What is with all the hate? A thematic analysis of New Zealanders' attitudes to the Human Rights Commission's 'Give nothing to racism' social marketing campaign

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Abstract

This article explores the attitudes of New Zealanders to the social marketing campaign 'Give nothing to racism'. Thematic analysis was applied to a series of comments posted on the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (HRC)'s Facebook page. The analysis revealed four key themes: 'It starts at the top'; 'White people are victims too'; 'What is racism anyway?'; and 'We are all equal'. These themes showed that the campaign did not create a single, unified desire among audiences to overcome racism. Posts from the public ranged from commending the HRC for stamping out racism to condemnation for shedding light on an issue that some felt was non-existent in New Zealand society or which unfairly targeted 'white New Zealanders'. The campaign appeared to produce ethnocentric and prejudiced responses, and the comments were evidence of in-group favouritism and othering of Māori. This article contends that social media platforms are spaces where "bullying, offensive content and hate speech" (Mondal, Silva & Benevenuto, 2017, p.85) can undermine social marketing and attempts to establish social cohesion and unity.

Keywords Racism; Social marketing campaign; Social media

Introduction

In June 2017, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (HRC, 2017) launched the social marketing campaign 'Give nothing to racism'. Taika Waititi, a New Zealand filmmaker and actor, fronted and directed the campaign, which aimed to make New Zealanders aware of casual racism and its increasing prevalence in society. To clarify, casual racism is understood here as covert, subtle, slights and putdowns (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez & Willis, 1978) that are hostile towards people of colour, regardless of whether they are communicated consciously or unconsciously in verbal and non-verbal exchanges (Sue et al., 2007). According to former Race Relations

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Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy, one-third of the complaints the HRC receives are about racism. The HRC was particularly concerned about the "quiet, personal places where racism and prejudice is nurtured" (HRC, 2017, n.p). Joining the HRC and Waititi in their attempts to highlight that racist jokes were not funny were a number of New Zealand celebrities, including Steven Adams, Sam Neill, Rhys Darby, Lucy Lawless, Sonny Bill Williams, Hayley Holt and Karl Urban. In each of the 24 videos produced for the campaign, a celebrity is seen laughing before abruptly stopping and becoming serious. The purpose of this article is to explore the attitudes of New Zealanders to this social marketing campaign and—more specifically—those of Māori, who are regular targets of racism within New Zealand society (Pack, Tuffin & Lyon, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

To offer some context, Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand (Barber, 1999). During the nineteenth century, British colonists began arriving in New Zealand, where they began settling the land. Māori referred to these non-Māori people as Pākehā and the term has endured, now encompassing New Zealand-born Europeans and others who have migrated to New Zealand. During the process of colonising New Zealand, the British entered into an agreement designed to ensure the partnership of both parties, the protection of Māori and their culture, and equal citizenship, which saw the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (Pack et al., 2016c). Regardless of whether the arrangements of the Treaty were misunderstood or the British sought to deceive the Māori (Seuffert, 1998), the Treaty led to the subjugation of Māori rights, loss of land and the marginalisation of their culture, language and customs (Pack et al., 2016b, 2016c). It was not until the 1975 Treaty of Waitangi Act that reparations were implemented to offset the negative impacts of colonisation on Māori people. The Act established the Waitangi Tribunal, a commission of inquiry to hear claims brought by Māori relating to Crown actions which breach the Treaty, and led to the recognition of New Zealand as a bicultural nation and Māori as equal Treaty partners (Houkamau, Stronger & Sibley, 2017).

However, even in this postcolonial society where efforts have been made to elevate the status of Māori to partners with the Crown, the effects of

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colonisation remain. Māori are disadvantaged in health, housing, education and socioeconomic status. For example, research has found that Māori are twice as likely to be found guilty of similar crimes to their Pākehā counterparts (Pack, Tuffin & Lyons, 2015) and suicide rates among young Māori are 2.5 times higher than among young Pākehā (Pack et al., 2015). According to the Police Commission, the former statistic is a product of unconscious racial bias (TeAoMāori News, 2017). The latter statistic has been attributed, in part, to the racism experienced by Māori, particularly as many New Zealanders continue to deny the endemic racism within society and have grown accustomed to the white superiority ideologies that underpinned the nation's development and evolution (Pack et al., 2015). Although New Zealand has sought to establish an identity that emphasises values such as democracy, egalitarianism and the perception of 'one people', such discourses appear to hide covert, subtle racism and asymmetrical power relationships (Kirkwood, Liu & Weatherall, 2005; Pack et al., 2016a). Amongst the intentions of this research is to consider how a social marketing campaign designed to overcome casual racism within New Zealand was responded to by those exposed to the videos on the HRC's Facebook page. To address the overarching research purpose, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to a series of comments posted on the HRC's Facebook page underneath the 'Give nothing to racism' videos.

Literature review

The 'Give nothing to racism' campaign was formulated in response to the perception that racism and discrimination are commonplace occurrences within New Zealand society and "contribute to and exacerbate enduring social and economic ethnic inequalities in New Zealand" (Houkamau et al., 2017, p.73). 'Race' is considered a biological category for dividing people. Despite race being used to segment people according to phenotype, modern genetics has found no scientific evidence for the existence of distinct 'races'. Stephan and Stephan (2000) argue that human populations are mixed with very little evidence to suggest the existence of 'pure' races.

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Race continues to be regarded as an ontological category because, although not biologically supported, race has become a social construct. Knowledge about what constitutes a race is collaboratively produced within communities (Marecek, Crawford & Popp, 2005) and the dominant view that is maintained is that the personalities of groups are dependent on hereditary characteristics. Collectives maintain this view of racial groups by transmitting understandings of race in language. As Marecek et al. (2005, p.196) attest, language offers a representation of reality but "not a direct replica of it." However, language can reinforce what the majority consider normal and who they consider 'others', creating double standards that ensure the maintenance of the status quo. Race becomes "the centrepiece of a hierarchical system that produces differences" (Hall, 2017, p.33) that treat some social categories as inferior.

According to Anderson and Taylor (2013, p.278), racism is "the perception and treatment of a racial or ethnic group [or person] as intellectually, socially or culturally inferior to one's group." By engaging in racism, people can benefit from political, social and economic inequalities. Fleras (2016) asserts that these inequalities are observed and projected in three types of racism: overt and blatantly malicious comments towards people of colour; systematic and institutionalised racism that subtly perpetuates white privilege by disadvantaging groups within society; and microaggressions that permeate everyday interpersonal interactions.

Overt racism includes direct and deliberate communications that dominate, exploit (Fleras, 2016) and are hostile towards people of colour (Salter, Adams & Perez, 2018). As Lentin (2016, p.35) argues, these acts of blatant racism are often misleadingly considered "frozen ... in historical time" and not prevalent in contemporary, postracial society. For example, fascist Germany, apartheid South Africa (Lentin, 2016) and the colonisation of New Zealand (Jackson, 2017) are considered evidence that overt racism explains the regimes of the past as opposed to the situations experienced by coloured people today (Lentin, 2016; Sue, 2015). Those that engage in overt racism are judged as exceptions to the rule, acting out their individual bias. However, as

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Jackson (2017) and Salter et al. (2018) argue, attributing racism to individuals obscures the systematic and institutional racism in society.

Systematic and institutional racism is "embedded in social practices and social structures" (Doane 2017, p.977). Much like overt racism, these forms of racism centre on ensuring the superiority of white people. For example, institutional racism refers to "the structures, policies, practices, and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race" (Jones, 2002, p.10). By depriving people of colour access to resources, institutional racism makes it difficult for these often marginalised groups to challenge the supremacy of white people and prevents people from unlearning racist attitudes of the past (Lentin, 2016).

The focus of the HRC's 2017 campaign was everyday racism or, as Sue (2013) describes it, racial microaggressions. According to Pierce et al. (1978, p.66), racial microaggressions are "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs." These messages "communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slurs and insults" (Sue et al., 2007, p.273) and are separated into three different forms: microassaults; microinsults; and microinvalidations. Microassaults are explicit verbal or non-verbal attacks on an individual that hurt the person and make them feel inferior. Those engaged in their use resort to microassaults when they lose control or there is perceived support for their racist views. Microinsults occur when a person is rude or insensitive when referring to another's racial background or ethnic identity. Finally, microinvalidations are when communications "exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p.274).

Regardless of form, microaggressions can be confused, dismissed or considered innocuous by those using them because they can be communicated unconsciously and unintentionally (Fleras, 2016; Robinson-Wood et al., 2015; Sue, 2013; Tao, Owen & Drinane, 2017; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). Tao et al. (2017) determined that those on the receiving end of racial microaggressions often granted individuals the benefit of the doubt because intent could not be readily discerned. Additionally, Fleras (2016) argues that not all microaggressions are confronted by those receiving them

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because of apprehensions and the likelihood of being accused of 'playing the race card', being politically correct, acting like victims or being overly sensitive. Therefore, receivers may excuse discriminatory microaggressions, despite their cumulative effect being considered more severe than overt racism (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). Such effects can include distress and racial trauma (Comas-Díaz, Hall & Neville, 2019), "anxiety, depression, perceived stress, anger, frustration" and "exclusion, powerlessness, and shame" (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015, p.468). As Robinson-Wood et al. (2015) argue, racial microaggressions are traumatic, pervasive and produce psychological and physiological implications.

According to Sue (2013), although white people may fear accusations of racism, they all hold an internalised prejudice which manifests in microaggressions. People in society have been culturally conditioned to automatically react in prejudiced ways to maintain an invisible bias that reinforces asymmetrical power relationships between white people and people of colour (Sue et al., 2007). For example, a professor asking whether a Māori university student is the recipient of a scholarship can be perceived as a racial microaggression because the implication is that the student would have been unable to attend university without financial assistance. The asking of such a question demonstrates that the professor has been socialised towards holding negative attitudes towards certain groups within society. Therefore, as Essed (1991) and Fleras (2016) assert, the everyday racism experienced by minorities is perpetuated in language and behaviours that normalise an implicit bias that favours the dominant majority.

Overcoming the prevalence of microaggressions and their impacts on those of colour is difficult because the white majority are fearful and reluctant to engage in race talk. Race talk happens when people of different cultures and ethnicities broach topics, such as race, racism, whiteness and white privilege. Such conversations can make white people feel uncomfortable, confronted, anxious, defensive and angry (Sue, 2013). To acknowledge their contribution to racial inequities is to threaten the prevailing ideology that white people are not racist and that they are considerate, moral and fair. The fear of being considered racist and misunderstood in race talk can lead to

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guarded, incoherent responses that are non-committal or can see white people remain silent and complacent to avoid being accused of racism (Sue, 2013).

Alternatively, Sue (2015) argues, white people can deny the existence of racism in society. Such denials include refusing to accept their prejudice and personal bias, as well as the continued presence of racism in society. Furthermore, white people can accuse people of colour of reverse racism, opting to deflect or become defensive when faced with criticism of their privileged position. The objective is to purge themselves of their white guilt, but in some cases the guilt can be overwhelming for white people, which produces paralysis (Sue, 2015). In New Zealand, Pākehā can experience such a paralysis, with feelings of hopelessness preventing them from being able to understand and even consider the importance of the Māori experience (Tolich, 2002). Denials can allow white people to ensure they retain their privilege at the expense of race talk that could challenge ideologies and perhaps even evolve societies.

According to DiAngelo (2018, p.24), white privilege is "a sociological concept referring to advantages that are taken for granted by whites and that cannot be similarly enjoyed by people of color in the same context." The essence of white privilege is that having white skin leads people to have unfair and unearned advantages over people of colour (Came & McCreanor, 2015; Matthewman, 2017). One means by which white privilege can be upheld in society is through the promotion of colour-blindness rhetoric. In keeping with the need to avoid responsibility for the disadvantaging experiences of minorities, in what Plaut, Thomas, Hurd and Roman (2018) consider an ego-protective response, those advocating for a colour-blind agenda look for non-racial explanations for inequities and inequalities that exist between white people and people of colour (Bonilla-Silva, 2016; Doane, 2017). Colour-blindness is defined, as "a belief that race should not and does not matter in judging a person's character and should not influence actions towards individuals or groups" (Sue, 2015, p.77). According to Jones (2016), at the core of colour-blindness are the beliefs that skin becomes a superficial maker of difference that can be ignored to avoid accusations of racial discrimination,

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and that people succeed not because of their skin colour but because they live in a merit-based society that supports hard work. Those that fail to have success do so because of personal inadequacy, rather than because they are members of "historically oppressed groups" (Doane, 2017, p.975).

When white people push for the adoption of colour-blindness, people of colour are forced to forfeit parts of their identities in favour of assimilating to the 'we are all the same' ideology (Jones, 2016; Sue, 2015). Of course, the colour-blind approach is limited by the natural inclination of people to categorise others according to race (Jones, 2016). It also leads to increased racism and social inequality because to be the 'same' is tantamount to being 'white' (Sue, 2015). Thus, people of colour are expected to comply with the views of the dominant, white group or face ostracism in what becomes an us-versus-them or in-group/out-group separation.

Experiences of racism are familiar to Māori. Pack et al. (2016a, p.96) found that Pākehā perceived Māori as "deservedly marginalized" and lacking in individual motivation. Therefore, Māori are considered responsible for their subordinate place within New Zealand society, which naturalises the present by discounting the historical abuses of the past. It has led many Pākehā to deny that Māori are victims of racism. Alternatively, Pākehā are ignorant of the existence of racism, which McCreanor (1993) believes gives Pākehā impunity when acting in racist ways. The racism and white superiority that is articulated by some factions of the Pākehā majority have left Māori feeling anxious, depressed, subjugated and prone to internalising a lesser position within society (Pack et al., 2015). Channels such as new media, and specifically the Internet, which were conceptualised as being race-free and democratic (Daniels, 2012), could have offered a platform for Māori to avoid the subtle and latent racism communicated and reinforced through mass media (Pack et al., 2015; Wall, 1997).

As Daniels (2012) argues, early in its conception, the internet was perceived by scholars as a virtual environment that would be void of articulations of race and racism. Although the platform is conducive to anyone having the space to express their views on public issues, it has also given individuals and groups another means of disseminating racism against people

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of colour. The internet now acts as a means of harassment and, with its global reach and penetration, can even multiply the harassment experienced by individuals and groups, producing real-world consequences (Daniels, 2008). The internet, therefore, has become a place where hate speech is commonplace and exposure to it is possible regardless of geographic location. Exploring how New Zealanders responded to the HRC's 2017 'Give nothing to racism' campaign, which was promoted via a website and on social media platforms, may offer insights into whether such racism can be curtailed.

Method

A previous research project (see Nairn & Nelson, 2018) found many positive assessments were made by commenters about the 'Give nothing to racism campaign' and especially Taika Waititi's involvement. Admittedly, many of those comments featured on Waititi's own Facebook page, perhaps skewing the audience's comments. This limitation motivated the current research project, which intended to narrow the focus to how commenters negatively reacted to the campaign on the HRC's Facebook page. Because the themes of 'Great guy, great message'; 'How could they get this so wrong?'; 'I just don't get it'; and 'Every little thing' have been documented elsewhere, the focus of this data analysis was on developing further the original theme 'Hate, oh how I hate', for the reasons why people so strongly objected to the message of the public service campaign 'Give nothing to racism' (Nairn & Nelson, 2018).

Thematic analysis was applied to the public comments made underneath eight of the campaign videos uploaded to the HRC Facebook Page at the height of the campaign (from 15 to 29 June 2017). In total, 4383 comments were analysed (see HRC, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f, 2017g, 2017h, 2017i). Of these, 2419 (55%) comments were negative and these form the basis of this data analysis.

Thematic analysis was chosen because of its flexibility and because it can be readily applied to large datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The objective of thematic analysis is to identify patterns in the data and, in this case, it assisted in determining themes that were frequently referred to, recurring across multiple video uploads on the HRC Facebook page, and which were

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passionately expressed in the comments. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), six steps need to be fulfilled to establish, develop and report the themes. Step one requires the researcher to become familiar with the data, which entailed repeated readings of the 2419 negative comments. Step two is where the researcher delineates particular codes. Boyatzis (1998, p.63) defines codes as "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon." The codes were developed by grouping comments together, and this led to the completion of step three, the collating of the data into common themes. Step four requires refining the themes and ensuring they are supported by the data. Step five involves naming of the themes. The four themes were: 'It starts at the top'; 'White people are victims too'; 'What is racism anyway?'; and 'We are all equal'. These themes were developed inductively and were named according to quotes that were repeated within the themes. Step six is where the themes are written up in a final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Admittedly, there are limitations to this research. Given that hate speech and racism can be considered subjective, those reading the comments on the HRC's Facebook page may not necessarily have the same perceptions of the content as I have. Nor is it possible to be sure that those expressing racist comments on the page are doing so because they share in those views or because they wish to incite disagreement in a public forum. Furthermore, the findings presented here represent a snapshot of how the campaign was received by only some members of the public and therefore cannot be generalised to either support or criticise the campaign. It has also been proven elsewhere that criticism, trolling and hateful talk is usually offered more vocally than support (Mathew et al., 2019), perhaps accounting for the abundance of negative posts. Finally, the HRC in New Zealand has been subject to considerable criticism in recent years (Edwards, 2018), which may have prompted those already holding a negative view towards the organisation to condemn the campaign.

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Findings

'It starts at the top'

The first of the themes identified in the data, 'It starts at the top', included two competing subthemes: Māori are privileged by structures in society and Māori are disadvantaged by institutional racism.

The first of these subthemes centred on contributors holding to account or blaming the likes of government for the apparent racism in New Zealand society. The subtheme captures thoughts of racism permeating laws and policies and considers the only solution to racism to be a trickle-down effect that enforces change. For example, as one contributor stated: "The anger, tension and intolerance is created by politicians and they are to blame. If you want to stop racism, treat everyone the same and you will see the difference." The perception here is that if governments did not privilege any one group, then equality would be a foregone conclusion. Similarly, another commenter remarked: "As long as we have race based seats in parliament, race based healthcare and community groups there will always be racism, this ad highlights how government structures shape this country into races." Organisations can influence how groups within society see one another and this can impact intercultural perceptions and interactions (Doane, 2017; Fleras, 2016; Lentin, 2016). The suggestion made here is that governments, businesses and not-for-profit organisations set a standard for people's behaviour and for these commenters; the expectation is that Māori are privileged and singled out for extra attention.

In this subtheme, perceptions of Māori receiving 'special privileges' were encountered. In such comments, commenters appeared not to acknowledge their white privilege. For example, instead of identifying that Māori need government interventions to overcome past atrocities that led to a disadvantageous position (Brown, 2009), some commenters felt that government help for Māori was prejudicial and discriminatory. Many went as far as to assume that offering assistance to them was perpetuating racism. "Yes, the government gives Maoris special privileges through Maori-only seats. That's an example, isn't it? Oh, and guaranteed representation on boards and

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councils. I'm sure there is more too." Another lamented that the government needed to stop discriminating "against us with race-based laws and policies, that would be the best start[,] teach by example," and yet another claimed, "There is no such thing as white privilege. If anything Maori get more privilege than white people do. Maori only teams, Maori only seats in parliament, Maori only land, Maori only classrooms in school ..." Observed here is that commenters fail to see that their white skin has given them opportunities and advantages over minority groups (Bahk & Jandt, 2004). In essence, they have overlooked the invisible and unearned advantage that their 'whiteness' permits (Came & McCreanor, 2015; Matthewman, 2017) and in being oblivious, negligent, uninformed or subtly racist, contribute to ensuring structures of power continue to privilege white New Zealanders (Park et al., 2016a).

The second of the subthemes related to comments suggesting that organisations should be held to account for racist practices towards Māori. Implied in the comments is a belief that the New Zealand government in particular engages in institutionalised racism. For some commenters, racism could only be stopped not through campaigns such as this but by "having the government settle treaty claims in a far more prompt manner." Another commenter felt that those arguing that Māori did not deserve special consideration were ignorant or malfeasant because "those 'benefits' were put into place PRECISELY BECAUSE of the systemic and institutionalized power structure that hugely favored pakeha for decade after decade after decade." Such an assessment of institutional racism in New Zealand is not unexpected but nor is it inaccurate. Research by Wall (1997) and Pack et al. (2016a, 2016b) identified that the media continue to promote negative discourses that vilify Māori, while Came and McCreanor (2015, p.24) found that "chronic disparities exist between Māori and non-Māori in ... education, health, criminal justice, and employment." Therefore, institutional racism does appear to be a problem in New Zealand, with structures able to maintain the superiority of white people and prevent challenges from minority groups (Doane, 2017; Fleras, 2016; Lentin, 2016).

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'White people are victims too'

The second theme identified was labelled 'White people are victims too' and captured comments made by contributors who felt that the 'Give nothing to racism' campaign accused white New Zealanders of being racists. For example, it was not uncommon to read comments such as "Oh that's right only white people can be racist right??" or "Let's not just put the onus on the white folk" or "You do realise that the White male is the smallest group per population and the most discriminated against?" Although the campaign did not target any one person or group, it was clear that white audience members believed that the campaign was designed exclusively to encourage them to alter their inferred racist attitudes. In response, many opted to justify their victimhood by accusing Māori of being more racist. As Sue (2013) argues, white people are fearful and defensive in moments of race talk. Race talk inevitably threatens the belief amongst white people that they are moral, fair and anti-racist human beings, and although some white people will opt to stay silent, others will make denials and accuse people of reverse racism to overcome their white guilt.

Therefore, by singling out Māori as more racist than themselves, these commenters engaged in defensive behaviours and denials (Sue, 2013, 2015) that construct in-group/out-group or us-versus-them distinctions (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tajfel, 1982). Accordingly, the comments were consistent with theories of in-group favouritism (Billig & Tajfel, 1973), where being white is considered better than being Māori. For example, one male believed that white people were not the problem in New Zealand society, going so far as to state "ive givin [*sic*] my blood to racism, getting attacked on the street by maoris [*sic*] on the way to work." Another white male working in the health sector believed that he had been "subjected to multiple angry racist comments working", many of which came from Māori even when it was "literally my job to save their lives." Although both commenters appear to make judgement errors by generalising and assuming negative stereotypes apply to all Māori based on their limited own experience, their prejudicial stories (Hall, 1998) inevitably contribute to the continued subordination of Māori as a means to protect the white identity or white in-group. These people,

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and others making derogatory remarks about Māori or denying white people are racist, perceive their in-group as having moral superiority that diminishes and undermines the integrity of the out-group (Māori).

In what was the clearest form of irony in this research project, by engaging in racist responses white New Zealanders demonstrated that overt racism is not solely a historical behaviour (Lentin, 2016; Salter et al., 2018) but rather manifests in contemporary society in blatant efforts to subordinate and condemn people of colour (Fleras, 2016). In this case, white New Zealanders opted to use prejudiced words or microinsults (Sue et al., 2007) against Māori because they felt threatened or, as Hall (1998, p.146) puts it, "personally afflicted". Resorting to microinsults maybe a product of individuals losing control but could also be because individuals felt supported by other commenters in asserting their racist views (Sue et al., 2007).

Acting ethnocentrically by making white identity superior and central was a means of overcoming what can be construed as 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018). As DiAngelo (2018, pp.3 & 100) argues, there is a tendency amongst white people who feel threatened to claim that they are "now the oppressed group" and steer away from environments that will inspire "racial stress". When racial stress presents, such as when New Zealanders perceive they are the victims of an unfairly targeted public service campaign, people will act out as a collective or resort to "varying forms of dominance and intimidation" to establish feelings of equilibrium again (Hughey & Daniels, 2013, p.134).

Aside from continuing to perpetuate the us-versus-them dualism or engaging in othering that subordinates one group in favour of another, the comments that speak of white New Zealanders' victimisation are in keeping with the communications of white nationalist or supremacist groups. White supremacist organisations commonly refer to how they are persecuted by minorities and vilified, which produces social inequality and disenfranchises white people. Brown (2009, p. 200) argues that the hate speech and separatist ideologies typical of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan are being used by cyber-bigots to maintain white superiority and to overcome white self-doubt in response to an increased belief in white victimisation or "racist double

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standard". Such discourses of racism, hate and bigotry prevent attempts to rectify the disadvantaged position of Māori (Kirkwood et al., 2005), undermine the message of the 'Give nothing to racism' campaign and inevitably contribute to a culture that continues to subordinate and distress minorities.

'What is racism anyway?'

The third theme identified in the comments was titled 'What is racism anyway?' and related to discussions around how New Zealanders defined racism and its endemic presence within society. For some, racism was considered innate and a response to the behaviours exhibited by groups of people. For example, one such commenter felt that:

> Few discriminate against any race or skin colour by default. However many if not most do because of the behavior of people who are of a certain race or have a particular skin colour. Stereotyping of any ethnicity is not a good thing but it does happen for a reason.

Here, the commenter suggests that racism is an almost unavoidable 'natural' occurrence. Research has found that due to cultural conditioning, people tend to categorise others into races, even if they advocate colour-blindness or anti-racist agendas (Jones, 2016; Sue, 2015; Sue et al., 2007). Cultural conditioning means that people form in-group/out-group distinctions, and these differences are used as a means of defining the self and others (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel, 1982). In the Facebook comments, such group characteristics developed and perpetuated stereotypes that more often than not unfairly targeted and subordinated Māori. For instance, one commenter signalled that stereotypes existed that ultimately negatively impacted on the individual's psyche. The commenter wrote:

> The joke about lazy Maori or fat pacific islanders. The assumptions that a dark skinned person has come into the shop to steal something. That is the racism that wears people down each day and really destroys their sense of self and cultural pride.

As identified in both examples above, stereotypes are used as a means to attribute general characteristics to groups of people but, in the stereotyping seen here, is not mindful. Mindful stereotyping permits a degree of reflection on how people might differ but the stereotyping observed in the Facebook comments instead leads to the "objectification of another person or group …

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which ignores the complexity and subjectivity of the individual" (Dervin, 2011, p.187). As Wall (1997) explains, these stereotypes about Māori as 'other' and subordinate have long existed in the media and have become naturalised, making it unsurprising that they were evident in the comments on the HRC's Facebook page. For instance, Park et al. (2015) point out that Māori are regularly stereotyped as lazy, violent and uneducated, reasserting the superiority of Pākehā. These stereotypes have contributed to the racialisation of New Zealand society and inevitably continue to construct Māori "as the perennial Black Other" (Wall, 1997, p.44).

Returning to the last-quoted Facebook comment, it is worth noting that there is evidence to suggest that racism does wear "people down each day and really destroys their sense of self and cultural pride." The everyday experiences of racism and microaggressions have been found to culminate in racial stress and trauma, which has emotional, cognitive and physical implications for people of colour (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). According to a recent online hate speech study completed by Netsafe, adult New Zealanders reported that being the targets of or being exposed to hate speech had an emotional impact and, in some cases, affected individuals to the point that they opted to remain isolated or struggled to maintain their offline identities (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018). Those privy to online racism, the majority of whom identified as members of the country's minority groups, felt anger, dismay, sadness and frustration, emotions which could impact sleep and interpersonal relationships (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018). Accordingly, the racism being experienced by those on social media sites, such as Facebook, can ultimately marginalise, disembed and dehumanise groups within society (Johnsen, 2010), and can lead to the perception of Māori as inferior and their identities as invalidated (Park et al., 2016a).

Regardless of how it was conceptualised, racism was considered by some commenters as being negative and a product of unfavourable attitudes. For example, in keeping with the theme of the 'Give nothing to racism' campaign, one commenter singled out casual racism as "rampant in this country. It comes from an unintelligent, hateful and foolish belief that their

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race is superior to any other. Nothing ever good came from hate and that's what racism is. Hate." Racism emerging from hate was also echoed in the views of this commenter, who stated: "Most people will never know how bad racism is and how much of it is out there and the hatred that is directed at you." The regular references to hate emphasised that for some contributors to the HRC's Facebook page, racism was akin to hate and had no place in society. Hate speech can include "communication that offends, discriminates denigrates, abuses and/or disparages a person(s) or group" (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018, p.12). Therefore, in defining racism—particularly casual racism—commenters sought to emphasise how such behaviour was considered hate speech and needed to be remedied to improve relationships between minority and majority groups.

'We are all equal'

The final theme identified was 'We are all equal'. This theme captured comments in the data which suggested that racism was a product of seeing differences between groups of people instead of embracing the belief that everyone is human and we should all be seen as one. On the surface, an adage of unity promoted by some commenters could be seen as having utility. Egalitarianism, fairness and unity need not be seen from a negative perspective. However, comments such as "If you truly want to stop racism then you need to treat ALL of your citizens as equals!"; "Racist is in itself a stupid term, all us humans are the same race"; and "[L]ets [*sic*] get back to one class of NZer. We are all equal, there are no 'more equal than others' here. [T]his has to stop" neglect to consider that such a togetherness ideology can have negative consequences for people within society. Augoustinos and Every (2007), Jones (2016) and Sue (2015) suggest that such colour-blind rhetoric minimises differences between groups by highlighting commonalities. It can produce a loss of identity and culture, disadvantage people by advocating for meritocracy (Jones, 2016; Sue, 2015), and, according to McCreanor (1997), can produce forced assimilation whereby Pākehā culture is considered the ideal and only those Māori that choose to conform are seen as good and worthy.

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When commenters like the above do not acknowledge that differences exist, Māori are likely to continue to suffer losses of culture and uniqueness. As Jackson (2017) argues, universalism encouraged by a colour-blind approach would continue to obfuscate the disadvantage and oppression that impacts Māori living in a postcolonial society. The uniformity of New Zealand identity can leave Māori hurt and disheartened (Park et al., 2016b), and pushes Māori to remain silent or muted to avoid being ostracised (Kramarae, 1981). The view that 'we are one' makes it problematic to draw attention to the plights of individual groups without being perceived as racist or opposing the majority (Brown et al., 2003).

This theme also included comments that denied that racism exists in New Zealand, such as:

> I just have a question ... Why S.D. [Susan Devoy] has to create a problem? New Zealand is NOT A RACIST country. If you don't believe me, just travel the World and you will see what "racism" means! Have a safe journey!

and

> If you think racism is a big problem in NZ then you have had too much of the Kool aid already.

The perception that New Zealand is not a racist country stems from a long-held ideology, preventing the evolution of society and acceptance of difference (Park et al., 2015). Furthermore, these and other similar comments reinforce Park et al.'s (2015) belief that individuals will act ignorant if they are not the victims of racism. Instead of accepting the campaign was a necessity because of the casual racism occurring in New Zealand society, individuals chose to accuse the HRC of creating unnecessary trouble, suggesting that audiences were naïve or unwilling to accept racism as a societal problem in New Zealand.

Discussion

As noted above, the data analysis revealed four key themes: 'It starts at the top'; 'White people are victims too'; 'What is racism anyway?'; and 'We are all equal'. These themes showed that the campaign did not create a single, unified desire among audiences to overcome racism, particularly casual racism or microaggressions. Comments posted on the 'Give nothing to racism' Facebook page ranged from commending the HRC for its actions to stamp out

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racism to condemning it for highlighting an issue that some felt was non-existent in New Zealand society and for unfairly targeting 'white New Zealanders'. In essence, some of the comments on the HRC's Facebook page support Augoustinos and Every's (2010, p.252) assertion that negative opinions are presented as "justified, warranted and rational" when individuals and groups feel threatened. The campaign appeared to produce ethnocentric (Bennett, 1986) and prejudiced responses, and the comments were evidence of in-group favouritism (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tajfel, 1982) and the othering (Johnsen, 2010) of ethnic minorities. Additionally, some commenters appeared to lack understanding of the historical disadvantages imposed by colonisation of Māori people (Jackson, 2017) and the racial stress and trauma felt by Māori in response to exposure to repeated racial microaggressions (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015; Sue, 2013; Sue et al., 2007). The fact that Māori require government and policy interventions to navigate circumstances that privilege white people was not considered by many commenting on the posts.

Of particular interest were the number of posters choosing to oppose the message of the campaign, with many resorting to using the Facebook page to attack Māori. In what can be perceived as an ego-protective bias (Plaut et al., 2018) and a need to deny accusations of racism levelled at white people (Sue, 2015), some of those commenting relied on negative stereotypes of Māori to support their objections to the campaign. In essence, those commenters looked to protect white identity and superiority by resorting to both overt and subtle forms of racism, inevitably ensuring the continuation of casual racism and microaggressions that oppress, exploit and dehumanise people of colour (Fleras, 2016; Sue, 2013, 2015; Sue et al., 2007).

To subvert some of the negativity generated by 'Give nothing to racism' and to ensure greater success in future campaigns, the HRC could engage in more dialogue with the contributors, which could lead to wider discussions of white privilege and white fragility. From a public relations perspective, dialogue entails "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" that produces mutual understandings (Taylor & Kent, 1998). By directly communicating with commenters in the posts and going beyond simply

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uploading the videos to Facebook, the HRC could educate, mitigate and continue to reinforce the message of the campaign to build on its influence and the receptivity of audiences.

Additionally, the racism on the HRC's Facebook page demonstrates that, even though the internet was originally perceived to be a means of facilitating democratic debate, it is—as Daniels (2012)—suggests, a platform not free of racial undertones. The present findings support Cohen-Almagor's (2012) assertion that the internet and, by extension, social media have become a means of disseminating racism and hate speech. New media have given those that hate or are ignorant a platform to express their views with few regulations to limit such negative and discriminatory treatment of minority groups. Although a contested topic, no uniform rules and regulations govern all content distributed on the internet, with some countries arguing that the banning of racism and hate speech is counter to free speech and autonomy (Cohen-Almagor, 2018). The decision to condone such speech, however, has negative impacts on individuals because if the racist and discriminatory messages are internalised, this can leave people, such as Māori, distressed, anxious, frustrated and hurt (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018; Pack et al., 2015). Furthermore, such racism continues to undermine the 'biculturalism' and 'partnership' that exists between Māori and Pākehā (Pack et al., 2016a, 2016b; Waldron, 2012), further fracturing an already complicated relationship.

According to scholars (Awan, 2016; Daniels, 2008; Perry & Olsson, 2009), cyberspace, and particularly social media platforms, are spaces where "bullying, offensive content and hate speech" (Mondal, Silva & Benevenuto, 2017, p.85) continue to proliferate. As Brown (2018) argues, what distinguishes online hate speech from its offline counterpart is that such content can be transmitted anonymously and instantaneously. It also builds communities of hate where like-minded people can share their negative views and feel supported and more confident in their desire to do so, particularly because the internet permits a degree of invisibility where the "cues of empathy and censure that tend to keep harmful or antisocial behaviour in check" are missing (Brown, 2018, p.300). Although Facebook account holders'

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names and profile pictures accompany the comments made by those opting to post, commenters have not been deterred from criticising Māori. Although it is unclear whether the accounts are legitimate and authentic, they contribute to what Awan (2016) refers to as antisocial behaviour in a public forum and, in this instance, have led to the message of the 'Give nothing to racism' campaign being undermined, reducing the likelihood that it will establish social cohesion and unity towards the cause of removing racism from society (Awan, 2016).

In essence, this research contributes yet more evidence to suggest that the regulation of online content is needed to protect cultural groups from prejudice and discriminatory treatment (Waldron, 2012). The findings are consistent with other research in the field, suggesting that policies to regulate racism and hate speech need to be more readily enforced (Cassim, 2015; Waldron, 2012). As Mondal et al. (2017) argue, social media platforms such as Facebook need to be less reactive to the presence of racism and hate speech and instead do more to prevent its emergence. As Hawdon et al. (2017) found, the stronger the anti-hate speech laws are in a country, the fewer people are exposed to racism and hate speech that disparages collectives. That is not to suggest that censorship and surveillance are necessarily the answer to discouraging hate speech but, rather, that requiring people to disclose their identities online so monitoring can occur and laws can be enforced might be one possible course of action (Mondal et al., 2017).

The findings offered here signal that, much like people in other countries, Pākehā using social media can express ethnocentric attitudes and maintain their white privilege. This research concludes that Māori continue to be an easy target of prejudice and discrimination, particularly online, and as such retain the stereotype of "the racialised Other" (Wall, 1997, p.40).

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