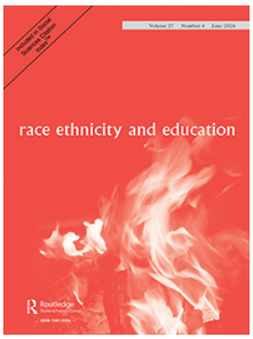

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A critical race analysis of Māori representation in university strategic documents in Aotearoa New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Following the recent claims lodged at two universities in Aotearoa New Zealand alleging the existence of racism, there has been scepticism towards the professed commitments by universities to create an inclusive and safe environment for Indigenous Māori. As a Kaupapa Māori-informed study, we (a group of Māori and Tauiwi scholars) employed tenets of Critical Race Theory to examine how the representation of Māori is racialised and subordinated in university strategic documents. We located five predominant discourses portraying different mechanisms that reify whiteness in university practices such as the selective interpretation of Te Tiriti articles, targeted recruitment of Māori, framing of Māori as dependent on the Crown to succeed, commodification of mātauranga Māori, and avoidance of conversations about structural racism, colonisation, and racial equity. Our findings suggest that university strategic goal statements need to incorporate a critical race analysis, or else risk perpetuating practices that fall short of challenging the status quo.

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Critical race theory; racism; Indigenous; Māori; university

Introduction

Dominant formations of higher education in Aotearoa New Zealand (hereafter, Aotearoa) have their roots in settler colonialism. As 'an arm of the settler state' (Grande 2018, 171), universities in Aotearoa function as an institutional nexus for the capitalist and religious missions of the British Crown that seeks to erase Indigenous presence. Prior to the establishment of eight independent universities across Aotearoa, there was a federalist University of New Zealand model akin to the University of London until 1961 (Collins and Lewis 2016). Since their imposition, universities have imported western higher education systems and norms and have continued to centre and privilege these (including in terms of a preference for recruiting North American and European

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academics) and have more recently prioritised international ranking that centres around Euro-American hierarchies (Collins and Lewis 2016). Such colonial formation and present operation of universities significantly impact on Māori (Tangata Whenua; the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa) and Māori systems of learning, that continue to endure colonisation underpinned by the assumption of the superiority of western language, knowledge, and culture (Smith 2003; Smith and Smith 2019).

Signed between Māori hapū (kinship collectives) and the Crown in 1840, Te Tiriti o Waitangi is envisioned to serve as the bicultural foundational framework within legal, political, economic, and social structures for Aotearoa New Zealand (Came, O'Sullivan, and McCreanor 2020). However, decades of Te Tiriti (Treaty) breaches along with institutional racism (Waitangi Tribunal 2023) have led to legitimate questions about the intention to enable tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) or any of the provisions agreed to (Simon 2022; Smith 2003). Under the Education and Training Act (2020), all eight universities of Aotearoa are obliged to actively promote and give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa (Ministry of Education 2021). Primary Te Tiriti responsibilities comprise ensuring plans, policies, and curriculum reflect mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledges) and te ao Māori (Māori worldviews), having instruction available that is grounded in tikanga (contextually sensitive protocols and practices) and te reo Māori (Māori language), and attaining equitable outcomes for Māori students (Ministry of Education 2021). While these priorities are frequently referenced within Aotearoa's tertiary educational rhetoric, they are limited in their aspirational capabilities in dismantling the structures of settler colonialism that undermine Māori sovereignty (Smith and Smith 2019).

In recent years, two Aotearoa universities (University of Waikato in 2020 and University of Otago in 2022) have been under scrutiny for the claims made about the existence of casual, structural, and systemic racism (Parata and Gardiner 2020; Wikaire-Lewis 2022). An independent review into public claims about racism at the University of Waikato noted that the University's discriminatory nature advantages individuals who can conform to the western norms and that well-intentioned references to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and commitments to bringing in te ao Māori are insufficient to redress the intergenerational effects of racism (Parata and Gardiner 2020).

Structural racism, grounded in settler colonialism and codified by mechanisms to sustain racial subordination and privilege, precludes Māori students and academics from participating effectively in the university system of Aotearoa. Indeed, despite the espousal of frameworks such as a Treaty statement, equality and diversity policy, and Māori advancement plans that aim to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori, across all universities in Aotearoa, little has fundamentally changed to improve the material conditions for Māori in universities. Examples of the impacts of sustained hierarchies of racial power have been documented in the following ways: underrepresentation of Māori academics and researchers (McAllister et al. 2019), over-representation of Māori academics employed within junior-level and temporary contracts (McAllister et al. 2019; Naepi et al. 2019), barriers to professional development (Simpson et al. 2022) and promotions (McAllister et al. 2020), limited enrolments of Māori students (particularly in the STEM disciplines; McAllister et al. 2022), monocultural university spaces at the expense of connectedness to Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) (Pihama et al. 2019; Smith et al. 2022), structural barriers for Māori students to complete their university

qualification (Theodore et al. 2016) and barriers for Māori to enter postgraduate studies and the academic workforce (Naepi et al. 2019; Simpson et al. 2022).

These inequities stem from intertwining and long-standing systems of settler-colonialism and institutional racism within universities that centre western traditions and cultures in universities (Kidman 2020; McAllister et al. 2020). Neoliberalism along with the public managerialism of academic knowledge production serves an economic function that diminishes the public good responsibility of universities (Collins and Lewis 2016; Smith and Smith 2019). By using neoliberal free-market ideas and practices like 'the marketplace', neoliberal policies can disguise contemporary expressions of imperial logic, enabling settler-colonial norms to remain the norm (Kidman 2020; Naepi et al. 2019; Oldfield et al. 2021; Smith and Smith 2019). The persistent privileges afforded to non-Māori (primarily Pākehā or European) and ongoing disadvantages experienced by Māori has raised the suspicion of scholars (McAllister et al. 2020; Nakhid 2011) who question whether the current commitments made by universities are adequately fulfilled. As universities respond to the systemic racism claim and devise strategies to strengthen the place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, it is timely to evaluate the institutional values set forth by all universities, particularly the proclaimed priorities to improve outcomes for Māori.

Theoretical frameworks

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was initially developed by legal scholars to challenge the hegemonic system of white supremacy and address racism in the United States legal system (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). CRT asserts that contemporary racism is integral and normal rather than aberrational (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). In this respect, racism can appear relatively ordinary in many instances and as a result it is rarely acknowledged and can be difficult to address explicitly. Informed by social justice principles to bridge inequities in social, health and educational outcomes for minoritised ethnicities, there are five core tenets of CRT in the analysis of race and racism. These comprise: 1) Racism is a systemic force invested in white supremacy (e.g. racism infuses everyday life in mainstream institutions); 2) Racism is often masked by epistemologies of ignorance (e.g. narratives of liberalism, individualism, meritocracy, and colourblindness that whitewash race-based inequities); 3) Interest convergence (e.g. the conception that endorsement of civil rights for minoritised ethnicities emerges only when it aligns with the interests of dominant whites); 4) White identity is a profitable property (e.g. White people engage in the defence of both white identity and the whitewashed philosophies that constitute racial privilege); 5) Counter-storytelling as a tool for focusing on existential voice (e.g. drawing upon the positionality of minoritised ethnicities as a means to reveal racialised constructions of everyday situations) (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Salter and Adams 2013).

Racism in Aotearoa is 'an ideology and practice [that] was invented and refined in colonisation' (Jackson 2020, 134) and the deploying of CRT analysis in Aotearoa ought to dismantle settler-colonial thinking, law, and politics that perpetuate a racialised hierarchy (Asafo and Tuiburelevu 2021). As CRT does not adequately address the issue of colonisation as endemic to society, Brayboy (2006) expanded the framework by introducing Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) and tenets critical to the liminal position of Indigenous peoples as both political and racialised being. Brayboy argued that policies that seek to serve the interest of

Indigenous peoples frequently fail to achieve the stated aims as they are rooted in imperialism with a desire for material gain. Imperialism is interconnected with white supremacy and the assumption that the western (European and North American) system as the legitimate way of doing things has both moral and intellectual superiority over non-western knowledge sources (Brayboy 2006). Thus, the problematic goal of assimilation that undermines the cultural integrity of Indigenous peoples may be embedded within policies designed without substantial Indigenous leadership.

Scholars such as Professors Graham Smith and Linda Smith (2019) have employed Kaupapa Māori theory (KMT) as a theory grounded in Maori philosophy, worldview and cultural principles, to facilitate the expression of Indigenous voices as part of a critical race analysis. Some TribalCrit tenets are similar to those of KMT that have a transformative focus to empower Māori with the momentum to confront colonising forces of the dominant society. For instance, TribalCrit and Kaupapa Māori scholars share commonality in exposing and dismantling structural inequities and (often concealed) power relations that maintain continued oppression of Indigenous peoples (Smith and Smith 2019). Moreover, Brayboy contended that Indigenous peoples have a desire to assert sovereignty, autonomy and self-determination by utilising Indigenous philosophies, customs, values and visions to construct their own lived realities. The notion of tino rangatiratanga is also encapsulated within Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Came, O'Sullivan, and McCreanor 2020; Jackson and Mutu 2016) so that Māori can exert control on key decision-making within institutions and are able to make choices that reflect cultural, political, economic and social preferences (Smith 2003).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) are credited with introducing CRT to education. CRT has subsequently been applied to examine the (re)production of inequities for Indigenous and minoritised ethnicities through institutional exclusionary norms (Bradbury 2020), lack of meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities (Stewart-Ambo 2021) and purportedly racially neutral policies that camouflage power and privilege (Iverson 2007). Iverson's work is instrumental in illuminating the deeply ingrained racism within universities that attempt to paint an image of acceptance of multiculturalism, inclusivity and equality through the introduction of diversity policies. Using CRT as an analytic framework, Iverson (2007) provided counter-narratives to the four predominant discourses surrounding the representation of minoritised ethnicities. Iverson found minoritised ethnicities to be directly (and indirectly) consigned a subordinate position through the discourses of access (barriers to enter to and participate in universities), disadvantage (susceptibility for discrimination and educational inequities), marketplace (higher education as a highly competitive market) and democracy (equal opportunity and treatment of every citizen).

A critical race analysis (grounded in Kaupapa Māori aspirations) on these resources is essential to understand how universities interpret Pākehā-Māori relations and how dominant hegemonic discourses manifest so that these narratives can be interrogated. Building on the eminent Kaupapa Māori-informed scholarship on the effect of settler colonialism, racism, and neoliberalism on Māori academic success (Kidman 2020; Mayeda et al. 2014; Naepi et al. 2019; Smith et al. 2022), we centralise the role of race and racism to examine how university policies in the neoliberal era perpetuate a racial hierarchy by consigning Māori to institutional margins.

The objective of this paper is to identify how Iverson's discourses unfold in Aotearoa where there are increased calls to decolonise universities heavily dominated by western norms, address systemic racism, and integrate mātauranga Māori following the introduction of equity weighting and new funding weights for research that advance mātauranga Māori in the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF).[1] We chose to focus on university strategic documents as these contain pertinent information on guiding principles and values and mission statements to advance diversity, equity and inclusion efforts for Māori. Employing the tenets outlined in CRT, TribalCrit and KMT, we critically analysed universities' strategic plan documents to explore the racialised natures of Māori representations.

Methodology

Our study involved a policy discourse analysis of university strategic plans (see Table 1). As a two-way mirror, discourse reflects social entities and relationships and also constructs them (Fairclough 2013). In scrutinising policy documents, discourse analysis unpacks the contradictions of 'lived experience and social ideals' by exploring the silence and exclusion within the policy documents (Ball 1990, 139). Uncovering a policy problem's underlying assumptions, inner bias, and hidden preoccupations is another strength of the methodology (Fairclough 2013). Instead of uncritically accepting a policy 'problem', discourse analysis divulges the construction of the very problem – how the 'problem' is created and given shape in the same policy proposal that is offered as the response (Bacchi 2000; Ball 1990; Fairclough 2013). As a methodology, discourse analysis is inherently activist as its final stage involves identifying new, alternative discourses which can counteract 'social wrongs' in the current, dominant discourses (Cummings, De Haan, and Seferiadis 2020).

The current analysis constitutes part of the Working to End Racial Oppression (WERO) programme (Diversity Policies, Privilege, and Structural Advantage) that examines how indigeneity and ethnicity are integrated into institutional policy, addresses the handling of racism, and explores the approach to dominant Pākehā (European) culture. The first author (WW), a senior Kaupapa Māori researcher and practitioner, led the project. WW invited Māori (LH) and tauiwi (KT, RR, and FC) (non-Māori) WERO members with a research interest in systemic racism within universities to contribute to the research design through multiple hui (meetings). In carrying out research that seeks to create a legitimate political space for the study of racialisation of Māori, we are acutely aware of the need to reflect on our positionality as insiders/outsiders and the associated power and knowledge imbalances within the team (Crawford and Langridge 2022).

In this study, we combined the critical approaches and transformative aspirations of discourse analysis and a collective Indigenous and race-based theoretical framework (including CRT, TribalCrit and KMT) to focus on discourses used to frame universities' commitments to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts for Māori in the strategic plans. We opted for a blended approach to coding, combining inductive and deductive

[1] A New Zealand tertiary education funding scheme that allocates funding to degree-granting organisations based on research capability.

Table 1. Analysis of strategic documents from universities in Aotearoa.

Institution	Name of the documents analysed
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)	AUT Directions to 2025
University of Auckland (UoA)	Taumata Teitei: Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan 2025
University of Waikato (UW)	Strategy 2022–2024
Massey University (MU)	Massey University Strategy 2022–2027
Victoria University of Wellington (VUW)	Strategic Plan 2020–2024
University of Canterbury (UC)	University of Canterbury Strategic Vision 2020 to 2030
Lincoln University (LU)	Lincoln University Strategy 2019–2028
University of Otago (UO)	Vision 2040: Approved as an interim final version by University Council, 2022

developments of codes. The first phase involved inductive coding through which the context-specific discourses related to Te Tiriti, mātauranga Māori, and anti-racism commitments in the documents. The second coding phase was deductive and derived from Iverson's (2007) pre-defined discourses. The coding was a recursive process, and two authors (KT and RR) categorised the codes under the guidance of Māori research members. The blended approach landed us on five discourses focusing on how the representation of Māori is racialised and subordinated in university strategic documents: Te Tiriti o Waitangi/biculturalism, access, disadvantage, marketplace and democracy/equality.

Our analysis and reporting of the findings are twofold. First, the description of each discourse accompanied by relevant quotes depicting the image, problems and solution for Māori educational inequities from strategic documents are outlined. Second, we offer counter-narratives to the majoritarian story told by the dominant group (i.e. universities as a Crown institution) as a direct challenge to the fictitious reality in which whiteness is seen as natural. One of the central tenets of TribalCrit includes the centring of Indigenous visions to understand the lived realities of Indigenous peoples (Brayboy 2006); this is partially achieved through the intentional integration of scholarship from Māori authors that have driven a critical race analysis of tertiary education in Aotearoa (e.g. Kidman 2020; Smith and Smith 2019; Smith et al. 2022). In this paper, we used the term 'universities' to refer broadly to decision-makers across universities in Aotearoa. Although all universities preach different Te Tiriti commitments, with some more ambitious and active than others, these institutions have shared funding models, histories and ontological foundations as they respond to neoliberal expectations to be highly competitive (Kidman 2020; Naepi et al. 2019).

Māori representation in university strategic documents

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Our inductive analysis saw the emergence of the discourse around the recognition of Aotearoa as a bicultural nation. Universities profess various components and degrees of commitments towards upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi to establish a bicultural foundation. First, universities implement a partnership model with Māori as Tangata Whenua, hāpu (collective of family related through a shared ancestor) and iwi (extended hāpu network). For example, Auckland University of Technology (AUT) states that 'We will

partner with Māori to advance mātauranga Māori and te reo and achieve the benefits a university can provide with and for Māori'. Similarly, University of Otago (UoO) noted that the institution aspires to 'proactively partnering with mana whenua (iwi with authority over land) in other locations where the University has a physical presence, and other iwi and iwi groups as appropriate'. An epitome of universities honouring the context-specific histories of the residing land is the partnership agreement established between University of Canterbury (UoC) and its local iwi (tribes).

> At the heart of UC's connection with our community is our relationship with mana whenua, the people of the land, Ngāi Tūāhuriri and with Ngāi Tahu more broadly, which is supported by the UC-Ngāi Tūāhuriri Partnership agreement to guide our collaboration and drive outcomes. UC will realise the objectives of the partnership through ongoing engagement with Ngāi Tūāhuriri, Ngāi Tahu, and city partners to recognise mana whenua, and support Māori learning and aspirations.

Massey University (MU) and UoO proclaim themselves as Tiriti-led universities. MU aspires to demonstrate authentic leadership through the 'provision of well-resourced Te Tiriti education, including research, teaching and collaborations that emphasise Te Tiriti-informed partnerships', as well as ensuring that Te Tiriti responsibilities are reflected within 'university governance models, policies, procedures and regulations'. Likewise, UoO outlines its plans of partnering with mana whenua, advancing Māori development aspirations through effective leadership, and integrating te ao Māori into teaching, learning, research and support services. Opportunities are offered for university communities to 'deepen understanding and awareness of our individual and collective Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities' (MU) so that every member including European migrants (Pākehā); Pacific Peoples (Tangata Moana), and newer migrants from across the world (Tauiwi) – collectively known as 'Tangata Tiriti' (MU) or people of the Treaty (UoC) can articulate Te Tiriti commitment, and that these responsibilities do not solely sit with Māori. The interpretation of Te Tiriti 'values', 'principles', 'responsibilities' and 'values' differs across all universities. For instance, University of Auckland (UoA) demonstrates its Te Tiriti commitment through the Waipapa framework that encompasses the principles of manaakitanga (caring for those around us), whanaungatanga (kinship and lasting relationships) and kaitiakitanga (stewardship and guardianship). Other universities espouse commitment to honour Te Tiriti though valuing 'rangatiratanga, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, whai mātauranga, whanaungatanga, and akoranga' (Victoria University of Wellington; VUW), and encouraging 'the use of te reo Māori' (Lincoln University; UoL).

Interest convergence is core to explaining the changes enacted by universities towards implementing Te Tiriti framework to promote their vested self-interests (Dixson and Anderson 2018). None of the strategic documents have utilised the languages specified in Te Tiriti o Waitangi articles: kāwanatanga (governorship), tino rangatiratanga (Māori self-determination), mana ōrite (equality and equity) and wairua (spirituality) (Came, O'Sullivan, and McCreanor 2020). The varied interpretation of Te Tiriti articles, evidenced through the introduction of different te ao Māori values (e.g. whanaungatanga and manaakitanga) across universities, are dissimilar to the promises of tino rangatiratanga or Māori to have the right to exercise Māori worldviews, authority and control (Simon 2022). The aspirational goals of tino rangatiratanga that offer spaces for the valid

existence of tikanga and mātauranga Māori (Smith 2003; Smith and Smith 2019) are disregarded and 'grafted' to components that are more palatable and convenient for the universities to comprehend and execute (Ahenakew 2016). Grafting refers to the act of transplanting Indigenous ways of knowing and being into western structures for assimilationist purposes (Ahenakew 2016). Universities make decisions on the extent of inclusion for the 'Māori aspects' as a form of commodity; usually, only values, principles, and knowledge sources that are intelligible within white cultural referents and can advance capitalist goals will be considered (Kidman 2020).

The resistance by universities to affirm Māori sovereignty and autonomy in turns limit the ability for Māori to define Indigenous spaces and exert influences within universities. Instead, universities adopt a partnership approach that seeks to constrain Māori as one of many stakeholders in decision-making processes. Although 'partnership' is a principle put forward by the Waitangi Tribunal (2023), the emphasis is on the 'necessary balancing of the concepts of kāwanatanga and tino rangatiratanga' (27) so that 'one party is not subordinate to the other' (28). The power redress is meant to restore the balance from the historical (and contemporary) imposition of Crown sovereignty over Māori tino rangatiratanga through a relational sphere (Jackson and Mutu 2016). However, the current conceptualisation of 'being a good Treaty partner' that does not express the essence of tino rangatiratanga frames universities as the power-holder that can decide the parameters for engagement with preferred Indigenous entities (Brayboy 2006; Kidman 2020). Within a partnership model where one 'partner' holds a far more powerful position, universities in this instance, they may inevitably 'claim to speak for and on behalf of the weaker partner; to know what the weaker partner thinks, feels and needs; to know what the appropriate remedies are to solve problems ... abuse the power they have by imposing their perceived remedies on the less powerful partner, with little or no consultation' (Macfarlane et al. 2007, 65–66).

Biculturalism commitments presented through partnership models are outdated and have minimal relevance to the goals of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and mana motuhake (Māori absolute authority). Simon (2022) characterised biculturalism as a 'zombie' concept that is trumpeted by Crown institutions despite losing its social purpose in upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Such interpretations of Te Tiriti articles are unlikely to lead to transformative changes of shared power between kāwanatanga and tino rangatiratanga envisioned in a relational sphere (Jackson and Mutu 2016) within university councils, mātauranga Māori embedded curricula, and dedication to eliminate racism and discrimination (Smith 2003; Smith and Smith 2019). These interpretations were constructed in ways that cater to the needs of neoliberal universities that do not address the unequal power-relations that have favoured the Crown through settler-colonialism (Kidman 2020; Simon 2022; Smith and Smith 2019).

Bicultural commitments outlined by universities resemble a desire for a joint nationhood fuelled by a demand for shared belonging. The deliberate assumption of roles as 'Tiriti-led universities' and 'Tangata Tiriti' position universities as bearing the responsibilities to honour Te Tiriti while promoting themselves as a caring and gracious actor. However, Critical Race Theory critiques the identity-defensive motivation (Salter and Adams 2013) that permits the Crown to define its roles safely as universities continue to legitimise the ongoing influences of colonisation. The notion of 'interest convergence' in CRT posits the commitment and passion for universities to achieve equity for Māori are

restricted to the extent that they are willing to disrupt a process that protects their unearned privilege through settler colonialism (Nakhid 2011). Furthermore, universities attempt to white-wash the colonised and racialised realities of Māori related to 'armed struggle, unjust confiscations of land, biased legislation and successive educational policies and initiatives that have imposed Pākehā language and knowledge to the detriment of Māori language and knowledge' (Macfarlane et al. 2007, 67). The erasure and trivialisation of the impacts of political and social domination by the Pākehā majority exemplifies what Tuana (2006) described as 'willful ignorance' (10). The Waitangi Tribunal (2023) has proposed four preliminary Te Tiriti principles for Crown institutions to address Māori inequities: partnership; active protection; equity; and options; yet none of these have been sufficiently discussed within the documents analysed.

Access

Most strategic documents recognise that the proportion of Māori staff at universities does not correspond to the ethnic profiles of the Aotearoa general population, as Māori only make up 5% of the academic workforce (McAllister et al. 2019). Although the number of Māori students enrolling in universities in Aotearoa has been steadily increasing, there is limited Māori representation (7%) within the graduate sample (Theodore et al. 2016). Therefore, one primary goal is to increase the access of Māori students into undergraduate programmes and to retain Māori students in completing their second and third year of undergraduate programmes and their progression into postgraduate programmes. For instance, AUT states that one of the signs of achieving equity and diversity is 'The proportion of EFTS (equivalent full-time student) in second year undergraduate and above (including postgraduate) matching the proportion of the age-adjusted regional population for Māori'. 'Accessible, equitable lifelong higher education opportunities' are also a priority for UoA as the university outlines goals to improve 'retention and progression for Māori students'.

Numerous strategies are proposed to enhance the participation of Māori in the university environment; these include 'to review offerings, scheduling, and delivery to improve access and retention to accommodate broader student needs and life stages' (UoA), 'reinforcing the role of excellent teaching and inclusive learning environments in supporting student success' (UoW), 'to embed new success and wellbeing strategies that are data-informed, technology-enabled, and that respond better to the needs of Māori' (UoC). As universities address barriers for Māori to progress from undergraduate study to academic role, an emphasis was made in recruiting Māori students based on academic performance. For example, UoW will offer 'a doctoral scholarship for outstanding students committed to an academic career with a commitment to employment in a relevant discipline at the University of Waikato upon completion of the doctorate' and UoC will 'maintain our own research capability by attracting and retaining high-quality, research active staff and students, fostering their development in a supportive environment, and recognising and celebrating their achievements'.

Universities are portrayed as institutions that are welcoming to Māori and committed to increase the number of Māori graduates. However, Indigenous scholars (Ahenakew and Naepi 2015) have raised the concern that 'the historical universalisation and naturalisation of western ways of knowing and being, disseminated violently through

colonialism, is very resistant to change, particularly when it sees itself as open to diversity' (181). The construction of the university's image as Māori-inclusive may become a wall of resistance to racial equity when the historical and systemic issues affecting Māori are rendered invisible (Ahenakew and Naepi 2015; Ahmed 2012; Nakhid 2011); this is partly demonstrated through the lack of attention to barriers that preclude Māori from accessing tertiary education. In all strategic documents, the use of 'Māori' as a race category is disconnected from the colonised and racialised realities (Asafo and Tuiburelevu 2021) and thus places constraints on the possible transformative remedies to address systems of white privilege (Dixson and Anderson 2018).

Universities also fail to acknowledge that participation in mainstream education in Aotearoa may come for Māori at a cost of their own language and culture (Macfarlane et al. 2007; Pihama et al. 2019; Smith and Smith 2019). Without an in-depth scrutiny of institutional racism and determination to decolonise the institution, universities explicitly and implicitly anticipate Māori to 'fit in' and conform to assimilationist goals in a relatively changed university environment (Kidman 2020; Smith and Smith 2019; Smith et al. 2022). Moreover, a university may 'simultaneously give voices to and silence minority groups' (Ahenakew and Naepi 2015, 182) for Indigenous peoples who secure entrance to the institution. For instance, Māori staff members are expected to express gratitude to the hiring universities by performing additional cultural labour (e.g. ensuring research protocols established by Pākehā researchers are followed in a culturally safe manner) (Haar and Martin 2022; Naepi et al. 2019) and conforming to institutional norms by not exposing (and causing) problems within the institutions (Ahenakew and Naepi 2015; Ahmed 2012; Kidman 2020). Despite the well-intentioned stated objectives of universities to achieve a 'critical mass' of Māori, it is vital that sites that perpetuate normative whiteness are critically scrutinised (Dixson and Anderson 2018) and spaces that enable the legitimate continuance of taonga (tangible or intangible item of value) Māori are meaningfully mobilised so that Māori can express belongingness within institutions that actualise Te Tiriti spirit (Smith 2003; Smith and Smith 2019).

Interest convergence is exemplified through universities' investment in candidates who can enhance their whiteness as property, such as status, prestige, and image, in order to compete with other institutions. Not all Māori are conceptualisted as prime candidates for targeted effort to be recruited into universities. Only 'elite' Māori students who perform well academically will be awarded a scholarship and Māori staff who improve the image of university through 'high-impact research' will be given full-time employment and permitted to climb the promotion ladder (Kidman 2020). In contrast, factors that Māori view as crucial to academic achievement such as community co-development and resource sharing are less valued by universities (Macfarlane et al. 2007). The pervasiveness of colonial ideas of meritocracy, objectivity and individuality is enshrouded within the standard that reifies a system of achievement presided on by intense competition (Dixson and Anderson 2018).

Disadvantage

As an extension of the 'access' discourses that focuses on the obstacles limiting the access, retention, and advancement of Māori in universities, the 'disadvantage' discourse scrutinises the deficit framing of Māori. Universities commonly describe

Māori students as a hard-to-reach population and thus require additional measures and assistance to enter higher education. Some terminologies used to refer to Māori students include 'under-represented', 'underserved' and groups with 'historical, educational and systemic barriers to success'. Māori students are portrayed through a deficit framing as a group who faces difficulties in obtaining entrance to and achieving success in universities when compared to students of other ethnicities. Universities present themselves as benevolent agents who are committed to reduce inequities for Māori by increasing 'the number and value of scholarships available for students to enrol at UoL, focusing on under-represented target groups or academic excellence' (UoL); increasing 'the participation and achievement of students from under-represented groups' (UoO) and 'reducing inequities of access for progression to postgraduate research, including doctoral studies, particularly for Māori learners' (MU).

The act of employing an individualised deficit lens to address Māori educational inequities is an example of universities perpetuating the inherent whiteness of 'educational success' as a property that is more accessible to those aligned with western cultures. The assigning of blame towards Māori during this process is a 'deeply politicised choice' (Dixson and Anderson 2018, 125) that can also be understood as the 'politics of distraction' (Smith 2003, 2) as universities let themselves off the hook from being recognised as a key contributor to Māori inequities. In turn, universities frame themselves as a 'saviour' through measures focusing on increasing Māori representation in student and staff cohorts and expanding support services to 'help Māori'. The framing of Māori disparities through victim-blaming perspectives (e.g. suggesting that the problems of underachievement and academic disinterest lie within Māori) exemplifies a colourblind practice wherein universities invalidate the reality of settler-colonialism and institutional racism and their impacts of Māori (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Macfarlane et al. 2007). Although some universities have acknowledged the need for an equity approach to close Māori educational gaps, they fall short of evaluating how the racialisation of institutional practices can continue to sustain inequities (Kidman 2020; Nakhid 2011; Smith and Smith 2019). Consequently, any attempts to 'privilege Māori' risk being construed as preferential treatment for Māori as discussions on institutional racism are not explicitly brought to the fore (Mayeda et al. 2014).

Universities have the 'power to define what is normal, natural, and desirable in ways that make this very power invisible' (Ahenakew & Naepi, 183). One such power is the universities' investment in white supremacy through the privileging of an upper-middle white standard (while seemingly blind to colour-difference) to judge Māori success that in turn undermines other achievement important for Māori such as learning in family, home, and community contexts (Macfarlane et al. 2007). Moreover, it is a deliberate decision for universities to refrain from discussing privilege associated with whiteness that translates to more educational capital (Mayeda et al. 2014; Smith et al. 2022).

Tribal Critical Race Theory calls into question the problematic goal of assimilation embedded within policies that require Indigenous students to forgo cultural integrity and to replace cultural knowledge with (predominantly Eurocentric) academic knowledge to succeed in universities (Brayboy 2006). Colourblind and assimilationist policies can contribute to the stereotypical depiction that Indigenous cultures are unable to work alone or to be self-sufficient, rather

than a potential source of strength or space for generative knowledge production (Brayboy 2006; Smith and Smith 2019). Indeed, Māori students are capable of achieving success on their own terms and the role of university is to create culturally safe environments that enable students to be who (individually) and what (collectively) they are (Macfarlane et al. 2007; Smith 2003; Smith and Smith 2019).

Marketplace

Strategic documents depict universities as a 'microeconomy' that generate revenues by recruiting a diverse body of local students (particularly in times of closure of international borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic), providing world-class learning experience and facilities that are on par with other universities, and producing high-quality research outputs including those that incorporate Mātauranga Māori to obtain a larger share from the PBRF pool. Universities in Aotearoa compete with each other to achieve the aims above in order to sustain the 'business model' while continuing to attract talented candidates and other appealing funding sources within or outside of government sources. The shift towards a corporate market-driven logic is part of the neoliberalisation that treats education as an economic function instead of a public good. The roles of universities are to 'attract talent (staff and students), produce high-level skills, generate knowledge and function as a microeconomy through providing employment, real estate holdings, training and technical capacity, employment practices, and procuring goods and services' (UoC). All universities strive to be the leading New Zealand university with international influences, although they each have particular distinctiveness and are unevenly positioned to compete in globalised higher education marketplaces. International competitiveness is evidenced in the actions such as 'improve our university rankings, ratings and accreditations, and build our profile and standing for the benefit of our students, graduates and communities' (AUT), and 'ensure our research and teaching are both locally relevant and internationally significant. We expect to rank within the top 1% of the world's universities' (VUW).

'Mātauranga Māori is an important expectation of the Government research funding in New Zealand' (UoC). As the effects of settler colonialism continue to persist within universities in Aotearoa, TribalCrit prompts us to contemplate the underlying intention for universities to promote mātauranga Māori as a pursuit of material gain. As government funding represents a significant space of competition for scarce revenue sources, mātauranga Māori are ascribed monetary values within such a system. Moreover, mātauranga Māori is now regarded as a commodity that can be traded in exchange for boosting universities' reputation as diverse and inclusive institutions, including on the international platform (Smith et al. 2016). For instance, it is one of the strategic priorities for UoW to 'increase recognition, internally and externally, of our world-class scholarship that reflects our place in the world, and in te ao Māori, and grow the next generation of researchers recognised for their scholarly impact and ability to create sustainable futures through local and global leadership'. The integration of mātauranga Māori in universities permits the harnessing of 'the significant value that we gain from bringing mātauranga Māori to bear on both basic and applied research activity across the disciplines. Our research is perfectly positioned to share Aotearoa's

distinctiveness within the Asia – Pacific region and beyond' (VUW). Universities also uphold their national standing by promoting its image of inclusivity towards taonga Māori through indigenous design elements on buildings, the diverse cohorts of Māori staff and students, and commitment to being a value- or principle-based university while honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

In Aotearoa, we can 'develop a different and unique decolonisation discourse because there are already stories which express the power of a different truth . . . hopes that iwi and hapū placed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi' (Jackson 2020, 136). Te Tiriti affords Māori tino rangatiratanga in designing kaupapa-Māori educational systems; yet, our analysis concurs with TribalCrit (Brayboy 2006) that Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination are often marginalised as universities pursue benchmarks of international excellence. Ongoing effects of settler colonialism are masked through the use of marketplace discourses as universities position themselves as global players in the competitive international higher education market to fulfil neoliberal agendas. The shifting of universities' role from an institution with public good responsibility to a privatised corporate entity resembles new formations of a neoliberal version of university implicated in imperialism and colonialism (Smith and Smith 2019). Discourses such as 'attracting and valuing people of diverse colour and knowledge systems' are often at odds with universities' ostensible commitments to diversity, inclusion and equality for Māori. The discussion of tino rangatiratanga in Te Tiriti is significant here as the path for Māori to reclaim knowledge and restore justice does not necessarily align with the market-driven logic that advances the interests of predominantly white universities (Smith and Smith 2019).

Following the neoliberal corporatisation of universities and the introduction of a competitive, individual score-based funding model such as PBRF have turned the recruitment and retainment of the Maori staff into a tokenistic practice (Haar and Martin 2022; Love and Hall 2022; Smith et al. 2016). The more recent initiation of equity weighting and new funding weights for research that advance mātauranga Māori in the forthcoming PBRF assessment suggest a more substantive investment. However, this reconfiguration may further reinforce the perfunctory hire of Māori staff and symbolic appropriation of te ao Māori as a means to enhance the balance sheet of corporatised universities, rather than to substantively transform institutions.

It is also worth considering the role of mātauranga Māori and Māori staff and students in relation to universities' globalising imperatives. Since the 1990s, internationalisation has become a key driver for universities in Aotearoa (Collins and Lewis 2016). In large part, this internationalisation has focused on a) recruiting foreign fee-paying international students to enhance revenue and b) the pursuit of advanced positions and profile in a range of international ranking exercises. The recruitment of international students by government, universities and industry actors has occurred primarily through marketing material that prioritises the colonial British heritage of Aotearoa's higher education system (Collins and Lewis 2016; Smith and Smith 2019). Engagement in ranking exercises similarly reproduces and reinforces settler colonial knowledge hierarchies because universities undertake rank seeking behaviour that involves promoting research endeavours that have global rather than local impact and that are designed to achieve maximum visibility with international audiences (Smith et al. 2016). The desire to engage in competitive behaviour is an example of ongoing settler colonialism exercised by universities (Kidman 2020). In relation to the discourse on 'access', the targeted recruitment

of 'elite' Māori active in global knowledge enterprises fulfils the desire of universities to achieve neoliberal standards and the potential for distinction in a crowded global marketplace. The attempted commodification of te ao Māori can also potentially play a role in distinctiveness in relation to these globalising imperatives, but it is largely symbolic. The more substantive effect of global marketisation is a marginalisation of mātauranga Māori to global/western knowledge and Māori staff and students to the revenue potential of internationalisation and the institutional desire to become a world class university.

Democracy

A core rationalisation of democracy is that everyone deserves equal opportunity and, in turn, has a civic responsibility to conserve this value. Equality is the cornerstone of democracy (Iverson 2007) and universities have pledged to: embrace 'diversity and inclusiveness and will not discriminate on the basis of … ethnicity' (UoC), welcome 'people of all ethnicities' (AUT), create 'a sense of shared community and belonging where everyone is valued' (AUT), ensure 'all people feel valued and respected' (UoA), ensure 'campuses are free from racism, discrimination and bullying', and to develop 'collegial relationships based on tolerance, diversity and fair treatment of others' (UoL). VUW describes Aotearoa New Zealand as a 'multicultural, democratic, egalitarian society' and therefore it is crucial to implement ethical values such as 'respect, responsibility, fairness, integrity, and empathy' at a university-wide level. Some universities also outlined plans to bridge the inequities affecting Māori by creating and enhancing 'learning and teaching environments that enable staff and students to embrace te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori' (UoA), increasing the 'number of te reo Māori users through sponsored language immersion programme' (UoW) and providing opportunities for 'staff to engage with mātauranga Māori' (UoW).

The persuasive narrative that 'everyone is welcomed' in universities that endorse diversity has been iterated across all strategic documents. This narrative constructs universities as a site of freedom of thought and speech even though it also permits the perpetuation of racist rhetoric (Smith and Smith 2019). Universities employ pragmatic and euphemistic terms of inclusion such as 'diversity', 'equality', 'multiculturalism' and 'democracy' as the precursor to a just educational environment (Dam 2018). Universities not only 'manage diversity' as a form of human resource to portray a seemingly inclusive image (Ahenakew and Naepi 2015) but also manage the discourses of equality and multiculturalism to demonstrate their zero-tolerance towards discrimination at interpersonal levels. The claim of being accepting of cultural diversity, however, is an attempt to skirt around race that depicts the universities' reluctance to talk about racial equity in a direct manner (McNair, Bensimon, and Malcom-Piqueux 2020). The use of euphemism masks the existence of institutional racism (Ahenakew and Naepi 2015; Ahmed 2012; Nakhid 2011) and the endemic nature of settler-colonialism (Brayboy 2006; Grande 2018), which also constitutes a deeper commitment to colourblindness justified through the dominant discourse of 'we are all New Zealanders' and thus should tolerate each other (Dam 2018).

One of the core tenets of TribalCrit is that policies professing to address structural inequalities must incorporate a component of activism to create meaningful social change (Brayboy 2006). However, the celebration of diversity does not correspond to the promise of empowering Māori to exert tino rangatiratanga or to play key roles at decision-making levels. Rather, whiteness is normalised through the controlling of taonga Māori that is not defined by Māori on our own terms but in ways that universities can comfortably contain (Ahenakew and Naepi 2015; Dam 2018). Taonga Māori are reduced to components that can enhance the university's image as a bicultural institution while entrenched Pākehā norms, values and structures are left unchallenged. Biculturalism entails more than simple tolerance and utterances of respect for Māori ways of being. Instead, biculturalism requires equal power sharing between Māori and the Crown enshrined through Te Tiriti, and the understanding that, as a foundational document, it has historically been interpreted to favour the latter (Dam 2018; Simon 2022). Our analysis shows that universities tend to selectively espouse commitments that are less likely to threaten the superior status of Pākehā. This aligns with the CRT argument that the extent of universities engaging in achieving equity for Māori will be accommodated only when the interest converges with those of decision-makers (Dixson and Anderson 2018).

Discussion and conclusion

Despite the professed commitments made by universities to fulfil Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities over the years, little has changed for the improvement of equitable outcomes for Māori as students, learners and staff (McAllister et al. 2019; Naepi et al. 2019). In line with Iverson's discourse analysis of university diversity policies, our study shows how well-intentioned strategic documents that 'beats the drum for cultural inclusivity' (Kidman 2020, 250) for Māori may unwittingly reinforce practices that support exclusion and inequity through the discourses of 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi', 'access', 'disadvantage', 'marketplace' and 'democracy'. The use of critical race (Brayboy 2006; Delgado and Stefancic 2017) and Kaupapa Māori (Smith 2003; Smith and Smith 2019) theoretical perspectives in this paper has cast light on the window-dressing nature of strategic documents that attempt to seclude the persistent problem of racism and to white-wash colonised and racialised realities of Māori. This is evident through the construction of a 'white saviour' image that portrays universities as a genuine partner of various external and internal Māori entities, an advocate for reducing Māori educational inequities, and an enthusiastic defender of equality.

A critical race analysis endeavours to expose the inconsistencies in structural systems and institutions (Brayboy 2006). CRT unveils the way in which whiteness, treated as a form of property, becomes active within ostensibly colourblind strategic documents. This is achieved through a deliberate avoidance of discussions on dismantling institutional racism, a lack of focus on the intergenerational consequences of settler-colonialism, subordinating Māori to a framework dependent on neoliberal institutions for success and diminishing the legal and political standing of Māori as Tāngata Whenua. This is often done using rhetoric centered on diversity,

equality, and multiculturalism. The bicultural promises made in the strategic documents, similar to those reiterated over the years, are merely cosmetic changes that mask the need for transformative changes to improve Māori educational equity (Dam 2018; Simon 2022; Smith and Smith 2019). It is through the regulation of Māori expression of tino rangatiratanga, devoid of attention to structural barriers and the perpetuation of victim-blaming on Māori, that reifies the value of whiteness and at the same time induces universities to engage in the defence of whiteness so that the 'rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude' (Dixson & Anderson, 127) can be retained.

Our nuanced and theorised understanding of Māori representation discourses within strategic documents serve as the preliminary step towards developing more effective transforming responses. Kidman (2020) reminded us that 'if indigenous peoples are going to survive in the neoliberal university, our scholarship must face outwards towards native publics or else sit forever in limbo, neither transforming the institution nor fuelling indigenous struggles against oppression and colonialism' (258). For decolonising and equity initiatives to have the sustainable foundation for success, these need to be set as strategic priorities that reflect Indigenous aspirations and are not distracted by neoliberal influences (e.g. competition for global ranking). Following the occlusion of Te Tiriti articles, we observed the (pernicious) moves towards commodifying mātauranga Māori, Māori academics and Te Tiriti into the monetised space of university competition. These are evidence of reproductive forces of settler colonialism and neoliberalism that universities continue to perpetuate within a global, colonial Eurocentric knowledge enterprise, which must be dismantled or disrupted in order for indigenising possibilities to surface.

Smith and Jones (2021) outlined three outcomes of Te Tiriti-embedded and anti-racist universities: 1) a welcoming, inclusive and affirming environment for staff and students of all cultures where systemic racism has been eradicated; 2) mana of Māori teaching, learning, and working at universities is enhanced; and 3) mātauranga Māori is meaningfully weaved through teaching and research approaches. Within the strategic documents that we analysed, only UoO acknowledges the colonial origin of how the university was founded. UoO has also outlined ambitious strategic goals of moving beyond its colonial past and becoming a Te Tiriti-led university; yet, there is no explicit plan put forward to respond to the systemic racism claims within its institution (Wikaire-Lewis 2022). If universities desire to draft strategic documents that serve as a road map for eliminating structural racism, these ought to have a transformation focus guided by Te Tiriti articles, CRT tenets, and Māori relational values identified by local iwi and hapū (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2022). Otherwise, colonising processes can hinder Māori from critically conscientising themselves about their needs, aspirations and preferences (Smith 2003).

In 2022, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission published the Maranga Mai! Report calling for Crown organisations to enter a process of truth (document evidence of racism), reconciliation (establish a mutually respectful relationship) and justice (implement actions to halt and reverse racism) with Māori and use this as a springboard to take bold actions to eliminate racism, commit to constitutional

transformation, and enable a better future for tangata whenua and all New Zealanders (23). The processes of truth, reconciliation, and justice for Indigenous peoples in Aotearoa and other colonised nations (e.g. Australia; Dudgeon and Pickett 2000 and Canada; Stein 2020) are the levers for addressing the intergenerational impacts of settler colonialism and persistent racism (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2022); the drafting of policies (including strategic documents) to bridge Māori inequities in tertiary education is an example of such efforts. However, similar to decolonial and anti-racism efforts in universities elsewhere (Iverson 2007; Stein 2020), we found strategic documents are complicit in structures that contribute to racial inequalities within the tertiary education. Māori continue to be racialised as universities engage in a series of manoeuvres that impede systems of accountability and obscure responsibility back to Māori. Such strategies are clear breaches of Te Tiriti and are often followed by claims of innocence (Tuck and Yang 2012) that further obscure the structures of settler colonialism. We hope our analysis can pave the path for more meaningful engagement of critical race discourses to create safe spaces to accommodate the increasing number of Māori occupying academic roles within universities.

Finally, we are cautious that writing a good strategic plan with aspirational goals for Māori inclusivity does not necessarily correspond with the effective performance of proclaimed goals. A strategic document or diversity policy that documents racism cannot be the sole indicator of good performance (Ahmed 2012). A critical race stance towards equity not only requires universities to have an equity talk, but also walk an equity walk (McNair, Bensimon, and Malcom-Piqueux 2020). Often, the burden of holding the universities accountable to implementing changes fall on Māori and minoritised groups, who are also most likely to be affected by injustices that are resistant to change (Nakhid 2011). The current analysis provides a framework for future studies to monitor the evolving discourses used to represent Māori, and to characterise efforts to address issues that impact on Māori educational outcomes within strategic documents. At all stages of creating and implementing strategic documents concerning goals for Māori, universities should ensure that the aspiration of tino rangatiratanga is fully upheld. This includes recognising Māori leadership positions and properly resourcing Māori divisions (e.g. Office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori and the Faculty of Māori Studies, and Māori student associations) in their role of leading internal and external engagement with Māori (Smith and Jones 2021). As Universities sit on unceded Māori lands, true decolonisation can only occur when the land is returned. Until such time, the interrogation of existing racist structures must be a priority.

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