



# NŌKU TE AO LIKE MINDS

SERIES **2**

**THE COLONIAL INFLUENCES UPON  
STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION**



**TE RAU ORA**



**TE KETE  
POUNAMU**

## SERIES TWO

### THE COLONIAL INFLUENCES UPON STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION

#### INTRODUCTION

The history of Aotearoa is complex, but in order to understand why stigma and discrimination have had a hold here specifically regarding the issues for people living with mental distress. We need to examine our history to appreciate where the tendency to label and categorise people has originated.

Part of this examination has been to explore the 'terminology and languaging' that was introduced into Aotearoa, and the continuity with these methods that have emerged over time concerning mental illness.

At the time of British colonisation of our whenua, Colonialists established their Asylums, and implemented their ways of how people with mental ill health would be treated. This embedded significant attitudes in society with historical consequences for Māori and how Oranga Hinengaro would be determined thereafter.

Insanity, madness, and lunacy were terms utilised in the early colonial era of Aotearoa, introduced by non-Māori, these conditions were considered to be more attributable to Pākehā migrant populations who experienced distress upon settlement to Aotearoa. It was thought, Pākehā were more prone to mental ill health due to the adaptation to the new conditions in a new country with the associated stresses of being a settler and subsequent medical problems (Brunton, 2001 p 43).

Insanity was an unknown term and condition among Māori. If there were differences among Māori, there was inclusion of whānau not exclusion. Additionally, there was little indication of the difference being called a Māori mental illness, though it indeed may not have been recognised by Māori either because of their lack of knowledge of mental illness (Prendergast, 1858).

Amongst the various constitutional arrangements of the early Colonial Government of Aotearoa, mental health policy was formulated amid significant changes that simultaneously occurred in Aotearoa at a time of national settlements of Pākehā. In the establishment of the first Asylums a public administration of health services was operational during Crown colony (1840-52) and provincial periods (1852- 76) (Brunton, 2001, p 112).

Original mental health policy makers involved two groups, one group from the justice sector involving policemen, court officials, jailers and the other group, the health sector with medical officers who when they had encountered mentally unwell people, reported their observations to Government officials appointed under the Crown colonial system. Together these groups shaped mental health policy of the time and communicated such using methods of the coloniser.

Public opinion was often expressed through newspapers about local and national interests. The publication of newspapers in both English and Māori languages began in 1840 with a dominant influence from the Crown in its deliberate plan for colonisation by the New Zealand Company (Day, 1990, Curnow, 2002).

Newspapers written in Te Reo Māori did not last very long (Walker, 2004) yet were deliberately used to socialise Māori to Crown legislation, missionary procedures, the Pākehā way of life, and aid in bringing the views of Māori and non-Māori together (Curnow, 2002, Rogers, 1998). At the same time, Māori owned newspapers provided avenues for airing political views amongst Māori of relevant events and issues, especially involving whenua.

In the period of 1840 to 1940 newspapers were consumed by public interest, and fostered public opinion of psychiatric care and Institutionalisation (Brunton, 2001). Public hospitals and Asylums were accessible to Māori and Pākehā, there was no segregation of services as experienced by indigenous or Black peoples internationally.

The psychiatric institutions in Aotearoa were regarded a “state responsibility” which also discharged police functions, and eventually contributed to the associated relationship between mental illness and law and order, under state responsibility (Brunton, 2001).

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was an increasing influence of British culture, with its institutions and systems, associated colonial policies and in due course these shaped how Māori mental illness and wellbeing would be constructed thereafter by mainstream audiences.

During the 1800's Māori were mainly resident in the northern part of the North Island, so North Island newspapers carried more Māori related news items than those in the South Island (Thompson, 1953). As Asylums operated in Aotearoa, public opinion of mental health care of its people were openly judged and played out in the press. Emotive reports about suffering individuals were used to arouse public opinion, encourage sympathy and to publicise political agenda (Brunton, 2001, p114).

Reports of Māori being mentally unwell appeared in newspapers, written by Pākehā using their constructs and perspectives of mental illness and of Māori to entail the typical attitudes of a period of time that described and discriminated insanity, madness, police apprehension and Asylum admission as parallel processes.

Newspapers had a significant influence as a mechanism of information sharing, and of attitude influence upon a developing society in Aotearoa. Whilst it also demonstrated how society thought was developing about mental health and what should be done for those impacted by lived experience of mental ill health. These influenced the various discussions that occurred openly in newspapers (Thompson, 1953).

Perspectives gathered from North Island based newspapers from the colonial period have provided insights to an era that purposely conveyed people with descriptions of their appearance and behaviour, and in doing so, by determination of the author of Māori being insane by public proxy.

This would not be acceptable now in the 21st Century. By reviewing this earlier era of media reporting, gives insights of public attitudes, and how people considered other people's experiences of mental ill health. This points to a colonial history in Aotearoa of how early stigma and discrimination associated with peoples experiences of mental ill health and societies attitudes toward them occurred. It also shows how the colonial languaging and mindset contributed to the association between social order, health and the solution that should be sought in these matters to address a person's ill health through police apprehension and hospitalisation.

In the following section, are examples of media and exerts from public reports thematically presented to highlight the origins of the colonial terms and how mechanisms were commonly used for Māori and non-Māori, regarding mental distress. It concludes with the recognition of deficit reporting of Māori and the continual broadcasting of negative stereotyping of Māori and mental distress.

## SECTION TWO

### 2.1. COLONIAL TERMS

Exerts from newspapers written in Aotearoa during the early colonial era demonstrate the views held and communicated amongst the public about madness. The conceptions of meaning were expressed to describe concerns about a person or their behaviours that included being unreasonable, disordered or against what was deemed ordinary.

It is important to understand that the origins of the languaging and the terms used were introduced into Aotearoa based on a westernized and Pākehā consciousness and knowledge systems from overseas. There was a colonial structure to how people talked about a person's mental health, mental wellness in Aotearoa which normalised perspectives early on in society, the following discussion provides the background to the views and assumptions held at the time.

In the following section, two tables highlight a selection of titles that were used in newspaper articles between 1870 and 1930. The first table represents how non-Māori were described and the second table represents how Māori were described in colonial terms. Upon comparison the language and terminology utilised was common, though Māori and those who were not Pākehā would also commonly be identified by their ethnicity, there was little difference.

Mad and Nude (1876)	Our Insane (1894)	Increase of Insanity (1901)	From the Life of a Lunatic (1923)
A Mad Act (1890)	Lunatic Asylums (1898)	Mad Jack Byron (1909)	Mental but not mad (1925)

Table 1. Terms used to describe non-Māori

Death of a Lunatic (1879)	The Mad Māori (1899)	In fear of their lives; Madman in Native Village (1913)	Mad Māori try's to drive motor (1927)
Reprehensible Dealings with a Māori Lunatic. (1880)	A Mad Māori (1908)	A pathetic case: Insane Māori in the Dock (1924)	A Māori Missing from Mental Hospital (1928)

Table 2. Terms used to describe Māori

## 2.2. PŌRANGI

Historically, Māori held spiritual beliefs about a person's mental and emotional wellbeing. If it was considered there was the presence of imbalance in their emotional or mental wellbeing, it was thought the person was Pōrangī or Wairangi. An explanation by Kaumātua Hone Kaa describes these terms as 'a state of being that was in turbulence.' Kaa stated that Māori sought from tohunga (cultural healers) a spiritual resolve to remedy any mental or emotional health problems.

Pōrangī means the lightness and darkness as day and night, it is the degree to which one is in the darkness or the light, which is determined by those around you. The term wairangi is to do with water, it is a turbulence about that, turbulence about the wairua or the mauri, it's not just utilised for the head, it can be used for the total person. In any situation Māori sought the advice of the tohunga and talked to him about these. In many cases the tohunga would already know about the person being in that state prior to being brought to them. The tohunga would work out the best incantations he required in order to put to a sense of normality. (Hone Kaa in Television New Zealand, 1984)

The term Pōrangī was often ill-used within non-Māori constructs to describe 'madness' in newspapers by Māori and non-Māori. The true understanding of the term as mentioned by Hone Kaa above potentially misconstrued the cultural interpretation of turbulence and framed it within a westernized perspective. The use of the term Pōrangī assumes two aspects, the first is that Māori established and promoted their own understandings of behaviour and a person's mental and emotional ill health and second editors understood the need to utilise Te Reo Māori in order to disseminate and socialise ideas about different behaviours and madness with mutually understood Māori terms.

### Alexandra (1886)

Tawhiao's people are much amused at Mr Balance's interview with Hori Ropiha and other natives, as reported from Wellington. They say Hori must be Pōrangī (mad) to have made the Native Minister believe that he was Tawhiao's mouthpiece in matters generally between the natives and the Government.

### A Dangerous Māori (1912)

A young Maungatautari native was brought to the police station last night, bound with ropes and chains by relatives who stated that he had gone Pōrangī (mad). It appears the man was suffering under the delusion that he owned the greater proportion of the landing the native settlement and made a disturbance upon anyone going near.

### Demonism amongst Māori (1920)

A Māori woman of 40 years of age was brought to us by her husband to see if anything could be done for her. We were told at the time that she had been afflicted ever since the time she was a very little child. Later on, were told that she had been treated by a Māori tohunga again and again. At times she would be seized by some uncontrollable power, and driven to the bush or anywhere away from her home. She was considered to be not Pōrangī (mad) but pohauhau (confused or silly).

### A Natives Will (1926)

This appeal affected the will of a native who at one period been an inmate of a mental hospital and whose release was secured by a brother on his promise to care for him. The native, it was said was eccentric in his habits and dress, and was generally known as Pōrangī or silly.

Table 3. Adapted from Alexander Turnbull Library, Past Papers Website

## 2.3. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

General submissions were made in local papers by way of letters to the editor or statements taken by members of the public about the mentally unwell with underlying perspectives that for certain behaviours a person must have been mad.

### 2.3. (a) Wahine Māori in London

In an extract of a letter published in Te Karere Māori in 1863, a group of Māori travelled to London, where one of them, Wahine Māori had become mentally unwell. The author of the letter describes the Wahine Māori as being 'deranged' days following their departure by ship. The Wahine was placed in a private Asylum on arrival to London but the report tells no more about her, and carries on about the visit to England (Buller, 1863).

TE KARERE MĀORI

London, May 25, 1863.

DEAR SIR,

Just one word to tell you of our safe arrival in London. Māoris all well except [Wahine Māori] became deranged a few days after we left. Auckland. We have placed her in a respectable private Asylum. Everything here favours our scheme. The Londoners are astonished- at the Māoris. We have them for a week or two in the " Strangers' Home," where they get baths, medical attendance, and every comfort, and they have been vaccinated. We are looking out for a large respectable furnished house, so that we can be altogether. We have a warm friend in Mr. Ridgway; all his New Zealand museum is at our service.

I was presented to the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress to-day. The Natives are to have, an interview with them at the Mansion-house tomorrow. The Lord Mayor will receive them in State, and with, a flourish of trumpets. A lunch will- be provided by his Lordship for their refresh- ment. We are expecting an interview with. the Duke of Newcastle and the Prince and Princess of Wales shortly. Our way is as yet promising. We are getting ready for operations, but I mean to establish a position first of all, and that will cany us through the kingdom.

Please address all communications to me and to the Natives at Messrs. Ridgway and Sons, Leicester Square. All their letters to be thus addressed. I will forward the Newspapers regularly. We go straight from the Mansion-house tomorrow to Spurgeon's Tabernacle to meet the immigrants who are proceeding to New Zealand next week.

Table 4. Adapted from Alexander Turnbull Library, Past Papers Website

This type of news sharing was not alarmist and seemed a matter of fact, and that a Wahine Māori from Aotearoa, away from her whenua and whānau would be like any other woman in an English Asylum. It is highly likely her main form of communication would've been in Te Reo Māori, and whilst she travelled to a foreign country for many days on the Ocean in a ship crowded with many others, she was hospitalised in an Asylum where there were no other Māori, seems unfathomable. What we understand is the Wahine was discharged from the Asylum and able to return to Aotearoa with her companions whom she travelled with to England. How she fared on the journey home or how she was thereafter this experience is unknown.

### 2.3. (b) Reprehensible Dealings with Māori Lunatic

In a letter to the editor, deliberate concerns were expressed about a young Māori man who was sent to an Asylum for assessment twice only to be discharged soon after. His behaviour in the community and possession of a weapon raised concerns to the author, who by bringing it to public attention in essence was challenging the state to take responsibility (Puckey, 1880 cited in New Zealand Herald).

#### Reprehensible Dealings with Māori Lunatic

Sir, About five months ago a young native became insane and was at once sent to the Asylum only to be returned again the following week. Well, we all Europeans and natives put up with him, till at last he became dangerous. He snatched up an inform most inhumanely and put it into an iron pet and when after some trouble it was rescued the madman seized a gun, much of the alarm of those present. It was taken from him by stratagem. Then he burnt all his clothes and ran through the settlement in a nude state. He was then sent for the second time to the Asylum, after having been examined by a duly qualified medical man. to our dismay he was again sent back the following week. Yesterday he broke open a neighbours box and took some gun powder and then rode away in a state of nudity to the West Coast where other natives are. His gun was previously taken from him. What will be the consequences if he gets a gun? There is no knowing. Several of the settlers children have to go two or three miles to school and if this madman is allowed to go at large we will oblige to keep our children at home. How long would a man in a nude state be allows to run at large in Queen street before he was either in gaol or the Lunatic Asylum. Surely we in the North who pay rates and taxes as well as our southern neighbours ought to have the benefit of public institutions if required. W.G Puckey, Kaitaia February 23, 1880.

Table 5. Adapted from Alexander Turnbull Library, Past Papers Website

## 2.4 CATEGORISING MĀORI RESISTANCE AS LUNACY

The actions of newspapers espoused unpopular opinions by non-Māori about Māori by categorising Māori behaviours that were not understood nor acceptable to non-Māori in derogatory terms. During the Colonisation of Aotearoa, many Māori fought and resisted the Colonial rule and breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, especially when the Crown threatened to confiscate or just stole their whenua.

One historical account that portrayed the struggle and resistance of Māori is no better than Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi in Taranaki.

After years of Colonial struggle, in 1879, a heavily reinforced army raided Parihaka. Instead of a fight by Māori, Colonial Soldiers were met with nonviolent resistance, a hakari ( feast) and gifts including 500 loaves of bread. The Commanding Officer was also presented with food supplies and offered a house that was owned by Māori. As the constabulary tried to provoke the Māori residents by destroying their work, Māori would continue to plow their gardens and fix their fences. Even when assaulted by the soldiers Māori would pick themselves up and continue their work. The depth of trauma during this era and from these events, and what occurred thereafter including the arrest, deliberate abuses, and separation of tangata whenua including Te Whiti and Tohu from their whenua continues to be felt amongst its current generations.

At the time, there was a running dialogue in newspapers during this period of passive resistance of Whiti at Parihaka, Taranaki. Colonial editors constructed versions of the situation in Taranaki in varying ways calling Te Whiti and his followers as being insane. Terms that were used included ‘deluded’ ‘madness’ ‘be fooled by a madman’ and the maniac.

In one newspaper article, there was the underlying goal to seek the apprehension of Whiti and to send him to the Wellington Asylum. This was a deliberate ploy by non-Māori to project Māori behaviours of struggle within a construct of insanity, with little recognition nor understanding of why Māori were fighting for the access and retention of their traditional whenua.

If the Natives have a grain of sense left they will no longer suffer themselves to be fooled by a madman, for the Whiti is undoubtedly mad, They are making themselves objects of ridicule to every sensible man in the colony. We advise them to apprehend the Whiti and send him to the Wellington Lunatic Asylum, where he would be carefully attended to and not allowed to injure himself or others. If they would adopt that course we have no doubt they would soon arrive at a satisfactory settlement of their grievances with the Government. We understand that the wives and relatives of the prisoners are determined to have an understanding with the Whiti; they expected that his gods would have delivered the prisoners from confinement. He claims to be the possessor of supernatural powers; let him prove it by himself trying his hand at the ploughing. If he can do it successfully, we shall be inclined to believe he is a true prophet. We shall send a few extra copies of this issue of the Waka to Parihaka for the benefit of himself and his disciples.

Table 6. Adapted from Te Waka Māori o Niu Tireni (19 July 1879)

To further the goals of the colonial aspirations another news item about Whiti was translated in Te Reo Māori, thus proposing to ensure Māori engagement with the non-Māori point of view.

Kua nui te mate nga Māori nga wa mua runga nga mahi wairangi ngakoroke huaina he poropiti Hau-Hau, ko tenei, hua noa atu te tangata kore ratou tuku. ratou kia whakawaia ano otira he nui nga tangata whakaaro ana he tino poropiti to Whiti Parihaka, mea ana he mana atua kei ia. mua ai nga ra o te whawhai Hau- Hau, ki tonu nga poropiti teka ma ratou e' whakaputa tikanga kore ai tu ratou tangata, kore ai mate, ahei ai hoki ratou te kapo ,i nga mata te Pakeha ki ratou ringa, kore ratou mate. Otira rere tonu nga mata, te taea te kapo a, he nui nga Hau-Hau mate aua mata, ratou te mahi hakawai ratou. In hoki Panapa, poro piti Hau-Hau mua, ki kore ia tu te mata. Otira mate ia I tepu Omarunui; whitu rawa nga mata I tu ki tona tinana, te taea ia te karo tetahi kia kotahi noa nei.

Inaianei, ko te Pōrangī nei, o te Whiti, pena ana ano ana kōrero. He kōrero ana ki ona akonga kite mea ka tupono he riri ma ratou ko te Pākehā, aku anei ka pupuhi te Pākehā ka hoki ona mata ki aia ano kite Pākehā whakamate ai ia runga te whakahau ate Whiti haere pokanoa tonu ana etahi Māori ki te parau nga whenua te Pākehā, he tango hoki te whenua. Na, kore ano tena tu mahi waiho kia nui i ana hoha rawa ana nga Pākehā taua kainga, hui ai katoa ana ratou hopu kia ana nga tangata parau ana. He pena tonu te mahi tenei wa kua hori ake nei; ka mau tetahi hunga parau, ka puta tonu mai etahi kai te parau ano, ka mau ano hoki ko ratou. Kihai aua Māori tahuri mai kite riri, aha tuku tonu ratou tinana kia hopu kia ana, kua nui atu te kotahi rau aua herehere kei te whareherehere Werengatana noho ana inaianei tatari ana kite whakawakanga mo ratou mo ta ratou mahi tukino te taonga a te tangata.

After the bitter experience, Māori have had in times past of the vagaries of so-called Hau-Hau prophets, it is hardly to be credited that they should again allow themselves to be so deluded yet there seems to be wide spread belief that the Whiti, of Parihaka, is veritable prophet, and possessed of superhuman powers. In the days gone by of Hau-Hau wars it was quite common thing for infatuated false prophets to assure their followers that they would render them invulnerable, and that they would be able to catch the bullets of the Pakehas in their hands without injury; but the bullets sped on their way, nevertheless, sending many deluded and confiding Hau-Hau to his last account. "We remember that Panapa, the Hau-Hau prophet of old, declared that no bullet could touch him. He was shot dead, however, at Omarunui, pierced by seven bullets, not one of which was he able to turn aside. And now the Whiti, in his madness, makes similar assertion. He tells his people that in the event of hostilities between them and the Pākehās the bullets of the latter will return and destroy themselves. Acting under his direction, parties of Natives have been regularly trespassing upon and ploughing up lands belonging to the Pākehās. This of course could not be endured, and the settlers, losing all patience, mustered in force and arrested numbers of them. This has been going on for some time one ploughing party is no sooner arrested, than another takes their place, who in their turn are also arrested. These Natives have suffered themselves to be apprehended without opposition, and there are now in gaol at Wellington considerably over hundreds of them awaiting their trial for malicious injury to property.

Table 7. Adapted from Te Waka Māori o Niu Tirenī (19 July 1879)

## 2.5 PUBLIC REPORTING OF PEOPLE IN ASYLUMS AND MENTAL HOSPITALS

Initially the Asylums were considered to be providing good for New Zealand's emerging society, however over time these places became mechanisms of social repression, continuing with the theme of care and coercion in the response to the mentally distressed. As the number of people admitted to Asylums increased, extracts from reports by the Inspector General were placed into newspapers for public information.

### Joint Committee upon Lunatic Asylums (1871)

The report states that the Asylums in the Colony have neither proper nor sufficient accommodation for the reception and care of lunatics and it recommends that the General Government should take measures to cause proper provision to be made, that a duly qualified medical officer from the United Kingdom having special knowledge and experience in the treatment of the insane shall have the supervision and control of all the Lunatic Asylums in the Colony.

### Dr Skaes Report on Lunatic Asylums (1877)

A report by the Inspector of Lunatic Asylums consists of a general report on the Asylums with recommendations including Asylum accommodation, medical attendance, central Asylum statistics of insanity, the cost of maintaining the insane and the maintenance of private patients. Included in the report are reports on each of the Asylums, plans and statistics.

### Our Lunatics (1901)

According to the Annual Report, the number of registered insane persons on December 31 1900 was 2672; 1581 males and 1091 females being an increase of 15 over the previous year. The proportion of insane to the population is 3.47 per 1000 or 1 in 288 (non-Māori) and 3.30 per 1000 or 1 in 303 (Māori). The percentage of deaths on the average number resident during the year was 5.61 compared with 6.30 for the previous year.

### Overcrowded Asylums (1928)

The report highlights overcrowding across Auckland, Porirua, Christchurch, and Dunedin hospitals identifying 820 patients in excess of the available accommodation. New facilities were to be built to relieve the pressure of current institution's

Table 8. Adapted from Alexander Turnbull Library, Past Papers Website

## 2.6 THE TERM MENTAL

Terminology used in the media started to shift around the 1920's away from the use of Asylum to Mental Hospital, and lunatic or mad person to mental patient.

### Porirua Mental Hospital (1923)

Mr Field asked the Minister in charge of the Mental Hospitals Department, whether he would take steps, without further delay to increase the accommodation in the Porirua Mental Hospital?

### Mental Patients (1933)

The request of the superintendent of the Tokanui Mental Hospital that owing to the overcrowded condition of the Tokanui institution, the Waikato Hospital Board should take charge of a number of patients whose mental condition was such that further detention was no longer necessary, formed the subject of correspondence received at a meeting of the hospital board on Thursday.

### New Mental Hospital to replace Seacliff (1943)

The Seacliff Mental Hospital is to be transferred to a new site at Cherry Farm near Waikouati. Plans are being prepared for a modern institution of the villa type consisting of a number of comparatively small well lighted and comfortable buildings in which the patients will be able to receive individual attention, both dietary and medical, with much greater facility than in the present hospital

Table 9. Adapted from Alexander Turnbull Library, Past Papers Website

## 2.7. DEFICIT REPORTING OF MĀORI

The relationship between Māori and Pākehā has largely been conditioned by the implicit Pākehā lens imposed upon Māori with a few exceptions, that Māori belong to an inferior social group to Pākehā (Beaglehole, 1946). There have been a number of serious implications with determining a person's character based on their racial profile, which has been demonstrated in the legal system with Police, Courts and the Mental Health Act involving the enforced treatment of Māori.

Narratives in newspapers were often dramatic, projecting episodes that occurred in communities regarding the apprehension of Māori prior to an admission to a mental hospital which seemed all too worthy to play out in the newspaper for public readers. In many cases, the projection of events portrayed Māori exhibiting erratic and frightening behaviours before becoming subject to the will of the Police, and then taken to hospital

The wild behaviour of a stalwart Māori who had gone demented caused considerate consternation on Para Bay Road on Saturday. So much so that the alarmed inhabitants telephoned for police assistance. Constable Power was dispatched but when the maniac caught sight of the man in blue he made a wild rush for the river. Then ensued a severe struggle and it took three men to put the handcuffs on the Māori. The latter was brought into Whangarei and after examination by two doctors was committed to the mental hospital where he left by today's train in a strait jacket and under police escort.

Table 10. Adapted from Auckland Star, 1924

The Māori who ran amok and smashed a number of plate glass shop windows. It was stated that [the] accused has been refused admission to the Auckland Mental Hospital, although twice previously he had been an inmate of mental hospitals. The person was charged with committing mischief by breaking 14 windows and was committed to a mental hospital.

Table 11. Adapted from Thames Star 1937

These newsworthy reports emphasised not only a need for social control but a deficit language of mental illness when there were perceived threats. The colonial monopoly of a person's function and behaviour were pursued through the deliberate promotion of societal attitudes of what was determined good or bad, in this case well and mentally unwell.

By conveying perspectives of criminal activity or disorderly behaviour of Māori, and then by association linking these with mental illness. The use of media indeed contributed to societal opinions of mental illness in Aotearoa. In turn producing repercussions in the way Māori would be viewed by non-Māori whilst in the pursuit of social transformation (Walker, 2004).

Over time concerns increased by both Māori and some non-Māori of the way news items about Māori in newspapers were reported. At an annual meeting (1951) of the National Council of Churches, Reverend Laurensen, Superintendent of the Methodist Church said

*“There is a very deep ignorance of the Māori needs on the part of many Pākehās. This is evidenced by careless handling and featuring and headlining of news bearing on Māori people in many newspapers.”*  
(cited in Thompson, 1953).

Media reporting in Aotearoa provoked an oppositional discourse between Māori and non-Māori, with continual consequences for Māori because of persistent and negative Pākehā prejudices toward Māori (Walker, 2004). Studies have demonstrated the depictions of mental illness are still common in media, with bias set toward serious forms of mental illness and attention toward bizarre behaviours (Coverdale, Nairn & Claasen, 2002). Furthermore, depictions of mental illnesses in the media for over fifty years has had little improvement, provoking serious implications for the ongoing efforts to destigmatise both mental illness and those who live with mental distress. The ongoing challenge Aotearoa faces is shifting Public attitudes towards people who live with mental distress when the stereotypes about being Māori and living with mental distress are reproduced through generations of people. That is, that the conditions of sustained positioning of Pākehā control is evident in organisational structures and processes continue to sustain racial inequalities.

The additional concern from the depictions about Māori is the continual impression conveyed of the association of Māori with mental illness, in addition to bizarre or violent behaviours, and the apprehension of Māori by Police. It is therefore possible that historical reporting and the publicised scenarios have embedded a prejudice in mental health services and the Police against Māori.

There is no argument that racism came into Aotearoa with the Colonial settlers, and that the processes of colonisation thereafter created discriminatory institutions and contributed to the unacceptable levels of stigma that have had major impacts on health and wellbeing (Nairn, Pega, McCreanor, Rankine, & Barnes, 2006).

Since the early colonial newspapers and forms of communication, Māori have continued to be broadcasted in the media in a negative and demeaning light (McDonald & Ormond, 2021). With decades of evidence on the ways in which the media has contributed to and reproduced racism and marginalisation of Māori (Nairn et al, 2006). The counter discourse is slowly occurring with the positive portrayals by Māori media of Māori showing that alternative views are possible and necessary. Clearly, Māori telling their side of the stories in their own ways are one antidote to the impact of decades of predominantly negative media coverage of Māori.

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