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Māori in partnership: a peer mentoring model for tertiary indigenous staff in New Zealand

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Abstract: This article presents a professional development programme which brought an indigenous minority group of tertiary staff together. We describe a peer-mentoring model, piloted in 2009 at the University of Auckland, New Zealand with university staff in order to promote staff advancement. The participants were all Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. The strengths of the model were: it gave Māori staff a rare opportunity to work with other Māori in a context where their culture was the norm with regards to language, spirituality, humour, and whakawhanaungatanga (togetherness); it mediated the effects of isolation that Māori staff often feel when working in large institutions; and, provided affirmation of Māori in a large institutional environment. This case study suggests that the model of staff development would be applicable to other indigenous minority groups, by adopting a similar approach and adapting the model to the specific cultural practices of the group.

Keywords: indigenous people; peer mentoring; indigenous people; Māori university staff; professional development

Introduction

It is a real privilege to be a Māori working with other Māori ... the benefits you get are that your culture is affirmed .... you’re politically in touch with what’s happening in the Māori world because you can discuss things with other Māori, understand those things .... iwi politics or why your family is falling apart because there is a dispute over some land ... it’s that sort of thing and so yeah it’s a privilege. (Māori academic)

It was a good opportunity to get to know someone better and she turned out to be a good mate. To know that we’re both Māori we’re already connected, end of story. There are things, they’re called tikanga, they’re our protocols, our customs, our practices that we automatically do that is internalized. We have certain ways of saying and doing things that is Māori. It’s the Māori way. (Māori academic)

Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand. In the last census (Statistics New Zealand, 2006), Māori accounted for 14.6% of the total population, with the majority, approximately 10%, residing in the city of Auckland. However, at the University of Auckland, the largest university in New Zealand, Māori are underrepresented making
up only 6% of all academic staff and 7% of professional staff (administration). The reality is that 94% academic staff are non-Māori, creating inequality and stereotype. This situation is not unique. Picower (2009) describes similar statistics for the US with K-12 schools and states that

as graduates enter the [teaching] profession, they are bombarded by dominant messages from schools, teachers, and the media reinforcing the idea that urban children of color and their families do not care about education (p.213).

Likewise in the UK, Tomlinson (1998) discusses the inequalities that ethnic minority students experience with a class system favouring the predominantly white middle class. As a result, when inequalities such as these prevail and stereotypes are reinforced, hegemonic understandings about the world are cultivated (Picower, 2009). If the imbalance is to change, strategies to improve educational opportunities for students and staff are crucial.

In 2009, at the University of Auckland a hui (meeting) on Māori staff advancement was held. One of the key outcomes highlighted was the need to provide a programme responsive to the needs of Māori as identified by Māori; to provide a culturally supportive space for Māori to come together; and to focus on unique aspects of development for Māori. With the enthusiasm and momentum following the hui, there was an urgency for action to find a programme that could be easily set up to keep this momentum going. As part of a wider programme of Māori staff advancement (Ratima, 2011), the Māori academic developer, Matiu Ratima, a Māori of Whakatohea tribal affiliation, was keen to respond to this need. A peer mentoring model was currently being run at the university for new academics by another academic developer Barbara Kensington-Miller (2011) and it was proposed that the two academic developers would work together and pilot this model with Māori staff for one semester. The specific question they investigated was: what are the benefits, if any, of peer mentoring for Māori university staff? A subsidiary question was: if beneficial, what factors are important for setting it up in a university environment? The aim was to present a model that would support advancement for tertiary staff who belonged to an indigenous minority group and which could be easily set up.

The article begins with the background for Māori academic development at the University of Auckland. This is followed by a review of the literature on traditional
mentoring and how it led to the current model. We describe the methodology we used to evaluate the programme and the theoretical framework which was influenced by a model of Kaupapa Māori. In the final section of the paper, we highlight in the discussion the emerging picture of what we learnt and what we would do differently. We then generalise how this model could benefit other indigenous minority groups working in tertiary education to improve their educational opportunities.

**Background to Māori academic development at the University of Auckland**

In some respects, the Māori story is no different from those of colonised indigenous peoples the world over. Loss of language, disruption of culture, alienation from material resources, and subjugation through both violent and non-violent means are all common features. In spite of the adversity, Māori have not been the docile victims of the British colonial imperative. There have been plenty of examples of Māori agency and co-operation between Māori and non-Māori New Zealanders for mutual gain. However, the fact that Māori people occupy the lower societal echelons of contemporary Aotearoa (the Māori name for New Zealand) must be understood with reference to long standing historical injustices of which the University of Auckland is a direct beneficiary. Land confiscated from Ngati Awa (a tribe in New Zealand in the Bay of Plenty) in 1865 was given by the Crown as part of an endowment to establish the university (Sinclair & McNaughton, 1983). While the Ngati Awa claim was settled in 2005, the reconciliation of past wrongs and the full participation of Māori within Pākehā (commonly New Zealanders of European descent) dominated society and its institutions are the ongoing subject of negotiation, debate, and collaboration between the New Zealand Crown, its mandated agencies, and those who represent Māori.

The Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 provided a blueprint for the rules of engagement between Māori and the Crown. The University of Auckland, like all other Aotearoa state funded universities, is required to acknowledge the principles of the Treaty in the execution of its duties (Bishop, 1992). In the University of Auckland strategic plan (2005-2012), it stipulates amongst other things a commitment to the development of Māori students and staff. One of the widely acknowledged principles of the Treaty is protection of Māori language and culture as ‘taonga’ (treasured possession), another is the right of Māori people to develop as Māori (Durie, 2003, pp. 199 - 200). From the 1870s to the present day Māori have rarely had access to developmental opportunities, mediated by their language and culture. Meanwhile
Pakehā New Zealanders are often privileged by their status as a dominant majority and their language and culture have come to be taken for granted in every aspect of the public life of the nation. Within the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Auckland the Māori Academic Advisor/Te Kaiwhakaako position (established in 2007) is one example of the centre’s commitment to the Treaty principles and to redressing this imbalance.

In 2007 and 2008, Matiu Ratima (Māori Academic Advisor) facilitated a series of hui (gatherings) for Māori staff on staff development needs. Feedback indicated Māori staff might be receptive to some form of peer mentoring to help advance the realisation of staff individual and collective goals, for themselves and the University. Matiu Ratima (an expert in the Māori Language and Culture) invited Barbara Kensington-Miller (an expert in staff mentoring and development) to form a partnership and provide Māori staff with a pilot mentoring programme. The key goal was to help staff establish and work towards the achievement of both personal and professional goals in order to advance their careers.

Mentoring

Finding a programme for staff development which would acknowledge and protect Māori language and culture while at the same time could be initiated quickly, be ongoing, and cater to the needs of each individual, either academic or professional staff and at differing levels, was a challenge. With so many variables, traditional mentoring seemed ideal, as a mentor who is commonly older and more experienced would be able to work with the differing needs (Kram, 1988). The history on mentoring is well documented and a meta-review of over 300 research-based articles (Ehrich, Tennent, & Hansford, 2004) describes a number of benefits such as increased confidence, personal satisfaction and growth, encouragement, friendship, advice and feedback on performance, developing collegiality, networking, and reflection. Many researchers concur (Bell & Treleaven, 2011; Chan, 2008; Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Ehrich et al., 2004; Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Traditional mentoring with Māori

According to the literature, the goals are similar whether mentoring within Pakehā or Māori domains but the pathways are distinctly different and it would be presumptuous to assume one size fits all (Hook, Waaka, & Raumati, 2007). Within a Pakehā framework, according to Hook et al. mentoring is about outcomes, whereas for Māori
Mentoring is embodied within āwhinatanga, an expression of Māori-centredness where āwhina means to assist, benefit or befriend. For Māori, mentoring may be more valuable within a group being influenced by whakapapa (genealogical or kinship ties) and tikanga tuku iho (familiar customary practice) than the one-on-one traditional model. In this way, mentoring for Māori may be more about the purposes of the group rather than about the individual.

In general, the approach to development within Māori culture is holistic, and is embedded within spirituality and connectedness, whereas for Pākehā it is more commonly based on competitive individualism (Middleton, 2007). To allow for differences, Ratima and Grant (2007) suggest first acknowledging the dichotomy might exist and then offering alternative approaches to mentoring rather than just the orthodox Pākehā model. However, the reality for most Māori is that they work within Pākehā institutions and are therefore expected to assimilate into the dominant culture (Hook et al., 2007). The alternative is to compete with the dominant culture and with the differing world views, which Smith (1993) argues is difficult for Māori academics as the result is a constant struggle with aspects of traditions and intellectual aspirations between the dominant and minority groups.

The best approach for mentoring Māori, suggested by Hook et al. (2007), is to incorporate the use of te reo (the Māori language), with the preservation of mana (authority, influence, power or honour one has) through manaakitanga (generosity), utu (reciprocity) and aroha (love). In a recent study of twenty-one tertiary institutions across New Zealand where Māori students were mentored, five areas were identified as necessary for good mentoring practice (Tahau-Hodges, 2010): providing kaupapa Māori-based or culturally relevant mentoring; utilising data to inform responsiveness to Māori student needs; setting high expectations; supporting cultural identity; and providing community development and leadership (p.6). The findings support cooperative learning through group or collective mentoring, with a key focus on community development. In this way, individual gains are considered a positive by-product rather than the main purpose.

Mentoring with minority or ethnic groups

Although there are many benefits of traditional mentoring documented in the literature, a lack of senior or experienced Māori staff available to be mentors was an overriding obstacle. As well, with the urgency for immediate action, the time involved to train
those that would be suitable was a further hindrance. Variations of mentoring were therefore considered, to accommodate the importance of the collective for Māori and for the development to be culturally understanding. A review of what difficulties might arise with implementation was examined to select the best variation. Generic problems documented were: finding sufficient as well as suitable mentors (Ehrich et al., 2004); uneven access to mentors; reactive mentoring; unclear guidelines for mentors with help being provided only when requested (Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Foote & Solem, 2009); unsuccessful matching of mentors and protégés; and the specific composition of the relationship which might influence the level of support and satisfaction (Ragins, 1997). In particular for minority groups there could be a lack of access to mentors within those groups (Ewing et al., 2008).

Working within different cultures, the literature advises to be aware of “unwritten rules, conventions, norms, and practices that are not readily accessible to outsiders” (Chan, 2008, p.263). Where race or ethnicity are deeply embedded within particular historical and cultural contexts, legacies of discrimination and prejudice may exist which can negatively affect mentoring relationships (Darling, Bogar, Cavell, Murphy, & Sanchez, 2006) and “cross-race relationships can have difficulty forming, developing, and maturing” (Thomas, 2001, p.104). Thomas believes that the approach to mentoring with minority groups be different from mentoring with white protégés. He argues that if racism exists, even if only subtly, a protégé from a minority group might not take proposed risks for fear of failure or being punished disproportionately.

Close mentoring relationships are more likely to form, Thomas continues, if each partner is able to see parts of them in the other. Therefore, forming mentoring pairs from cross-cultural groups requires open discussion so both partners have a clear understanding of the other’s world views to avoid any issues of race, privilege, or racism that might occur (Chan, 2008; Thomas, 2001). In a study where 163 African, Hispanic and Native-American PhD students were mentored by tenured academics who were predominantly Caucasian (the rest being African-American, Asian and Hispanic), it was found that racial or ethnic similarity was important for the protégés at least at the surface-level, but for mentors they were guided by experience and deeper-level values (Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, smith2005). In general, pairs which had similarities experienced more satisfaction, commitment and interpersonal comfort suggesting that universities provide ‘courting’ opportunities for mentors and protégés to explore whether they have similar values before being paired together.
In another cross-cultural case study, a white male full professor mentored a black woman associate professor for over a decade (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). They found that trust was the critical component for mentoring success in academia, which they describe as a hostile and unaccepting environment for many minority faculty, and involves “arbitration between historical legacies, contemporary racial tensions and societal protocols” (p.11). The authors argue that power relationships will naturally exist in mentoring because of its hierarchical nature but will be magnified in cross-cultural mentoring. To be successful, they recommend: “on-going and honest discussions about race and racism” and if pairs “share similar worldviews ... [they will] increase the chances of success” (p.13).

**An alternative model of mentoring**

In a review of group mentoring over the last twenty-five years, Huizing (2012, p.27) states that: “If one of the goals of mentoring is to secure the wisdom and experience of others, it would seem that group mentoring – where the wisdom and experience of multiple people is available – would receive greater observation”. Collaboration of ideas and mutual understanding are the greatest benefits of group mentoring, according to Huizing’s extensive review. Four different typologies are identified, which he labels: peer group mentoring; one-to-many mentoring; many-to-one mentoring; and many-to-many mentoring. Details of each typology can be read in his article. In each case, the role of the mentor shifts within the group. Benefits of group mentoring include flexibility, inclusiveness, shared knowledge, interdependence, broader vision, widened external networks, provision of a safe place, developed team spirit, personal growth and friendships.

When groups form, there will be physical, behavioural, cultural and professional differences to begin with (Driscoll, Parkes, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill, & Pitts Bannister, 2009), but over time, as collaboration and experiences are shared, a commonality of intellectual purpose, feeling, experience and resolve takes over. As members meet together, Kram (2004) explains that feelings of isolation and professional self-doubt will commonly diminish, participants will grow closer and learning will occur. Groups can exist in diverse contexts as they “all share the underlying foundations of a defined domain, community and practice” (Jawitz, 2007, 2009; Nagy & Burch, 2009, p. 227). Therefore, in the collaborative atmosphere, members are able to “discuss real issues relating to work, career and family with like-minded people .... the greatest benefits
coming from interacting with others and sharing experiences” (Darwin & Palmer, 2009, p.134).

Learning occurs through participation “in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p.4). In other words, according to Wenger, by spending time together sharing information, pondering common issues and exploring ideas, knowledge accumulates and needs are met. Incentives to join groups are often linked to career advancement, accelerated productivity, personal satisfaction and growth (Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Ehrich et al., 2004). Jawitz (2009) is mindful that creating opportunities to learn within communities of practice, rather than simply providing opportunities for individuals to learn in isolation, requires an understanding of context and a focus on support, in order for knowledge and experience to be shared.

**Theoretical Framework** The theoretical framework for the research was influenced by Graham Smith’s (2000) articulation of a model of *Kaupapa Māori* (Pihama, Smith, Taki, & Lee, 2004). Earlier iterations of this model were developed in the 1980s by Māori educationalists who were reacting to the epic failure of mainstream primary school education to cater to the needs of Māori children (G. H. Smith, 1987). We believe the model is appropriate to this study because it privileges indigenous language and indigenous ways of knowing. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to therefore hypothesise that essentialisation of ethnicity is possibly key to the success of the model. Smith sets out the six key features of *Kaupapa Māori* (Māori philosophical) sites as follows:

- *Tino Rangatiratanga* (the ‘self-determination’ principle). Within our programme, participation was always voluntary and our focus was to support staff advancement towards goals they had identified as important for them.
- *Taonga tuku iho* (the ‘cultural aspirations’ principle). All our hui (meetings) were conducted according to tikanga Māori with karakia (prayer) to open and close, mihimihi (informal speeches of welcome), and the sharing of kai (food) as key features to maintain our whakawhanaungatanga (camaraderie and togetherness).
• *Ako Māori* (the ‘culturally preferred pedagogy’ principle). The *tuakana – taina* principle of peers mentoring peers was foundational to this programme as the group formed mentoring pairs made up of academics and professional staff often of similar rank and years of experience.

• *Kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga* (the ‘socio-economic’ mediation principle). While socio-economic mediation was not a relevant concern for our programme there was the need to mediate the negative consequences of isolation. Māori staff are often sparsely spread across large institutions like the University of Auckland with little opportunity for contact with other Māori. This programme helped mediate the effects of that isolation.

• *Whānau* (the extended family structure principle). While the programme and the cohort were not based on the traditional concept of a *whānau* as an extended family kinship group, a contemporary “*whānau*” dynamic as articulated by Metge (1995) was always evident within the group. Here *whānau* refers to a group with a shared sense of purpose, who organizes themselves and carries out activities in accordance with Māori culture.

• *Kaupapa* (the ‘collective philosophy’ principle). As indicated above our shared sense of purpose was Māori staff advancement. We defined advancement in broad terms to include professional, academic, and personal aspects as members determined what their own needs were.

In summary, we went to great lengths to provide a programme that was consistent with the *Kaupapa Māori* model outlined above, and one which would advance indigenous peoples well-being by adopting an approach that valued and respected their language and culture (Hook et al., 2007). The following section describes the methodology and methods we chose to operationalize our theoretical goals of respectful conduct and of representing the participants’ views.

**Methodology**

A qualitative case study methodology seemed most appropriate for this research as we were exploring a phenomenon about which little has been written: Māori and indigenous staff development. In the past, research has been conducted “on” rather than “with” or “for” Māori and their perspectives framed as incidental to the research questions (Cram, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1993). For this reason we adopted an ethnographic...
approach to the gathering and analysis of data. Ethnographic approaches, with their roots in anthropology and American sociology, seek to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants rather than the researchers perspective (Creswell, 1994). This seemed the most relevant approach to allow the voices of Māori participants to be heard and to position their concerns as central to the success or otherwise, of the peer mentoring project and to our research.

An important feature of the success of our approach was partnership. As facilitators our skill sets complemented each other. Barbara Kensington-Miller, a Pākehā New Zealander, has extensive experience in co-ordinating peer mentoring programs for academics at the University of Auckland, and Matiu Ratima has experience as a programme leader for Māori Academic development, speaks te reo Māori and has a nuanced understanding of Māori culture and custom. We formed a partnership for the delivery of this pilot programme that we believed was crucial to the quality of this research and to the programme itself.

Method

Participants and research site description

Twelve Māori staff took up the invitation to be involved in the peer mentoring programme for one semester. There were four academic and eight general staff, with three male and nine female. Over a period of three months we ran a programme that consisted of three cohort meetings (where all the participants attended) in a relaxed and collegial setting around a large table. Each meeting lasted approximately one-and-a-half hours, beginning and ending with a karakia (prayer) which was Māori custom. The participants were organised into six pairs based on factual information they provided on their pre-entry questionnaire (see following section), and with the background knowledge of Matiu Ratima.

At the group meetings, the time was divided to celebrate successes, discuss any issues, and incorporate some teaching on aspects of their choice. The sharing time gave each person an opportunity to relate how their month had been, talk about their one-on-one peer mentoring experience, how often they had met, where, and any highlights or difficulties they wanted to share. This time was important for each person to have a voice, to connect with each other, and to be encouraged.

At the first session, SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) goals were introduced and each participant worked through one main
developmental goal that would be achievable during that semester. For the academics, examples of goals included completing a chapter for a PhD, writing a paper for a conference, or redesigning lectures. For the professional staff, examples included learning to use new software; writing a presentation for a conference; improving an electronic filing system; writing a proposal to begin a PhD. The second meeting explored work-life balance with all the cultural expectations placed on them being Māori. For academics, this balance was around how they could be more effective with their preparation time for teaching and doing research (Boice, 1991; Gray, 2005). For professional staff it was achieving the work required of them in the necessary time allocated. Over the previous week, the participants had completed a record of their academic or professional activities which provided valuable information for us to base the discussion on. The third session covered Academic Performance Reviews, continuation (similar to tenure), promotion applications and how to map out their career over the next few years. The participants discussed their goal trajectories, and mapped these out on a timeline to show realistically what they could possibly achieve. Before leaving each meeting, the pairs would schedule two dates to meet for one-on-one peer mentoring, at a venue of their choice, during the following month. Some chose cafes, others their offices. They received tasks to be completed during these sessions related to the teaching from each meeting.

As the facilitators, we coordinated and organised the meetings, assisted the pairs if necessary dealing with any difficulties, and provided pastoral care by keeping in touch with each pair over the month through emails and/or phone calls.

Data collection
The participants were given a pre-entry questionnaire to provide information for us to pair them. Questions covered tribal affiliations, how well they spoke te reo Māori, whether they wanted to work with someone in the same faculty and what they wanted to focus on such as teaching, research, administration, management, leadership, or other.

At the end of the semester, seven of the original twelve participants were interviewed by Barbara Kensington-Miller, in order to talk about their experiences working with other Māori. The remaining five could not participate in the given timeline for a variety of personal reasons and so our scheduled meetings had to be cancelled. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and were organised around questions about the participant’s peer mentoring partner, how they ran their peer
mentoring sessions, whether they took turns mentoring, had clear goals, structured their peer mentoring time, where they met, the tasks they were asked to do, what qualities they found helpful in their partner, and the benefits of peer mentoring. Questions were also asked about the group meetings, the timing of these, the length of meeting, the topics covered, and the benefit of meeting together. A semi-structured approach was used in order to probe participants’ perceptions more closely if needed.

**Data analysis**
The interview transcripts were read separately and coded independently to identify excerpts and themes that emerged relevant to the research questions. These were then compared and revised until consensus reached. Finally, they were collated and sorted into categories related either to the one-on-one peer mentoring or the group peer mentoring.

Next, we identified all the excerpts from the interviews that fell into these categories. We analysed these excerpts in finer detail through an iterative process and applied causal networks to identify relationships. From this, we were able to sort these into emergent patterns and make plausible interpretations of events (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Results and analysis**
The following results are divided into two parts: the one-on-one peer mentoring and the group peer mentoring, with the major findings highlighted at the beginning of each. Within each part, we discuss the benefits and structure in general and then more specifically for Māori.

**The one-on-one peer mentoring**
The key findings for one-on-one peer mentoring highlighted many benefits. These included comradeship, feedback, accountability, encouragement, support, and continuity between group meetings. For Māori, the benefits specifically were affirmation as an individual and affirmation of their culture, as well as an opportunity to try things in a ‘safe’ environment such as speaking *te reo* Māori. It was also important that the mentoring sessions had an explicit time-frame, were structured, and the partners had compatible goals. If possible, previous connections were an advantage in helping initiate the relationship faster, and working in close proximity to each other and being flexible around meeting times and venue all made the peer mentoring easier to establish.
The benefits:

One-on-one peer mentoring provided comradeship and an opportunity to get to know someone better at the university. It was also a chance to bounce ideas off another person and get feedback which they might not normally do. One participant explained this as “it gave me permission to ask whereas I probably would have just carried on working trying to get to it myself”. The relationship was mutually beneficial both personally and professionally for most. Another participant remarked:

I really liked the peer mentoring thing and I really liked having people there that I can talk about things that I want to do. The good thing about it was we talked about all sorts of other things as well. ... I mean there are people like helping me out.

Being able to discuss each other’s goals, even if they were different, and focus on these was valuable for accountability and making sure they were attainable. The opportunity to talk with someone throughout the month about how their goals were going and to be encouraged was valuable:

Our goals were quite different but it wasn’t a problem …. We’d talk about what I want to achieve and he’d say well this is what I want to achieve this month and we’d send emails every couple of weeks you know to make sure we’re on track.

For our participants, peer mentoring was an opportunity to meet with another Māori colleague. With the exception of a few who worked in departments with Māori oriented agenda, most participants talked about feeling isolated from other Māori, lacking support and felt that they missed out on having their “culture affirmed every minute of the day, every day, because you’re with other people of the same culture”. They felt it was a privilege and rewarding to work with another Māori, as it meant being on the same ‘wave length’ or ‘in tune’ with each other.

Working together affirmed the value of Māori culture and helped make participants more aware of what was happening within the Māori world. They spoke about the ease of working together and the protocols, customs and practices that Māori automatically observe. One participant said: “Māori have certain ways of saying and
doing things, and can read the body language. They look after each other’s well-being, *manaki tangata*. Another participant said:

> Being Māori added to the relationship, very much so, it was a lot more comfortable, and a very open relationship ... I’m comfortable with the relationship because there are our protocols, our customs, our practices that we automatically do so that I can read her. I can tell if Māori is happy or if Māori is upset ... it’s what we call the Māori way.

Being able to practice speaking Māori was an important opportunity for those who wanted to. One pair decided to only speak Māori when they met and valued this time:

> To speak Māori with someone at your own level and that you’re comfortable talking to. You have something in common and so you know you can branch out using different words and things like that.

The other partner affirmed this saying that “without a doubt speaking Māori was really positive. ... it was really important to me to be able to discuss with another Māori”.

**The structure:**

For all the participants, being part of a programme that had a clear start and finish date, was short-term with the opportunity for extension, and was designed to add value to their already busy workloads rather than ‘another thing’ they had to take on, was unanimously welcomed. They were all prepared to be committed to the programme knowing that it was only for one semester. This seemed manageable.

As facilitators, the first criteria we decided on was to match academics together and professional staff together as we felt their goals would be more compatible. However, for one pair of professional staff this did not work very well as one partner was doing a doctoral degree as well as working full-time and expressed that “we weren’t really able to help each other much on our individual goals, aside from just being able to talk about it with someone else”. This pair had been well matched on all other aspects but the importance of the goal was overriding and in hindsight an academic partner might have been a better choice.

Another factor which we identified when matching pairs, was whether they had a previous connection or if they had a particular request for someone in the group. Not
surprising, those pairs noticeably established quickly and appeared to gain momentum faster. One participant commented:

As soon as you gave me the form I knew who my peer mentor was going to be … I had known her for many, many years but to have the opportunity where we worked together on goals was just great.

Ownership of the process or ‘buy in’ was essential for building the relationship and for making decisions about what each pair wanted their individual structure to be as described by one participant:

You’re always a little bit more passionate about the things you make yourself. You tend to put more energy into it and you tend to get a lot of energy out of it too.

Another commented:

The only thing I would do differently is have a clear structure for the individual meetings so that it is not just a catch up, that there’s a set task or something working towards getting those end goals.

And another expressed:

If you haven’t got a task set before you get together, then if you can’t make that meeting it doesn’t seem that important to have another one because you didn’t have an expected outcome.

Successful arrangements for meeting were those that were flexible when and where they met, mostly in offices or cafes. In order to meet regularly and easily proximity was important. Many found they only met once a month unless their offices were physically close to each other as one participant explained:

We made several appointments and because X is quite a long way from me and because it rained on those days, we postponed the appointments … and then she went on leave and I was away for work … it was really hard".
Another added, “it would be good to have someone who was located closer but that will exclude people who are located far from anyone”.

Setting up times in advance with the provision to change these meant meetings were more likely to actually occur. The average length of meeting together was about an hour, and all the pairs described that the first part was a catch-up time followed by a set task to focus on so that the meeting had significance. The pairs commented on the importance of having a structure and set timeframe.

**The group peer mentoring**

The principal findings for group peer mentoring were the opportunity for networking with other colleagues, camaraderie, accountability to a group, and being able to learn together. In particular for Māori, working alongside extended family or whānau, made the meetings more relaxed, easy-going and comfortable.

**The benefits:**

The group meetings provided a place to meet as a cohort and build further relationships with new colleagues. Being once a month was in their words ‘doable’ with busy lives and they all enjoyed the camaraderie of coming back together to talk about how their month had been, especially as many were spread out across the university. The meetings were a time when they could learn from the others in the group, from their stories, and share difficulties that they may face as academics and professional staff. It was also a time when they could openly discuss any prejudices they felt being Māori. Importantly, the meetings provided an environment where being Māori was the cultural norm and they could celebrate being Māori together.

Listening to what the others did provided further options, and gave participants new perspectives to examine and question things in a ‘safe’ environment. Having the opportunity to share in a group where the main culture was Māori was a treat for most. They described being Māori together meant they were able to be more relaxed and easy-going. Initially, some lacked confidence at being in the ‘lime light’ when it was their turn, but having hands-on activities and providing food helped participants to become quickly acquainted with each other and feel comfortable.

This level of comfort with one another was unmistakeable and most evident was the frequent laughter that radiated out which they said “that’s what we [Māori] do”. Some participants believed it was easier to communicate being Māori together as there
were less barriers and this opened up communication in other areas. The explanation was that Māori have a common understanding of basic principles such as tikanga (customs), whānau (family), manaaki (respect), and so the relationship could advance quickly to the next level of discussion without the awkwardness of explanation:

I wanted to get out of my little space and meet other academic people but Māori people more so ... at the University the whole process is very Pākehā and that’s okay but I do miss sitting down and having a good laugh .... they’re sort of on the same wavelength as me ... you have an understanding ... like you can say that I only had one pair of shoes that lasted me five years or hand me downs and everyone laughs ... I wouldn’t say it to anybody ... but they understand.

The structure:
Meeting together once a month brought the group together as a whānau or extended family:

Being Māori together helped. I don’t know whether it’s a sense of humour or expectation that if I get something wrong it’s not seen as a negative. It’s just like you know that it’s different when they mainstream you.

The timing of the meetings at lunchtime, with food provided, was welcomed but an hour was not long enough to get through the agenda:

There was a time when we were sort of stretching it to get to the meetings because we had other things going on and other kaupapa that’s not directly related going on at the same time but we made it.

It was important to allow time for each participant to report about the previous month and any achievements or difficulties that they wanted to share. They also liked the accountability:

I think the structure was really good because here you tell the others what you want to do and then you know you’ve got to report back on that, which is useful, it is important to back up the mentoring.
The topics were chosen to accommodate both academic and professional staff, which were challenging for the facilitators to meet the needs of both groups as they wanted to stay together:

I enjoyed the goal setting one, to sort of narrow in a little bit more on good goal setting, well achievable goal setting. The life/balance thing I enjoyed that one too. I don’t know if I completed that exercise but it was good to take some time out to plan especially if you want an academic career. You need to plan those academic things into that and if you wanted a different kind of life you’d have to plan it too. Things just don’t happen.

Discussion

What we learnt

By providing an integrated model of one-on-one peer mentoring and group peer mentoring the Māori staff were affirmed individually and collectively at the same time. Working together at the same level made it easier and gave the staff purpose while providing comradeship and supporting their identity as Māori, consistent with Hook et al’s (2007) argument. The opportunity to work with others within their own culture was an overriding benefit and one which they commented on frequently. It drew them together as a group and strengthened them within their culture (Durie, 2003).

The model provided general benefits of friendship, reflection, accountability and the chance to network amongst each other. Coming together as a group provided commonality of purpose and the benefit of sharing experiences and knowledge acquisition, qualities emphasised by Darwin and Palmer (2009) and Huizing (2012) on group mentoring. The one-on-one peer mentoring provided continuity between the meetings and a chance to work with a Māori colleague on a deeper level.

Exclusive for Māori however was the affirmation they received, of their culture and ways of doing things, and the privilege they felt being a Māori working with other Māori, living one’s culture and not being ‘pigeonholed’ as they described it. They were able to understand the protocols and the customs and practices that Māori do instinctively and for some a chance to speak Māori, which Hook et al. (2007) advocate.

The group meetings were important to hear what the others were doing with their research, their interests, and what direction they were going. During these times, their culture was the norm with regards to language, spirituality, humour, and whakawhanaungatanga (togetherness). It was also a time of sharing and becoming
politically up to date with what was happening in the Māori world, what they described as *iwi* politics.

Having a facilitator coordinate and structure the meetings, and provide pastoral care, meant that there was an overall accountability with goals and participation. The role of the facilitator was paramount to the success of the model. However, future research exploring this role for possible explanations would be worthwhile as to whether the approach might differ between *Pākehā* and Māori needs or whether there was any significant influence by the *Pākehā* facilitator.

**What we would do differently**

**One-on-one peer mentoring**

Analysis of our interview data confirmed that goal compatibility needs to be the overriding priority for pairing participants for one-on-one peer mentoring in order to have continued momentum and purpose. Self-selection should be offered as an option but only if the goals are well-matched. Although it was an advantage for pairs to have the opportunity to speak Māori, our current thinking is that this factor should not be prioritized ahead of goal compatibility.

We found that more guidance is needed for pairs when they meet. One participant complained that her meetings just turned into catch ups with goals put to one side. She suggested more structure to the meeting be given by the facilitators. Although this problem might have been due more to the incompatibility of goals with this particular pair rather than the lack of structure it is still an important request. Simple instructions were e-mailed to participants but a structure with clear expectations needs to be formalised with a basic guide of suggestions on how one-on-one meetings can be run effectively.

Pairs need to organise their meeting times face-to-face for the month in advance, and preferably at the group meetings. We found that pairs who didn’t do this at the time, usually because they had left their diaries behind, struggled to organise meetings when they returned to their offices. We initially asked each pair to make two meeting times but this became quite pressured with other expectations, particularly for those whose offices were far apart. We now believe one meeting per month mandatory and more meetings optional.

**Group peer mentoring**
The group meetings were a time when all the participants could come together. Having both academics and professional staff together was a challenge for the teaching session to make it relevant for both groups. However, our feedback from professional staff was they wanted to work together with academics so we would be reluctant to split the cohort:

   It’s good to bring Māori tertiary staff together, you know, cause that’s their common bond, you know, they’re all Māori staff, here for the university, for the Māori students.  
   It’s good that connection between all the gathered people.

The time frame of one semester was important for commitment but four group meetings would be better than three for completion. As the first meeting is at the start of the programme having a fourth meeting at the end provides completion and a time to renegotiate for further time if the pairs want.

   Having at least one facilitator who understood the Māori culture was critical to the viability of this model. First, the cohort could not have been recruited into the scheme if not for the pre-established trust between the participants and the Māori Academic Advisor. Second, it is difficult to see how facilitators with no Māori cultural competence could be successful in paying respects to the participants’ language, culture and customs. The risk is that important cultural cues can be missed and important aspects of meaning go unnoticed when facilitators lack these abilities. In this situation, the authors worked well together. The Māori cultural knowledge and experience of working with Māori academic and professional staff that Matiu Ratima had was complemented by the knowledge of peer mentoring and experience of running peer mentoring programmes for staff that Barbara Kensington-Miller had. The administrative and pastoral work of running the group was shared equally.

Conclusion
There is a plethora of studies documenting the benefits of implementing traditional mentoring (Ehrich et al., 2004) and group mentoring (Huizing, 2012), but there are few articles on mentoring Māori using a Māori framework (Hook et al., 2007). The model presented here goes part way to addressing the obstacles to Māori staff participation in professional development. Firstly, it addresses the lack of available senior Māori mentors to support early-career Māori staff. Secondly, it helps bring Māori together, as
at the University of Auckland they are spread out quite thinly across all sectors causing isolation for many. Thirdly, it provides affirmation of Māori in a large institutional environment.

The synergy between the one-on-one peer mentoring and the group peer mentoring provided a good balance between learning on a more personal level and learning through participation in a collaborative atmosphere. In this way, knowledge and experience were shared within the group setting with continuity between the meetings provided by the one-on-one peer mentoring. Our study highlights the benefits of Māori working with Māori. The magnitude of this feature alone was overwhelmingly significant from all those involved.

The case study presented in this article represents a model which encouraged and supported an indigenous minority group to advance their careers in tertiary education. The fundamental advantage was the opportunity the model provided for indigenous people to work together, where cultural cues are understood and the dominant culture does not compete. The adaptability of the model allows indigenous groups to be responsive to their needs as they identify their needs, to provide a culturally supportive space to collectively come together as a large group or in pairs, and to focus on any unique aspects of development for their group. Although the pilot was small-scale, the results suggest other indigenous minority groups internationally could adopt a similar approach, by adapting the model for their own needs and testing it accordingly. In particular, the many experiences the Māori group had which were inherent to actually being Māori are noteworthy. Further research into whether these experiences are an argument for essentialisation of ethnicity would be worthwhile.

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