responses to the speech revolved around the metaphor of ‘cultural vandalism’. Ironically, taken out of context and used to conflate Taliban and Pakeha actions, the metaphor produced a strong emotional response that resulted in responders distancing from any
collective guilt through a positioning of themselves as the wrongfully or unjustly accused. Their outrage at this apparent accusation constituted an emotional backlash which included the scapegoating of the messenger.

To a considerable extent this emotional backlash was fed by political and newsprint responses. The initial press framing representing pakeha as ‘like Taliban’ was complemented by the political opportunism of the three centre right parties, National, NZ First and ACT who, in different ways, used the ‘Taliban analogy’ to attack de Bres’ credibility and so score points against the Government’s appointment of de Bres as Race Relations Commissioner.

Similarly, the newsprint’s commercial concern for ‘newsworthiness’ of the ‘Taliban analogy’ contributed to public controversy and divisiveness through the headers which framed their coverage and through the three main story groups they ran. The first group seized on negative political reactions, while neglecting the political and UNESCO press releases in support of de Bres. The second group purported to reflect expert and public opinion, while promoting a division along racial lines that tended to give greater coverage to Pakeha than to Maori views. Finally, a group of social or political commentary stories picked up on politically initiated public fears of a ‘separatist agenda’ and different ‘rights’ for Maori and Pakeha. Such stories far outnumbered the more considered discussions by commentators such as Anne Else and Chris Laidlaw, and contributed to the scapegoating of Joris de Bres.

Thus, our analysis suggests the power and the peril of pathos as a persuasive strategy in areas of public sensitivity such as race relations. Paradoxically, the power of pathos is revealed in the strength and extent of the reaction to de Bres’ speech; the peril of pathos is shown by the way the appeals of the speech resulted in an emotional backlash that lead to a dissipation of the message of cultural tolerance and a scapegoating of the messenger.
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Future research is called for to further examine the double-edged possibilities of appeals to pathos, especially in debates that involve areas of political, social, and cultural sensitivity.
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¹ All newspaper articles listed in these references were supplied to the researchers in the form of the Human Rights Commission Press Monitoring of all newsprint items to do with de Bres or his speech from 4 December 2002 to 8 May 2003, page numbers unknown.
² A copy of Joris de Bres’ speech was supplied to the researchers by the Human Rights Commission. The full text of the speech can also be found at [http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/PO0212/S00094.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/PO0212/S00094.htm)
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Marianne Tremaine
Department of Communication and Journalism, College of Business, Massey University, Private Bag 11-222, Palmerston North, New Zealand. Email: M.G.Tremaine@massey.ac.nz
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Language and identity in the Māori community: Without the reo, who am i?

Arapera Ngaha
University of Auckland

Introduction
The ways in which people identify themselves individually and collectively are influenced by engagement in a number of social milieu as well as the political, economic and traditional spheres within which we are located (C. Bell, 2001; Jenkins, 1996). In the traditional sphere, particular social institutions and social structures have shaped our ways of viewing ourselves and others. But in contemporary Māori society, many of the traditional Māori social institutions and structures are no longer active or, they have adapted in recognition of and to accommodate a changing socio-political context (Walker, 1990). Te reo Māori as the medium of communication and carrier of cultural knowledge has traditionally held pride of place in maintaining our cultural identity. However, the diminished use of Te reo appears to have weakened the link between language and identity which I contend is contributing to changes in the way that we also view ourselves as Māori.

To begin, I explore the role of te reo in expressions of Māori identity. Secondly this work provides a brief oversight of research undertaken on Māori language use and considers the data obtained from Census 2001 that addresses Māori identity, Māori ethnicity and Māori language use. Thirdly, I use the data gathered from a small survey of a number of Māori people on their views about Māori identity to contrast these with traditional views. This survey asks respondents to rank, in order of importance and from their own viewpoint, a prescribed set of indicators of identity. These findings are then discussed exploring the perceived changes in the ways that we view our identity today.