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Contested Realities: Race, Gender and Public Policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Contested Realities: Race, Gender and Public Policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Tracey McIntosh

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Mihi/Introduction

Identity, both personal and collective, is formed in the material reality in which we live. Our gendered identities determine to a large degree the way that we see ourselves and are seen. Similarly, our class location is important to these same perceptions. Ethnicity is another layer upon this, and some ethnic identities produce a far greater and more pronounced reaction than others. The Maori experience of colonization and the contemporary reality of marginalization and deprivation in everyday life mean that ethnic identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand is a site of struggle and resistance. There is no single Maori experience. We do not all suffer the same burdens or enjoy the same privileges. Though there is a strong sense of our connectedness, of our belonging to each other by descent and by the land and of sharing a common history, our experience of being Maori is inflected in a myriad of ways. If we understand social policy to be those "actions which affect the well-being of members of society through shaping the distribution of and access to goods and resources in that society" and note that by this process "some groups and individuals will be advantaged and other disadvantaged" (Cheyne et al. 1999:2-3), we understand how social policy influences and moulds these experiences.

To say that I am a Maori woman, which I do, is not to make a claim that is free from ambiguity. Maori, as an ethnic classification is understood in a variety of ways by a variety of actors. Self-perception is an important aspect of identity politics but it may not be the primary one, the perceptions of others may have far greater implications on 'who' you are.

Ambiguity and Identity

I have been asked many times why I self-identify as Maori, the underlying thrust of the inquiry being less posed as an inquiry of interest but rather offered as a challenge[1]; that is, a questioning of the authenticity of my claim. My authenticity is questioned due to the simplest of things: colour. Being of fair complexion means that for many my persistence to identify as Maori is seen by some (non-Maori) as a form of romantic stubbornness while for others it is seen as merely perverse. The issue of 'passing'; that is, of being a 'person of colour' but identifying with the dominant ethnic group, has generated both scholarly and popular works in the United States of America. Two recent publications (Ginsberg, 1996; Sollons, 1997) look closely at the constructive features and

[1] It is interesting to note that those who offer this challenge have changed over time, when I was younger it was mostly Pakeha New Zealanders, as I have grown older it has mostly been non-New Zealanders and mostly in foreign countries at that. I have never been asked by Maori but this is not to say that they have not challenged my authenticity in other ways. The change in who asks the question over the years reflects the changing political status of things Maori.

fictive narratives of identity making, particularly in regard to ethnic hybridity, and the ability to pass as white. Given the far greater level of intermarriage in Aotearoa/New Zealand and a less heightened and hysterical regard to race[2] the issue of 'passing' has not been as pertinent to our ethnic discourse. However, as I have already noted it does not go unquestioned. The question pertaining to my ethnicity could as easily be "why say you are Maori if you don't have to?"(McIntosh 2001:142)

This form of questioning contains an interesting policy dimension. As a young person it was asked of me within the context of assimilation. If I could pass as Pakeha[3] then why persist in being seen as Maori if this serves only to act as an obstacle to my

becoming a 'full, contributing member of New Zealand society'. A call for all to be 'New Zealanders' was a call for Maori to embrace Pakeha values and societal structures while carving out a space of inclusion for (non-threatening) aspects of Maori culture. To sing Pokarekare Ana[4], even if you did not know what the words meant, was seen, particularly by Pakeha, as signifying the unity and particularity of our joint cultures. It was portrayed as a token of the way 'we' embraced each other's culture. Actually, it only signified tokenism. The question posed in this context reflected a belief that New Zealand had the best race relations in the world. As Ranginui Walker has noted "the ideology of one people functioned to hide the relationship of Pakeha dominance and Maori subjection" (Walker 1990:186). Later I was asked the same question laced with suspicion and cynicism. Framed within a heightened awareness of historical grievances and Maori claims my self-definition as Maori was thought by some to be about accessing resources and privileges reserved for Maori. Calls for us to be one people now come from those who believe that Maori have preferential treatment at the expense of non-Maori. For many Pakeha any initiative that seeks to redress Maori disadvantage is seen to be at the great cost of "ordinary" (read non-Maori) New Zealanders. This has meant that most state social policy has steered away from using "affirmative action" rhetoric, instead speaking of targeting Maori "problems" rather than redressing systemic disadvantage. The stigmatizing of the Maori condition leads to further individual and collective degradation. The different ways my Maoriness has been perceived over time mirrors current political and policy debates. The way I understand myself as Maori may have little in common with ways that non-Maori understand me.

This raises a number of issues, particularly in regard to notions of homogenous ethnic identity. While not disputing the idea that to be Maori means that one would recognize or acknowledge the significance of certain things (for example, whakapapa, iwi/hapu affiliations, te reo, kawa, tikanga)[5] it does not mean that to identify as Maori

means that one is absorbed into an undifferentiated ethnic mass. My identity as Maori is inextricably caught up with my working class background and the fact that I am a woman. Different

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[2] This is of course not to argue that race and colour do not matter in Aotearoa/New Zealand. They do and they have always mattered. The history of Aotearoa/New Zealand since European settlement is one that is shaped and informed by discrimination and prejudice. Legislation has at times blatantly discriminated against Maori but our experience can be compared with difficulty to the legal processes of segregation and racism that occurred in South Africa or the United States of America. While these countries had segregation embedded in their systems in both a legal, political and cultural sense, in Aotearoa/New Zealand we have relied far more heavily on what Ranginui Walker has termed 'the informal social divide between Maori and Pakeha (1996: 9).

[3] The meaning of the word Pakeha is still contested and can change in a variety of contexts, however, generally it refers to descendants of immigrants from Europe who has been in Aotearoa/New Zealand for several generations.

[4] A popular Maori love song.

[5] Whakapapa refers to genealogy and descent; iwi refers to tribal group; hapu to sub-tribe or clan within an iwi; te reo Maori refers to the Maori language; kawa to protocols and customs and tikanga to appropriate cultural practices.

aspects of my identity provide the shades and contours in creating the multiple realities which are the self. The Maori who I grew up with, who lived in the same street shared similar struggles; struggles as likely to be connected to the inequalities inherent in a capitalistic system as to struggles directly connected with being Maori. Nearly all the Maori men in the street (and my Pakeha father) worked at one of the three abattoirs ('freezing works') in the Otahuhu - Penrose area of South Auckland. This too is a part of *my* experience of being Maori. While other 'common' Maori experiences may have been outside of my sphere of knowledge, the ones I had are a part of my authentic experience of being Maori. To be Maori is to be part of a collective but heterogeneous identity, one that is enduring but ever in a state of flux.

Maori Identity

The history of Maori struggle and its implications in the formation of Maori identity has already been well documented (Walker, 1990; Greenland, 1991; Poata-Smith, 1996). Hauraki Greenland (1991) explores the way that Maori identity has developed over the last thirty years. In this way we can map how over different periods, and due to specific political and economic conditions often underscored by changes in policy direction, identity has been more closely linked to certain aspects than others. Shifts of emphasis do not go uncontested by Maori. Coates and McHugh's (1998) collection canvasses the wide number of views held in the way that Maori identity is understood. In the light of moves towards compensation and new policy directions from government for Maori, the issue of Maori identity becomes even more salient. For example, urban Maori who have become disenfranchised or disaffiliated from traditional tribal ties seek new ways of constituting a Maori collective identity that emphasizes ethnicity and class interests over tribal allegiances. Apirana Mahuika acknowledges that Maori differ on this issue and sees that discussion as healthy and to be expected. While he believes there are legitimate claims to tying identity to ethnicity over tribal ties in a few selective cases, he argues that ethnicity 'cannot usurp the mana[6] and role of whakapapa as the determinant of who one is affiliated to, and who are one's kind based on descent and blood' (1998: 218). Similarly in the same collection Mason Durie, Roger Maaka, Joe Williams and others offer commentaries that illustrate the richness and diversity of issues pertaining to what is at the heart of Maori identity

Linda Tuhiwai Smith looks at the way Maori women are reasserting their own specific identities. Europeans of the nineteenth century depicted, objectified and represented Maori and other indigenous women in ways that have "left a legacy of marginalization within indigenous society as much as within the colonizing society" (Smith 1999:46). Many modern Maori organizations that are perceived as traditional indigenous structures are colonial constructs put in place for purposes of colonial rule and administration. These organizations have often privileged certain groups or families over others, in many cases making positions of power and decision-making an exclusively male domain. In an attempt to reclaim and acknowledge Mana Wahine Maori[7] a group of prominent Maori women have made a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal which hears petitions by Maori relating to the contraventions of the Treaty of Waitangi.[8]

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[6] Mana cannot adequately be translated but it speaks to spiritual power and authority.

[7] Mana Wahine Maori is the spiritual power and authority of Maori women. Mana wahine is also used to denote Maori forms of feminism.

[8] The Treaty of Waitangi was signed between Maori chiefs and the British Crown in 1840. The Treaty had three provisions and two versions one in English and the other in Maori. The competing interpretations that exist within and between the two versions have "played havoc with politics and policy" (Fleras & Spoonley

Before this Tribunal, the Maori women taking the claim are having to establish and argue, using historical texts, research and oral testimonies, that the Crown has ignored the *rangatiratanga*, or chiefly or sovereign status, of Maori women. To argue this, the claimants are compelled to prove that Maori

women were as much *rangatira* (chiefs) as Maori men. At a very simple level the 'problem' is a problem of translation. *Rangitiratanga* has generally been interpreted in English as meaning chieftainship and sovereignty, which in colonialism was a 'male thing'. (Smith 1999:46)

As Maori lawyer Annette Sykes argues, the implications of believing that Maori power regimes replicated nineteenth century European ones has led to a loss of status for Maori women in their own communities, effectively devaluing women and their roles and denying them their rightful voice in helping determine their communities futures.

The essence of the claim is to bring to the forefront of the current Treaty jurisprudence, the need to look at notions of governance in Aotearoa and the exclusionary practices that exist, which inhibit and prevent participation by Maori women in tribal models for self-determination, that have been erected under New Zealand legislation, and the erosion that this itself has had on Te Mana Wahine in Te Ao Maori [the mana of women in the Maori world]. (Sykes cited in Smith 1999:156.) Reclaiming, reasserting and in some cases reconfiguring Maori identities and Maori relationships has become a crucial part of Maori personal and collective politics.

Radical identities

My previous discussion on personal ethnic identity formation was an attempt to portray identity as a 'process rather than a result' (McHugh, P. 1998:149). Since the 1960s, and particularly the 1970s the most common face of Maori presented to the non-Maori audience has been the 'radical' one. For the most part it was a very specific face: young, urban and angry, and it was not only Pakeha that withdrew from it. Many Maori elders were disturbed by the path these young people chose to air their grievances. But as the assault continued there was a need to try and determine the type of people the 'radicals' were and to ascertain the nature and legitimacy of the grievances they had. Hauraki Greenland notes (1991: 91) that radicals were typically criticized as 'false Maori who adopted Pakeha techniques to protest Maori take (causes)'. This drew on the stereotype of the radical as being a disaffiliated, disrespectful, shiftless individual who had ceased to listen to the counsel of those who knew better and was unable to take responsibility for his/her own obvious shortfalls. However, Maori protest did not exist within a vacuum but should be seen within a global context of protest movements. Civil rights movements, Black Power, Women's Liberation, student political activism, the Vietnam War, the rise of the New Left and the influence of Marxism and feminism all created a greater awareness of conditions of oppression, conflict and the desire for redress. The level of discontent, the dire picture that was portrayed of the living conditions of Maori and their demands for revolutionary change were disconcerting to many. The "best race relations in the world" myth was shattered as

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1999:9). The Waitangi Tribunal was established by parliament under The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. This Act establishes the Tribunal that is charged with hearing claims by Maori that the Crown has contravened the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. At first this applied only to contemporary grievances. The Tribunal was able to recommend action by the Crown but the recommendations were not binding. The Act was amended in 1985 in order to extend the scope of claims back to 1840 (Smith 1999:57) There is a vast literature on the Treaty of Waitangi (see for example, Walker 1990, 1996; Cox 1993; Durie 1995, 1998;Kelsey 1996, Graham 1997, Fleras & Spoonley 1999).

young Maori, men and women, exposed the level of oppression and deprivation that existed in Maori life. An international focus on inequities coupled with the consequences of urbanization that led Maori and Pakeha to face each other in everyday life, sometimes for the first time, meant that Maori began strongly articulating their struggle for self-determination.[9] That articulation has been continued in a range of voices.

Location

As tangata whenua (people of the land, indigenous people), Maori find their social location in New Zealand society to be a highly contested one. The struggle to achieve Tino Rangitiratanga (self-determination, sovereignty) is seen as primary to most Maori but both its achievement and interpretation are areas of some dispute. Social policy in New Zealand of the last thirty years has been informed by these debates to a certain degree and the meeting Treaty of Waitangi obligations has become a central objective of policy outcomes.[10] Though the present government has clearly articulated its intention to uphold the Treaty of Waitangi and to "close the gaps" between Maori and non-Maori achievement in education, labour force involvement, housing and health, this intention has been met with a certain cynicism by many Maori and strident opposition from other sectors of New Zealand society. Many Maori doubt that there is sufficient political consciousness and will to truly address the causes for the ongoing social and economic disparities while some non-Maori strongly resent policies and programmes that they perceive as privileging Maori over other "ordinary" New Zealanders. Criticism of the Treaty itself is often a broad canvas to the belief that the treaty is used as a cloak for "dubious Maori activities, from violent protests and civil disobedience on the one hand, to illegal plunder of customary resources on the other" (Fleras & Spoonley 1999:16) For others, Treaty entitlements are compared to apartheid strategies where privileges are given out on the basis of 'race' (ibid). For still others, there is a sense that the Treaty is being used to fool successive governments into making "extravagant payments in perpetuity to Maori" because on ill-founded sentiments of guilt based on actions in the past (ibid). Against this backdrop we find that all things Maori are political.

That there exist major cleavages between Maori and non-Maori is clear. Extensive research on the Maori condition shows that Maori suffer disadvantage from birth. The Maori infant is more likely to die than the non-Maori infant. The Maori child is less likely to participate in early childhood education. Though there is little significant data on performance at primary school level we know that young Maori are leaving secondary school with much lower levels of qualifications than non-Maori. Maori are much more likely to be suspended and expelled from school which increases the likelihood that Maori will achieve lower educational achievement and be more significantly involved in youth offending. Maori unemployment rates are considerably higher than for non-Maori and Maori income is considerably lower. Maori are more likely to require government assistance or be totally dependant on a government benefit. Many Maori live in inadequate housing and suffer a poorer mental and

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[9] The struggle itself was not new only the forms that it undertook. Walker's *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, (1990) provides evidence and analysis of the Maori struggle for social justice, equality and self-determination since European contact.

[10] The Treaty and its importance in contemporary Maori lives is not something that can be taken for granted. Not long after it was signed it was dismissed as a "nullity" by colonial governments. In the space of the last 30 years the treaty has gone from a document of historical interest to a "blueprint for a bicultural New Zealand and from a 'fraud' to a framework for living together with our differences" (Fleras & Spoonley 1999:14).

physical health status than non-Maori. Disadvantage and difference are marked in Maori participation in the criminal justice system. Maori are over-represented both as victims and offenders (Te Puni Kokiri 2000: 6-7). For too many people unemployment, illness, psychiatric conditions, poverty and prison life is what being Maori is. Though the position and legitimacy of Maori culture within New Zealand society has been greatly enhanced since the 1970s, with greater respect afforded to our tikanga and te reo, the Maori renaissance has been far less successful in addressing the many other social inequities that Maori face in their daily lives. There is a danger of speaking of a culture as a whole way of life outside its own political economic history (Webster 1998). While culture is obviously vitally important to physical and spiritual well-being, for this to be fully achieved we need to ensure that day-to-day struggles and the solutions to them are met with the same determination that we give cultural considerations. There is the need to not only fight for the preservation and vitality of culture but also to assure equity in regards to economic and political standing and the accessing of resources, power and knowledge.

Intersections

Race[11], gender, sexuality and class are interlocking: each of these factors impacts on the way the other is experienced. Maori attempts to address issues of their own oppression have been multifarious. There is a tendency to privilege cultural discourses that stress the differences between Maori and Pakeha cultural values and to ignore the way that oppressive relationships are inflected by gender and class. Some commentators have noted the need to explore how attempts to tackle forms of racial discrimination may benefit different sectors of Maori more than others and in some cases continue to perpetuate forms of gender oppression. Maori women are at the forefront of the struggle to better the social position of their communities, yet they continue to bear the greatest burden of social, political and economic oppression. Maori women continue to critically examine their position both as Maori and women in New Zealand society. This has led them to, amongst other things, challenge Pakeha feminists and to question their own allegiances. This challenge is passionately articulated in Donna Awatere's (1984) *Maori Sovereignty*.[12] Written first as a series of articles for a New Zealand feminist magazine it is a blistering attack against racism, sexism and capitalism. In it she is sharply critical of the feminist movement, the trade unions and the left, positing that their inability to truly align with the Maori sovereignty cause is because in the end "all white people are captives of their own culture"(Awatere 1984:9).

Her section on the feminist movement first looks at what Maori women have achieved. She argues that the Maori Women's Welfare League[13] is the strongest indigenous women's movement in the world. She notes how in its formation Maori women had to "step outside traditional Maoridom leadership's paths to provide leadership for ourselves and for Maoridom as a whole"(1984:41). Mira Szaszy, a founding member of the League and a past-president also speaks of the necessity "to set up a

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[11] The term "race" is rarely used in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context. Though colonial and historical documents speak about the "Maori race" it is no longer in common usage. The term ethnicity is used to refer to specific and general group identity.

[12] Donna Awatere views on Maori sovereignty and many other issues have shifted dramatically since 1984, (see Awatere 1996). In 1984 she was at the vanguard of Maori calls for total autonomy, now as a Minister of Parliament and ACT party member (a right leaning party) her views on these issues have changed. However, her 1984 work remains one of the clearest articulations of young radical Maori voice of the period.

[13] Founded in 1951 the MWWL was the first national Maori organization to be formed. It set out to promote "activities that would improve the position of all Maori, particularly women and children, in the fields of health, education and welfare (Szaszy 1993:xvi).

structure which was not dominated by men, i.e. on non-Maori lines" (in Hoskins 2000:43). Maori women through their efforts to bring more balance to leadership roles sometimes sought alliances with Pakeha women. However, Awatere asserts that Pakeha women cannot understand the need for Maori to see Maori issues as primary. Maori allegiance first and foremost is to other Maori rather than to other women. Pakeha women, she argued:

vent their anti-Maori xenophobia on Maori men. In the early 70s white women's paranoia about Maori men "rapists" and "gang members" matched equally that of white men.

White women sought to set Maori women against Maori men. Some white women are still into this. The first loyalty of white women is always to the White Culture and the White Way. This is true as much for those who define themselves as feminists as for any other white women. This loyalty is seen in their rejection of the sovereignty of Maori people and in their acceptance of the imposition of British culture on the Maori. This is to be expected as the oppressor avoids confronting the role they play in oppressing others. (1984:42)

She claims that Pakeha feminists use their race power, privilege and status to ensure that there way of understanding feminism supercedes the way that Maori women understand it. White feminists assume that issues that the see as vitally important to their interests (debates around abortion, equal pay, sexuality etc.) are universal women's issues. Awatere notes how oppression is rarely a discrete entity. A focus solely on patriarchy may render invisible other virulent forms of domination.

The oppression of women *does not* exist in a vacuum: economic and racial privileges cannot be separated from sexual power. Try telling a black Azania women today that she should unite with white women to overthrow the patriarchy, and the stupidity of treating sex oppression on its own can be seen. (ibid.)

Awatere seeks to redefine, from a Maori perspective, feminist issues. She argues that for Maori women the primary issue is one of sovereignty. She sees this as the ability to determine one's own destiny from the basis of the land and resources.

For Maori women, all our concerns as women center around the fact that we and our people have no say in the shaping of our own destiny as a people. That the rules in this country were made by immigrant races and nations, and were *not* made for the Maori by the Maori. We are *forced* to live apart from the resources of the land and apart from the cultural and spiritual values which made us what we are.

The Maori language is a feminist issue, the land is a feminist issue, separate development is a feminist issue, the venomous hatred of the Maori by the Pakeha is a feminist issue. (1984: 43-44)

Awatere recognizes that Maori women and Pakeha women share a common oppression. It is an oppression that "requires a political, economic, social and philosophical upheaval to achieve its goal of eliminating all forms of iniquity based on race, sex and class" (1984:44). Yet, she argues, the truly revolutionary action that must be taken will not be considered by white women, as this would affect their race and class privileges. Michael Reilly argues that Awatere's work forces us to be aware that worthy causes may serve the interests and needs of advocates differentially. For Awatere it was clear that Maori sovereignty must remain the central focus for Maori:

What does she say to history? Maori sovereignty must always be the guiding criterion: study of Maori must serve Maori ends, articulate the Maori struggle, relate a history too conveniently laundered by historians in the service of Pakeha society. (Reilly 1996: 85).

Inside Inequality

There have been a number of Maori women (Te Awekotuku 1991; Irwin 1992, McArdell 1992; 1993; Szaszy 1993;Evans 1994; Johnson & Pihama 1994; Hoskins 2000) and non-Maori women (Guy 1986; Jones & Guy 1992; Simpkin 1992; Larner 1996) who have further explored the relationships between Maori and non-Maori feminists. Along with these women others have also looked at gender tensions within Maori society. Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts that since our first contacts with Europeans our identities, cultural life and political arrangements have irrevocable changed. She believes that all Maori social structures have been "colonized, distorted and rearranged" and that colonization coupled with the imposition of Western hegemony has meant the construction of new forms of social relationships within Maori culture and between Maori and Pakeha (in Hoskins 2000:35).

Johnson and Pihama assert that "Maori are constructed in opposition to Pakeha, a constructed duality which predominantly locates Maori in deviant and inferior locations" and that this is to be expected in relationships associated with dominance and subordination (1994:88). They also note that since colonial times Maori women have been treated differently from Maori women because colonist saw women primarily as male possessions. Maori women and girls place in society was devalued during this time as they were seen as playing no role in determining the direction of Maori society; "Pakeha men dealt with Maori men. The roles proffered for Maori women were mainly those of servitude, as either maidservants for Pakeha households or 'good wives and mothers' for Maori men"(1994:89).

Early social policies acted to further marginalize Maori women on the basis of their ethnicity and gender. Smith argues that Maori were seen as the 'Other' of all social relations.

As women we have been defined in terms of our differences to men, as Maori we have been defined in regard to our differences to the colonizer. As Maori women we have been defined in terms of our differences to Maori men, Pakeha men and Pakeha women. (in Johnson & Pihama 1994:93)

Johnson and Pihama's work on the processes of marginalization of Maori women convincingly expresses how negative perceptions that then feed social policy and legislation have massive and long term implications. Their discussion on the schooling experience of Maori women from colonial times until recently reveals how it has locked Maori women into a cycle of deprivation:

For Maori, the implications of our historical experiences are such that we have been denied access to Te Reo me nga Tikanga, our language and culture. We have been denied access to the credentials and qualifications that would provide Maori women with options other than those of domestic and service workers. We have been denied access to full participation and input into the wider society. We have been denied access to full participation in policy formation and key decision making for our own people. Colonial discourses have operated on the whole effectively to lock Maori women out of crucial positions – positions that impact on our day-to-day lives and the lives of our peoples. (1994:99)

The devaluation of Maori women has impacted negatively on all aspects of Maori life. Our children, our relationships, our families and our communities have suffered. It has occurred to the detriment of the lived reality of both Maori men and women. However, it has also has allowed Maori men to widen their areas of power and dominance in respect to Maori women. Hoskins argues that Maori men within Maori society: have largely become the legitimated keepers, interpreters and

promoters of what is considered authentic, traditional knowledge and tikanga and kaupapa Maori.[14] It is *they,* therefore, who are primarily articulating our past – in their own interests and political goals… The popular notion of traditional gender complementarity – defined as different/separate spheres in work and social relations for women and men does not, in my opinion, necessarily mean that 'material and power considerations' automatically flow to all Maori women. Indeed, patriarchally and Christian inspired missionary/colonizer-conveyed notions of gender role 'complementarity' were *not* about the sharing of decision making and power, but about separate roles with women clearly positioned as subservient to men. (2000:39)

Distinct 'traditional' gender roles do not necessarily mean that gender inequities become less problematic. The issue of speaking rights on the marae[15] has ensured that gender issues in Maori society have continued to have a high profile in New Zealand. The belief that women have no speaking rights on the marae has often been cited as proof that Maori society is inherently sexist and oppressive of women. The collapsing of the meanings of marae, the debate about what constitutes 'speaking' in a Maori context, the increasing importance of Maori protocols in formal and state occasions, the invitations to non-Maori to speak on the marae have meant that this is an issue that is hotly contested by Maori and non-Maori alike. Kathie Irwin contests that it is only Western notions of what constitutes speaking which fails to recognize karanga as a form of speech.[16] Women do have power, status and voice on the marae, a fact that many non-Maori do not understand. Marae has spiritual, cultural and political significance to us and we are often hurt when it is abused and misunderstood. However, it would be difficult to argue that gender power relations on the marae are equal. Though Irwin believes that the speaking rights issue has been used by Pakeha to belittle Maori and to justify "both their ignorance about the Maori language and culture and their refusal to become informed" (1992:8), she acknowledges that while certain aspects of marae protocol have changed to better meet contemporary needs these changes have not benefited Maori women:

All cultures are dynamic and continually changing. However, it is clear that many of the 'newly traditional' Maori cultural practices that are emerging are serving the interests of Pakeha men while disempowering Maori women, in the name of 'Maori cultural practices'…It is a strange culture that legitimizes the rights of male outsiders over and above the rights of its own women. These new 'tikanga' seem to many Maori women to be practices of male bonding, not Maori culture, and they should be recognized as such. (Irwin 1992:16)

Ripeka Evans believes the restricted speaking rights on the marae are increasingly pervading other non-marae situations enhancing male hegemony and further oppressing and silencing the collective voice of women (in Hoskins 2000:42). Mira Szaszy argues, "our marae are patriarchal institutions pervaded by assumptions of male dominance"(ibid). Hoskins observes that a feature of the 'Maori renaissance' has been that marae protocols are now found in many other Maori and non-Maori fora (2000:43). Maori men, by grace of their gender already have an advantage over Maori women and it is unlikely they will willingly relinquish it or even share it. Current policy and Treaty settlement practices mean that certain Maori men are benefiting substantially. While the Treaty of Waitangi recognizes and promises to protect group rights (in both the Maori text and English translation), government policy towards Maori historically and presently has sought to extinguish these rights, and replace them with individual rights as these are understood in European legal and social policy terms

[14] Kaupapa Maori refers to Maori philosophies, values, principles, rationales and approaches.

[15] Traditional Maori gathering place; the marae atea is the space directly in front of the meetinghouse where rituals of encounter take place. Kathie Irwin (1992) alerts us to the fact that the term marae has at least two distinct meanings; the first refers to the whole complex made up of encounter area, meeting house, cooking areas, dining areas and ablution blocks while the second refers to the marae proper, i.e., the open space of ground in front of the ancestral meeting house where hosts and guests first meet.

[16] Karanga is the call of welcome that is ritually performed on the marae. It is performed by Maori women.

(Cheyne et al.1999:168). The individuals who have benefited by this approach have been overwhelmingly male. Maori male interests are perceived as simply Maori interests. Ripeka Evans observes that within many Maori institutions, organisations, trusts and the like:

The power and decision making process of these organisations is in the hands of a small oligarchic menagerie of Maori men, businessmen, politicians, bureaucrats and lawyers, or otherwise more commonly known as the boy's club…There is no system guaranteeing a place for Maori women within our own institutions or within new organisations which have evolved to manage our assets. Any talk of structural change sends some of our Maori men into a tail-spin about 'cultural correctness' and 'making waves'. There is high powered selective amnesia about what it takes to make change. (in Hoskins 2000:46)

Maori women continue to want to be linked to and stand by Maori men, we recognize that to achieve our aims and to maintain our own cultural values continued solidarity is essential, we must however also continue to strive for equal positions of power and responsibility. Social policy, legislation and action, if it is to create greater levels of well being, must enhance the mechanism for power sharing and inclusive participation rather than replicate and legitimate unequal power relations.

Anti-racism moves

Issues of unequal power relations and barefaced hypocrisy came to the fore in the anti-racist movement of Aotearoa/New Zealand. In the 1960s a "close working relationship was forged between Pakeha anti-racist groups and what eventually evolved into the Maori protest movement" (Poata-Smith 1966:99) This relationship was originally formed around opposition to the New Zealand Rugby Football Union's decision to exclude Maori rugby players from the 1960 All Black tour of South Africa. This generated intense opposition, and the 'No Maori, no tour' protests extended to look at the ethics of any contact with South Africa and a closer examination of the apartheid system. This examination, prompted by pointed comment by Maori, led to some predominantly Pakeha anti-racists organizations to start to question more deeply the relationship between Maori and Pakeha in New Zealand society. Halt All Racial Tours (HART), an umbrella organization of anti-racist groups was formed in 1969 was a result of the interaction between Maori groups and anti-racist groups. Though not without conflict (Awatere 1984, 1996) the relationship was an enduring one that culminated in the forceful opposition to the 1981 Springbok Tour (Poata-Smith 1996:99-100). The 1981 Springbok Tour forced many Pakeha to face up to the day-to-day racism that Maori faced. They also were challenged by Maori groups to explain why they protested so ardently against apartheid in South Africa yet were strangely silent about commenting on forms of racist oppression in their own country. The Maori Organisation on Human Rights (MOOHR) publicized the racism and discrimination that Maori faced in housing, sport, employment and elsewhere. As an organization which drew on class analysis to explain Maori oppression it urged both Pakeha and Maori to join the struggle against discrimination stressing that it was "rich Pakeha to blame for racism, not all Pakeha" (in Poata-Smith 1996:101). While MOORH took this position ready to champion the rights of all "minorities" both class or ethnic based, Poata-Smith asserts that since the 1980s many Maori movements; have tended to fight for the political changes of greatest benefit to those Maori who are already middle class or wealthy. In this regard, cultural nationalism and the politics of Maori identity have been the perfect social theory for the upwardly mobile Maori middle class because it presents the interests of Maori in contemporary capitalist society as essentially unitary… This ignores the critical importance of differential access to economic and political power within and across Maori society.

Indeed, Maori are all too frequently discussed by cultural nationalists as if forming one homogenous entity, its members possessing exactly the same experiences of oppression and exactly the same political aspirations. (Poata-Smith 1996:112)

An emphasis solely on cultural solidarity obscures the very real difference of social class and social relations in Maori society in the same way that it obscures the inequalities between men and women.

Policy debates

The Royal Commission on Social Policy of 1988 acknowledged the dual heritage of New Zealand society, namely Maori and Western/Pakeha cultures. The Commission documents states that the standards and foundations of Maori society were identified as the following four cornerstones:

Te Ao Turoa (the environment; Whanaungatanga (bonds of kinship); Taonga tuku iho (cultural heritage); Turangawaewae (place of security). (in Cheyne et al. 1999 :53

This stresses the inter-relationship between physical, human, spiritual and cultural dimensions of life (ibid). Social policy needs to be mindful of these foundations but see then as dynamic not static foundations.

Maori social policy, as understood and directed by Maori with its roots in the Treaty of Waitangi, has sought to maintain and improve the well-being of Maori based on a world-view and values that emphasize collective identity and a unity between the spiritual and material worlds (Cheyne et al.1999:47) Over time, under different social conditions, Maori have employed different approaches and strategies with the state. The state itself has seen itself as benefactor, minder, enforcer, director and facilitator, sometimes playing a number of roles concurrently. In regards to Maori, the state has achieved some success in improving well-being but overall social indicators are a damning indictment. The *Closing the Gaps* report acknowledges that there has been little reduction in the social and economic disparities between Maori and non-Maori in the last few years (Te Puni Kokiri 2000: 6). Where the status of Maori has improved we find that equivalent improvements in the status of non-Maori have occurred so the 'gaps' remain. Disadvantage remains entrenched. For many, social policy is understood as an abstract or bureaucratic process that occurs some distance from the lived realities of one's day-today existence. Yet for all people, and most particularly for those who are from deprived and devalued sectors of society, social policy can be literally a life and death issue. Health indicators serve as a potent reminder of Maori deprivation in Aotearoa/New Zealand and alerts us to the fact that social policy can impact at the most critical levels.

We discover that death, like life, is not equal. Social location, to a great extent, determines the type of death you are likely to experience. Class, gender and ethnicity play an important role in locating your probable cause of death. In the past hundred years the average life expectancy of New Zealanders has risen significantly. A temperate climate, low population density, lack of heavy industry and good nutrition meant that from the middle of the nineteenth century until the 1930s, New Zealand had the lowest mortality rate in the world (Statistics New Zealand, 1998). The improvement of longevity mostly occurred prior to the 1930s and was due to saving lives at younger ages. The infant mortality rate fell in association with a major reduction in infectious and respiratory diseases, which were previously the main cause of death. Recent data indicates that heart disease, cancer and cerebrovascular diseases are the three leading causes of death in New Zealand, and together account for three-fifths of all death among the adult population in any year. Respiratory diseases claim another

ten percent. Motor-vehicle accidents cause another three percent of all deaths in a year, with people in the age group of 15-24 accounting for over four-fifths of these fatalities (ibid). Since 1972 there has been a gain of a little over 5 years in the life expectancy at birth of men and 4.5 years in women. Although the nation has benefited from better living standards, advances in medical technology and improvements in health services, the benefits have been unevenly distributed. In 1990-1992, the average life expectancy of Maori males was 68 years, compared with 73 years for Maori females, while for non-Maori, life expectancies were 73.4 years for male and 79.2 years for females (ibid). Statistics are useful in giving an overview of a social phenomenon but there is a need to be mindful that numbers alone can obscure the lived reality of many people. What are the social consequences of Maori men living five years less than their non-Maori counterparts? Is it nothing more than mere numbers? People's health and life expectancy have always differed according to their position in society. The types of death we die may change, but overall "wealthy people continue to have better health and live longer to enjoy it than poorer people" (Evans et al., 1994).

There is strong evidence linking vulnerability to ill health to low income. Income inequalities in New Zealand diminished post World War II until the 1970s, but increased markedly between 1987 and 1991. This growth in inequalities is particularly marked in relation to Maori and Pacific Island communities. Maori health status in the 1990s could be characterized by higher risk of low birthweight and death during the first year of life than non-Maori higher risk of injury, both accidental and non-accidental, during childhood and adolescence than non-Maori higher risk of infectious diseases, including pneumonia, tuberculosis and rheumatic fever than non-Maori higher risk of hospitalization for and deaths from asthma than non-Maori increasing rates of suicide and hospital admission for mental illness higher risks of cancers, especially those of the lung, cervix, stomach, liver and uterus than non-Maori higher risk of heart disease, especially coronary, hypertensive and rheumatic heart disease than non-Maori higher risk of diabetes and its complications than non-Maori higher risk of death from, and hospitalization for road crashes than non-Maori higher risk of injury and death from violence than non-Maori a level of access to primary health services less than estimated need institutional barriers to secondary or tertiary care lower life expectancy, and life expectancy lived free of disability, than non-Maori lower levels of health prerequisites such as education, adequate housing, income and employment than non-Maori higher likelihood of belonging to a low socioeconomic group than non-Maori a greater likelihood of living in areas with higher rates of poverty and lower levels of servicing than non-Maori (Reid 1999: 89-90)

Philippa Howden-Chapman notes that the behavioural and health effects of unequal resource distribution indicate a breakdown in social and community relations (Howden-Chapmen 1999: 73). She further notes that health and wellness is more than just the absence of personal illness or injury, "well-being involves consideration of collective well-being, sense of community and the community's pool of organized 'social capital' from which individuals can draw"(1999:80-81). She feels that to arrive at more equal health outcomes in society there is a strong case for better distribution of economic and social resources. The statistics also support the idea of cycles of disadvantage that indicate a need to look at lifecycle but also examine historical patterns of disadvantage. Levels of deprivation and community health, research suggests, have a significant impact on the health of a population. This fits well with Maori views of health and the belief that policy that targets the individuals rather than the wider community is likely to be of less benefit to Maori than collective initiatives (1998:76).

From the late 1980s governments have turned their attention on reforming health, welfare, and education services. The Ministry of Health has as one of its goals to: improve, promote and protect Maori health status so in the future Maori will have the opportunity to enjoy at least the same level of health as non-Maori. The objectives are: to ensure that all services funded are culturally appropriate

and compatible with gains in Maori health to show an understanding of and commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. (Manatu Hauora 1988:62)

Addressing power

Though there is the reference to the Treaty of Waitangi, as there is in many governmental goals and objectives, parliament has continued to resist inserting legally binding references to specific Treaty or other Maori rights in social legislation (Cheyne et al. 1999:154). There continues to be a greater enthusiasm in meeting "culturally appropriate" goals that may be met with increased sensitivity to cultural considerations than to looking at true power sharing which would be needed to honour Treaty of Waitangi commitments. The health statistics of Maori speak to a history of exclusion, material deprivation, cultural degradation and marginalization. These are all offspring of racism. To overcome these there is a need to not only recognize and respect cultural difference but to create structural change that produces true economic and political power sharing. Shifts in the debates about biculturalism and tino rangatiratanga in New Zealand since the 1980s has been about the need for economic and political power sharing and not merely an awareness of and respect for Maori values, language and culture. This can take many forms and requires political courage to create the mechanisms and institutions that would make 'closing the gaps' more than mere rhetoric, "such power sharing may require autonomous political institutions and an independent economic base, or it may involve equal participation in bicultural institutions" Cheyne et al. 1999:122). Oppression cannot be lifted solely by facing up to or even appreciating difference. Culture is vitally important but it will be a hollow culture if it serves only to record an ongoing history of oppression. Aotearoa was once a Maori society that was forced to find a place for Pakeha settlement but it has become a settler New Zealand in which a place has to be found for Maori (Orange in Fleras & Spoonley 1999:13). To move toward a time where we can begin to truly live lives of partnership will involve massive structural changes. To do nothing, or to apply policies piecemeal, will be to bequest an increasingly troubled nation on our future generations. Real moves to close the gaps can only come with the shifting and transforming of power relations.

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