

# MĀORI EXPERIENCES AND RESPONSES TO RACISM IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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## **Abstract**

When racism is promulgated on a number of fronts, including the media, it becomes a powerful and pervasive force in society, detrimentally impacting on the lives of those who are its object. This paper analyses Māori focus group interviews that traversed a wide range of sites where racism occurred, including print and broadcast media. We utilised a framework for understanding racism that is in line with key racism theorists and identifies four primary levels through which it operates: internal, interpersonal, institutional and societal. The core themes to emerge in the findings reinforce this framework and have been grouped accordingly: Internalised Racism, Interpersonal Racism, Institutional Racism and Societal Racism. Negative effects on health and wellbeing were articulated by participants as was the call for transformative, counter hegemonic representations of Māori.

## **Keywords**

Māori, media, racism, representation

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## Introduction

Despite a widespread and growing understanding of the significance of racial discrimination against minority groups as a determinant of health and wellbeing (Commission on Social Determinants of Health [CSDH], 2008; Williams & Mohammed, 2009), studies of the experiential dimensions of these phenomena are sparse. In Australia, Ziersch, Gallaher, Baum, and Bentley (2011) explored the effects on living with racism on First Nations people in Adelaide, finding a spectrum of irritations, barriers and disenfranchisements through almost every domain of daily life. Harris et al. (2006) used New Zealand Health Survey data to show damaging impacts on Māori sense of wellbeing from racism in personal interactions, and in work, healthcare and rental accommodation situations. Bécares, Cormack, and Harris (2013) analysed area-level census data and found that when the effects of area-level deprivation are accounted for, Māori experience better health where they are clustered together. The explanation offered is that such residential arrangements reduce exposures to the aversive and damaging effects of racism compared to areas where Māori are less densely settled.

This paper explores Māori experiences and reflections on racism that emerged from focus group discussions arising within a project about Māori representations in mass media news. While some participants made direct links with media representations, the discussions traversed a wide range of sites where racism occurred. These responses, which we present in the light of research into media racism within the framework of a structural analysis, convey important insights into direct experiences and understandings of racism in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Racism

Racism is promulgated on a number of fronts. Definitions of racism include “a mix of prejudice,

power, ideology, stereotypes, domination, disparities and/or unequal treatment” (Berman & Paradies, 2010, p. 228). Fundamental to racism is an ideology of inferiority, promoted by social norms and institutions. These features constitute what Galtung (1969) has referred to as “structural violence” and provide a substrate upon which relational forms are perpetrated and experienced. Paradies and Williams (2008) suggest that racism operates at overlapping levels that can usefully be delineated as societal, institutional, interpersonal and internalised. Societal racism is constituted in the cultural ambience produced by the entrenched social orders and includes the values, epistemologies, norms and sensibilities that attach to hegemonic power. Institutional racism is produced in this context through the organisational requirements, conditions, practices, policies and processes that maintain and reproduce avoidable and unfair inequalities across ethnic/racial groups. At the interpersonal level the myriad direct interactions between people across power differentials enact inequities that are cumulative with the higher level influences, reinforcing and materialising their impact. For many marginalised individuals and groups these effects are internalised and incorporated into personal discourse, attitude, belief or ideology in damaging and self-fulfilling psychological negativity. Internationally the detrimental impacts of racism on health and wellbeing have been recognised (Harrell et al., 2011; Krieger, 2003; McKenzie, 2003; Nairn, Pega, McCreanor, Rankine, & Barnes, 2006; Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). The ill-effects of racism have shown to support the wholesale disenfranchisement of ethnic diversity, which it reinforces through cultural suppression, violence and inequitable access to social and structural resources such as education, employment and housing.

The adverse effects of stereotyping on health are increasingly debated (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Oliver, 2006; Paradies & Williams, 2008) and in Aotearoa New Zealand

the use of racialised identities to portray Māori have their origins in a colonial history where they were used to legitimate a settler society (Belich, 1996; Harding, 2006; McCreanor, 1997; Nairn et al., 2009; Walker, 2004; Wall, 1997). According to Baum (2006) the purpose of this style of categorisation is to define “groups of people that have been socially and politically constructed as ‘racially’ distinct ... [They] have notable cultural dimensions, but they are primarily a manifestation of unequal power between groups” (p. 11).

The history of Aotearoa New Zealand is replete with examples of this oppressive patterning where colonisation sought to assimilate Māori from their cultural roots (Walker, 2004), supplanting their philosophical, social and economic orders in favour of a “better Britain” (Belich, 2001), oriented to settler priorities. This colonising agenda continues through social institutions (including the mass media), to undermine indigenous health and wellbeing through its normalisation of racialised framing and negative stereotypes (Harris et al., 2006; McKenzie, 2003; Nairn et al., 2006).

## Media

The media saturate our lives with messages and images on the television, radio, internet and newspaper (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008; Dew & Kirkman, 2002; Hogan, 2000). Viewing society through this lens illuminates the power of the media to shape our understandings of the world, the choices we make, the behaviours we exhibit and the way we see ourselves and are perceived by others in society (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008; Nairn et al., 2006). Central to the creation of news products is the use of discourse in the construction and maintenance of social identities and realities (Abel, 1997; Maharey, 1990; McCreanor, 2005; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). As Hall (2003) pointed out, these influences are nowhere more salient than in the representation of race and ethnicity, as

definitions, meaning, imagery and problems are routinely played out, “articulated, worked on, transformed, and elaborated” (p. 90).

International studies on media representations of marginalised and indigenous peoples align with stereotypical representations and the limited scope of depictions found locally (Fitzgerald, 2007; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Peters-Little, 2003; Taylor, 2005). One international study found that heavy viewers of television held “predominantly negative stereotypes of Native Americans” (Lee, Bichard, Irey, Walt, & Carlson, 2009, p. 106). Mastro, Lapinski, Kopacz, and Behm-Morawitz’s (2009) study of audience exposure to television news stories on violent crime suggest that the “race of the depicted suspect has a significant effect on attitudes toward Blacks in greater society, beyond the mediated context” (p. 615).

The representation of Māori in Aotearoa mass media (Abel, McCreanor, & Moewaka Barnes, 2012; Adds et al., 2005; McCreanor et al., 2010; McGregor & Comrie, 1992, 2002; Rankine & McCreanor, 2004; Spoonley & Hirsh, 1990; Walker, 1990) provides a case study of media culpability in defining and polarising the contours of social order through its continued use of stereotyping that marginalises Māori. In many instances media coverage provides the main form of access for the dominant group members into the lives and cultures of marginalised ethnic and indigenous people in society (Dew & Kirkman, 2002; Hartley, 1996; Nairn et al., 2011; Wall, 1997).

A flow-on effect of racial framing in the media is observed where representations of Māori remain embedded in a deficit frame which reinforces their status as the ethnic “Other” (Abel, 1997; Alia & Bull, 2005; Colvin, 2010; Nairn et al., 2006; Oliver, 2006; Walker, 1990). Through the routine use of racialised discourse to portray Māori, the media continues to support the marginalisation of Māori through the normalisation of negative and stereotypical depictions of Māori and their racist ripple effects (Pihama, 1996). Negating and damaging

media representations are a determinant of health and wellbeing for marginalised groups in society (CSDH, 2007; Stavenhagen, 2006) through “symbolic annihilation” (Gerbner, 1972) and the seamless reproduction of hegemonic discourse.

In this paper we explore Māori experiences and responses to racism with reference to media framings and impacts on Māori health and wellbeing. As part of a project funded by the Health Research Council—Media, Health and Wellbeing in Aotearoa—which examined Māori representations on television news, newspapers and radio (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2012; Nairn et al., 2011), we ran a series of focus groups with Māori. Qualitative analyses were applied to understand participant views on the way Māori and Māori issues are portrayed in mass media. This process allowed us to determine the meaning-making they derived from these representations, and provided a backdrop on which to consider views on how these representations impacted on Māori. We suggest that dominant framings of Māori at multiple sites, which includes mass media, remain grounded in an ethnocentric paradigm that maintains unequal power relations, adversely contributing to Māori health and wellbeing through the normalisation of negative stereotypes and racist behaviour towards Māori.

## Method

Audience focus groups were conducted as a part of the research study that examined Māori representations on television news, newspapers and radio. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to explore the impact of mass media news representations of Māori on Māori audience members. In total, three focus groups were recruited using snowballing from contact people in researcher networks. Group 1 consisted of seven Māori participants—six female and one male, 25–30 years old—who were from a tertiary environment in a major city. Group 2

consisted of six Māori participants—four female and two male, 20–30 years old—who lived in a smaller urban centre. Group 3 consisted of six Māori participants—two female and four male, 25–35 years old—who lived in a provincial town setting. A staged approach to running the focus groups was used where the participants in each group were interviewed three times each over a 2-year period. This allowed participant awareness of the media and its framing of Māori issues to develop, and enabled interviews to cover a wide range of media topics in the timespan. Ethics approval was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee and the groups were facilitated by Māori researchers.

Meeting 1 aimed to develop background information on participant media awareness. Researcher-led discussions were used to establish which media the participants were most familiar with, the regularity of media access, their knowledge of media production, and their general perceptions of the way Māori are portrayed in the media. Meeting 2 focused on canvassing participant perspectives on the framing of Māori in current events; recollections of recent news items; discussion on a selected Māori-centred print story; and perceptions on the differences between television coverage of two news items involving Māori. The items discussed were a print story covering a Waitangi Tribunal claim about water rights, and television coverage of White Ribbon Day where men express support for stopping violence towards women and children. Meeting 3 explored the comparisons between Māori Television and mass media produced stories about Chris Kahui’s release on bail to the community and police raids at Rūātoki. The focus for comparisons was on general differences between the items, effects of each item on Māori audiences, effects of each item on non-Māori audiences, non-Māori perceptions of Māori as a result, and the impact on Māori-Pākehā relations.

Each focus group discussion was recorded

and transcribed, then coded by theme using the qualitative research software *nVivo* using close script reading techniques to elicit meaning from the data. Thematic and discursive analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2004) were carried out to frame participant experience, understanding and meaning-making in relation to media framing of Māori issues and performance in the representation of Māori people, communities and worldviews. The analytical focus was on some of the commonalities in participants' talk on particular topics, as well as examining some of the discursive aspects of particular phrases. Through this analytical framework the themes were extracted and developed.

## Findings

Baseline data from the first round of interviews showed that participants in all focus groups regularly accessed the media through a range of sources including print, radio and television media. While no participants had direct experience of media production, some did have knowledge of the processes involved with producing the news. Meetings 2 and 3 provided more in-depth data on participant perspectives of the mass media in Aotearoa New Zealand and its treatment of Māori issues. The focus groups provided wide-ranging discussions across multiple sites, including media, where participants spoke of personal experiences and observations of racism.

Findings from the focus group data are presented in sets of themes and sub-themes and are supported by the use of regular verbatim quotations throughout this paper. In line with key racism theorists a suggested framework for understanding racism and its impacts identifies four primary levels through which it operates. The core themes to emerge in the findings reinforce this framework and have been grouped accordingly: Internalised Racism, Interpersonal Racism, Institutional Racism and

Societal Racism. Sub-themes under Internalised Racism highlight negative role fulfilment, and sub-themes under Interpersonal Racism include discrimination and Māori responses to surveillance. When racism is directly linked by participants to media representations, this is noted and is evident in discussions under Institutional Racism and Societal Racism.

### *Internalised Racism*

A powerful and concerning theme emerging from the focus group discussions centres around internalising racist stereotypes, believing them to be true and justifiable and then acting on that internalisation. They are concerning not only for the regularity in which they appear throughout the lives of these participants but also for the deep and nuanced articulation of the internal conflict to which they attest.

Here a participant talks about the influence racist stereotypes of Māori, particularly in the media, can have on decision-making and the naturalisation of particular behaviours, in this instance criminal offending.

Well we probably mentally think “Oh well that’s us” then, the average fulla must think “Oh well must be true then, I must be a ratchet fulla then” ... next time they are in that moment of rage they are just gonna do whatever they do ... because that is what we are, must be what we are ... if they going to keep writing bad things about us then we are gonna be bad because we feel like we are meant to be bad ... [we were] buying into that stereotype because at that time the media did say hey it still was going on about heaps of Māoris in prison, heaps of Māori committing all the crimes so that is going to be the result? Is that we are going to start thinking like that, so even nowadays when that Māori goes up to rob something and he thinks “Fuck should I or shouldn’t I?”, “Nah fuck it Māoris are meant to be in jail anyway” whereas if it was on the positive side it would be “Shall I smash this

window?”, “Nah fuck we are Māori, we are trying to be positive”, and put it down and not get into trouble and that is the difference that the media could portray and create you know?

This partial role-play produced for the interview renders authentic ways in which the negative constructions of Māori produce their recursive influence. The poignant juxtaposing of stereotypical and alternative depictions of Māori provides a lively image of ways in which entrenched realities could be shifted by constructive media representations.

In another group, attention is drawn to the influence of the media in defining Māori identity and its impact on social conditioning.

Kate: Our brother well he’s like “I’m a Māori but really I’m a Pākehā.”

Stacey: But he’s real racist like he’ll see a whānau member, his own whānau walking down the street and if they’re looking like the average Māori, he’ll be like “Oh my god, shame” ... most Pākehās are looking tight on TV, but if we’re not up to scratch like that my brother will be “You Māoris are savages” ...

Pani: It’s cultural pride and I reckon media has done a lot of that.

Jasmine: I think we just get confused full stop—shall we be Māori? It’s Waitangi Day lets be Māori today—then we’ll go to school the next day—oh no I’m not Māori.

Mere: All that negativity creates an identity crisis for them. Particularly your young ones.

The interpersonal tensions within whānau represented here are an example of the classic “divide and rule” tactic of the powerful that pits the oppressed against each other and distracts from constructive debates about identity. Participants note unhelpful comparative depictions in the media and see the undermining of

Māori culture as a driver reinforcing a sense of Māori inferiority, naturalising certain behaviours, creating conflict and uncertainty.

Personal feelings of “shame” were raised in some interviews and can be read as an important indicator of internalised racism at the individual level.

Pani: ... before I got to this point of learning about myself there was that cultural shame.

Hone: I feel a little bit ripped off because growing up it was almost ok to not like your culture; you know it was ok for you to say “Oh fuck that Māori shit ...”

Kate: They made it seem like learning te reo, learning Māoridom, learning tikanga was going to pull you down and make you fail and then my grandparents still say that to me today.

Although not directly linked to media, the shared experiences of these participants are the result of the continued effects of believing and contesting internalised racism throughout the life course. The influences of racialised assumptions are manifest in feelings of shame, occasional contestation and a general sense of the low value assigned to Māori culture. Pani and Hone raise the effects of indoctrination from external sources while Kate explicitly refers to a process of cultural discounting from within her family illustrating the potency of entrenched colonial thinking when they become accepted by the stigmatised.

A final excerpt shows the powerful nature of internalised racism and how early in life it can become embedded.

Stacey: I mean I chose to be white growing up, I really did, I made a conscious effort that I was white and then went to school and got called a nigger. At 5 years old tried to paint myself white because I wanted to be white as everybody else at my school ... You know

the only way that I could be Māori was to be naughty.

Stacey's story shows the impact of social interpretation of her ethnicity irrespective of her own wishes and aspirations. The action of "painting herself white" is a manifest failure that reinforces her exclusion and leaves her only deviance as an avenue of self-expression and identity.

Together these data and analyses highlight the nexus of internalised identity and external racism and discrimination, explaining a mundane but critical dimension of the struggle that Māori face in attempting to achieve equity and inclusion in society.

### ***Interpersonal Racism***

Interpersonal racism (sometimes called personally mediated racism) is defined by Jones (2000) as differential assumptions of the abilities and intentions of others based on their race (prejudice) and differential actions towards someone because of their race (discrimination). These assumptions and actions can be used to exclude, stigmatise, treat unfairly, ignore and disrespect someone on the basis of their racial background. Familiar manifestations of interpersonal racism may include name calling, suspicion and surveillance and poor or no service. Several of these manifestations were present in our data set; some participants made connections between their experiences and media representations.

Jasmine: This is the reality of our lives, of Māori lives for me I feel the media just reinforce what I experience every day, in everyday life and in a shop, you are followed around, like I have been going there now for three years, this is the same shop in and out and my partner can spot them off a mile away and he turns around and he tells them "Fuck off I know you are security" you know and "Why are they following us?" ... the media just sort of reinforces our experiences in this world today.

The notion of being under constant surveillance and feeling a sense of harassment is a common example of interpersonal racism in the international literature and in these data. Here Jasmine talks about this scrutiny as the "reality" of living as Māori. The repeated notion that these experiences are a daily occurrence illustrates the constant pressure and negotiation associated with an everyday task like grocery shopping. The impact on Jasmine and her family is that an activity as banal as grocery shopping is fraught with tension and confrontation. Jasmine signals that mass media coverage of Māori create and reiterate negative representations of Māori that feed off and into her lived experience.

The notion of surveillance extended into the education system for one participant. In her illustration she reflects on the impacts that negative stereotyping had on her and the feeling of vulnerability as a parent.

Nicole: Yeah because for me the whole dynamics of it ... it makes me angry because through the like media influence because that's a huge pathway to sort of shape people's minds and it puts me in a vulnerable position to the point where I have to be very self-conscious. For example my daughter got a trampoline and she didn't she you know she was jumping, jumping and hit the walls and she had three scratches on the side of her face for example and I had never experienced anything like this. She went to school. I didn't think anything of it, she just had like three sort of scratches she went to school, she came home and told me that she was taken to three different teachers to look at the scar, it wasn't even scars it was scratches and that was from the side of the tramp and they didn't tell me, they didn't notify me, and so I went into the school the next day and I said "Why were three teachers assessing her face?" ... She told them honestly she goes "Well, I was jumping on the trampoline" as they do. At 5 they are so sort of honest and then they go "Were you told to say that?" ... this happened and it's always

detrimental to Māori so we are put in you know invisibly—we are put at a huge disadvantage because that’s it there you know for me I look at as a typical 21st century discourse for Māori, it’s a new bubble.

Here Nicole describes obtrusive surveillance of Māori families that is seen as a growing trend. In this instance teachers are responsible for the stressful level of scrutiny she is subjected to following her daughter’s trampoline accident. Nicole identifies the media as powerful in focusing people and institutions on the abuse of Māori children, influencing her treatment and leaving her feeling angry and vulnerable.

Anxiety about unwanted attention from police on the basis of ethnic background is another common feature of interpersonal racism reported by participants.

5: It makes me that little bit more worried when I pull up to a police officer with you know your proper licence, your warrant, your rego and everything is sweet you still think you are bloody ... You are still there gripping your steering wheel thinking you are doubting yourself.

3: Oh my god I have done something wrong even though I haven’t.

5: You go through this bloody check list in your head: warrant, rego, licence ok what could I have done back there, nothing at this distance.

3: Do I look tired? Are my eyes red is my music being played too loud, am I smiling too much? ... I’ll admit it, I will even put glasses on as I drive up to a police check I will pull my reading glasses out and put them on.

1: My partner will say to me you know “Babe, you drive” ... He has his full licence and five different other licences but he will still say “No babe maybe you should drive because you are less likely to get pulled over.”

The self-policing evident in this description of an encounter with the law is worked fluently between the participants as they role-play the checklists of internal dialogues and direct exchanges about strategies for keeping harassment at bay. Anxiety and self-doubt are to the fore, producing behaviours that ironically are likely to attract closer police scrutiny. Experiences of racism, described here in physical (gripping the steering wheel), emotional (anxiety and self-doubt) and behavioural terms (adopting counter-stereotypical practices by wearing glasses to look studious, and regulating music volume), are additional and ongoing stressors that have been linked to inequitable health outcomes (Giscombe & Lobel, 2005; Krieger, 2003). The gendered character of discrimination is the expectation that a Māori woman is less likely to be singled out than a Māori male.

A final excerpt highlights a tension between clear-cut illustrations of racism and more ambiguous situations.

Mere: So there is no relationship—it’s a them and us.

Hector: It’s not true in real life aye, I mean I’ve got Pākehā friends.

Jasmine: Well it isn’t like that but then again it is cos there are Pākehā out there you know that are also on that side of the fence ...

Kate: ... my Mum looks down to Māori, my Grandma she’s just like whatever, and my grandfather is absolutely racist.

Kate: My Grandad aye, he’s like “Stop speaking Māori in my house.”

Stacey: I have to change our babies’ Māori names into Pākehā—like her baby’s name is Hana, so we call her Hannah.

Mere’s opening statement is challenged in ways that produce a further discussion about the

practical complexities of life situations. The anecdotes instantiate how even in the heart of whānau, speaking te reo Māori or naming of children can be subjugated to Pākehā norms or wishes. The weight of this exchange sits with a consensus that the exceptions among Pākehā rather prove the rules of marginalisation and exclusion.

However, the effects and impacts of racism move well beyond the interpersonal sphere to manifest in everyday structures of society.

### ***Institutional Racism***

Institutional racism refers to differential access to societal goods, services and opportunity on the basis of ethnicity. Institutional racism operates without individual identifiable perpetrators but via practice, legal and policy frameworks that govern societal institutions (Jones, 2000).

Responses across all groups were linked to institutional racism and the media where participants discussed first-hand experiences in multiple settings. Discursively, participants described the different ways in which institutional racism impacted on their lives.

SP4: But that's what they do aye? The media they just push their thinking and what have you on to society by doing those sneaky little things and people start believing it even if it's not true.

Interviewer: Why do you think that they do that?

SP4: Because they have got an agenda.

SP1: But whose agenda is it?

SP4: Not ours, definitely not ours!

SP1: It's not usually the media's either, it's whoever owns them.

SP4: Do you think?

SP1: It's the media owners.

SP4: But what about the journalists? They can pick and choose what words they use and what they say. If you have been tainted by your own beliefs and what have you and values and whatever your values are you will drive that through your kōrero and what you are saying and the way that you ask your questions.

In this discussion, a theoretical framing of how the media work is in play. The notion that the media represent the media owners' agenda ("not ours!") is balanced against the responsibilities and interests of journalists themselves and their ideology of neutrality. This analysis resonates with understandings about negative representations of Māori expressed earlier and the role institutions, including the media, play, in perpetuating inequities. As Pani stated: "It's always sad. Māori are bad. Everything's worse off for Māori".

Further discussion in all groups explored the ways in which discriminatory practices continued to typify mass media's coverage of Māori issues. Crime stories were seen as a prime example where Māori ethnicity is named and Pākehā ethnicity is silent.

Piri: Well because when things like [crime] are happening you don't really have to mention that it is Māori people they could just say a 24-year-old male was blah, blah, blah.

Amber: Like they would if it was a European person or you know, not a Māori.

Piri: But they will go "a 24-year-old Māori male" they could just say "24-year-old male"—that still gets the story across.

Piri elaborates his initial offering to support Amber in their concise analysis of the politics of articulating perpetrator identity in crime stories (Alia & Bull, 2005).

Some groups spoke of specific examples of

coverage: the reporting style of a particular television presenter/journalist, the portrayal of Hone Harawira in mainstream headlines over leaked emails, and the focus on violent aspects of Stan Walker's past, detracting from his achievement on *Australian Idol*. Discussing the way these items were played out enabled participants to reflect on the ways mass media institutions entrench negative Māori stereotypes.

Jasmine: But anything to do with Māori aye? And then I notice they pull all the letters out and I am thinking they never read Māori letters its always "Oh these Māoris they you know they sign the Treaty and now they want [Pākehā] to give New Zealand back, go on, get over it", you know? Or when it was the baby killers you know? Paula Bennett went on there and said "a child every 5 minutes was getting out into hospital" and then he [television presenter] said "did you hear that? The Māori children are all going"—and she goes "no, no, no", but he had already put it out there and then all the emails were "Māori are always killing their kids" you know? "Māori need to be shot" you know it was horrible and [television presenter] is reading them like this "Oh look at this one", you know?!

Jasmine highlights different practices that produce negative representations of Māori: her perception that the letters and emails highlighted were a biased selection and the apparently accidental way in which an interviewee's contribution was interpreted. This is linked to the ways in which listener responses then extrapolate from the journalist's contributions in threatening and violent ways, to illustrate the power of construction that is routinely wielded in the mass media. Negative coverage and a lack of media staff education regarding Te Tiriti and historical contexts were also raised. The institutional structuring of racism of course reflects and supports the wider racialised society within which it is embedded.

### **Societal Racism**

The influence of mass media at the broadest level entails the "agenda setting" role (Poindexter, Smith, & Haider, 2003) that tells its audiences what counts as news. Participants were well aware of these biases.

2: I think [the media] only portray what they want to be seen from whatever view they are looking from, they never seem to like talk about our, the things that they done to us. It's always that "Oh Māori are always going for Treaty claims, what more do they want we should all be equal in this country" blah, blah, blah but they never address the issues from the history that talks about what they done to us.

Here the speaker is drawing attention to the broad cultural and discursive features of Pākehā society that mass media play a key role in reproducing. The central contrasting of Māori "grievance" (Tiriti claims) with Pākehā ideology of "equality" neatly captures the way in which structural elements are deployed to advance Pākehā interests and deny attention to the substance of Māori discontent.

A further excerpt links media discourse to public discourse:

SP1: Yeah well I think if they had Māori more approach to journalism like what Māori TV has then you wouldn't have so many Pākehā people coming up and going, "Do you really want to take the beach?" Because the stories just aren't detailed enough and that is generally the problem, most mainstream ...

SP2: Well the general public isn't educated enough on our history.

Here Māori Television becomes the exemplar of how to counter the superficiality and ignorance of mass media coverage. The sense that the Pākehā polity is unable to discern the

significance and meaning of Māori actions is palpable and there is a frustration that the failure of the mass media to educate is a major barrier to progress in Māori–Pākehā relations.

The deconstruction of one such Pākehā discourse about “Māori privilege” and the role of the mass media in maintaining it, completes this analysis.

SP4: One that really stands out for me is this that Māori are over-privileged you always hear it in the media that we are over-privileged because we get scholarships that are only for Māori, we are over-privileged because Whānau Ora is a Māori health kind of initiative and so they change policies by saying well actually to make people feel better I feel, they say, well, we have to make this for all people when actual fact it was built upon one thing and that was for Māori because we are at that low level of health ...

SP3: But even if you look into actual stats and that about that shit you will find that we are not even aye? We are not even getting as much as what they portray in the media aye?

In this exchange the speakers collaborate in a deconstruction of Pākehā ideology of Māori privilege. They cite multiple key instances of how this discourse is applied to particular areas of life and implicate the media in undermining an evidence base that suggests that the hegemonic form is unfounded.

These criticisms are focused upon the role of media in producing and maintaining the broad societal frameworks for understanding established power relations between Māori and Pākehā. They are not focused on institutions (such as law, education and medicine) but rather on the society level—hegemonic discourses and practices that give meaning and form to social relations. As such they demonstrate Māori analysis and knowledge of an important and under-theorised domain of discrimination and injustice.

## Discussion

Findings from the Māori focus groups highlight multiple aspects of racism (societal, institutional, interpersonal and internalised), giving expression to Māori experiences and responses in the specific context of Aotearoa. In particular, discussions related to societal and institutional racism drew links with mass media. Racism and its implications for health and wellbeing were articulated in various ways, including feelings of exclusion, anxiety, anger and resignation. There is a growing body of research that links racism to inequitable health outcomes. Evidence suggests that racism, as a particular and ongoing stressor, may have a greater impact than more general stressors (Giscombe & Lobel, 2005).

### *Societal Racism and Institutional Racism*

Participants reflected on the mass media’s “agenda setting” that tells the audience what counts as news and ultimately silences Māori experiences, histories and worldviews. Reporting on Te Tiriti and the foreshore and seabed legislation, alongside the associated notions of Māori privilege, were given as key examples of the media’s role in reproducing Pākehā ideology, undermining the need to urgently understand and address inequities in our society. In addition, the reproduction of enduring constructions of Māori as criminal and violent, as examples, were seen by participants as the result of particular choices made by media producers; there is an opportunity to present alternatives.

### *Interpersonal Racism*

The effects of these types of depictions were directly experienced by participants through interpersonal relationships, identity constructions and public encounters. Interpersonal racism, experienced on a day-to-day basis, was discussed by participants with reference to the

role the media plays in contributing to discriminatory practices. Society's negative assumptions about Māori were experienced by participants in the form of undue surveillance and confrontations in public spaces. This impacted on their health and wellbeing manifesting in anticipatory stress, distress, anxiety and guilt.

### ***Internalised racism***

The multiple sites where Māori are subjected to ongoing racism, including dominant media constructions, can also result in the internalisation of racist beliefs. Cultural shame was highlighted as one manifestation of cultural denigration as well as personal rejection of a Māori identity. Passing as white was raised as a strategy to combat societal racism as it equates with the privileges and status of whiteness (Edwards, 1992; Ziersch et al., 2011). The contradictory nature of these positions is revealed in conflicted feelings about Māori identity and low self-esteem when being Māori is systematically and through multiple sites presented as inferior and white being superior.

With few meaningful alternatives, pervasive stereotypes, purported to be the "truth" about Māori, were seen to encourage and reinforce role fulfilment in society (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2012). Internalising hegemonic constructions of Māori as inherently bad/violent/savage (Hokowhitu, 2004) ultimately limits the potential of Māori as it sets a pre-determined

pathway for expectations and behaviours.

When racism is promulgated on a number of fronts, including the media, it becomes a powerful and pervasive force in society, detrimentally impacting on the lives of those who are its object. The negative effects on health and wellbeing were articulated by participants, as was the call for transformative, counter-hegemonic representations of Māori that contribute to an equitable and harmonious society.

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### **Glossary**

kōrero	speech, conversation
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Tiriti	The Treaty (of Waitangi)
tikanga	correct procedure, custom
whānau	extended family
Whānau Ora	indigenous health initiative in Aotearoa driven by Māori worldview and concepts

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