MAKING TRANSITIONS:
THE ROLE OF INTERACTION IN JOINING
A WORKPLACE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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Abstract: In the process of transitioning from one institution or workplace to another, people often encounter new interactional norms and values. For those moving countries as well as workplaces, the transition may involve different cultural and societal norms and values; but even a move between organisations or workplace teams within a country may present formidable challenges. Focussing on the New Zealand value of egalitarianism, in particular, the analysis in this paper demonstrates the range of ways in which this societal norm is instantiated in New Zealand workplace talk, and discusses the problems this poses for newcomers.

Keywords: Workplace discourse, intercultural communication, sociocultural norms, transitions

Özet: Bir kurumdan veza iş yerinden diğerine geçiş yapma sürecinde, insanlar genelde yeni etkileşimsel kurallarla ve değerlerle karşılaşırlar. İş yerlerinin yanı sıra ülkeleri de değişenler için bu geçiş farklı kültürel ve toplumsal kurallar ve değerleri içerebilir, fakat aynı ülkedeki kuruluşlar veya çalışma ekipleri arasındaki bir geçiş bile aşılması güç durumlar ortaya çıkarabilir. Özellikle Yeni Zelanda eşitlikçilik değeri üzerine odaklanan bu makalede analiz Yeni Zelanda iş yeri konuşmasında bu toplumsal kuralın nasıl örneklendiğinin çeşitli yollarını göstermektedir ve yeni gelenler için bunun meydana getirdiği problemleri ele almaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: İş yeri söylemi, kültürler arası iletişim, sosyokültürel kurallar, geçişler

1. Introduction[1]

Interaction is a crucial means of establishing and maintaining relationships with others in the workplace, but, importantly, it is also a means of learning how to become a well-integrated member of the workplace community. The challenge of attempting to join a new workplace brings this process into central focus, and this paper examines how a number of New Zealand workers respond to this challenge. In the process of transitioning from one institution or workplace to another, people typically encounter new interactional norms and values. For those moving countries as well as workplaces, the transition may involve different cultural and societal norms and values; but even those moving between organisations or workplace teams within a country may find such transitions challenging. The analysis in this paper explores such challenges and examines how they play out at the level of face-to-face interaction in different workplace teams or communities of practice.

Joining a new society or community of any sort entails learning the interactional norms of its members and how they enact relevant societal and community values. At the societal level, New Zealanders subscribe to an egalitarian ideology (Ashkanasy, Trevor-Roberts & Kennedy 2004; Bönisch-Brednich 2008; Kennedy 2007; Trevor-Roberts, Ashkanasy & Kennedy 2003). Commitment to this egalitarian ethic is evident in many different ways in New Zealand society, and in workplace interaction in particular, as this paper will illustrate. As noted in Holmes, Marra and Vine (2012), one consequence, for example, is a general expectation that formality is kept to a minimum. In New Zealand workplaces this is apparent in the preference

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for informal ways of interacting, even in large meetings, and especially in one-to-one interaction. However, it is not always easy for newcomers to identify the social significance of the range of behaviours which instantiate this value in different workplaces. While local norms or "ways of doing things round here" are sometimes made explicit by a mentor or workplace buddy, analysis of workplace interaction in a range of New Zealand workplaces indicates that the rules for appropriate behaviour and the related societal and professional values are often very subtle and inexplicit, and that the specific ways in which the egalitarian norm plays out in different contexts needs to be learned if new workers wish to fit comfortably into their new workplace team. Focussing on relational aspects of workplace interaction, and ways of signalling informality in particular, this paper examines evidence for the egalitarian norm as well as the way it is enacted in a number of New Zealand workplaces, and discusses its significance as people make transitions from one workplace context to another.

2. Literature survey
2.1. Transitions

People making a transition from one workplace to another must identify the features of new interactional norms and their significance in representing societal and community values. As Westerman (2012:11) notes, transitions involve "periods of change, rather than a single moment in which individuals experience some form of discontinuity in their (professional) life space, forcing them to respond by developing new behaviours or changing their (professional) life space in order to cope with the new situation." The analysis below illustrates that New Zealanders venturing overseas became gradually aware of the significance of new behaviours in their new organisations and typically reflect on this on their return. The processes involved in workplace transitions have been described as "modes of adjustment" (Nicholson 1984:172), and these are clearly related to the socialisation processes through which employees learn to become part of a new workplace environment.

Much previous research on transitions focusses on employees' perceptions of the processes involved, rather than providing any analysis of the relevant processes. To this end, researchers have generally relied on questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in which participants report their perceptions of their experience in the new workplace (e.g., Blakeslee 2001; Bullock et al. 2013; Moyle & Parkes 1999; Nielsen 2009; Oud 2008; Stevenson 2002). Thus as Nicholson (1984:174) points out, there is a marked lack of empirical research on how transitions are experienced and managed. Undoubtedly, however, one way to manage transitions, to learn about new workplace norms and ways of interacting, for example, is through workplace talk.

In a vocational context, Filliettaz (2010a; 2010b) and Losa and Filliettaz (forthcoming) provide detailed information on the role of workplace discourse in socialising apprentices. Analysing audio-visual recordings collected in Switzerland, their analysis examines how apprentices negotiate their participation in their new workplaces and actively contribute to earning a legitimate role in their workplace teams. The analysis perceptively makes visible some of the hidden challenges faced by young people as they learn to fit into new work contexts. Their focus, however, is on learning new technical skills rather than acquiring interactional norms.

Many other earlier studies of workplace transitions also focus on the applicability and transfer of specific content knowledge, ways of performing job specific tasks (or skills), and displaying values in the new context (see, for example, Marks & Vansteenkiste 2008; Morrow

2009). The role of communication and interpersonal interaction as important aspects of what it means to join a new organisation or workplace team are not often the focus of analysis. Noting this, Stevenson (2002) highlights communication and interpersonal interaction as aspects of workplace knowledge needed to carry out tasks and perform activities in the workplace. The analyses below illustrate some of the ways in which workplace talk provides evidence for such norms in a range of New Zealand workplaces.

2.2. Intercultural communication: egalitarianism[2]
There is a very extensive literature on intercultural communication (e.g., Hua 2014; Jackson 2014; Paulston, Kiesling & Rangel 2012; Piller 2011; Scollon, Scollon & Jones 2012; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009). Here I focus on the cultural norm of egalitarianism as the area of most relevance to the analysis in this paper. Cross-cultural research on perceptions of leadership involving 62 countries (Chhokar, Brodbeck & House 2007) indicates that there are large disparities between different countries in respect to their attitudes towards power and status. "New Zealanders tend to have the lowest power distance in the world – that is, we do not tend to accept or embrace the fact that power in institutions and organisations should be distributed unequally" (Jackson 2008:13). In other words, societal level pressures come to bear, constraining unmitigated self-promotion, and an egalitarian ethic prevails. Jackson and Parry (2001:27) claim that: "it would be difficult to find a nation that has institutionalized and ritualized…wealth and status envy" or "lack of reverence for big business" to the extent that Australasians have.

Among Pākehā (New Zealanders of mainly European origin), egalitarianism is oriented particularly to the importance of achievement rather than other sources of status: it is essentially a belief that social standing should depend on achievement and not on birth, and that achievement is appropriately assessed by somebody else, not by the individual concerned (Lipson 1948). New Zealand's particular variety of egalitarianism has been attributed to the rejection by those settlers immigrating from Britain of that country's class-dominated social structure (McLeod 1968). McLeod (1968:55) comments that New Zealand "was born in a time of enfranchisement, of peaceful social revolution, in which elite rule was being challenged" in the western world, and that the development of New Zealand democracy emerged largely from the settlers' strong desire for equality and liberty (1968:57). So although achievement is admired, it is not to be flaunted. Bönisch-Brednich summarises it in this way: "everyone should be the same and if they are not they should, at the very least, pretend to be" (2008:6). Societal level pressures come to bear to constrain unmitigated self-promotion, and even complacent acceptance of praise and admiration. Consequently, Pākehā New Zealanders do not comfortably tolerate explicit demonstrations of power, and people often seek ways of reducing status differences and emphasising equality with their colleagues. Relevant strategies include avoiding linguistic labels and titles which indicate status, and a preference for first names and informal address forms, as well as a range of other strategies which construct informality and debunk conventionalism and "decorum". In other words, the macro-level societal value of egalitarianism is instantiated in face-to-face interaction by strategies which index informality. It is in workplace teams, or communities of practice, then, where hierarchies undoubtedly exist, that instantiations of the New Zealand egalitarian ethic can be observed.

2.3. Communities of practice
Joining a new workplace often involves joining an established community of practice (CofP), a concept first proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) to account for the characteristically social character of learning. They argue that learning involves gradually increasing

participation in a community of practice, and that the learner moves from initially peripheral status to more complex and fully engaged participation. This participation unavoidably involves learning the ways of talking appropriate to the CofP: "becoming a member of a CofP interacts with the process of gaining control of the discourse appropriate to it" (Holmes & Meyerhoff 1999:175). This discourse includes relevant technical and specialised terminology or "jargon and shortcuts to communication" (Wenger 1998:125), established linguistic routines, and appropriate interactional styles. In the New Zealand workplaces that we have researched, appropriate interactional styles were typically relaxed and informal.

Wenger (1998:125–126) identifies some specific constitutive characteristics of a CofP, including the 'absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process' and 'very quick setup of a problem' (1998:125). These are features which characterise informal, casual talk between people who know each other well and who are on the same wavelength, and they are evident in our workplace data, as I will illustrate. Acquiring membership of New Zealand CofPs often entails developing an understanding of quite subtle interactional norms, such as what qualifies as an acceptable topic of small talk, and just what kind of and how much humour or swearing is considered appropriate in a specific CofP. Making a transition to a new workplace thus involves tuning in to local interactional norms and acquiring appropriate ways of talking, which in New Zealand workplaces typically entails avoiding any emphasis on hierarchy or status by constructing an appropriate level of informality.

3. Methodology

The data used for the analyses in this paper was collected by the Language in the Workplace (LWP) Project team, based at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.[3] The LWP team has been collecting workplace data since 1996 and we currently have around two million words comprised of over 3000 interactions from about 700 participants across 35 workplaces. This data has been gathered from professional, government departments, small businesses, semi-public or non-government organizations (NGOs), and private, commercial organizations, as well as factories, a plant nursery, a recycling company, and most recently from eldercare residences, and building sites. The interactions include both business talk and social talk, informal talk, and meetings of many different sizes and kinds, with participants from a wide range of different levels in the workplace hierarchy.

Our standard methodology involves a period of ethnographic participant observation followed or accompanied by recordings over a period of several weeks by volunteers in the workplace, and interviews with the volunteers after the recordings have been completed. The hallmark of the LWP methodology is collaboration: we give participants direct control over the data collection. Volunteers from the workplaces carry a voice recording device throughout their workday and record samples of their everyday interactions; they decide exactly what, when and how much to record.[4] Where possible, meetings are also video-recorded, again without any of the researchers being present.

This approach has proved very successful in collecting workplace interaction, and the project's methodology has been adopted by many others researching workplace discourse (e.g., Angouri 2007; Koester 2006; Ladegaard 2011; Mullany 2007; Richards 2006). This paper draws on interviews with ten New Zealanders who had spent time working overseas recorded by a LWP research assistant, Jessica Scott, and interviews with recent immigrants to New Zealand conducted by Nicky Riddiford, a LWP team member, ass well as data recorded in a number of different workplaces, including government departments and a building site.

The next section provides evidence for the relevance of the New Zealand egalitarian ethic in workplace interaction, and analyses examples of workplace interaction which demonstrate how this ethic is instantiated in a number of New Zealand workplaces.

4. Analysis
4.1. Evidence of egalitarian ethic and informal interactional norms
In this section, I first consider how experience of working overseas often raises consciousness of taken-for-granted local societal norms, illustrating with interactions which exemplify how the New Zealand egalitarian ethic is instantiated in New Zealand workplace talk in a range of different organisations. The examples involve first white collar professional New Zealand employees, then new migrants to New Zealand with professional qualifications and experience, and finally blue collar workers on a building site. In all cases, the New Zealand egalitarian ethic is enacted in relaxed and informal interactional behaviour.

As people move between institutions, and in some cases between countries as well, their experiences bring norms and values into focus which may have been largely implicit before making the transition. For the New Zealanders with overseas experience whom we interviewed, one of the most salient New Zealand values which emerged was egalitarianism, and the related informality associated with this.

Example 1[5]
Context: Lawyer John Gibson comments on formality of meetings in the English law firm in which he worked in the UK.
  1 I was making a point cos like someone gave a silly example
  2 and then put forward a hypothetical
  3 and I was I said something along the lines of
  4 well if that happened to me I'd be fucking pissed off
  5 or something and everyone sort of stopped
  6 I was like OK good to note

This account of an exchange within an internal meeting of members of the law firm illustrates how John put his foot in it by using two swear words (line 4) to intensify his opinion. He records the other participants' response *everyone sort of stopped* (line 5) and indicates that he responded by noting that his very informal language had elicited a very negative reaction, implying he would not be repeating this faux pas.

John's comment suggests that informal interaction is the norm in the New Zealand workplaces with which he was familiar so that he was surprised to discover different expectations regarding formality and appropriate language in the English law firm meetings.

Our recorded data in New Zealand workplaces provides good support for John's behavior and expectations, as example 2 illustrates.

Example 2[6]
Context: Meeting of the Senior Management Team of a large organisation. Three male and two female senior staff present as well as Daniel, the CEO.
  1 Frank: Company V got a new chairman they just got sick of him
  2 Daniel: oh yeah + fuck that's the sort of article
  3   we got to send out to keep on [company] eh
  4   so that they don't think that fiddling around with the board
  5   won't do that you know

This is a very typical excerpt from the meetings of the senior management team of this organisation. The CEO, Daniel, consistently plays down his authority, managing meetings with a light hand, and using a number of linguistic devices to construct the meetings as an informal domain. As this example illustrates, he not only uses swear words (line 2), he also makes use of casual pragmatic particles such as the informal New Zealand pragmatic tag, *eh* (line 3), and the interactive *you know* (line 5) (Marra, Vine & Holmes 2008; Meyerhoff 1994). Daniel, like other New Zealand leaders, also uses a great deal of teasing, sarcastic and even self-denigrating humour in meetings (Holmes 2007), all features which contribute to constructing a casual and relaxed atmosphere, as well as debunking any emphasis on status and authority.

Evidence of an emphasis on status and hierarchy in the English organisation in which New Zealanders worked included observations about non-verbal as well as verbal behaviour, as example 3 illustrates.

Example 3

Context: Project Engineer Mike Ross comments on interactional norms in the English company in which he worked.

1   um yes my company in particular um has a very hierarchical nature
2   um so even though we are on site
3   um we are still expected to wear a shirt and tie
4   which um I don't think many other construction companies
5   would be doing but in reality if if I'm on site
6   I don't like the fact that we have to wear ties
7   because it's a bit harder to relate with people sometimes
8   if you're the man in the shirt and tie walking around site yeah

Although this comment relates specifically to the relative formality of the dress code, *we are still expected to wear a shirt and tie* (line 3), Mike clearly regards this as impacting on the way people interact verbally on site, as indicated in lines 7-8.

Data that we collected in a number of New Zealand professional organisations supports Mike's observations. Example 4 was recorded in an IT company where Donald was the managing director.

Example 4

Context: The managing director Donald is showing Michael, a potential new employee, around the company and explaining how things work.

1 Don: things are looking like this year
2   will probably be our best year ever
3   um but it does come on the back of you know
4   fairly tight fairly lean times we're just now
5   there's four main shareholders um so it's you know
6   it's however deep our pockets are and
7   you can see the quality of my suit// [laughs]\
8 Mic: /[laughs]\\
9 Ann: he's got shoes on so he must be having// a good day\
10 Don: /[laughs]\\ oh yes
11   we try and run a relaxed atmosphere

Donald indicates with humour, and modesty, that though the company is steadily increasing its business (lines 1-2), they are still experiencing *fairly tight fairly lean times* (line 4), as indicated by the quality of his suit (line 7). Ann picks up Don's humour and extends it with a comment on the informal dress code of the company as indicated by the fact that Don is wearing shoes on this occasion. We know from ethnographic observations that Don often wore shorts and no shoes (Schnurr 2009), and he confirms the fact that informality is the norm in this company with his comment *we try and run a relaxed atmosphere* (line 11). The informality of Don's dress can again be regarded as an indication of the informality which typifies interaction in this company, and which instantiates an egalitarian ethic, a point supported by the humorous exchange, and especially by the fact that Ann feels confident in teasing the boss about the fact that he has put shoes on for this occasion (line 9).[7]

In example 5, Daniel, the CEO (see also example 2), explicitly discusses the fact that ties are not required in his workplace.

Example 5
Context: Daniel, the CEO of Kiwi Consultations discussing workplace dress norms with a younger manager whom he is mentoring
1   but it's also an indication that
2   you don't have to wear ties here anymore eh
3   you don't have to but don't wear rags [laughs]
4   [laughs] you know…
5   I don't wear ties any more
6   I'm hōhā ['fed up'] with it eh um
7   and so nobody else feels
8   they have to wear them either eh

Daniel here asserts that smart casual is the dress code for his organisation: ties are not required but people are expected to look smart: *don't wear rags* (line 3). Again he uses the pragmatic tag *eh* (lines 6, 8), well attested as a marker of informality and solidarity (Bell 2000; Meyerhoff 1994), as well as the very casual Maori word *hōhā* (line 6).

4.2. Challenges for migrants in New Zealand workplaces
The New Zealand egalitarian ethic and the associated informality in the workplace are often a shock for new migrants to New Zealand. Nicky Riddiford who coordinates and teaches the Workplace Communication Programme for Skilled Migrants (WCPSM) (Holmes et al. 2011; Riddiford & Joe 2010) has recorded many interviews with migrants reflecting on their experience as interns in New Zealand workplaces. Migrants from countries with more status-oriented and hierarchical social systems consistently comment on their surprise at the informality of interactions in New Zealand workplaces. The fact, for example, that the boss often did not have a separate room or uniform, and that s/he spoke to subordinates in a friendly and contextually polite manner, rather than issuing unmitigated directives and direct criticisms, was a source of astonishment to migrants from countries such as China, Korea, and Russia. Example 6 provides two typical comments.

Example 6
Context: interview between course coordinator, Nicky, and Chinese migrants
1   Wang: Managers in China usually have cool faces to demonstrate their seniority and positions. Employees usually say hello to them first when passing by. Managers usually nod their heads to show their response.

2   Helena: New Zealand managers are more friendly and proactive in looking after their employees. For example, managers usually say "good morning", "hello" and smile at their employees. The Communication Manager and General Manager always say "hello" to me, although I don't directly work for them.

The converse of this, not surprisingly, is that many migrants find the interactional informality of New Zealand workplaces rather challenging. They are not used to engaging in small talk and social talk with their peers, much less their managers.

Example 7
Context: Kate, a New Zealand employment consultant, comments to the course coordinator on the problem of small talk for a Chinese employee.
    When Sara first came here she asked how to respond if someone said "hello" in the lift and whether she should get into a conversation or not, and is it polite. As one of the migrants said: "It's hard. In our culture we try to avoid talking to the CEO". (mbie.govt.nz)[8]

The pervasiveness of social talk in New Zealand workplaces has been well documented (Holmes 2000, Holmes 2003, Holmes and Stubbe 2003), as well as the challenges that this social norm presents for newcomers. While different communities of practice develop slightly different customs, with preferred topics of social talk, as well as times and places when it is expected (Holmes 2006), the overall patterns are widely recognised. Small talk is almost obligatory at the beginning and end of the day, and in many CofPs, the morning tea break and lunchtime provide additional regular sites for social exchanges (Holmes 2000; Holmes, Marra & King 2013). During the internships which form part of the WCPSM, the interns are assigned New Zealand mentors. Our recordings of the interactions of the migrants in their new workplaces indicate that social talk is a regular topic of comment, with mentors encouraging the migrants to engage in small talk with others in the workplace so that they will not be perceived as "stand-offish" and unfriendly.

Example 8
Context: Feedback from Leo, Isaac's workplace mentor in a government organisation
    1 Leo: try and integrate yourself more with everyone…
    2   but also the learning is to sit with people at lunch time
    3   and learn the language and listen to the jokes
    4   and the and participate

Clearly Leo is encouraging Isaac to join in more with social interaction in the workplace and he gives examples of how Isaac can do this. He should have lunch with his workmates (line 2) and *listen to the jokes ... and participate* (lines 3-4). By the end of his internship Isaac demonstrates he has learned the social norms when he offers to bring cake for his farewell morning tea, a well-established New Zealand custom in many workplaces.

Example 9
Context: Isaac discusses his plans for morning tea with his mentor Leo.
    1 Isaac: tomorrow I will bring a cake a cake at morning tea time
    2   and I would like to share it with all the colleague
    3 Leo: that's very nice we'll look forward to eating it
    4 Isaac: [laughs] okay thank you

Leo here confirms that Isaac has learned the local ways of doing things.[9]

Migrants with professional qualifications who come to New Zealand looking for work face many challenges, including negative attitudes to unfamiliar accents and suspicion about their levels of proficiency in English and their ability to use English effectively in the workplace (Podsiadlowski, 2006). Less overt but just as problematic is the challenge of learning to fit in to a new culture, including a specific workplace culture or CofP. Those enrolled in the WCPSM have the advantage not only of explicit teaching during the course regarding New Zealand sociopragmatic norms, but also a period of internship with an assigned mentor who is licensed to make explicit the ways in which New Zealand ways of interacting are different from those of other cultures (Holmes 2014). For New Zealanders joining a new workplace, this explicitness is not considered appropriate. They are expected to "pick up" the norms on the basis of careful observation, reflection and inferencing.

4.3. Challenges for New Zealanders joining new CofPs
This final section of the analysis, considers the challenges facing people joining a new CofP within their own society. Even when one is familiar with the culture and the social norms which characterise it, the transition from one institution to another or from one organisation to another may not be easy. Moving from a Pakeha to a Maori organisation, for example, involves a steep learning curve (see Holmes, Marra & Vine 2011, chapter 8). Similarly moving from school into a well-established workplace team presents the problem of how to integrate smoothly. And for New Zealanders, the explicit advice meted out to migrants is rarely available; they are expected to pick up the interactional norms through observation and inference.

Our research on building sites provides useful examples of what is involved in joining a new CofP.[10] Holmes and Woodhams (2013) examined evidence of the process of how apprentices move from peripheral to core status in their chosen professional community of practice. The research focussed on interactions between Tom, the foreman, Max, a relatively experienced apprentice, and Rick, a young work-experience student studying towards a pre-trade qualification. The analysis demonstrated that learning the interactional norms of this CofP involved sensitivity to often subtle interactional cues which Max had largely succeeded in acquiring, but with which Rick was still struggling. Two examples must suffice to illustrate this point.

Building site discourse switched rapidly and seamlessly between transactional, on-task talk relating to the job at hand, and interpersonal, social talk on topics such as sport, including rugby and diving, family, and music. This switching required that participants could not only accurately anticipate the precise requirements of the job but also that they were on the same wave-length socially. The interactions between Tom and Max were notable for the ease with which they accomplished these switches, as example 10 demonstrates.

Example 10
    1 Tom: oh right yeah ++ um (10)
    2 Max: someone broke their leg +
    3   hey you got a bottom corrugation
    4 Tom: bottom second down bottom of the corrugation
    5   yeah like bottom of that board
    6 Max: thirty nine
    7 Tom: yeah thirty nine +

8   what's someone broke their leg where
9 Max: oh they were doing like a half time display
10   of people like parachuting in //+\ or like hang-gliding in
11 Tom: //[laughs]\\ at the super fourteen game
12 Max: nah what he was saying ( ) //+\
13   and then some dude like broke his leg
14 Tom: [laughs]: oh yeah: (9)
15 Max: do you want to go cut another one
16   I can keep doing this
17 Tom: yeah do you think
18 Max: I'll just do one now or //I mean\

Tom and Max here smoothly interweave transactional and social topics so that instructions regarding a technical process (lines 3-7, 15-18) seem to an outsider to be unexpectedly inserted into a discussion about what happened at a sporting event (lines 2, 8-14). Max is typically quick to pick up what is needed, anticipating the next step (eg. line 15), while also competently managing the social exchange. Overall, as Holmes and Woodhams comment, Max's more integrated status in this CofP compared to Rick's "is apparent in their differential proficiency in 'talking the talk' on site" (2013:292).

The second example illustrates Rick's lack of familiarity with the professional norms of the builders on this site. Our data demonstrates that the members of this CofP have high professional standards and they value hard work; they avoid cutting corners and they value a full day's work for a full day's pay. These standards are not only apparent from their behaviour, but can also be inferred from the critical comments directed at Rick when he slopes off early from work to get a haircut as illustrated in example 11.

Example 11
Context: Tom, the foreman, has been elsewhere on the building site and returns to find Rick has left early
1 Tom: oh is he gone
2 Max: yeah ++ when we were inside he said oh tell Tom…
3 Tom: //fuck he doesn't have many days
4   where he stays here all day does he\
5 B1:   /he's got a hairdressing appointment\\…
6 Tom: /doesn't often get through a full\\ day
7 Max: yeah + yeah the other week the other day he
8   oh yesterday I think he left for a fifteen minute smoko
9   at like ten ten thirty

This informal and humorous interaction demonstrates that Rick's behaviour is not considered to measure up to the expectations of the CofP members. As a newcomer, he is expected to be sensitive to the norms and values of the workplace and to avoid transgressing these. The humorous and sarcastic comments of the builders make it clear that Rick does not conform to their idea of appropriate behaviour for a CofP member. Interestingly, our recordings do not indicate that these attitudes and values are ever conveyed directly to Rick; rather they are implicit and he is expected to pick them up through his own observations and interactions. Moreover, while he is often the butt of humour, he rarely participates in the workplace humour which characterises the interactions of the core CofP members (see Holmes & Woodhams 2013).

These interactions illustrate the challenges of joining a new CofP, even when one is a member of the wider society within which it operates. The building site is also an interesting workplace from the perspective of egalitarianism and informality. There is no doubt that Tom, the foreman, is in charge and he has responsibility for organising the work of both Max and Tom. However, his directives to Max are often indirect and hedged, instantiating the New Zealand preference for avoiding overt exhibitions of power and authority, and Max typically responds accurately to the smallest hint of what is required next. Moreover, as indicated by the social talk which is interwoven with the work talk in example 10, and the humour and the swear word (line 3) in example 11, informality is the norm on this site as elsewhere in New Zealand workplaces.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

When people move countries in the course of their work, contrasting sociocultural norms are inevitably foregrounded and these may cause surprise or even offence. Even within a country a transition between different organisations or between different institutions (e.g. school to workplace) can bring different ways of doing things into focus. Using interview data and recorded interactions in a range of New Zealand workplaces, the analysis in this paper has provided examples of the diversity of interactional behaviours that newcomers need to learn to smoothly integrate into a new workplace.

The analysis has highlighted one particular important societal norm that distinguishes New Zealand workplaces from many of those overseas. New Zealander subscribe to egalitarian values. As Hansen (1968:58) pointed out more than forty years ago "in comparison with England and the United States, and even Australia, New Zealand has most actively and consistently emphasised equalitarianism". This entails de-emphasising status differences and hierarchy, features which distinguish New Zealand from many Asian societies too. This macro-level sociocultural norm is typically instantiated at the micro-level of face-to face interaction in the form of an emphasis on informality and solidarity. Within particular workplace teams and CofPs, specific social practices develop to construct a harmonious and friendly context. As the examples in this paper have illustrated, New Zealanders do not like what they regard as stuffy formality in behaviour or language. Swear words do not raise eyebrows in some workplaces (examples 1 and 2); informal interactional linguistic features are widespread even in formal meetings (example 5); the boss may wear casual clothes (examples 3 and 4) and will greet everyone in an equally friendly way, whatever their status (examples 6 and 7); informal interaction is valued and many workplaces have a regular morning tea period where employees engage in social talk (examples 8 and 9). And while the focus on informality and sociability, quintessentially captured in the skilful interspersing of social talk and transactional talk (example 10) might suggest that New Zealanders do not take their work seriously, there is abundant evidence that this is not the case. In general, honest hard work is highly valued along with respect for professional standards, attitudes and values, as indicated in example 11.

These social values and socio-cultural norms are, however, rarely made explicit. Newcomers are generally expected to infer them by observation and reflection. Interviews can elicit relevant reflections, as examples 1 and 3 indicate when New Zealanders were asked to describe what they found different when working in England compared to New Zealand. Workplace mentors, who have an official mandate for this purpose, can also assist newcomers to become aware of the ways of doing things that are appropriate in their new workplaces, as examples 8 and 9 illustrate. But more often, new employees are expected to pick up the norms for themselves with little explicit help. Co-workers typically take a great deal for granted;

they share assumptions and often extensive background knowledge and experiences as well. They hold similar values and attitudes towards work and the objectives of their CofP, as illustrated in example 11. Newcomers face a daunting task if they are not only inexperienced, but also from a different cultural background.

In conclusion, the analysis in this paper has demonstrated that interaction is a crucial means of learning how to become a well-integrated member of the workplace community, and of becoming acquainted with relevant sociocultural norms and professional values. While some local norms or "ways of doing things round here" can be made explicit through reflection or articulated by a mentor or workplace buddy, the analysis indicates that interactional norms and the related professional values are often instantiated in quite subtle and inexplicit ways. Successful integration into a new workplace is an impressive accomplishment.

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Appendix A: Transcription key

// \	simultaneous or overlapping utterance of 'first' speaker
/ \\	simultaneous or overlapping utterance of 'second' speaker
[laughs]	paralinguistic information
: :	text between colons is modified by the tag immediately preceding it
…	omitted section
un-	cut off word, both self and other interruption
( )	untranscribable or incomprehensible speech
(well)	transcriber's best guess at unclear speech
+	pause of up to one second
++	one- to two-second pause
+++	two- to three-second pause
(4)	pause over three seconds

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[2] This section draws on material from (Holmes, Marra & Vine 2012).

[3] See http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lwp for further information.

[4] For more information on the project, and especially details of data collection and methodology, see Holmes and Stubbe (2003), Marra (2008) and Holmes, Marra and Vine (2011).

[5] All names are pseudonyms.

[6] Transcription conventions are provided in Appendix A.

[7] See Holmes and Stubbe (2003), Holmes (2006), Holmes and Schnurr (2005) for further examples of this kind of humour and teasing in New Zealand workplaces.

[8] See also http://www.immigration.govt.nz/employers and
https://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/resources?default=tool

[9] See Woodhams (2014) for further discussion of the process of Isaac's socialisation and especially of Leo's use of metaphor to convey workplace norms to Isaac.

[10] See King (2014) for a valuable, detailed analysis of the process through which a CofP develops.