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Media, Racism and Public Health Psychology

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What is This?

Media, Racism and Public Health Psychology

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Abstract

International literature has established that racism contributes to ill-health of migrants, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. Racism generally negates wellbeing, adversely affecting physical and psychological health. Numerous studies have shown that media contribute marginalizing particular ethnic and cultural groups depicting them primarily as problems for and threats to the dominant. This articles frames media representations of, and their effect on, the indigenous Maori of Aotearoa, New Zealand within the ongoing processes of colonization. We argue that reflects the media contribution to maintenance and naturalisation of colonial relationships and seek to include critical media scholarship in a critical public health psychology.

COMPETING INTERESTS: None declared.

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- *colonization*
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. . . [will] the Maoris . . . prove an exception to the rule which seems universal, viz, that the aboriginal savages must fade away before their civilized brethren. (Gore Browne, 1859, cited in Sinclair, 1957, p. 147)

THE INSPIRATIONAL call by community psychologists Albee and Fryer (2003) for a public health psychology and the generation of conceptual and practical frameworks of this discipline (Hepworth, 2004) marks a watershed in attempting to shift the discipline from its individualist, pathologizing roots (Antonovsky, 1996) to a more functional focus on the roles that physical and social environments play in producing and maintaining the wellbeing of populations. Similarly Murray and Cambell called for a re-orientation of health psychology towards 'a discipline that sides clearly with the interests of the oppressed and disenfranchised masses' (2003, p. 233), articulating the need for a conscious politicizing of health psychologists and their alignment with broader social justice movements. An earlier call for more effective engagement with 'race-associated differences in health' acknowledged the impacts of racism and the effects of social classification 'in a race-conscious society' (Jones, 2000, p. 1212). Such politicizing cannot be achieved using universal (western) concepts that have not been adequately localized (Corin, 1994). Our critical health psychology project responds to those challenges from within a colonial setting, which enables us to display effective linkages between the concepts as they were and continue to be instantiated in Aotearoa, New Zealand and the consequent effects on the indigenous Maori in this country. We position the universals; 'colonization', 'race', 'racism' and 'media' in our local situation (Falmagne, 2004). These four distinguishable areas of scholarship: colonization—viewed as the creation of a racist society, impacts of racism on health and wellbeing, discourses of race in Aotearoa and the place of race in media practices and products are reviewed before we present a broad theoretical approach to our situated study of media racism.

Institutional racism

Racism, the right to dominate racialized others has been widely discussed and theorized (Essed,

1991; Jones, 2000; Reeves, 1983; van Dijk, 1991, 1993). While acknowledging personal and internalized forms of racism (Jones, 2000) we focus on institutional racism and the means by which it is naturalized (Billig, 2001; Hall, 2001). 'Institutional racism refers to the way in which groups are differentially treated by institutions as a result of a set of organisational policies and procedures' (Spoonley, 1993, p. 21). Describing how racism functioned in dominant institutions Spoonley emphasized the importance of ideologies that benefited the dominant group not least by legitimating gate-keeping mechanisms controlling access to resources. Commenting on such institutional racism Walker noted that members of the dominant [Pakeha] group were 'often unaware of its [racism's] origins or its function in maintaining a structure of Pakeha domination and Maori subordination' (1986, p. 94), adding that this hindered change in such structures. We regard institutional racism as both driving the processes of colonization and as a continuing consequence of those processes.

Historically psychology has focused primarily on personal racism locating its origins in personal characteristics of 'the racist' (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Allport, 1954), everyday cognitive processes—categorization and generalization—(Hamilton, 1981), or in use of social categories in (personal) social identity theory (Turner, 1987). Those conceptualizations effectively excluded the structural, systemic and discursive contexts within which discrimination and oppression occurred (Falmagne, 2004; Jones, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

However, psychologists who have sought to engage the discipline in producing real change in racist and other unjust social orders and institutions have attended to the discursive and social foundations of the social order (McCreanor, 1997; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Like other authors (Murray, 2004) they have emphasized the critical importance of studying the interplay between context, discourse and ideology. Within the New Zealand setting Wetherell and Potter showed that 'traditional' psychological approaches to racism were inadequate when examining the ways in which Pakeha[1] responded to 'race issues'. They noted that, while some parts of speakers' self-presentation and (discursive) treatment of Maori and Pacific

peoples might seem to reveal racist attitudes, social identity or personality, other parts of the same person's talk contradicted that view.

Colonization—creation of a racist society

Colonization and its sibling imperialism have been subjects of intense, informed debate (Miles, 1994; Rattansi, 1994, Slater, 1994) that increasingly acknowledges that colonizers intended to establish and maintain the means to profit from the resources of the 'new' land. Numerous authors have identified patterns of trade, missions, settlement, war and legislative control in which indigenous law, education, political practices and language were supplanted by those of the colonizer (Ballara, 1986; Belich, 1986, 1996; Walker, 1990a; Williams, 1989). One effect of those changes was that the foreign became the natural or normal and the indigenous, particularly those who did or do not assimilate, became alien. Described that baldly the injustice of colonization is intolerable yet such portrayals are rare because discursive and social practices in colonial countries normalize and justify the status quo (McCreanor, 1993a; Nairn & McCreanor, 1991; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The following brief sketch of colonial strategies employed in the establishment of Aotearoa, New Zealand as 'the Britain of the South' (Belich, 1996, p. 298) demonstrates some of those destructive practices of the late 18th- and early 19th-century imperialism. The example is intended to provide a context for the later discussion of discourses of race (Falmagne, 2004; Murray, 2004).

In 1840 Maori representatives signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi; hereafter Te Tiriti) with the British Crown. There is much debate about the meaning and significance of Te Tiriti (Barrett & Connolly-Stone, 1998; Joseph, 2000; Kawharu, 1989; Sharp, 1990; Williams, 1989) but despite contested aspects it is clear that Queen Victoria guaranteed the chiefs of all Maori tribes inhabiting Aotearoa, New Zealand her royal protection, including all the rights and privileges of British subjects. Maori had already been guaranteed 'te tino rangatiratanga' (independence) and 'mana' (sovereignty) in the Declaration of Independence 1835 (Orange, 1987). Te Tiriti reaffirmed Maori sovereignty but

ceded 'kawanatanga' (governance) to the British Crown (Yensen, Hague, & McCreanor, 1989, p. 33). However, subsequent settler governments ignored Te Tiriti and acted as if Maori had seceded sovereignty. On such dubious claims of sovereignty the colonists established their own state modelled on the British economic, class and parliamentary systems.

From that point colonization of Aotearoa, New Zealand proceeded on the presumption that Maori would be assimilated into the dominant (Pakeha) society. The following quotation from Macaulay's *Minute on education* (1835) exemplified this policy that was not specific to New Zealand, a form of what Anderson (1991, p. 150) termed 'official nationalism' that was intended to: 'create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect' (as cited in Anderson, 1991, p. 91).

The Anglocentrism of the settlers' systems and institutions; finance, legislation, education, religion and their domination of public life, made Maori the savage 'other' in their own country (Belich, 1986). Settler domination was driven and underpinned by their perceived superiority as advanced, civilized, Christian people. Two applications of that presumed superiority will suffice to demonstrate how racist institutions were established at the whim and to the benefit of the settlers. Looking first at education, Maori had shown a keenness to learn to read and write Te Reo[2] from their first contact with missionary teachers who had transcribed the language. Few leading settlers showed any inclination to learn the indigenous language as they regarded fluency in English a sign of their civilization. Consequently schools (for Maori) were supported financially, only if they 'provided instruction in the English language' (Biggs, 1968, p. 74). Because school inspectors increasingly argued that the Maori language was an obstacle to civilizing Maori the settler-dominated parliament passed the Native Education Act (1867), which specified that English was to be the medium of instruction. Moving the second reading of that bill Mr J. C. Richmond said: 'for a people in the position of the Maori race it was a first condition of their progress to put them in the way of learning the language of the inhabitants and government of the Colony'

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(Richmond, 1867, pp. 862–863). The transformation of Maori from tangata whenua (people who are the land) to a race that was to be assimilated to majority (English) practices underpinned education in New Zealand as was made explicit by Richmond's statement.

Assimilation took a different form in relation to constitutional practices, especially those relating to 'ownership' of land. Among the constitutional preconceptions that colonists brought to Aotearoa, New Zealand was the belief that an individual's entitlement to 'own' land derived from the sovereign who retained rights to any mineral or other wealth beneath the soil. Further, European political philosophers had concluded that only people who improved land could have title to it, so both the colonial administration and the settlers, presumed that the Crown 'owned' the beds of rivers, lakes and the sea. Consistent with Maori conceptions of ownership (Jackson, 2004), Maori sought to assert sovereignty over such areas and resources on the basis of their uninterrupted possession and usage. When Maori who were accustomed to gather fish and shellfish from the seabed near Thames sought a ruling on their title from the Maori Land Court that court was barred from issuing a ruling, and the bar remained in force until 1993. Since the establishment of a 'responsible settler government' in 1852 the Crown has consistently set settler interests before Maori as in that Thames example.

In 2003 the Court of Appeal determined that the Maori Land Court could hear and rule on Maori entitlements for use of the seabed and foreshore. The response of the Labour-led government was entirely consistent with those of their predecessors; they promised to assert public, i.e. non-Maori, ownership over New Zealand seabed and foreshore not currently covered by private title. Amid the ensuing debates it became clear that the foreshore and seabed were not covered by existing legal definitions and could indeed be regarded as remnant sovereign possessions of Maori. Despite strenuous opposition that legislation passed into law in November 2004. It vested the seabed and foreshore in 'the people of New Zealand' without compensation, concession or acknowledgement that Maori had not extinguished or surrendered their title. Opponents of the legislation argued that it continued the government tradition of breaching Te Tiriti by abrogating Maori rights comparing the Act to earlier illegal confiscations of Maori land by the British Crown (Jackson, 2004; Sykes, 2004; Sykes & Pihama, 2004). It should be clear that we agree with those who argued that the Foreshore and Seabed Bill was a recent instance of the settler government illicitly asserting sovereignty over (Maori) resources on behalf of the Pakeha majority.

In these and numerous other ways the colonizers created a society where Maori are regarded with suspicion and are expected to succeed in institutions grounded in overt hostility to them as a people, their language and their culture. Like other indigenous peoples in colonial societies, Maori are expected to be responsible for their health and wellbeing while coping with pervasive but largely unacknowledged racism.

Racism affects health and wellbeing

There is a large and growing body of evidence that racism and racial discrimination impact negatively on people's health (Gee, 2002; Krieger & Sidney, 1996; LaViest, 2003; Williams, 1999). Experience of racial discrimination has been shown to be associated with higher rates of mental ill-health (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Harrell, Hall and Taliaferro (2003) reviewed findings of negative physiological impacts created by incidents of racial discrimination and concluded that racial discrimination undermined people's health. Karlson and Nazroo (2003) demonstrated that different forms of racism—personal, institutional and societal, operated independently and additively to effect negative outcomes on a wide range of health indicators.

On the basis of such findings, researchers have advocated investing in anti-racism as a public health measure (Krieger, 2003; McKenzie, 2003) and concluded that progress in meeting public health goals requires the elimination of racism (James, 2003). Krieger (2003) identified the complex of epistemological, methodological and political issues to be addressed in treating racism as a threat to public health and concluded that it is a key field for investment for the public good.

Although the reviewed research indites racism as a significant cause of the poorer health experienced by minority ethnic and indigenous groups, Nazroo (2003) argued that the interpretation was clouded by inadequate specification and measurement of ethnicity, socio-economic status (SES), social disadvantage and racism. Further, he concluded that many researchers and commentators exploited that masking by continuing to use victim-blaming interpretations (see also Lukes, Banuazizi, Liem, & Morris, 1996; Ryan, 1971). Assessing how the crucial variables were acknowledged and integrated into mainstream research, design, execution and interpretation, Valencia (1997) argued they gave priority to 'deficit thinking'. Such interpretations declare those subject to discrimination to be responsible for their own fate while deflecting attention from the social structures, procedures and ideologies that encourage or enact the discrimination.

Research findings in Aotearoa, New Zealand are consistent with the international research. A recent Ministry of Health report *Decades of disparity* (Ajwani, Blakely, Robson, Tobias, & Bonne, 2003; Jones, 1999) summarized local studies that examined the role of interpersonal and institutional discrimination. Age-standardized rates of mortality over a wide range of fatal conditions such as cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes, accidents and suicides were significantly worse for Maori than non-Maori, often by margins greater than 100 per cent. Of particular note was the observation that life-expectancy for Maori and Pakeha have increasingly diverged since the mid-1980s. From that point Maori (male and female) life expectancy remained steady or declined while non-Maori life expectancy rose. The authors of the report noted that the divergence coincided with the introduction of policies enacting a radical neo-liberal agenda in Aotearoa New Zealand (Easton, 1997; Kelsey, 1995).

Health services research (Scott, Marwick, & Crampton, 2003; Westbrooke, Baxter, & Hogan, 2001) showed how racism might affect the health of individual Maori. Westbrooke et al. analysed disparities in treatment rates and concluded that Maori were denied equal access to cardiac interventions. Scott et al. showed that Maori and low-income groups were significantly less likely to visit a GP than any other groups because visits incurred significant costs not mitigated by subsidies that were intended to raise Maori rates of engagement with health care. Local research also includes micro-level studies such as an analysis of the ways in which doctors talk about Maori health. When talking about Maori health, non-Maori general practitioners employ many of the discourses identified in studies of Pakeha talk (McCreanor, 1993a, 1993b; Nairn & McCreanor, 1990, 1991) that supported a 'standard story' (Fish, 1980) of Maori assimilation into the Pakeha-dominated society (McCreanor & Nairn, 2002). Examinations of how Maori health stories were reported in the mainstream media have shown that journalists used similar discursive resources in depicting Maori as needy, passive, objects of Pakeha help (Hodgetts, Masters, & Robertson, 2004; Rankine & McCreanor, 2004).

Those demonstrated links between racism and health at the population level lead to two conclusions. First, all social institutions implicated in the reproduction of racism contribute to damaging the health and wellbeing of Maori. Second, as racism 'came ashore' with the settlers it is necessary to locate those social institutions in their colonial context. We have argued that the processes of colonization created discriminatory institutions and the ideological commonsense that naturalizes their everyday practices (Billig, 1995; Falmagne, 2004; Hartley, 1982). Unacceptable levels of personal racism among settlers fit comfortably within that social and cultural matrix that also ensures that many indigenous people are damaged by internalized racism.

Discourses of race in Aotearoa

There is now a large body of research examining how social categories and social relations are constructed and modified in discourse (Billig, 2001; Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 2001; Radley, 2004; Smith, 1999; Wilkinson, 2004). Some of this work has explored how social groups are racialized or 'Othered' within the dominant discourse practices (Fairclough, 1993; Reeves, 1983; Sampson, 1993). In general however the research has focused on the construction of immigrant minorities as threatening or draining the resources of a host society (van Dijk, 1984). Common to such analyses is the recognition that social categories such as; 'Maori', 'Pakeha', 'settler', while typically used as if category

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memberships were fixed, are constantly and flexibly constructed to meet speakers' situated needs. In using those terms we do not intend to imply either that memberships are fixed or that the members are homogeneous. Given the critical interest in the colonial origins of modern New Zealand it is unsurprising that debates about relationships between Maori and settler peoples in this country should have occasioned significant scholarship. Salmond (1991) charted development of these 'race' discourses from 'first contact' (Abel Tasman's voyage of 1641–1642) until 1772. She contrasted European and Maori constructions of each other noting that, although two distinctive cultures were viewing each other for the first time, the European gaze was preset. Maori were seen through the diffracting prism of European thought as either inferior or, less consistently, as exhibiting traits that were either valued or considered worthless, a precursor of 'Good Maori–Bad Maori' categorization (McCreanor, 1989, p. 91). Salmond found that the Maori view of the newcomers in contrast was generally more positive and less ambivalent. Pakeha came with a specific view of Maori as Other (Ballara, 1986), that had been 'formed in Britain or other parts of her colonial dominions' and that natives were inferiors to whom the settlers brought the 'inestimable benefits of civilization' (p. 10). Colonizing companies intent on luring customers promulgated similar images (McCreanor, 1997). Such portrayals of Maori might suffuse depictions of noble savages, be utilized to justify exploitation, or to account for defeats and reverses in military engagements with Maori (Belich, 1986).

Malcolm Nicholson (1988) examined material effects of late 19th-century Pakeha representations of Maori primarily in relation to provision of health care and hospital services. He identified two colonial discourses that had very different consequences for provision of Maori health care and education. One discourse, that enabled Maori to be depicted as 'the noble savage', encouraged provision of education and health care, while the other depicting them as 'ignoble savage[s]' discouraged such provision. As constructed a noble savage would benefit from health care and education because, like Macaulay's Indians (see the earlier section on Colonization), they could become civilized. Constructed as ignoble

savages, Maori were considered incapable of benefiting from education and, because such savages were depicted as being of inferior or uncertain disposition, teachers and health workers were discouraged from working with them.

Unsurprisingly, Maori resisted such degrading, racialized categorizations. Sir Apirana Ngata, a prominent Maori leader through the early decades of the 20th century, challenged historians' portrayal of Maori. He argued that western historians consigned Maori to the past as they did not recognize it was a living culture and in doing so, rendered their recordings inaccurate. In particular their work emphasized negative images of Maori that reinforced the ideologies of the dominant group. Ngata wrote that, even when historians recorded Maori and Pakeha enjoying good working relationships, they persisted in: 'dwelling only on the romance and mystery of the past or recounting only factors of hostility, massacres, wars, riotings, and acts of degeneracy' (n.d., p. 4).

There have been several formal studies of current race discourses in Aotearoa, New Zealand (McCreanor, 1989, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1997; Nairn & McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Nairn and McCreanor (1990) identified 10 commonly used discursive patterns in Pakeha submissions about 'Race relations in New Zealand', made to the Human Rights Commission in 1979. They argued that the patterns—interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987)—sustained a durable Pakeha 'commonsense' about race relations that assumed and could 'legitimate' instances of Pakeha domination. That commonsense constructed Maori/Pakeha relations apart from our colonial history, social structures and the distribution of power (Nairn & McCreanor, 1991). The descriptions of the following examples of the patterns are taken from McCreanor (1989: 91–3):

One people: We (living in New Zealand) are or should be a single united group and that is the only way in which we can avoid the dangers of divisive racial tensions.

Privilege: Any institution labelled as 'Maori' e.g. 'Maori Affairs Department' 'favours Maori' giving them privileges that are unfair and racist.

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Good Maori/Bad Maori: Enables a speaker to divide Maori into those who fit into society and those who don't, a categorisation deployed flexibly to attack 'Stirrers' and assert national unity.

Stirrers: Assumes that Maori unrest arises solely from the politically motivated actions of a minority of agitators. In the 1979 materials most identified stirrers were Pakeha. In more recent materials stirrers are typically ('Bad') Maori.

Data from the 1980s and 1990s showed that Pakeha speakers continued to rely on these and other discourses. Wetherell and Potter (1992) identified similar patterns in their interviews with (mainly) middle-class white New Zealanders although they named them differently. Maori were 'fundamentally lazy' (1992, p. 15), handicapped by inefficient cultural practices, (1992, p. 15), criminal and still had not learnt the 'language of the inhabitants of the colony' (1992, p. 96). Over lengthy interviews individual speakers made selective use of the patterns to meet specific goals. One speaker deployed a classic exemplar of the 'Bad Maori', a 'Black Power gang member', as the helper of the stranded motorist (1992, p. 39) to position himself as 'a decent joker' (1992, p. 53) who can see some good in everyone. Such decency, or fairness, underwrote support for special provision for Maori groups that was grounded in perceived inferiority or weaknesses of Maori (1992, p. 54). That perception of Maori as a people who needed the advantages of 'western civilization' (1992, p. 54) did not extend to situations where special provisions were represented as discriminating against 'the Europeans'. At such times speakers, relying on notions of national unity, rejected such privileges arguing that the practice could destroy social relations (1992, pp. 76–7). Throughout their data Pakeha values, practices and dominance provided the unmarked norms against which Maori were assessed.

Although New Zealand's 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) presumes Maori assimilation, they have resisted militarily, politically and through diverse protest actions. As a people they have accomplished a stunning renaissance over the latter half of the 20th century. However, that renaissance co-exists with material and spiritual dispossession, of which the foreshore and seabed legislation described earlier is merely the most recent instance. Reacting to Maori assertiveness a number of additional discursive strands in Pakeha race discourse have been identified that modify existing understandings of race discourse in Aotearoa (Bell, 2004). The first, most powerfully manifest in recent works on identity (King, 1999, involved an attack on the unique (indigenous) status of Maori by explicitly constructing all population groups as immigrants. That move reconfigured the difference between indigenous and settler as merely length of residence. While Bell noted ambivalence and some reservations about the manoeuvre she confirmed that it eroded the status of Maori and was, consequently, very effective in undermining sovereignty claims by Maori. Further, King utilized the narrative of his own life and experience to produce a fetching account of Pakeha indigeneity that resonated strongly with commonsense ideology that linked identity to the development of the land by 'can-do' people. King's construction was, in effect, similar to claims by the Honourable Trevor Mallard, Minister of Education, that Pakeha possessed a kind of indigeneity that while distinct from that of Maori must nevertheless be regarded as authentic and a potent warrant for claims to belonging (Mallard, 2004).

Media and race

Analyses of media in modern and postmodern societies have concluded that media are the storytellers, repeatedly confirming and modifying the society's image of itself (Anderson, 1991; Condor, 1988; Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 2001). In and through those stories, whether in the factual or fictional genres, we get to meet and 'know' our fellow citizens and, consequently, consistently distorted depictions stigmatize those so portrayed (Nairn, 1999; van Dijk, 1993). All media storytelling occurs within regnant social and discourse practices (Fairclough, 1993, 1995) that include criteria or values that identify events or people as newsworthy, what Hall termed 'regimes of representation' (2001, p. 338). In a major study of Canadian news media Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987) identified deviance—departures from that deemed

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socially normal—as the prime characteristic of news stories. We argue that, in our colonial society, the indigenous peoples are routinely monitored for deviance.

As in other colonial societies, the media have played a major role in advancing and supporting Pakeha dominance in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Settler journalists constructed the colonial wars as conflicts in which a savage rabble was inevitably overcome by the might and valour of British fighting men (Belich, 1986). That view was reproduced in the popular press, official accounts, education system and other institutions to become an established truth. Other commentators have drawn attention to more recent patterns in the way the settler press represents Maori and Maori issues (McGregor & Te Awa, 1996). Wilson was strongly critical:

> . . . there's nothing [the media] handle quite so badly [as Maori news]. They bungle it in all sorts of ways—playing down big issues (Maori language teaching), missing Maori implications in other issues (immigration), ignoring stories completely (major hui and festivals), quoting people who aren't Maori authorities (Winston Peters or Bob Jones)[3] and neglecting those who are, blowing up negative stories, getting them wrong and denying they did. (1990, p. 49)

Walker evaluated media coverage of Maori claims to land and cultural recognition, and concluded: 'When these events involve Maori and Pakeha, it [media] consistently represents the Pakeha status quo, helping them to maintain their power' (1990b, p. 46).

Ramsden and Spoonley's analysis of media coverage of cultural safety issues in nursing argued that among other things, this approach: 'questions the role of the media in defending traditional Pakeha values against any change which might provide Maori with different and more appropriate services' (1993, p. 170). Kernot (1990) showed that media crime reports used race labels, 'Maori', 'Pacific Islander' or 'Polynesian' up to four times as often as labels such as 'Pakeha', 'European' or 'Caucasian', creating a strong but illusory association between crime and ethnicity.

McGregor and Comrie (1995) analysed news stories about Maori from television and radio between 1985 and 1994. Those stories made up only 5.5 per cent of the total and in writing them the journalists overwhelmingly relied on Pakeha newsmakers who were the sources for 61.7 per cent of stories. Maori sources were used in only 12.8 per cent of the items. Television news about Maori was dominated by the bad, often expressed as conflict. Pakeha concepts and discourses of race relations pervade media constructions of issues involving Maori. Selective reporting of negative issues, reliance on non-Maori sources and preferential use of race labels creates and sustains a distorted view of Maori (Corner, 1995; Husband, 1991).

Referring to the patterns previously described, McCreanor analysed media coverage of a particular protest and found that:

> . . . media stories both construct and are constructed by those commonsense ideological patterns and associations shared by their audience. The patterns act as boundaries or fields within which the commonsense of a social group can flow with ease and beyond which a speaker's discourse can be expected to meet with hostility or incomprehension. (1993a, p. 82)

Those who believe that 'activists' are completely justified in calling for redress for Maori grievances, cannot use the settler commonsense and have to explain their underlying assumptions before they can make their point. Within a 10-second soundbite that necessity places them at a disadvantage compared to opponents who can rely on existing understandings embedded in previous media constructions.

Detailed study of particular instances of media coverage has demonstrated how those practices work to disadvantage Maori. Abel (1997) analysed television coverage of Waitangi Day[4] in 1990, identifying four discourses that were ranked hierarchically in that coverage. The pre-eminent discourse was:

> . . . the 'unity' discourse which referred to the Treaty (if at all) as a symbol of unity . . . saw the celebrations as moving people closer together and spoke of 'one people', 'our nation'. It described moves for Maori control over Maori resources and development as 'separatist'. (1997, p. 39)

In a version of the 'Good Maori—Bad Maori' discourse, the coverage positioned Maori as either 'wild' or 'tame', that categorization masking the breadth of Maori support for protests about Treaty grievances. Further, the media focused on the tactics of protest rather than the injustices that stimulated the protest. As hypothesized (Fiske, 1987) the broadcast news was grounded in a presupposed equilibrium of 'celebration and consensus' that was disrupted by the protesters who were marginalized by the concluding summaries that proclaimed unity to be the reality of the day.

An analysis of Maori documentary makers' struggle to access mainstream television in Aotearoa found that they were constrained by the dominant practices (Barnes, 2003). Pakeha control of the practices of production coupled with domination of both funding and programming justified by the dominant ideologies, limited how Maori participated. When pitching ideas Maori programme makers were undermined by those ideologies that guided them towards representations that were familiar and accessible to the decision makers.

Discursive and content analyses of media coverage of a successful genetics research project that had been initiated by Maori demonstrated that the media attributed the achievement only to the Pakeha partner, a genetics research team at Otago University (Rankine & McCreanor, 2004). The stories failed to acknowledge that the Maori researchers had initiated the project, been responsible for the genealogical component of the work and had overseen the application of the findings. Hodgetts et al. (2004) studied media coverage of the report *Decades of disparity*. They showed that the structure of the media items encouraged explanations based on individual lifestyle choices, implied that recently created Maori health services were ineffective and sabotaged the report's strong evidence that health inequalities were structurally determined. No media workers questioned the role of mainstream health services in the disparities and media coverage of the debate ignored sophisticated Maori models of health in favour of Pakeha conceptualizations.

Studying media at the intersection of race and health

The evidence shows that oppression and marginalization are inimical to a people's health. There is damning evidence that the media contribute to that marginalization, intensively monitoring members of certain social categories and giving prominence to their constructed deviance (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978; Kernot, 1990). Looking at Aotearoa, New Zealand as a colonial society we have shown that the colonists created a racist society and developed discourses to help naturalize and render invisible that oppression. We have sketched the media contribution to promoting and maintaining Pakeha domination. Critical analyses of media representations of Maori and relations between Maori and settlers have been shown to favour the latter and, in a variety of ways, damage the former. While we acknowledge that there is a dialectical relationship between popular discourse/culture and media representations, we argue that in relation to the health and wellbeing of Maori, the media operate as a key apparatus of ongoing colonization. By framing this in the terms suggested by Albee and Fryer (2003) as a public health issue, we endorse the notion that media racism should become a field of study to which critical and discursive psychology can make a profound contribution, changing approaches to the wellbeing of population groups, particularly Maori. Albee and Fryer stated that: 'Those in the field of public health argue correctly that primary prevention is the only practical way to reduce the incidence of many of the great plagues afflicting human beings' (2003, p. 71).

There are three strategies for primary prevention: eliminating the noxious agent, preventing the transmission of the agent and enhancing the resistance of the population to the agent. Our goal is to apply these principles to media bias, to prevent the transmission of racism, as that should greatly assist the elimination of institutional and personal racism and encourage resistance to racism, not least by encouraging the development of indigenous media options some of which already operate in Aotearoa, New Zealand in the areas of print, radio and television (Barnes, 2003).

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Media theorists and researchers, both local and international, have little doubt that the mass media are hugely influential, but remarkably unaccountable sources of made meanings and reality maintenance in contemporary societies (Chomsky, 2003; Hall et al., 1978; McQuail, 2000). Some have argued that this constitutes a serious threat to democratic systems that need citizens to have ready access to trustworthy information, to prevent suffrage being wielded in ignorance (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Scammell & Semetko, 2000). These problems are deep-seated, creating a thoroughgoing distrust of media outputs for, as O'Neil stated in her recent Reith Lecture: 'Good public debate must not only be accessible to but also assessable by its audiences. The press are skilled at making material accessible, but erratic about making it assessable' (2002, p. 4).

The experience in this country with respect to coverage of race relations mirrors those concerns. Analyses of historical media texts have identified the content as racist and settler-serving (Ballara, 1986; Belich, 1986). Spoonley and Hirsh (1990) offered an analysis, both empirical and theoretical, of the means by which that bias was effected and the struggles of non-journalists to call the offending institutions to account. McGregor and Comrie (1992, 2002) and Abel (1997) confirmed the lack of accountability of New Zealand mass media in relation to race issues. Recent studies, presenting detailed accounts of the discursive and media practices, have demonstrated how the partiality is created in particular instances (Hodgetts et al., 2004; Rankine & McCreanor, 2004).

We are arguing for a new development in media research, specifically processes and organizations that can provide systematic, independent knowledge of how well coverage conveys the diverse, challenging issues arising from relations between Maori and settlers. That possibility was inspired by the model and practices of media monitoring developed by the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) to address anti-Islamic coverage in that country. Through intensive study of annually gathered media archives CIC researchers have developed a set of indices that they apply systematically to subsequent items and bodies of coverage to produce ratings of anti-Islamic bias. For five years those ratings have been applied to media materials from specific newspapers, creating comparable ratings of each publication. The Congress annually publishes 'league tables' that compare the bias of different newspapers. That process, the indices, the ratings and the yearly publication of findings, has proven to be both critical and educational, and has led to changed and improved practices in a number of newspapers. Henry and Tator (2002) commented that the CIC intervention has improved awareness and accountability of editors and journalists, reducing the strength and frequency of anti-Islamic bias.

We have made a modest beginning to a project intended to lead to the development of a similar set of indices to underpin three distinct lines of work. First, using those indices to underpin an annual accounting of pro-settler bias in New Zealand mass media. Second, to create the technical capabilities and capacity to provide rapid research-based evaluations of the coverage of particular issues. Third, using the indices and research to resource consultative and educational dialogues with journalists with the goal of enhancing the quality and standing of their work. The first two lines of work are conceptualized as directly undermining support for institutional and personal racism making an indirect but significant contribution to improved Maori health. We argue that the project, in the longer term, has the potential to make strong contributions to the common wealth by improving relationships between settlers and Maori by undermining stereotyped understandings fuelled by representations born in the colonial processes. The resultant improvements—increased inclusion, greater social cohesion and generally improved wellbeing—will constitute valuable contributions to the public good.

Notes

1. Pakeha is a Maori term for New Zealanders of European descent.
2. Te Reo Rangatira, the language of chiefs is how Maori identify their language.
3. Maori right-wing politician and Pakeha property magnate respectively.
4. Waitangi Day is an annual commemoration of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between the British Crown and the Maori people in 1840. Contested interpretations of the Treaty as alternatively ratifying or extinguishing Maori sovereignty

make the day a focus for opposed celebration and protest.

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