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MĀORI SPORT AND MĀORI IN SPORT

Mass media representations and Pākehā discourse

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Abstract

Māori players, coaches, administrators and audiences contribute to a wide range of sporting codes at all levels in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally. However, Pākehā media coverage, a representative sample of which we analysed in this project, presents Māori participation and achievement as limited and aberrant. This paper reports our analysis of New Zealand newspapers' sports coverage in which Māori were represented. A database of 50 articles was created from 120 newspapers. This was examined using thematic and discursive methods to explore the nature of two overarching themes within sports stories. "Māori sport" depicted Māori as exotic and marginal to sporting life in Aotearoa/New Zealand, while "Māori in sport" articles subsumed Māori within monocultural sporting codes. The implications of these findings are discussed in the context of a theoretical framework of Māori self-determination and decolonization.

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Introduction

For more than 50 years many researchers have examined mass media coverage of Māori and Māori issues (Abel, 1997; Hodgetts, Masters, & Robertson, 2004; McCreanor, 1993; McGregor & Comrie, 1995; Phelan, 2006; Spoonley & Hirsh, 1990; Thompson, 1953, 1954; Walker, 1990). Māori are widely understood to be under-represented, negatively depicted, and less likely to find stories that affirm themselves or their communities. Our own pilot studies (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005; Rankine et al., 2008) have begun to consolidate these understandings through analysis of content, theme and discourse in media samples, which informs our current project, *Media, Health and Wellbeing in Aotearoa*. The research is grounded in the literatures of decolonization and self-determination (Huygens, 2006; Maaka & Fleras, 2000; Said, 1978; Smith, 2006; Smith, 1999), which challenge established colonial states and argue for the sovereignty and self-determination of indigenous peoples. The research is set within a public health framework that theorizes mass media representations of Māori and Māori issues as a social determinant of Māori health and wellbeing (Nairn, Pega, McCreanor, Rankine, & Barnes, 2006). As such, it adopts critical approaches to mass media performance around ethnicity (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978; Henry & Tator, 2002; Jakubowicz et al., 1994; Rankine & McCreanor, 2004; Spurr, 1993; Van Dijk, 1991) which regard Pākehā media as a colonial institution with vested interest in maintaining the status quo of New Zealand society.

The project gathered a representative national sample of print, radio and television news items, between November 2007 and April 2008, as data for investigations that combine content analysis with a discursive approach. In this paper we focus particularly on a discursive analysis of print media items on sport, and provide quantitative data on frequency, range, and categories of items for the study of form, character and meanings. The aim is to explore

the nature of existing coverage, and highlight persistent inequitable framings.

Sport is a central element of cultural identity in physical, economic and social life in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Bruce, Falcous, & Thorpe, 2007; Edwards, 2007). Players, coaches, supporters in schools, clubs and associations—at local, national and international levels—generate a wide range of activities that have created niches for commerce, professions, scholarship and policy-making. Edwards (2007) argues that sport also provides validation and acknowledgement of personal identity for diverse individuals, groups, players, supporters and followers of codes and competitions.

Sports activity is represented as quintessentially meritocratic; selecting and rewarding physical and psychological skill, strength and fitness on the basis of performance and success. However, despite having bequeathed to politics a metaphor of egalitarianism—the “level playing-field”—sport is an intrinsically political domain in which inclusion and reward are influenced by socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender.

Like most sectors of the political economy, sport is a key focus for information and communications, as results, coverage and developments are reported, analysed, debated and celebrated for wide public consumption (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008). Media practices of selecting, framing and producing sports news and coverage add a further, complex layer to the social representation and understanding of sport. As Bruce, Falcous and Thorpe (2007, p. 147) note: “The relationship between sport and the media is highly significant in how we understand the place and meaning of sport in New Zealand life.”

The deregulation of broadcast media in the 1990s and the professionalization of key codes has seen sports fixtures, practices and timetables increasingly dictated and controlled by transnational media corporations such as Sky TV, and the abolition of live, free coverage of nationally valued sports (Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2002). Along with a weakening of “public good”

accountability in contemporary journalism practice (see PEW Foundation, 2005; Scammell & Semetko, 2000) and the aggregation of media outlets, journalistic professionalism has become increasingly vulnerable to commercial, institutional and ideological editorial control (Rankine et al., 2008; Rosenberg, 2008).

The launch of Māori Television in 2004 has made available daily programming about Māori, including sport, from a Māori viewpoint. Māori viewers perceive this as valuable in showing Māori diversity (Poihipi, 2007), promoting te reo Māori (the Māori language) and tikanga (customs, traditions) (Stuart, 2003), and in utilizing more cooperative news values (Rankine et al., 2008). Unfortunately, the broadcast range of Māori Television remains limited and so access and exposure to these alternative framings is less than it could be.

Given the manifest importance of sport in society, in the context of ongoing colonial domination of Aotearoa/New Zealand (Nairn et al., 2006; Reid & Cram, 2005) the place of Māori in relation to sport and sports coverage is a matter of concern and debate (Falcous & West, 2009; Hokowhitu, 2003; Palmer, 2006, 2009).

There is a growing body of analysis and critique of conventional representations of sport from the perspective of self-determination and decolonization, particularly around the involvement of Māori and Pacific rugby union players at the national level (Hokowhitu, 2003, 2007; Hokowhitu & Scherer, 2008; Hope, 2002; Palmer, 2009; Ryan, 2007). Conventional discourse is set firmly in a colonial understanding of the physical, animalistic or even superhuman characteristics attributed to Māori people (Ballara, 1986; Belich, 1986; Hokowhitu, 2008; McCreanor, 1997; Salmond, 1997). Colonial ideologies cast Māori many links down the “great chain of being”, with the English ruling class superior. The physical abilities of Māori were highlighted to obscure or deny their higher capacities. This served a useful purpose: “A physical/intellectual dichotomy, that would limit Māori throughout colonial

history, emerged in the grand colonizing era of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (Hokowhitu, 2003, p. 194).

Evidence of the influence of this kind of thinking in media representations of Māori and sport is provided by the pioneering studies of Thompson (1954). His analysis describes a theme in which Māori are depicted as “naturally” athletic, as in this example:

The Māori is seldom a taught Rugby player. Usually his ability is instinctive, and the discipline of coaching sits heavily upon him. This is why his game is so brilliant, and why it has a few weaknesses. Few Māori players are complete footballers in that their defence is as strong as their attack. (*The Star Sports*, May 6, 1950, cited in Thompson, 1954)

Hokowhitu (2003; 2007) has argued that colonial discourse about the “physicality” of Māori (men in particular) has helped exclude them from intellectual occupations in favour of labouring work, including sport. The curricula in native schools (Simon & Smith, 2001), public schools, and even in specialist tertiary physical education training, has achieved what Hokowhitu (2003, p. 200) refers to as the “physical education of Māori”. The forced mind/body split has undoubtedly contributed to a gap between integrated philosophical frameworks such as kaupapa Māori (Māori ideology) (Smith, 1997) or Whare Tapa Wha (unified theory of health) (Durie, 1994) and Māori practices, including those surrounding sport and physical activity. These outcomes are shared (with regional variations) by indigenous people in other colonial settings such as Australia (Hartley & McKee, 2000) and Canada (Paraschak & Tirone, 2008), as well as by other minority groups in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Loto et al., 2006).

However, Hokowhitu (2005, p. 90) also argues that the innovation and leadership roles of Māori players in the developing and internationalization of rugby have been subsumed into mainstream discourse about the game:

[E]arly Māori rugby stood for tino rangatiratanga [self-determination], mana [prestige] and Māori nationalism, but its entrenchment within New Zealand rugby's dominant discourse meant the respect given to Māori masculinity through rugby was only for a hybrid-masculinity of the dominant group.

Palmer (2009), in a recent presentation on tino rangatiratanga in sport, highlighted the disjuncture between the relatively high proportion of Māori players to Māori coaches and administrators. Mulholland (2009), in his book on the history of Māori in rugby, draws attention to the politics of the game which led to challenges to Pākehā administration of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) and other parties over historical discrimination against Māori players, and which resulted in redress.

These commentaries have begun to show how media coverage of sport contributes to maintaining the boundaries and dimensions of national identity (Bruce et al., 2007; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2002). Falcous and West (2009) found that print media coverage of the 2005 Lions' Tour framed it as a "national unifying event" (p. 161). Their analysis of the NZ Māori versus Lions game demonstrates the press's mystification and marginalization of Māori rugby and support of Pākehā control and domination of the national game.

Method

For this 3-year project, we collected a large representative sample of news items relating to Māori and Māori-Pākehā relations in print, radio and television in the 6 months between November 2007 and April 2008.¹ A random selection was taken from 3 of each of the days of the week

to make 3 "constructed weeks". This regime is somewhat in advance of the "gold standard" of 2 constructed weeks recommended for representative samples of media performance (Lacy, Riffe, Stoddard, Martin, & Chang, 2001).

Print data was collected by a professional clipping service working to a set of 15 keywords or phrases, including "Māori", "iwi" (tribe), "hapū" (sub-tribe), "whānau" (family), "Treaty of Waitangi" and "Māori-Pākehā relations". Photocopies were provided of each original story, with headlines, photographs, page numbers and a graphic of its placement on the page. The items were gathered from every New Zealand daily, bi-weekly and weekly newspaper (120 titles), resulting in a raw data set of 1,621 items. A selection process identified the stories with a significant focus on Māori issues, and excluded those where Māori interest was incidental. The corpus was read separately by two of the project researchers, who made a first cut of inclusions, exclusions and debateable items before the selection was discussed and finalized. The final database comprised a total of 858 print media items.

Items were then categorized by 15 broad topics, including business, crime, education, Treaty of Waitangi and sport. All items were converted to Word documents and imported into the Nivo8 software program for qualitative analysis. Thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001) and discursive (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) analyses were then applied to each of the items within every topic to describe broad patterns and some detailed deconstructions of media discourse about Māori. While some issues such as the Treaty of Waitangi were found under multiple topic headings, the 50 items in the sport category were distinct and not coded under any other topic.

The current paper is a report on the qualitative analysis of items in the sport category. We will begin by providing some basic quantitative information to contextualize our thematic and discursive findings.

1 This period was selected to fit the time frame of the project. It may not represent optimal timing for studying representations of sport, given the seasons of major codes; however, we were interested in all news coverage and not just that of sport.

TABLE 1 Sports story coding, total sample (n=50)

Code	No.	Code	No.
Basketball	1	Rowing	2
Boxing	1	Rugby union	21
Fame	3	Rugby league	4
Fishing	1	Table tennis	2
Golf	4	Tennis	2
Life saving	1	Touch	3
Multi-sport	3	Waka ama	2

TABLE 2 Proportion of Māori sport stories to sport stories overall, sample and total for the *New Zealand Herald* and *Dominion Post*

New Zealand Herald		Dominion Post	
Māori stories sample	Sport stories	Māori stories sample	Sport stories
3	548	0	466

Findings

Table 1 shows the distribution of the 50 sports stories from a total of 120 papers over the various codes.

While the items included a reasonable range of sport, the sample is dominated by rugby union. The sample shows that 30 papers (one-quarter of all newspapers) ran Māori sports stories on any of the 21 collection days. Since we did not count the total number of sports stories in the newspapers, we chose the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Dominion Post*—large circulation dailies owned by rival companies—to count the total number of sports stories for our collection days.

Table 2 shows the frequency of Māori sport stories compared to sport stories overall.

The proportion of Māori sport stories to the total number of sports stories carried by the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Dominion Post* shows that coverage is minimal.² This data

² The hand count also showed some stories about Māori sportspeople did not include any of our keywords. This indicates that we may have slightly undercounted the number of sports stories.

grounds the analysis that follows by giving us some understanding of the frequency and form such reporting takes.

Two broad divisions are evident in these items, with almost an equal number of stories in each division. The first includes items that deal with the business, competitions and outcomes of Māori sports bodies and codes, including rugby, golf, table tennis, tennis, touch rugby and waka ama (outrigger canoe racing). The second consists of stories that feature players, administrators and other participants who are identified as Māori. The major category of rugby items is also evenly divided. There is also a strong gender bias, with only two stories predominantly about women, 30 about men, and 18 mixed, mostly where competition is segregated.

Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis uses a broad thematic approach and a more fine-grained discursive examination of Māori representation in these news stories.

Thematic analysis

We began with some broad observations of the ways Māori identity is handled in the data. There are several strands in the stories about Māori participation in sport, the most common being that a player has arrived at a noteworthy level through the training and discipline provided by the Māori stream within the code. For example, a *Cambridge Edition* story about the Gilmartin-Kara sisters describes how the two young women have excelled in junior regional Māori netball and have been selected to play in national youth teams. Other examples include a *Piako Post* item on rugby players who have made it into Super 14 teams via national Māori representative sides—and there are many variations of such journeys.

Some identifications are almost incidental, as in the *Gisborne Herald* item about boxer

Shane Cameron who, but for the fact that an upcoming bout was to be covered by Māori Television, would not have registered in the keyword search. While his professional name, Mountain Warrior, is perhaps suggestive, his website gives his ancestry as Rongomaiwahine/Scottish (Mountain Warrior Ltd, 2010). And the *New Zealand Herald* identified successful rower, Storm Uru, as Ngāi Tahu, but they did not elaborate on the significance of this connection.

In the “Māori in sport” category of news stories, Māori identity is evoked to varying degrees, but is incidental. With a few exceptions (such as the story about Pat Walsh, detailed below), Māori identity is commonly unaccounted for. The effect is to submerge the Māori identity of players and contributions into local, regional or national discourses of identity. This is entirely consistent with the One People discourse (Nairn & McCreanor, 1991; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), which asserts that as a unified nation we should all have equal opportunities.

We then looked at “Māori sport”, a category made up of news items about codes and competitions run by Māori, sometimes affiliated to national bodies, but sometimes standing alone or relating to marae (meeting house) or iwi groups. Examples of this group are the Tainui Golf tournament, reported in the *Hauraki Herald*, the national Māori table-tennis tournament, recounted in the *Western Leader*, and the Te Arawa waka ama competitions, described in the *Rotorua Review*. One Māori rugby item in the *Timaru Herald* highlights Māori rugby as a distinct but integrated part of the NZRFU, while other stories in the same paper and in the *Bay of Plenty Times* provide match reports and outcomes for actual games in the Māori representative provincial and national competitions.

Identification as Māori is a curiosity in media representations. In most instances, Māori appear to create and maintain their own codes and competitions. Player choice also appears in some items, for example, in the *Gisborne*

Herald Colin Hovell speaks about his promotion to captain of the Tūranganui-a-Kiwa side, and marks the importance of Māori identity and the Māori game to his progress. On the other hand, half of rugby coverage is given to Māori participation in mainstream rugby. For example, a *Wairarapa Times-Age* story about Zac Gildford’s selection for the Hurricanes’ starting line-up notes his emergence from the ranks of Māori rugby.

We turn now to look more closely at each of the streams of Māori representation in the “Māori sport” category.

Stories in the “Māori sport” category carry a strong subtext of exclusivity, since by definition the activities are either defined as Māori (as in waka ama) or controlled and dominated by Māori. In the mass media they are represented as available to Māori only, irrespective of other qualifying criteria. The likely interpretation of a Pākehā audience is that Māori are either prejudiced against other cultures or ethnicities, or are unable or unwilling to compete in an open field. These framings relate to the widely available resources which tell the standard story of Māori–Pākehā relations, and specifically the discourses of “privilege” and “Māori culture” (McCreanor, 2005, 2008).

The “privilege” theme portrays Māori as having rights or benefits denied others on the basis of ethnicity in ways that are unfair and racist; for example, they may have special access to funding, or support for projects that do not deserve it. In addition, Māori are said to have been reimbursed generously in Treaty settlements, with enough resources for their needs, so continued reliance on state funds is greedy and unreasonable. Examples include any form of targeted relief or support, including affirmative action in education and employment, Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development), parliamentary seats, Treaty settlements, housing loans and Māori sports teams. This comment made in a *New Zealand Herald* story of February 22, 2004, is illustrative: “A lot of benefits are specifically focused on Maori,

such as education grants, loans and the Maori All Blacks. If you had a Pakeha All Black team people would be hitting the roof.”

Hokowhitu and Scherer (2008, p. 244) cite a similar example, from the *Daily News* of September 6, 1999:

The Maori All Blacks is [*sic*] wrong. If you are not good enough to get into the All Blacks, then you shouldn't be able to go into a team that excludes white. That is racism. But it's acceptable if you are a Maori.

In our analysis, the “privilege” discourse is evoked by the exclusivity of “Māori sport” and the apparent absence of a clear rationale for its existence.

The “Māori culture” theme describes Māori social organization and praxis as primitive, superstitious, mysterious, lacking in conceptual and practical knowledge, and dependent on a limited language (Nairn & McCreanor, 1991). It is seen as clearly inferior, inefficient, sexist, ossified, of no intrinsic value, and unable to compete in the modern world. As one letter to the *New Zealand Herald* put it: “Maori are descended from stone-age barbaric savage cannibals who owe all the benefits of modern life and civilization to European colonists” (September 7, 2000).

On the other hand, that Pākehā use or appropriate decontextualized elements of Māori culture (such as the haka, or ceremonial dance) to mark their own identity is seen as legitimate and appropriate. In our analysis the inferiority of Māori culture is reflected in the existence of closed competitions, which allow Māori sporting achievement to be belittled as occurring in a “small pond”. The assimilation of Māori talent and expertise into national and other representative sides is seen as unproblematic.

Within such discourses, Māori codes can be seen as an affront to entrenched ideologies about egalitarianism (everyone gets a fair go), especially neo-liberal discourse centred on the metaphor of the “level playing-field”. The

metaphor and the values it espouses are useful and necessary falsehoods of white privilege in the face of a raft of disparities between Māori and Pākehā—in wealth, health, education and other social goods. Māori sportspeople must overcome many barriers and discriminations before they can experience anything like equal opportunity (Ryan, 2007), so their achievements are even more noteworthy.

At this broad thematic level, sports coverage of Māori lies uncomfortably between representation as privilege on the one hand, and enactment of assimilation on the other. No contextual or historical information was provided to inform readers about the reasons for a Tainui golf championship or a national Māori tennis competition. Without such background, the coverage is aberrant or irrelevant. It is not that these back-stories do not exist; Hokowhitu (2004) has pointed out the growing appreciation of Māori in the development of rugby into a national game. But such material flies well under the radar of conventional media coverage. The absence of explicit rationale for phenomena such as the Māori All Blacks leaves a rhetorical void that is readily filled by the standard anti-Māori story.

Discursive analysis

In this section we introduce selected texts as data for a fine-grained, discursive examination that allows us to unpack the journalist's art and understand the subtle ways in which meaning is constructed for “Māori sport” and “Māori in sport”. This enables us to distinguish the extent to which the shaping of meaning is the work of the journalist or of their sources.

What is striking about rugby stories categorized as “Māori sport” is that discursively, despite their inclusion in mass-circulation papers, they are likely to appear as distinct and exotic to Pākehā audiences. The names of players, teams, competitions, trophies, venues and regions are often Māori and frequently unfamiliar. There is a very real sense that, for

a Pākehā audience, these stories could as well be about rugby in Samoa or South Australia as in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

In these rugby items, journalists routinely name games and events as “Māori rugby”. In the *Bay of Plenty Times*, for example, a “Māori Rugby” subheading seems to indicate a specialist reporter’s round. It also commonly uses Māori names for regional representative teams (often without English equivalents), such as Horouta, Aoraki, Tūranganui-a-Kiwa, Te Raki Paewhenua and Te Wai Pounamu. Items cover match reports, tournament outcomes, selection choices, and player and administrator personalities. Mention of practices such as pōwhiri (welcome ceremonies) at the start of tournaments, the acknowledgement of a sub-union kaumatua (elder) in *Timaru Herald* items, and the inclusion of women’s competitions indicate a distinctive protocol and culture.

Phrases such as “Tim Windleborn (who whakapapa[s] back to Hokianga)” in a *Northland Age Guardian* story provide markers of Māori context. These rugby stories give a sense of an entire, self-contained sport that is referred to by Māori sources as a “revival” and “gaining in popularity”. While some speakers provide these contextualizing features, they are mostly the work of journalists, and are not evident in Māori rugby or in general rugby coverage.

These features mark Māori rugby as something exclusive, apart and exotic, and as such are highly congruent with the “privilege” theme, which denigrates and marginalizes such activity as racist and inimical to national unity and identity. Ultimately, to Pākehā readers such items may act as a kind of rhetorical question (“Why is there a Māori code here?”), to which the most available answers are discriminatory and marginalize Māori and the Māori game (“Māori are racist and exclude others”; “Māori can’t compete in a wider context”).

The stories about rugby in the “Māori in sport” category present quite a different perspective. While stories in this category have some of

the characteristics evident in the “Māori rugby” category (for example, use of the phrase “Māori All Blacks” and a trophy honouring a Māori individual), these are relatively rare and Māori elements are always a passing mention rather than a focus. The details of these items seem unremarkable, with no discernable denigration of Māori players or organizations evident under discursive analysis. Stories are constructed from within a sports reporting genre in the familiar language and imagery of contest, hierarchy, achievement and failure.

Here is an extended example of this kind of coverage, from the *Otago Daily Times*:

Meanwhile, Bruce (24) has confirmed he will be staying in Hamilton after being let go by the Highlanders and picked up in the draft by the Chiefs.

He had a clause in his Otago Rugby Football Union contract that enabled him to exit his two-year deal a year early because he was not selected in the Highlanders.

It does not represent particularly good business by Otago, which invested in Bruce, threw him into top rugby when he was not really ready and has now lost him just as he started to show signs of developing into a good player.

Bruce made his Otago debut in 2005 and has played for the Highlanders as a first or second five-eight in each of the last two seasons. He was also a New Zealand Māori representative. (Meikle, 2008)

The text deals with the mundane operational detail of the professional rugby business, with its comments on organization, contracting and commercial competence. The player, his position, track record and potential are all mentioned before the comment that bears on his ethnicity. The order contributes to the relative insignificance of this information and there is a lingering sense that it is of little future relevance now that he has made his “debut” into the upper echelons of the mainstream game.

Here is another example, from the *Northern Advocate*:

The return of blockbusting No. 8 Jake Paringatai, the appearance of New Zealand Sevens star Rene Ranger and the arrival of new Northland rugby signing James Rodley will add some sting to the Joe Morgan memorial club rugby championship this weekend.

Paringatai is fresh back from a short stint with Irish club Munster and is likely to turn out for Marist when they head to Kamo on Saturday.

Rodley will make his Northland club debut for Mid Western when they head into town to meet Hora Hora at Hora Hora.

. . . Rodley is likely to go head-to-head with Corey Tamou to try and secure a starting spot in the Northland squad this year, a tussle that will be intriguing as both have played for the New Zealand Māori team. (Eves, 2008)

The language is florid, with terms such as “blockbusting”, “sting” and “tussle” expressing the physicality of the game. However, it is very much within the style of sports journalism. Readers are left to infer Māori identity by way of Paringatai’s name until the very end of the passage, when it is made explicit.

The exception here is a cluster of stories marking the passing of Pat Walsh. These are interesting because, while they honour a revered player, they also contribute to the construction of Māori rugby as a tributary to the national game, and to the stereotype of Māori rugby abilities. For example, a *Herald on Sunday* story includes the following:

One of the legendary characters of New Zealand rugby—and certainly among the mightiest totara[s] of the Māori game—Pat Walsh died on Friday evening . . .

From his days at Sacred Heart College and then at Ardmore teachers training college, Walsh was a natural. He had speed, skill

and superb balance anywhere in the back-line and spiced these assets with the mischief (and sometimes the mystery) that only Māori seemed to possess in those days of uninhibited rugby. (November 25, 2007, p. 67)

To our reading, the first sentence exemplifies the “small pond” or “tributary” trope; the “totara” of Māori rugby is only a “character” in the national game. The final sentence evokes the feral characteristics which have long been attributed to Māori by Pākehā. The notion of Walsh as a “natural”, with its evocation of the untamed exotic, combines with the player’s physical attributes and the inexplicable to epitomize the Māori contribution to the game and reinforce the sense of “otherness” and difference. This implicitly contrasts with the conventional “hard man” attributes of high-level players, whose strength, rugged determination and competitiveness map conventional notions of settler masculinity, and are seen as the backbone of rugby in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

We argue, then, that there are discursive features that distinguish these two categories of stories, contributing to their semantic load and the likely interpretations and meanings that will be taken from them. There is an extent to which, despite the very banality of such sports writing, it reinforces the broader negative ideological treatment of Māori engagement in New Zealand sporting activity.

Discussion

Our analysis shows that in the supposedly apolitical domain of sporting competition and activity, Māori are represented in only a small proportion of newspaper stories. The coverage there is of Māori participation and contribution in this domain is divided between what we have characterized as “Māori in sport” stories, where Māori are effectively assimilated into Pākehā codes and competitions, and “Māori

sport” items, in which Māori-controlled and Māori-oriented activities are presented in a context of Māori “privilege” (Borell, Gregory, McCreanor, Jensen, & Moewaka Barnes, 2009; McCreanor, 2008). While there are overlaps and continuities, we argue that such characteristics are congruent with broader hegemonic Pākehā discourse about Māori/Pākehā relations and contribute to maintaining Pākehā dominance. Historical and contemporary Māori resistance to these ongoing colonial tensions is expressed in both the literature and current challenges to the power and actions of sporting structures such as the NZRFU.

From a critical, decolonizing perspective, perhaps even more important is the mundane, commonplace achievement of media representations of sport. The newspapers in our sample (taken from the entire cohort of daily, bi-weekly and weekly papers available in Aotearoa/New Zealand) are highly significant in their constructions of Māori engagement in sporting activities because of their circulation, penetration and durability in markets. Their presentation is uncontested since, unlike radio and television, there is no regular, competitive Māori voice to provide alternative news frames, styles and content. While they may command only fleeting attention in the public eye, newspapers also have a material presence that, unlike the ephemera of electronic news, continues to produce their effects well beyond their publication date.

The absence of a regular Māori newspaper is in contrast to the daily flow of Māori news from Māori perspectives in *Te Kaea* and *Te Karere*, on television. Māori TV highlights Māori sport with eloquence and apparent audience satisfaction, offering choice, shifting frames of news values, and celebrating participation as well as success. We argue that it does this from a different set of underlying values (Smith, 2006)—including connection/relationships, time/space/history/context and self-determination/rights—and thereby produces more detailed and nuanced stories grounded in Māori community and experiential contexts.

The stylistic features described above work to represent Māori activity around sport in subtle and mundane ways as deviant and aberrant, routinely reinforcing fundamentally monocultural discourses of ethnicity, gender, nation and identity.

Sport is one of the few areas of news reporting where bad news is not the staple frame that sells newspapers. It is also an area in which, at least in the popular imagination, Māori excel in spite of everything. And it is an area where the active construction of biculturalism is “witnessed” as an everyday commonsensical notion. However, Māori researchers such as Hokowhitu, and Palmer and Mullholland, are making strong claims about Māori self-determination in and through sports. Current mass media practices often undermine and negate the efforts of Māori communities, players and leaders.

Sport is a prime site for the mundane construction and reproduction of power relations and national identity. In colonial societies, media sport overlays the entrenchment and maintenance of colonial power with the ideologies of objectivity and social truth. Nonetheless, sport has much to offer in terms of personal health and development, but even more importantly, as a social and community activity that encourages participation and builds social cohesion on a number of fronts. Māori clearly know these things, and value sport through their own codes and streams that have, for many decades, served these ends and contributed to self-determination. Recent iterations of this include the “Pā wars” phenomenon (where representatives from different marae within the same iwi compete in a range of sports, cultural and social activities) and the introduction of international sports competitions and fixtures for indigenous people.

There are real questions about the ways in which the mass media in Aotearoa/New Zealand handles this issue, highlighted in coverage by Māori television and radio, where the stories appear to differ greatly. Print media, which has no effective Māori competition, appears to use

its monopoly primarily to ignore this significant area of Māori activity, or in the minimal coverage offered, to position Māori contributions as marginal or assimilated into pastimes that are of great significance to national life.

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Glossary

haka	ceremonial dance
hapū	sub-tribe
iwi	tribe
kaumatua	elder
kaupapa Māori	Māori ideology, ways of thinking
mana	prestige, authority
marae	meeting house
pōwhiri	welcome ceremony
te reo Māori	the Māori language
tikanga	customs, traditions, codes, conventions
tino rangatiritanga	self-determination
waka ama	outrigger canoe racing
whānau	family, including extended family
Whare Tapa Wha	unified theory of health; literally, four cornerstones of health (physical, emotional, spiritual, social)

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