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Speaking the Unspoken: Racism, Sport and Māori

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Abstract

In this paper, we consider the silence that surrounds issues of racism in New Zealand sport. We argue that the intersection of two key ideologies – New Zealand's purported history of good race relations, and the positive contribution that sport is believed to make to racial equality – contribute to a culture of silence in which it is difficult to talk about, let alone discuss constructively, Māori experiences of racism. Our aim is to put the issue on the agenda through engagement with ten experienced Māori sport participants, coaches and administrators whose experiences demonstrate the existence of, and pain caused by, cultural and institutional racism in New Zealand sport. In this aim, we do not seek to hide behind a veil of neutrality or objectivity. Rather, following a kaupapa Māori research approach, our interest is in bringing to light the voices, frustrations and concerns of Māori sportspeople in order to contribute to a much-needed conversation.

Introduction

He hōnore, he kororia ki te Atua
He maungarongo ki te whenua
He whakaaro pai ki nga tangata katoa
Ko Raima taku ingoa
Ko Tainui, Whakatohea, Ngati Toa, Ngati Koata, Ngai Tahu me Nga Puhi ōku iwi,
No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

Ko Karioi te maunga
Ko Whaingaroa te awa
Ko Jess me nga kaipuke e whitu ōku waka
Ko Pākehā te iwi
Ko Toni taku ingoa
No Whaingaroa ahau
No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

In the mihi [greeting] above, we introduce ourselves as women of Aotearoa New Zealand, one Māori and one Pākehā[1]. In this paper, we explore the complex experiences of Māori in

[1] There continues to be debate over the origins and use of the term Pākehā but it generally describes people who are not Māori and, more particularly, those with a White European heritage whose cultural values and practices reflect their location as members of the dominant group within New Zealand (Bell 2004). We note that defining Māori identity is equally difficult because it does not relate directly to race or 'blood' (Ihimaera 1998). Indeed, Ihimaera (1998) argues that many Māori "can claim as much Pākehā ancestry as they can Māori ancestry or, at least, Pākehā influence in their years of growing up. Much of our identity has to do with whakapapa [genealogy], with memory based not only on the bloodlines and physical landscapes we live in but also the emotional landscapes constructed by loving grandparents or whānau [family] with aroha [love], manaakitanga [hospitality/caring] and whānaungatanga [kinship connections]" (p. 14).

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sport that result from the legacy of the colonisation of New Zealand in the 1800s, with particular focus on the way that colonisation has created a sporting context that marginalises, belittles or ignores Indigenous[2] knowledge, protocols and cultural practice but makes it difficult, if not impossible, to talk about racism. The paper engages multiple voices; our own, the ten Māori participants in the first author's postgraduate research thesis, and a range of researchers and theorists whose ideas have something to contribute to an exploration of the experiences of Māori in mainstream sport. We take seriously Douglas Hartmann's argument that "the racial dynamics of sport are...determined in context and defined by both possibilities of agency and resistance as well as systems of constraint" (Hartmann 2003, p. xiii). Thus, our discussion is contextually specific, foregrounding the experiences of Māori whose voices, like those of other Indigenous sportspeople, have too often been absent from research. Our approach is grounded in a Kaupapa Māori research methodology (Bishop 1996; Smith 2000) that emerged from challenges by Māori academics to "the way that certain knowledge was established as legitimate and the way that other knowledge, like Māori knowledge, was not viewed as legitimate" (Walker, Eketone & Gibbs 2006, p. 332). Such an approach draws attention to the challenges faced by Māori operating in a context that privileges non-Indigenous ontological and epistemological understandings of the world. In order to ground this challenge more concretely, we begin with a korero [story] – entitled *What I really want to say* – by the first author about gaining access to a conference to present an earlier version of this paper (Hippolite 2008a). Her story was written as an emerging Māori scholar learning the rules of an academic 'game' that is grounded in colonial/white/Pākehā ways of doing and being, and it clearly resonated with the experiences of other Indigenous academics in the audience.[3] Thus, rather than being simply an angry response to a critique of an abstract, we propose that it embodies much more than this. Not only is it part of a larger struggle to reclaim tino rangatiratanga [self determination] in which Māori have the right to determine what counts as culturally valuable, but it highlights the often different paradigms through which Indigenous scholars and research participants, in this case Māori, view the world. In

[2] By Indigenous we mean people who inhabited 'nations' before colonization by imperial powers. These include Māori in New Zealand, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia, Native Americans and/or First Peoples in North America (Canada and the United States). While such groups have been written *about*, often by non-Indigenous scholars, their own voices and theoretical perspectives only rarely appear in the sport literature. Our focus on Indigenous peoples thus excludes the extensive research about marginalized non-Indigenous groups in sport, such as African Americans in the United States and Canada, and those of Afro-Caribbean or South Asian heritage in the United Kingdom, much of which has been done by scholars from these groups.

[3] They demonstrated this by their comments and questions after the first author's presentation, and in further discussions throughout the conference.

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addition, our extended discussions about whether or not the first author should actually present it emphasise the challenges that Māori constantly face about 'what to say, where to say it and to whom' as they navigate through a monocultural (sports) world primarily defined by Pākehā values and belief systems.[4] In terms of its content and structure, we draw the reader's attention to Ihimaera's (1998) description of how Māori communicate: "Most Māori offer subjective experience and they write as they talk. White hot. Straight for the jugular. What comes to mind is what gets put down on the page" (p. 12). Ihimaera goes on to explain that what is "written about and the way it has been written" is the individual's "choice for that moment...a particular response on a particular day prompted by a particular memory. But, on another day, the response may have been different" (1998, p. 12).

What I really want to say

As I stand here today, to the Western thinker I stand alone because that is all you see. Yet I stand with my family; not the nuclear concept of family but those past and present who have lived experiences that inform my thinking and my being, as well as future generations to whom I am responsible and who will be held accountable for what I say (see also Ihimaera 1998; Smith 1999, 2000). When I submitted my first abstract for this conference, it was reviewed by two people. One was clinical and, as my supervisor described it, a bit 'over the top'; the other had a lighter tone but both required theoretical background to validate my research. Basically there was a 'theoretical gap'. And so I threw some names in like Russell Bishop (1999, 2005), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 2000) and Brendan Hokowhitu (2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2007), and if they didn't know those authors because they're Māori, then I threw in Colin King (2004) and Franz Fanon (1967). Obviously it was accepted. But I need to say that although the 'academy' requires compliance to set criteria that allows entry to these forums, the voices of the participants contained within my research do not need validation from theorists and other writers on postcolonial themes. These voices speak their experiences and this is what they are saying: Māori can stand and speak for themselves. Māori have done that since before the Pākehā came to New Zealand. And when the Pākehā came to New Zealand, Māori continued to speak and stand and it has been a struggle without end – "Ka whawhai tonu matou"[5]. Māori have said the same things from the early 1800s. In recognising the tidal wave of oppression upon them, Māori formed their own King Movement in 1856 to create an entity that Pākehā would recognise in the Waikato, for three reasons: to halt the taking of Māori land; to cease the spilling of blood; and to retain mana Māori – the right to be Māori. My research speaks the longings of my heart, and the hearts of those who have gifted their stories – the gift of honesty and integrity. These words are not found in a library. These are living books who walk, talk, breathe, play sport, have raised children in sport, coached and

[4] Before the conference, with another colleague, we debated the merits and potential dangers of presenting it to what was likely to be a predominantly white academic audience. We concluded that the best approach might be to attend the conference, assess the participants and the mood and make a decision at the time of presentation. So the first author prepared a paper that constructed a 'standard' academic argument with evidence but also contained the space to insert the korero if she deemed it appropriate.

[5] As Ranginui Walker (2004) has also described it.

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> administrated in sport. Who here has the right to tell me that I need research from Britain or the USA or Australia to validate these Māori voices in New Zealand sport? It is Māori who have waited for the colonials to catch up, Māori who have been pushed to the periphery whilst the core of colonial power has only heard the whispering echoes of mana Māori and has interpreted these as idle grumblings. Now this world of academia has discovered postcolonial literature, gotten on board with it and has created its own hierarchy; what gives it the right to judge what is good Māori research or not? So I challenge you white, middle-class theorists to go back to your hills and theorise about your own people before you decide what is acceptable 'Māori research' and what is not. And if you are Indigenous to your nation and you peer-reviewed my abstract, then shame on you for believing that it takes a white man's system of validation for something to be of worth or value. These conferences are part of 'playing the white man's game', a way of funnelling students' research to serve professors to multiply their academic accolades. But I have come to this conference to see what these sociologists have to offer my people. You will take what you want and I will seek to know what can I take back to my people from this conference that I can share and say 'Here's what can help us'. And if I can't do that then it leads to questions like 'Who does this conference serve?' What good are these "grand theories if they do not assist in the solving of day-to-day social problems?" (Smith 2004, p. 122).

The Broader Context: Race Relations in New Zealand

In this paper we identify New Zealand's purported history of good race relations, reinforced by ideologies of equality and fairness in sport, as underlying reasons for the almost complete absence of a much-needed public discussion of the lingering effects of colonisation on New Zealand sport. As indicated in the korero [talk] above, and discussed in more detail below, these lingering effects most often privilege non-Indigenous understandings while simultaneously (and often unintentionally) marginalising alternative Indigenous views. New Zealand has an international reputation of (relatively) tranquil race relations, exemplary protection of Indigenous rights, and complete religious freedom with social and legal egalitarianism (Meijl & Miedema 2004) – and this view is widely shared. As Pākehā educator Robert Consedine points out:

> Growing up in the 1960s I thought of race relations as a problem in other countries. Like many New Zealanders I had been lulled into the popular belief that New Zealand had the best race relations in the world. I had very little contact with Māori and had no awareness that there was any problem. (Consedine & Consedine 2005, p. 155)

Thus, for many Pākehā New Zealanders, a functionalist view of society prevails in which social institutions, including sport, are seen as having positive functions for society as a whole (Coakley, Hallinan, Jackson & Mewett 2009). Within a functionalist view, it is

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assumed that shared values provide the basis for the existing social order, which is seen as rational and normal (Coakley 2004; Jarvie & Reid 1997). This functionalist way of thinking is espoused by governments, sports organisations, religious groups and most key societal institutions and we argue that it remains the dominant cultural understanding of sport just as it does of broader society in New Zealand.[6] However, the functionalist view has been heavily critiqued for overstating the positive consequences of institutions for society. In New Zealand's case, this view has meant a privileging of Pākehā understandings: "New Zealand, through its colonial history, has been designed primarily to benefit Pākehā. Māori were required to fit into Pākehā culture and systems. All our basic institutions functioned on the assumption that being Pākehā was 'normal'" (Consedine & Consedine 2005, p. 218). As a result, as Wetherell and Potter (1992) point out, many Pākehā have attributed divisiveness and the collapse of the ideal of multiracial harmony to the actions of Māori and other groups contesting discriminatory practices: "Over and over again we are told that it is Māori groups who initiate friction, division and disruption and who thus disturb the harmonious 'resting state' of New Zealand society" (p. 158). In such accounts, Pākehā are constructed as reasonable and rational, while Māori groups are positioned as irrational, emotional and acting improperly. Thus, in this view, Māori claims for tino rangatiratanga [self determination] are not seen as legitimate claims for redress but as creating disruption and disorder. The dominant Pākehā account of race relations, therefore, does not recognise that conflict already exists in New Zealand and that colonisation by Pākehā is responsible for much of it. Instead, the view is that "society was harmonious and integrated *before* Māori groups ('inexplicably') generated conflict, and *now* society is divided, antagonized and full of friction" (Wetherell & Potter 1992, p. 160).

Several studies have found that Pākehā individuals and news organisations tend to divide Māori into diametrically opposed forms: as 'wild' versus 'tame' or 'good' versus 'bad' (see Abel 1996), with 'tame' Māori "represented as supporting the status quo" and 'wild' Māori "counterposed as deviant ('them') and represented as making unreasonable demands in an unreasonable manner" (Abel 1996, p. 33; McGregor & Te Awa 1996). Thus, Māori who do question the status quo are negatively labelled as stirrers, radicals, activists or even terrorists

[6] The second author notes, for example, that undergraduate students she has taught in the United States, Australia and New Zealand overwhelmingly espouse a functionalist view of sport, at least before (and often after) they encounter critical cultural and sociological accounts that challenge this view.

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(Wall 2007); terms that are then used to deny credence to claims of racism. Indeed, any discussion about racism is perceived as negative for New Zealand society (Wetherell & Potter 1992) and immediately denied or responded to with "considerable hostility and resistance" by Pākehā (Consedine & Consedine 2005, p. 158). For example, the difficulty of directly raising issues about racism in the public realm is revealed by the overwhelmingly negative public response to a wide-ranging study of Māori interactions with government agencies in the 1980s:

> The more recent identification of institutional racism as the basic evil constraining Māori participation in New Zealand life, has caused something of a furore. The assumption of those under attack has been that their involvement in our monocultural institutions means that they personally are therefore accused of being 'racist'. The resultant resentment has been bitter and a barrier to change. It has polarised attitudes and clouded the capacity for dealing with the issue of monoculturalism. (Puao-te-ata-tu 1988, p. 78)

The Discourse of Sport

A functionalist view is even more strongly evident in the powerful ideology that sport is a level playing field in which all people have the chance to participate (Coakley et al. 2009; Collins & Jackson 2007). The functionalist understanding of sport as contributing to social justice and equality first emerged in the Victorian British public schools, where sport was encouraged because it was believed to foster "such virtues as leadership, respect, loyalty, courage, honesty, fair play, self-reliance and self-discipline" (Arnold 1992, p. 238; Coakley et al. 2009; Lee & Cockman 1995). Moreover, similar ideals are reflected in the rhetoric of the Olympic movement that competition "shall be fair and equal" with "no discrimination on grounds of race, religion or politics" (Arnold 1992, p. 238).

New Zealand's belief in itself as an egalitarian culture further reinforces a functionalist view of the role of sport and the place of Māori within it (Hokowhitu 2007; Phillips 1996). Although Vidacs (2003) suggests this belief in egalitarianism is fraught with contradictions, there is no doubt that Māori have been successful at competitive sports introduced by the colonisers, such as rugby union, rugby league, basketball and netball; such sports quickly became an integral part of many Māori communities and have contributed to the maintenance of cultural connections (Hokowhitu 2007; Palmer 2005). According to Palmer (2005), "Māori values are an important part of the culture of [Māori] sports clubs and the kawa (rules) from which they operate. Whānaungatanga and manaakitanga, for instance, are often elements of tikanga Māori incorporated into the culture of sport teams, clubs, and organizations" (p. 78).

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However, as the korero [stories] of the participants in this study reveal, kawa and tikanga are seldom acknowledged or valued in mainstream sport contexts in New Zealand. Instead, the research participants' responses align more with critical theories, which deal with relationships between culture, power and social relations (Coakley 2004). In these theories, sports are seen as social constructions that change as power relations, narratives and discourses change (Coakley 2004). Research within this framework focuses the meaning of sport as a site for cultural reproduction and transformation (Hall 1992). Sport thus becomes a platform to a) challenge and transform exploitive and oppressive practices, b) increase the number and diversity of participation opportunities, c) challenge the ideological implications of the stories told about sports and d) challenge the voices and perspectives of those with power (Coakley 2004). Māori perspectives find their place in this framework when they deal with the social construction of race and ethnicity and issues of privilege and oppression for racial, cultural and ethnic groups in the sport context.

Thus, although the participants' experiences indicate the need for critical, sustained discussion of the effects of racial ideologies in New Zealand sport, the dominant ideology of sport as a site of (racial) equality and positive race relations makes it difficult to engage in such conversations. Writing about racial issues in Western sport generally, Coakley et al. (2009) point out that "most people think in fairytale terms when it comes to racial and ethnic relations: they believe that opening a door so that others may enter a social world is all that is needed to achieve racial and ethnic harmony" (p. 300). Certainly this view has prevailed throughout much of New Zealand's history. For example, while strongly critical of race relations overall, Māori author Ranginui Walker describes Māori as "passionately devoted to rugby, the national sport in which they found *ready acceptance on equal terms* with the Pākehā" (2004 p. 175, italics added). Indeed, in the early twentieth century, with Māori culture on the brink of extinction, sport was a welcome salvation (Hokowhitu 2004).[7] Māori attitudes to sport have always been positive (Smith 1998) and "Māori have achieved more in sport than in any other area of New Zealand society" (Hokowhitu 2004, p. 209). The belief in sport as promoting racial equality is supported by research that struggled to find any evidence of racial stacking in major New Zealand sports (Melnick 1996; Melnick & Thomson 1996). This finding is in stark contrast to research in the United States, United Kingdom and

[7] Hokowhitu does note, however, that sport has provided Māori with only "conditional access to the white man's world" (2003a, p. 187).

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Australia which has consistently found patterns of positional distribution by race. Unsurprisingly then, the dominant mythology in New Zealand is that sport has played an important role in racial integration (Phillips 1996; Walker 2004). As Phillips (1996) points out, Māori success in rugby led many Pākehā to believe that New Zealand was "a racially harmonious society" (p. 286).

Further, even those directly tasked with dealing with racism may find it difficult to acknowledge such discrimination *in sport*. For example, in a 2009 television interview, New Zealand's race relations conciliator, Joris de Bres, responded to news that the national Māori rugby team might be prevented from touring South Africa by stating "it's a very understandable history in South Africa that is very strongly opposed to racially selected teams but looking in New Zealand *we don't have racial discrimination in sport*, we've got ethnic diversity" (TV3 news 2009, italics added). De Bres claimed that "people of all ethnic backgrounds are eligible to play in New Zealand's national, regional and local representative teams, and alongside that, consistent with the principle of freedom of association, people are free to play together in any other combination" (Reid 2009, para. 25). He went on to state that "The New Zealand Māori rugby team has a proud history in New Zealand and has the support of the community as a whole" (Reid 2009, para. 26). The power of the belief about racial equality in New Zealand sport is clear in de Bres' statements yet, as discussed later, his claims about freedom to play and community support are challenged by the participants' experiences and evidence from other sources.

Research on Māori in New Zealand Sport

In this context, the remarkable dearth of studies that explicitly address Māori experiences of *racism* in sport is perhaps not surprising. In this dearth, New Zealand differs significantly from former British colonies such as Australia and Canada where racism and Indigenous sporting experience have been on the agenda for some time, and from other Western nations where racism in relation to major non-white populations such as African Americans in the United States and those of South Asian or Afro-Caribbean descent in the United Kingdom have been well documented. The New Zealand silence around racism and its effects on Indigenous sportspeople contrasts markedly with the situation in Australia, New Zealand's closest neighbour. In the 1990s, the courage of Indigenous Australian athletes in speaking out against overt racism has put discussions of racism and sport on the research and public

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agenda, and led to formal policies such as the Australian Football League's Racial and Religious Vilification Code that banned racial abuse (e.g., Bruce & Wensing 2010; Coram 2007; Gardiner 1997; Hallinan & Judd 2007, 2009, and numerous others). However, this public and research silence does not mean that Māori sporting experiences have been completely ignored. Although very little directly focuses on racism, a small body of theoretical and empirical work has emerged in the last decade, led by Indigenous scholars Brendan Hokowhitu and Farah Palmer (Hokowhitu 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009; Hokowhitu & Scherer 2008; Jackson & Hokowhitu 2002; Palmer 2000, 2005, 2006, 2007; Palmer & Masters, forthcoming; see also Ellis, Sperling & Toma-Dryden 1999; Hippolite 2008b; McLean 1999, 2001; Melnick 1996; Melnick & Thomson 1996; Rewi 1992; Te Rito 2006, 2007; Thompson, Rewi & Wrathall 2000). Yet New Zealand has yet to engage in any meaningful discussion about the existence of contemporary racism against Māori in sport.[8] The hidden nature of racialised thinking in New Zealand has been highlighted by Pākehā award-winning sports columnist Richard Boock in the sport most strongly associated with racial equality:

> It remains the dirty little secret of New Zealand rugby. Racist British and European football fans tend to yell and chant their warped abuse at the ground on game day; Aussies favour hurling obscenities and/or missiles. *Over here it's whispered among friends and behind backs*, and rationalised into a language that attempts to deodorise the stench of the core message: that it's OK to judge folk on the basis of race (Boock 2008, paras. 11-12, italics added).

[8] We note, however, that acknowledgement of historical experiences of racism involving the exclusion of Māori players from New Zealand rugby teams touring South Africa during the apartheid era (in deference to South Africa's racially segregated sport) began to emerge earlier in 2010 in conjunction with celebrations of 100 years of Māori rugby in New Zealand. However, an apology from the New Zealand Rugby Union, made only via media release, did not occur until after widespread media coverage of an apology issued by the South African Rugby Union ('Timing of' 2010). A Māori former national and Māori team player acknowledged the pain of the experience: "It affected us as a tribe, as people and as tangata whenua of New Zealand, being denied the right to play for our country because we were dark skinned" ('Timing of' 2010, para. 10). However, claims in February 2010 by a famous Pākehā former All Black Andy Haden that a successful rugby franchise had long operated a racially-based quota system of three Polynesian players were immediately dismissed and attention re-directed away from this possible example of institutional racism. Instead, the widespread media coverage shifted towards a critique of his use of the term "darkies" [which appeared to be how the Pacific Island players were described to him] along with calls for him to quit his role as Rugby World Cup ambassador (see Campbell Live 2010). As one journalist described it on national television, "It's a disaster referring to brown rugby players as darkies". This reorientation towards an individual case of 'racism' (which appears much more palatable to the public and media than consideration of more broadly-based institutionalised racism) occurred despite Haden explaining in a live television interview that "I've had two All Blacks ring me up this morning and say they've had similar discussions...volunteered by [team] management at the time" and "I had a Māori from the [team] call me up...this morning and laughing his head off and agreeing with everything that I've said" (Campbell Live 2010).

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Thus, the contextually specific nature of racism in sport in New Zealand is highlighted by Boock who explicitly contrasts the hidden nature of racism in New Zealand with the more overt racial stereotyping and vilification expressed by non-Indigenous Europeans and Australians (see also Bruce & Wensing 2010; Coram 2007; Gardiner 1997; Hallinan & Judd 2007, 2009). Indeed, recent New Zealand research indicates that 'racism' is more often publicly attributed *to* Māori, particularly when they seek to compete in national Māori sporting teams (Hokowhitu, 2009). In stark contrast to de Bres' claims about public support for the Māori men's national rugby team, Hokowhitu (2009) found the team was labelled as separatist and even racist: he quoted several Pākehā who argued that "the *only example* of the racism in New Zealand rugby is the existence of Māori rugby" (p. 2328, italics added).

Thus, public reactions to Māori rugby teams and to investigations into Māori interactions with government agencies (e.g., Puao-te-ata-tu 1988) have 'taught' Māori that direct discussion of racism is unlikely to be welcomed or to lead to institutional change. Consequently, discussing racism becomes a social 'taboo' that is not spoken about by Māori *to* Pākehā, perhaps to avoid discomfort and associated anxieties. And so effectively between Māori and Pākehā, it becomes a non-discourse, a non-conversation, with no dialogue and no discussion. The historically potent image of strong race relations between Māori and Pākehā perhaps shrouds the underlying tensions remaining from unresolved grievances that are hard to forgive when Māori continue to be treated unequally and unfairly. Pākehā accuse Māori of having memories like an elephant; they never forget. The rebuttal would suggest that Pākehā suffer from convenient bouts of amnesia, especially where Māori issues are concerned.

Methodology: Researching Māori Sport Experiences

The research on which this article is based grew out of the first author's conversations with many other Māori sportspeople; conversations that revealed a strong perception that bias and prejudice exist in sport against Māori individuals, Māori teams and Māori organisations (see also Hippolite 2006). These conversations, and the dearth of sociological research into Māori experiences of discrimination in sport, provided the impetus for the first author to conduct in-depth interviews with six women and four men, all of whom have extensive experience in their respective sports as players, coaches, administrators and parents who have also raised

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their children in the same sports.[9] They are or have been involved in a range of individual and team sports, some of which have high numbers of Māori participants and some of which are dominated by Pākehā. Their collective pool of knowledge comprises more than 360 years of playing, coaching and/or administrating sport from the 1950s to the present. The research uses a Kaupapa Māori research methodology (Bishop 1996; Smith 2000; Walker et al. 2006) which highlights the importance of conducting research by Māori, for Māori, in order to give voice to Māori as they seek tino rangatiratanga [Māori determining their own destiny]. As discussed in the introduction, Kaupapa Māori research is a response to Māori discontent with traditional Western research practices (Bishop 1999; Walker et al. 2006). At its core, this approach focuses on research that is of benefit to Māori, conducted in culturally appropriate ways, and validated by its acceptability to Māori. As Bishop (1999) describes it:

> The Kaupapa Māori position regarding legitimation is based on the notion that the world is constituted by power differentials, and that there are different cultural systems that legitimately make sense of and interact meaningfully with the world. Kaupapa Māori research, based in a different worldview from that of the dominant discourse, makes this political statement while also acknowledging the need to recognise and address the ongoing effects of racism and colonialism in the wider society. (p. 5)

The interview format was kanohi-ki-te-kanohi [face to face], semi-structured and open-ended, similar to a conversation and beginning with the process of whakawhānaungatanga in which participants establish kinship connections (see Wihongi 2002). Like the first author whose mihi demonstrates her whakapapa [genealogical] links to the Tainui iwi [tribe], all the participants live in the Waikato-Tainui region, which lies south of Auckland and includes New Zealand's fourth-largest city Kirikiriroa (more widely known as Hamilton). The region is named after the Tainui waka which crossed the Pacific Ocean from Hawaiiki to Aotearoa more than 800 years ago, led by the chief Hoturoa. Four principal tribes – Hauraki, Ngāti Maniapoto, Raukawa and Waikato – comprise the descendants of the Tainui waka.

The interviews took place in 2008 at sites negotiated with the participants. Some were individual while others were conducted in groups, often in the participants' homes where whānau [family] and friends passed through, listened in and often contributed to the discussion. Thus, although based on the experiences of these ten participants, this study also

[9] Some interviews were funded by a Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Summer Internship Scholarship and the results of this work appear in Hippolite (2008b).

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draws upon observations and informal discussions held throughout the research period with other Māori involved in sport in New Zealand, as well as the first author's own extensive experiences, which comprise over thirty years of playing, coaching, administrating and encouraging her children in numerous sports. These additional sources of information served as a form of triangulation, confirming the main themes expressed in the formal interviews. In terms of confidentiality, New Zealand's small size and sensitivity about imputations of racism led to the decision not to identify participants, specific tournaments or events in order to protect participants from potentially negative consequences for speaking out. The names of specific sports were replaced in quotations by the notation [sport]. Other changes related to maintaining confidentiality are identified by the use of square brackets. All direct quotes from participants are presented in italics.

Marginalising Māori Sport

"My opinion is that they did set us up to fail."

In this section, in order to challenge the silence that currently exists about racism towards Māori in sport, we describe how cultural and institutional racisms combine to marginalise both Māori in sport and Māori teams. These forms of racism are based on the belief that Pākehā culture, lifestyle, values, beliefs and systems are normal and superior; beliefs that become institutionalised in monocultural organisations and national structures (Consedine & Consedine 2005; Puao-te-ata-tu 1988). As one participant described it, *"I've always felt there's been quite severe racist policies in [sport]. I think what actually hides it all is the high number of Māoris that do play it, who do overcome all of that rubbish..."* Further, not only is this underlying notion of Pākehā superiority "seldom overtly stated in modern New Zealand"[10] (Puao-te-ata-tu 1988, p. 77) but "contestation over the centrality of white subjectivity is regularly displaced" (Hokowhitu & Scherer 2008, p. 253).

The greater importance attached to New Zealand as opposed to Māori national teams (see also Hokowhitu & Scherer 2008; Hokowhitu 2009) was evident in the experiences of three research participants, and the broader understanding that Māori teams and individuals were marginalised in representative sport from junior to national levels was shared by all the participants. At the elite level, three participants knew of situations where national sporting

[10] The writers of the Puao-te-ata-tu report did note that, even if not overtly stated, it "is constantly implied" (Puao-te-ata-tu 1988, p. 77).

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organisations had effectively denied Māori athletes the chance to play for national Māori teams, even when there were no competing events. In one case, even after national Māori team personnel had researched the whakapapa [genealogy] of an Australian-born Māori player and gained a temporary New Zealand passport for her from the New Zealand consul in the Pacific country hosting the tournament, the national organisation decided *"without consulting the coaches"* that she could not represent New Zealand and sent another player in her place: *"And I didn't find out about that till that girl was on the plane coming over."* For this participant, the national body failed to understand the kaupapa and tikanga of Māori teams:

> *...so we had a player whose grandfather had gone to all her whānau, chased them all up for money to help support this girl to get over there. They'd gone back to her iwi, [which] had given money to help her get there, and she wasn't allowed to play. So she sat in [Pacific country] that whole tournament.*

When another participant, after *"a tonne of meetings"* and a *"really hard"* fight, did convince the national body to let him register national Māori teams for an elite South Pacific tournament held in New Zealand, he was told he could not select any Māori players from the New Zealand team: "*You can't have any of the[m] because …then it's demeaning to [them] if you guys use them as Māoris and that sort of thing*". Nor did the national body want to endorse the team wearing the silver fern, the widely acknowledged national sporting symbol (see Wensing 2003): *"They didn't want us to use the fern on our uniforms..."* These decisions suggest that being Māori is less than being a New Zealander and clearly demarcate a racial hierarchy where Māori are set below Pākehā. The denial of the fern emblem also suggests that, in contrast to race relations conciliator Joris de Bres' statements above, Māori teams are not accepted as reflecting 'the support of the community as a whole'. In all three cases, the participants felt strongly that the national organisation did not want Māori sport to succeed. As one said, the national organisation *"set us up to fail. They didn't want to see us succeed because ultimately if there is any talent there, they want to have first choice on our players."* Another participant called such processes *"a subtle way of stuffing Māori [sport]."* When asked if the national sporting body would sabotage a Māori team that became competitive, his response reinforced the issue of silence: *"Absolutely. In a heartbeat, but you'll never hear it. No one will directly tell you."* He suggested that rather than simply stating that New Zealand team players would not be released to a Māori national team, *"they'll say, 'Well, they've got other commitments. It's their choice'."* However, he pointed out that although these players wanted to play *"for the love of Māori [sport]"*, the policies of

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the national body ensured they could not. If they 'chose' to play for the national Māori team they would risk losing the playing contracts that allowed them to be full-time athletes. These examples demonstrate how institutions, such as national sporting bodies, are able to marginalise Māori sport while avoiding charges of racism.

In most cases discussed by the participants, cultural and institutional racism have resulted in Māori participation in sport being conditional upon subjugating their own values to the systems of those in power. The two participants who explained *"we just take it"* clearly reinforce Hokowhitu's (2009) argument that Māori are "cognizant of the colonial subjugation" (p. 2329). These forms of racism may also have influenced how Pākehā organisations respond to Māori desires to enter national Māori teams into international competitions. For one participant, his attempts to enter a Māori team into the South Pacific tournament discussed above were initially rejected because the Pākehā-run national body was afraid it would be labelled racist or separatist; a fear grounded in the reality of how many Pākehā interpret Māori teams, as discussed earlier (see Hokowhitu 2009).

One participant's overall assessment that one national government body would only *"play their hand, in terms of our national Māori team, when it's convenient for them….it's just token gestures"* clearly demonstrated another outcome of these broad forms of racism. In this case, it is the "arrogantly assumed 'right'" (Puao-te-ata-tu 1988, p. 78) to include only certain aspects of Māori culture as part of national culture while discarding or not bothering to understand other essential dimensions of Māori values and lifestyle. As Consedine and Consedine (2005) acknowledge, the legacy of colonisation meant that "only the exotic features of Māori culture were encouraged, where they benefitted the country in areas such as tourism and sport" (p. 218), of which the performance of the haka before international sporting events is a prime example. This lack of knowledge about Māori culture was revealed when one national body asked the national Māori team personnel, *"Well how are you going to [organise] accommodation and pay for all of that?"* The participant had to explain that *"this is a Māori team so we'll stay on a marae [traditional tribal meeting place] and the home people on the marae will feed us etcetera, and we will give them a koha [donation] to the marae and that sort of thing"*. The marae environment is the appropriate, common-sense, cost-effective solution. Logistically, accommodating large groups of people is the function of marae. The marae operates as a place for the people to be fed and to sleep to attend the given

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purpose of the stay whether for tangi [funeral], weddings, sports tournaments or hui [meetings] for tribal issues to be discussed.[11] Although the Māori teams swept all the prizes, the national body would not permit any New Zealand Māori teams to participate in future tournaments.

An ignorance of Māori custom by Pākehā was evident in all the sports in which the participants were involved. For example, simple matters of protocol were often overlooked and disregarded. It seemed to the participants that many *"arrogant"* Pākehā did not understand important differences between the two cultures, nor had they bothered to learn about Māori 'ways' in order to understand Māori athletes. As one participant described it, *"they don't even try to understand it."* One participant and her players *"had to have little discussions about the misunderstandings that people may have of us as a club, as players, as Māori".* All the participants believed that *"Māoris have a different way of expressing things"*. These differences lead to misunderstandings with major repercussions for Māori players or teams, including non-selection, increased surveillance by officials, Māori feeling they did not have the mana [clout, status] to be heard, or even deciding to withdraw from particular sports or competitions. The experiences of these participants are also reflected in some existing studies. For example, Deslea Wrathall's research with thirteen elite Māori sportswomen demonstrated that Māori players felt a disconnection between their values and those of mainstream sport, and that coaches and administrators who were not Māori "had little understanding of Māori ways and values and often were not interested in them as people other than what they could produce on the playing field" (Thompson et al. 2000, p. 246). The athletes' experience was that "you either did it their way or you were out" (Thompson et al. 2000, p. 246). Another example of the way that Pākehā organisations selectively choose parts of Māori culture but ignore or are ignorant of other essential elements was evident in Wrathall's finding that "only one culture was taken into account most of the time" except when Māori were expected to take a leading role in singing at after-match functions (Thompson et al. 2000 p. 247).

Speaking the Unspoken: The Challenge of Discussing Racism in New Zealand Sport

> *"You know that there is racism in New Zealand, that it's all undercurrent. Nobody has the nuts to hop up and say 'All you black buggers get out, we're not interested in you'."*

[11] Each marae is autonomous but is generally aligned to the protocols of its hapu, and iwi.

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Overall, there was little doubt that most of the research participants felt that racial ideologies played a huge part in how Māori experienced sport in New Zealand, although they sometimes found it difficult to explain why. As one woman put it, "*I mean, like sometimes we feel like everything's against us."* Another female participant said, *"there's something happening up there. I don't know what it is but I think it's unfair, it's unjust."* A male stated, *"because I was Māori, I was behind the 8-ball right from the word go."* Another identified the effects on predominantly Māori teams that he coached in a Pākehā-dominated sport "*You always knew that you were the second-class citizen. No one said it but you were treated like that. All the things that happened at that particular tournament and the tournaments later on, you just felt that way."* Their use of words such as *'no one said it'* and *'it's all undercurrent'* clearly indicate the lack of openness around how racial difference is expressed. Indeed, in part of the quote that opens this section the male research participant identifies the difficulty Pākehā have in expressing their views directly to Māori in his comment that "*Nobody has the nuts to hop up and say..."*

We note, however, that although the participants identified the widespread nature of racialised thinking on the part of Pākehā, none of them attributed this kind of thinking to all Pākehā. Indeed, one noted that that he was *"always impressed in places like Tokoroa, Mangakino, the coasties. The Pākehās that come from there have been around Māoris all their lives and they've got different attitudes."*

The problem of racism in sport cannot be solved without clear dialogue between Māori and Pākehā about what racism is, what it looks like, and the effects it has on individuals, communities and New Zealand society. However, discussions with the research participants suggest that Māori experiences and feelings are rarely expressed *to* Pākehā, for fear of ostracism or negative labels such as stirrer or radical. Therefore, an important advantage of the Māori interviewing Māori approach embedded in Kaupapa Māori research methodology is that it increases the likelihood of eliciting responses related to racial discrimination, as opposed to the silence that generally prevails around 'race talk'. In contrast to Pākehā who "smugly assumed that a people who fought and played rugby together was necessarily one people" (Phillips 1996, p. 288), the research participants know this is not the case. Instead, they suggested that what is said *about* each other is rarely said *to* each other. One made it

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clear that she could openly discuss issues of discrimination on the basis of race with other Māori involved in the sport context, "*Like I said, they walk the same lines*". However, when three women interviewed together were asked if they could discuss them with Pākehā, they all spoke at once, "*No, no*."

Their belief that many – but not all – Pākehā hold racist views *about* Māori but do not often express them directly *to* Māori came through clearly in the interviews. Three females recalled hearing about a social occasion when *"amongst themselves"* Pākehā openly expressed stereotypes about a group of young Māori players: *"Oh they won't last long. All those Māori girls, they'll be pregnant."* While two rejected this comment as *"a stupid thing to say"* or *"just stupid"* they also recognised it as a form of racism or prejudice. A male interviewee, involved in a sport with many Māori participants, felt strongly that racist attitudes held by Pākehā would always be revealed, albeit in subtle ways:

> *Those long-held attitudes, they manifest themselves. They may only manifest themselves under stress, but they will manifest themselves. You watch. You watch when things don't go right in the heat of it. You watch. Boof, something will come out. I think 'Well, that was off the wall'. But that tells me what that man really is thinking..."Oh that black bugger. Oops I shouldn't have said black bugger. Bugger that [sport position], he shouldn't have done that." But you hear the first attitude. That's the real attitude.*

Columnist Richard Boock also encapsulates the widespread and entrenched nature of such attitudes (see also Ballara 1986; Hyde 1993):

> You hear it mostly...from ageing, white, narrow-minded rugby-heads, who probably still hanker for the times when you could call fish and chips a "Māori roast", a ditch a "Māori drain", and underarm deodorant a "Māori bath". How they used to laugh. Now they're getting old and can't understand the world, poor blighters. (Boock 2008, para. 1)

One interviewee stated several times that he would prefer Pākehā to make their prejudices clear: *"I'd prefer that they said that. You know…. 'We don't want brown folks in here doing this stuff, you know, we don't want them'. And then you know where you stand and then you can either say, 'Stuff you!' or say 'Ah well, no problem'."* Later in the same interview, he said *"I've got more time for a fella who says that. Now I know what you are: You're a redneck, cracker. I know what you are. Rather than people who say, 'Aaahhh, I'll get back to you'."*

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Conclusions

The participants' experiences suggest that in New Zealand we are some way from effectively engaging with entrenched but disavowed racist attitudes. Their comments clearly identify the difficulty New Zealand faces in even opening up debate about some of the "systems of constraint" (Hartmann 2003, p. xiii) that influence sport's racial dynamics. Their experiences suggest that New Zealand sport is in *cultural denial*, which Cohen (2001) describes as a situation where whole societies slip into collective modes of denial, arriving at some unwritten agreement about what can be publicly acknowledged. For example, in New Zealand the denial of racism in sport justifies resistance to discussing the entrenched advantages that Pākehā have and continue to gain at the expense of Māori. Indeed, as discussed earlier, racism continues to be marginalised as an explanation in discourse (Consedine & Consedine 2005; Cormack 2006; Wetherell & Potter 1992). Instead, the high visibility of Māori athletes in national teams, especially in high profile sports such as rugby union, rugby league, netball and basketball, appears to reinforce the broader societal belief in sport as a site of positive racial opportunity and race relations.

Yet Māori know racialised thinking is present in sport and many want it out in the open rather than whispered or obscured. However, their desires are undercut by the strength of the belief in sport as a place of equal opportunity, along with the broader mythology that New Zealand has the best race relations in the world, which appear to coalesce in a way that makes talking about racism particularly difficult. Further, the institutionalised nature of these systems of constraint, in which the structures, policies and processes of sport are based on a Pākehā paradigm, provide another significant barrier to creating the desired change. As Coakley et al. (2009) point out, "challenging the negative beliefs and attitudes of individuals is one thing; changing the relationships and social structures that have been built on those beliefs and attitudes is another" (p. 306).

Improving race relations requires those in power to commit to confronting and challenging racial issues (Coakley et al. 2009). Based on these participants' experiences, those in power have not demonstrated any interest in confronting or challenging racial issues in sport, especially at the cultural and institutional levels. Indeed, from the participants' perspectives, those in power seem unwilling to even acknowledge that problems exist. As a result, the

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participants, while loving sport, do not appear to be particularly optimistic about major structural change. For example, asked if she thought sport was a level playing field for Māori, one respondent answered: *"No, never has been, never will be."*

Overall, we found that many of the participants' interactions with a Pākehā-dominated sport system have made them feel inferior, frustrated, hurt, disillusioned and angry. Some have opted out, some have made a conscious decision to try to change their sport from the inside, while others are re-evaluating their commitment to New Zealand national sport organisations that seem unwilling or unable to recognise Māori talent. Some know families who have moved to Australia because other Māori have found less racism and more opportunity there. And, not surprisingly, some are getting tired of the constant struggle.

> *They fob you off left, right and centre, you know. And you get to the age now where you probably just want to put your patu [weapon/bat] away mate. You get tired. You know, I've been slashing away now for 25 years in some instances. Just get sick of it mate, get tired and worn out.*

Yet, despite being tired and worn out, this participant and the others interviewed in this study have not 'put [their] patu away'. This participant has spoken out because he believes something needs to be done now so that his mokopuna [grandchildren] do not face the same things he and other Māori have had to deal with. The research participants' contribution in speaking out about the realities and pervasiveness of racism in their sporting experiences is part of their commitment, as Māori, to future generations. This study is one step towards ending the silence and beginning a discussion that leads towards realising the ideals of sport, based on the participants' vision of sport without racially discriminating ideologies and practices that negatively impact Māori sporting experiences.

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