# Reframing the rural experience in Aotearoa New Zealand: Incorporating the voices of the marginalised

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## Abstract

A scan of social research about rural New Zealand from the 1980s reveals power divisions which have muted the voices of 'others'. Listening to these voices could transform how we manage the economy, sustain the environment and promote social well-being in future. Rural sociological attention in New Zealand has focused on the people and communities associated with land and resource-based assets, with little attention to the rural majority not engaged in primary production. Indigenous voices are also missing. As Jessica Hutchings argues, decisions on economic development, the environment and social services continue to uphold colonial hegemony as the dominant worldview in Aotearoa New Zealand. By being open to the perspectives of people normally ignored and particularly engaging with indigenous approaches, application of capital and power in development can be rethought and structural inequalities addressed.

Stories about rural New Zealand tend to focus on primary production with scant attention paid to people engaged in other industries (see, for example, Brown et al., 2019). Because of agriculture's importance to the national economy, farmers have power and voice, and their hold on leadership is rarely questioned (Joseph, 1999). Consequently, knowledge held by 'others' about rural places is often not collated. Rural areas, however, are diverse and the main occupation of the majority of rural people is not farming. Census data shows that fewer than one-quarter of rural residents are engaged in primary industry, and even in rural districts (outside centres of 300+ people), the proportion engaged in

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primary industry is under 40 per cent (Pomeroy, 2019a). However, when discussion about rural communities, their inhabitants, problems and solutions is narrowed to centre almost entirely on farming and farming issues (as in Brown et al., 2019), this impedes the opportunity to understand fully the dynamics of the wider rural community and find innovative solutions to not just farming but the full range of rural issues. Marginalised people's views are needed to successfully imagine new rural futures. This article addresses the continued exclusion of marginalised rural groups through a review of published research literature, using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'doxa' and 'habitus' to frame analysis.

The New Zealand government-funded National Science Challenge (NSC) 'Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities' (2018–20) provided an opportunity to explore research on New Zealand's rural communities. Among other things, the NSC research brief sought information on regional inequalities and local well-being/disadvantage in the small towns and rural districts which constitute non-metropolitan New Zealand, particularly following the introduction of neoliberal policies after 1984 (Nel and Connelly, 2019; Pomeroy, 2019b). Sociological exploration of New Zealand's rural societies is sparce (Carter and Loveridge, 1991; Crothers, 2012; Loveridge, 2016), so the review used a range of disciplinary viewpoints. These very different inquiries are viewed here through the relational lens provided by Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. Bourdieu used the term 'habitus' to refer to ingrained habits of behaviour, social conditioning, and life circumstances which block perception of alternatives and generate attitudes which circumscribe and constrain, or alternatively promote action (Bourdieu, 1977, 2002). Habitus shapes practice. Thus, powerful people continue to control the narrative and influence policy. Those without influence have difficulty challenging entrenched ideas. The studies show habitus at work through a '"relational" mode of thinking' (Maton, 2008: 56). This emerges in the dichotomies inherent in people's ownership (or lack) of economic capital and place in entrenched rural power structures, their social inclusion or exclusion based on their social connections and networks (social capital), and their gender and ethnic status. While 'habitus allows for individual agency it also predisposes towards certain ways of behaving' (Reay, 2004: 433), so that it perpetuates inequalities and marginalises segments of the population. Habitus accounts for the unchallenged persistence of dichotomies inherent in class, gender and race relations within New Zealand's rural society.

Application of Bourdieu's (1977) concept of 'doxa' (self-evident, unquestioned truths) also helps explain the emphasis on farming in New Zealand's rural research, and tendency to see rural inequalities in economic terms (Pomeroy, 2019b). Certainly, most rural studies from the 1980s concentrate on the political economy of agricultural production (and consumption) in an era marked by, as Alison Loveridge described it: 'the resurgence of rural sociology as sociology of agriculture' (Loveridge, 2016: 214). Kathryn Scott, Julie Park and Chris Cocklin's (2000) analysis of the social and community dimensions of sustainability in Mangakahia (Northland) makes this explicit. They noted the tendency of academic discourse and policy commentators to 'treat "rural communities" as homogeneous in nature, ignoring the diversity in ethnicity, class and occupational status which are evident in many rural areas' (Scott et al., 2000: 433). They observed that: 'In the Mangakahia, class, ethnicity and gender are strong modes

of social differentiation' and that 'ethnicity cross-cuts or aligns with class to create deep, if often unrecognised, difference' (Scott et al., 2000: 433).

They also argued that not only was 'rural' subsumed into agriculture, but the majority of assessments of rural community viability in New Zealand focused just on land-use change. In contrast, their Mangakahia study showed different groups were affected in different ways and to varying levels by wider economic and regulatory changes. Thus, legislation requiring local government to balance the interests of different groups was seen as of little use when councils were controlled by a powerful elite. Too often:

> voices of any other than certain groupings of farmers are seldom attended to. . .. [Furthermore] little is known about the impacts of economic and political changes upon the 'other' in rural areas, including small business-owners, Maori, life-stylers (people who live on small blocks of land but derive most of their income elsewhere), farm and horticulture workers, and beneficiaries. (Scott et al., 2000: 434).

More recently, Hugh Campbell (2020) argued that the Pākehā (non-Māori) farming world was secured by rendering other worlds invisible and this was achieved by erasing the voice of Māori.

Habitus explains the perpetuation of class, gender and ethnic dichotomies (discussed in the following three sections); it also explains why inequalities persist in rural areas, and why particular groups continue to be marginalised and find difficulty in being heard.

## Class/status and landowner dominance

Privilege or disadvantage shape rural New Zealanders' lives and their ability or willingness to act, and this is nowhere clearer than in the class divisions evident in New Zealand's rural communities. Ruth Houghton's (1980) surveys of people living in the Lower Waitaki Valley identified social and economic disparities between property owners and manual/farm workers. She found that while all might engage in a range of community activities together (golf, tennis, or the service clubs), there were, nevertheless, strong status differences based on occupation and class distinctions based on landownership. 'Ownership and control of a farm is important, and people who are not farm owners are considered to be of a lower status than owners' (Houghton, 1980: 50). Farming dominated the local economy, and the beliefs and attitudes of farm owners prevailed in local and broader-area decision-making (Houghton, 1980). Farmers' and their wives' leadership positions were similarly described in Bob Hall's (1987) study of Kurow (also on the Waitaki River). Farmers were presidents of the more important sports clubs, and chaired the school committees and various local authority boards (county council, catchment, electric-power, hospital and rabbit boards), and held regional and national positions in Federated Farmers and the Wool Board. Farmers' wives led the rural women's organisations, health, welfare, pre-school, school, library and arts committees.

Status distinctions in rural Waikato were equally acute: 'the rich farmer addresses others by their Christian names where they in turn address [the rich] farmers by Mr or Mrs So and So' (Palakshappa, 1983: 17). Wives of farm managers and workers were particularly conscious of the class barriers confronting them, created by the economic

gap between owners and employees. A farm manager's wife commented at a rural conference that most workers could not afford the petrol to attend social events, and did not socialise with farm owners (Ellis, 1977). At another conference six years later, a schoolteacher and wife of a farm worker raised the issue of the sense of social inferiority experienced by workers and their families who were 'trying to fit into an already formed social group . . . [whose] members may have known each other for years, are possibly related, and where success in life is, unfortunately, often measured by acreage, production, or heritage' (Thompson, 1983: 21–2). Workers are a group whose voices are rarely heard, and whose lack of income increases their social isolation.

Anthropologist Cheleen Mahar's (1985, 1991) research showed strong social barriers in the Rangitikei between farming and townspeople (with farm owners the elite), and particularly strong class differences between farmers and employees. The latter distinction was highlighted by a landowning farm woman Mahar interviewed: 'People can't always invite farm managers and their wives to certain things (social events), although it's not so bad here as in other communities. Sometimes it's best not to. It saves them from embarrassment' (Mahar, 1991: 368). In-depth analysis led Mahar to conclude that the wives of the wealthy landowners were undertaking acts of generosity and community service to reserve and cement their position as an elite, legitimising and reproducing class structures within the community (Mahar, 1985). An eastern Southland study identified that women who married into their rural community were not accepted until they had children and joined the local playgroup. Even then, women whose husbands were not farm owners felt left out of community activities, and being the wife of a businessman was not sufficient for inclusion (Smith and McMath, 1988: 51). People outside the ranks of landowners were easily overlooked, an attitude reflected in the following anecdote, where a farmer apologised to a new neighbour for not welcoming her and her husband to the district. He had thought they were 'only farm workers' (Smith, 1991: 87). This inequality persisted and deepened following neoliberal restructuring in the mid-1980s (Littlewood, 2017).

The life circumstances (habitus) of landowners compared to non-landowners explains their disproportionate influence in local affairs and policy. Farmers were privileged by their class position as owners of economic capital, but also by their social capital: the social status, connections and networks they had accumulated through their longevity of residence in the district, and on intergenerational family properties. A study of the former Akitio county (northern Wairarapa) which covered both farm and non-farm residents found that while the majority of (male) farm owners had been born in the county, 94 per cent of farm and non-farm employees (excluding farmers' sons), had moved in from elsewhere and stayed only a few years. Most agricultural contractors also came from elsewhere, residing at their work location for a period of days or months, while non-farm business-owners also tended to stay for only a few years (Gillies, 1979). Workers might participate in voluntary activities and sport while they were in the district, but lacked the social connections needed to take leadership positions in the community. The wives of these workers and service personnel took little part in community social life, partly because of the social barriers and partly because of the mobility of their husbands (Levett, 1980). Business-owners and professionals who did stay in a community for more than a decade or so could acquire the social capital and status needed to take elected positions

as shown by Bob Hall's (1987) study. Campbell's (2006) ethnography of Methven (Canterbury) also reflected on local longevity as a factor in masculine hegemony.

By the end of the 20th century, the social structure of rural areas was changing due to improved road networks and changing mores. Urban people were commuting daily to rural areas to work (Newell, 2011), while others came for short-term construction projects (Taylor et al., 2001), or permanently for cheap housing (Perkins, 2006; Waldegrave and Stuart, 1997), and others again bought land for a rural-residential lifestyle (Perkins, 2006). The latter often commuted daily into urban areas for work. Where once it was unacceptable for married women to take paid work outside the home, from the 1980s increasing numbers of women joined the men commuting to work outside their rural districts. Greater mobility meant locality-based social relations that had previously focused on the local primary schools, post offices, general store, and events, now transformed into broad social networks linking with urban areas (Pomeroy, 2015; Taylor et al., 2001).

Despite these changes, habitual behaviours and class distinctions continued. Wealthy landowners who lived their social life in the cities remained leaders of the local community, regardless of how little they had to do with life in the community itself (Campbell and Fairweather, 1991), and farm-based pressure groups continued to maintain a formative role in policy (Bremer and Brooking, 1993, Roche et al., 1992). Even as the numbers of farmers who were also Members of Parliament dropped, peak farming bodies (such as Federated Farmers) had no difficulty accessing decision-makers whether ministers or senior bureaucrats, and political and economic bases of power remained closely linked (McLeay, 1992).

Ruth Liepins (2000b) recognised that landowners controlled the discourse and this was continuing to marginalise farm workers and others not connected to the land through agriculture. She undertook a further analysis of Kurow as part of a four-village study exploring how rural people conceptualised their understanding of 'community' and how communities formed across, or in spite of, social differences. The people of Kurow (like those in the other three centres: Ranfurly, Otago; Duaringa, Queensland; and Newstead, Victoria) recognised that people living in their village were different in terms of their class position, length of residence, economic activity, life cycles, interests, ethnicity and lifestyle. People from all four centres had quite contradictory and contrasting views of their villages. Attitudes ranged from 'Everyone helps each other' and 'People care about what happens to you and nobody is left abandoned', to 'It's a divided community' and 'it is a mean spirited little hell hole' (Liepins, 2000b: 331). Liepins noted that 'the greatest division between groups in the case studies revolved around socio-economic position and material quality of life' (Liepins, 2000b: 332), so that 'community' was not a social institution open to all rural dwellers. Significantly, she observed that locals' perceptions of their community fed into the economic and social processes and places (structures such as the school, pub or rugby grounds) that linked (or separated) people and activities across their communities, thus enabling (or preventing) social connections (Liepins, 2000b) and perpetuating the fringe location and lack of voice of the powerless.

## Patriarchal power

Rural women are another marginalised group. On farms particularly, and in rural areas generally, males tend to dominate the discourse. The idea that women should be

subservient to men came with the settlers. Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith (1994) argued that '[t]he pioneer household was more than a site of production and reproduction. It was a mechanism of government. Through British common law, the State invested in men discretionary power over the family and its members' (James and Saville-Smith, 1994: 28). The power differential and social expectations controlling women (including expectations they would contribute hours of unpaid work, only work for pay in a narrow range of occupations should they lack a male provider, and not have control over financial decisions or access to bank accounts) carried well into the 1980s (Parker, 1988; Pickles, 2001; Smith and McMath, 1988).

Bob Hall's (1987) study of Kurow's township and its rural hinterland identified that while 85 percent of 365 women were unpaid housewives or retired, none was classed as a farmer, but two percent were farm workers, and the remaining 13 percent were business, professional or manual workers (doctor, other medical, teachers, clerical or post office workers, hairdresser, shop assistants, school-bus-driver, domestic worker) (Hall, 1987). That women married to farmers and working on the property were listed as housewives not farmers reflects ingrained attitudes: in Bourdieusian terms and in this context, the habitus of ongoing unequal gender relations. The work women did on farms, while expected, went unnoticed and did not entitle them to a say in farm affairs.

By the mid-1980s, however, academics were recognising (and the women themselves were starting to agitate about) the lack of recognition given in particular to farm women's stressful, heavy, unpaid work-loads and lack of independent means, the patronising attitudes they were subjected to, lack of job opportunities and training for work (other than for traditional jobs of administration, nursing and teaching), and issues such as family violence. Mahar reflected that 'the work that rural women contribute to their families and community has never been given much value as "legitimate" and necessary work in New Zealand. There is in fact, a history of devaluation and sexism' (Mahar, 1985: 26).

The blinkered view about the traditional role of farm women led to the assumption that, when increasing numbers of these women took off-farm paid work from the mid-1980s, since it coincided with the removal of farm subsidies, this was to support the farm's viability – an acceptable reason for a farm woman to obtain paid work. To the contrary, these were mostly urban-born women who, as roads improved and other technological changes reduced the on-farm work-load, returned to their former careers. The idea that 'women who live on farms but work in a local settlement or town are not necessarily doing "off-farm" work to support the farm and family but perhaps work in their chosen field of interest or career' (Rivers, 1992: 17) was gaining traction, and is supported by other research (Coombes and Campbell, 1996; Pomeroy, 2015). Nevertheless, while female perspectives shifted, male opinions remained fixed. One woman's Kellogg's rural leadership course project in north Wairarapa identified that 'if there was no financial need for the women in her district to work off the farm, all but one would continue to do so, but 63% of their husbands expected their wives would return to the home' (Wilkinson, 1990: 10).

A decade later women farm owners were still struggling to be heard. Liepins (2000a) highlighted the perpetuation of the gendered nature of agriculture when she showed how the media and farming organisations articulate, construct, perpetuate and privilege agriculture-related masculinities. She found both Australian (*Weekly Times, Australian Farm*

*Journal*) and New Zealand (*New Zealand Farmer, Straight Furrow*) farm publications to be predominantly conservative, and male-orientated, with 'narratives that portray "true" farmers as individuals exhibiting a selective form of masculinity.. . . [Farmers are] men who are rugged, physically active in outdoor work, and knowledgeable and decisive in their farm management' (Liepins, 2000a: 612). In presenting this narrow conceptualisation of masculinity, while apparently portraying 'reality', Liepins argued that the media were complicit in perpetuating a distorted image (quite apart from refusing to acknowledge that women are as capable as men of being mechanics, electricians or builders). She commented that the women's attempts to deconstruct these 'truths' and create alternative knowledges was hindered by reporters' choices to use men as the authoritative figures and spokespeople. Similarly, Mary-Jane Rivers calculated that of the 44,600 farms with one or more working owners in the mid-1990s, 50 percent had at least one female working owner, but the farming press ignored this in its stories, images and advertising (Rivers et al., 1997).

Nevertheless, rejecting norms prolonging gender inequalities (their habitus), increasing numbers of rural women entered the paid workforce and many stood for, and were elected to, positions of power in local government and organisations previously the preserve of male farmers (Grigg, 1987; Newell, 2011; Smith and McMath, 1988). Certainly women farmers were agitating from the late 1990s for the provision of creche and childcare facilities at field days and leadership courses to enable their attendance (Burborough and Cumberworth, 1998; Clements, 2000). Unfortunately, there is a paucity of current studies on whether there has been any significant change in societal norms giving rural women's views the same media coverage and 'air-time' as men's.

Other studies identified rugby clubs and pubs as sites of male power and legitimacy in rural community life (Campbell, 2000, 2006; Phillips, 1996). Campbell's work showed that 'rural pubs can actually operate as a key site where hegemonic forms of masculinity are constructed, reproduced, and successfully defended' (Campbell, 2000: 563). Not addressed was how engagement in a heavy drinking culture impacted on gender and power relations in the home, and on issues of domestic violence. However, Lesley Pitt, Jane Maidment and Yvonne Crichton-Hill's (2019) research on poverty in rural Taranaki provides some answers. They found that the district's patriarchal structure and hegemonic masculinity was a powerful contributor to the intimate partner violence (male to female) experienced by some of their study participants. Among other things, they found 'more defined gender roles than those found in urban areas and women being coerced to keep private what goes on within their homes' (Pitt et al., 2019: 32). Already marginalised by their economic position, the women in this study took for granted being dominated and controlled by men both at home and at work, as that was all they knew. Nonetheless they resented male assumptions of entitlement, and how wider social and legal systems supported male power. A common theme was that integral to 'intimate partner violence, [was] hegemonic masculinity, where normalised ways of behaving for men included heavy drinking' (Pitt et al., 2019: 34). This behaviour was part of a version of rural manhood seen as natural: 'the *hard man*, someone who drinks heavily, works hard, does not express feelings and dominates women and children' (Pitt et al., 2019: 35), a construct of the ideal man as shaped by the workplace and sport (Pitt et al., 2019). This

unsafe environment was not, and will not be, addressed or remedied when female voices, experience and ideas continue to be ignored.

## Māori marginalisation

Viewing rural New Zealand through the lens of habitus draws attention to how privileging of people with financial and social capital and power perpetuates a form of colonial hegemony (Hutchings, 2006). Lingering colonial, racist attitudes sustain discriminatory practice and inequality in rural New Zealand. The continuing tendency for Pākehā to assume superiority, arguably a symptom of Pākehā habitus, has marginalised Māori knowledge and tikanga (values, beliefs, ways of living). Colonial policies of land confiscation and assimilation stripped Māori of lands they had occupied, nurtured and subsisted on for 25 or more generations. The resulting poverty and trauma left most rural Māori few options but to move to the cities to work, particularly after the Second World War (Easton, 2018; Littlewood, 2017; Stokes, 1979; Taonui, 2006). For those who remained in rural areas, or returned there following neoliberal restructuring and job losses after 1984, life was difficult. Unemployment was high and there were few social services (Brown, 2016; Easton, 2018; Harris and Williams, 2014; Pomeroy and Tapuke, 2016).

Housing was a major problem for rural Māori (Davey and Kearns, 1994). The government-sponsored Māori Women's Housing Research Project (MWHRP, 1991) found that:

> Many Māori families, particularly those in rural areas, are living in appalling conditions, mostly obscured from the public eye because of geographical isolation. Substandard dwellings . . . temporary shelters . . . old buses, and caravans constitute the permanent dwellings for numerous Māori families. Others have dirt floors, no power, and no running water. Many are insect and vermin infested, or present ongoing health risks. (MWHRP, 1991: 19).

Under the principle of manākitanga (hospitality) by which rural marae-linked Māori lived, overcrowding was common, with 'temporary' additions of extended family lasting from days to months, often because the visitors had nowhere else to go. The resulting stressful and volatile situations often led to family violence, to the extent that such brutality was accepted as normal (MWHRP, 1991: 22). Because there were no state houses there was no official waiting list, hence 'no demand', so nothing was done to alleviate the housing shortage (MWHRP, 1991; see also Kearns, 2006).

A report on Māori housing policy in 1994, commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal (the WAI 60 claim), echoed the MWHRP report, but nothing changed as policies continued to be embedded in inherited European ideas of family living, with houses too small and not well-configured to meet cultural needs (Brown, 2016; Ferguson, 1995). Use of candles in houses without electricity resulted in fires that caused the deaths of Māori children in the Far North District in 1977. More children died from the same cause in 2001, but nothing practical was done. A 2011 report from the Office of the Auditor-General showed no improvement in the rural Māori housing situation (OAG, 2011), and the 2020 report on a 2014 Māori Housing Strategy merely reiterated intent, rather than identifying progress (HUD, 2020).

Many rural Māori who sought help from government welfare agencies found difficulty being heard and having their needs understood (Labrum, 2002). Rather than acknowledging that Māori in financial trouble started at a disadvantage, they were seen as lazy and lacking in budgeting skills (Labrum, 2002). Not only was paternalism a feature of Māori families' relationships with welfare officers, but Pākehā officials had completely different perceptions of 'need'. Māori 'lived in a culture that was different to the one embodied by the welfare state, which was predicated on Pākehā familial models.. . . [And] some Maori families had needs that were quite outside the experience of Pākehā' (Labrum, 2002: 180).

The government's assimilation and integration policies, combined with many officials' ignorance of the Crown's Treaty of Waitangi obligations, meant ignoring Māori history, tikanga, and solutions. Instead, Pākehā answers to Māori problems were promoted (Williams, 2015). When the North Hokianga land-development scheme in Panguru failed, the government refused to provide housing assistance within the community. People had to leave the area to access government support – an impossibility for people trying to retain a presence on the land, maintain ahi kā ('keep home-fires burning') and meet responsibilities for the upkeep of marae and kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the environment and resources).

When hapū (local tribes) objected to the construction of sewerage outfalls in the areas they depended on for fish and shell-fish to survive, they were ignored (Hunt et al., 1984; James and Pawson, 1995). Likewise, dam construction blocked rivers used by Māori as critical food sources, preventing fish and eel spawning (Pomeroy and Tapuke, 2016; Stokes, 1992). Similarly, objections taken to the Environment Court to an irrigation scheme for just 25 farmers that would destroy a waterway, food sources, the river's ecology and fish habitats, and reduce water available for hapū crops, were unsuccessful (Kaipo, 1997). Māori claimants found: 'No matter how far the discussions range it is usually only that of the Pākehā world that is heard' (Reedy, 2000).

It took the appointment of a Māori as Chair of the Waitangi Tribunal for Māori perspectives to be seriously considered (Goodall, 2005). Even then, while the 1981 Motunui-Waitara Claim was eventually successful, the government initially dismissed the Tribunal's findings, and it took protests from environmental groups and a further decade for the outfall and waste treatment plant to be upgraded (James and Pawson, 1995). The Motunui-Waitara hearing was a revelation. Pākehā were shown to be oblivious to Māori history and management practices, and their assumption that Pākehā landscape ideals were universal was also questioned. James and Pawson argued that 'the significance of the Motunui-Waitara findings was that they began the process, for Pākehā, of drawing attention to the appropriation and subsequent degradation of the traditional Maori resource base' (James and Pawson, 1995: 123).

Linda Te Aho (2011) documented, in one of many examples, the difference between how Māori and Pākehā viewed the Waikato River. Māori sourced food from the river and saw it as a source of survival. Pākehā saw the river as an obstacle to be overcome, wetlands to be drained and a convenient avenue for waste-disposal. By 1971 the Waikato River had been blocked by eight hydro-dams and nine power-stations. It became heavily polluted, had reduced bio-diversity and flow, and its native fish-life was threatened. While the Crown took responsibility for the river's degradation following a 2008

Waitangi Tribunal claim, and a Settlement Act was passed in 2010, it was seen as only a partial victory and relevant hapū were still ignored (Te Aho, 2011). As Māori Studies lecturer Mike Ross (Ngāti Hauā) described it:

> historical colonisation and government policy . . . have excluded Waikato River tribes from the decision-making relating to the lands and waterways in the region. This power imbalance between Māori and the Crown continues to be the reality in Waikato-Tainui's dealing with Government. (Ross, 2018: 70).

Today, while co-governance arrangements are progressing with waterways and tributaries being cleaned up, and the river given legal status in its own right, the mana of the river and its people are still a long way from being restored (Muru-Lanning, 2016; Ross, 2018). Campbell (2020) also contends that marginalising and silencing Māori, and privileging Pākehā settlers' knowledge over Māori knowledge, has set ecological crises in motion and closed dialogue on alternative pathways.

## Discussion

Rejecting the idea that rural occupations and primary production are synonymous meant that multiple studies in the literature about the social relations of primary production were excluded from this analysis. Instead, New Zealand's rural research was interrogated for insights about people generally excluded from discussion. While farming studies do shine a light on rural social disparities (Campbell, 2020, for example, discussed those rendered invisible within farming worlds), utilising the concept of habitus as a tool to explain continuity and change, tension and struggle, within particularly non-agrarian structures in rural places, has served to highlight marginalised perspectives. Examination of the dichotomies and particularly power imbalances inherent in class, gender and indigenous groupings in rural areas draws attention to the difficulties marginalised groups face when they challenge ongoing acceptance of discriminatory differences (including officials' inertia), once such dichotomies are socially embodied, internalised and seen as 'natural' (Bourdieu, 1977).

Farmers' class position enabled them to run local civic and social activities from which non-landowners were and are often excluded. As connections between rural and urban have improved, distinctions have lessened, but the power landowners wield lingers on through the social and political networks maintained by the resource-rich wealthy. Second-wave feminism reached rural areas later than urban areas, but once it became acceptable for women to (re-enter) the paid workforce, the habitus which sustained expectations that women's place was at home, was broken. Women have used the social and financial capital available to them to challenge and break down barriers confronting them, and this effort has resulted in greater interest in women's ideas. The presence of women in decision-making forums inside and outside the home, is enabling some of the more invidious aspects of unequal power relations (such as family violence) to be addressed. Rural Māori continue to experience the negative consequences of ill-conceived policies and blatant racism, but it is through respecting and understanding Māori knowledge and tikanga that the changes needed to address current social, environmental

and economic issues confronting rural places may be introduced. Certainly Campbell suggests that to address issues confronting agricultural production 'we must first understand farms as agents of colonization and . . . understand how modernist farming . . . rendered invisible the possibility of alternatives' (Campbell, 2020: 184).

Habitus can create inertia, but listening to people formerly marginalised can produce new ideas and solutions to old problems. Bourdieu argued that the concept of habitus could account for social transformations. In 'being a product of history, that is of social experience and education, it [habitus] may be changed by history, that is by new experiences, education and training' (Bourdieu, 2002: 29).

## Future prospects

As Dame Anne Salmond argues, there has been an:

> interlock between power and knowledge in Aotearoa's colonial history. For two centuries, mātauranga and wānanga, ancestral forms of knowledge . . . [were] dismissed as benighted and defective, imperfect understandings based on superstition, almost always by those with very little if any knowledge of them. (Salmond, 2020).

Understanding these ancestral forms of knowledge and adopting Māori tikanga enables a radically different way of doing things. Those schooled in tikanga follow a collectivist approach, focusing on the ethics of care, kinship, empowering and supporting others, and managing and guarding resources, among other things (Durie, 2003). If we all understood and adopted this way of living it would be possible to move on from an overzealous pursuit of economic wealth and focus instead on economies which envision 'new kinds of outcomes and better ways of understanding capital, investment and development, and new ways of humanising capitalism' (Henare, 2011: 268).

This is a point strongly made by Max Harris (2017: 60), who argues that a new approach to the economy is needed which has key values of care, community and creativity, delivered by the state (rather than the private enterprise focus of neoliberal governments), and which focuses on social outcomes. Harris also argues that these values can only be realised when people are on an equal footing (Harris, 2017: 84). Removing structural inequalities will require ensuring the voices, histories and identities of those who were previously unheard, particularly Māori, become part of mainstream narratives and discourse. This will require recognising that those currently marginalised are not inferior. Harris makes a strong argument as to 'the need for a renewal of values-based politics, the importance of decolonisation and the centrality of Māori world views' (Harris, 2017: 199) in finding effective and different policy solutions for managing rural, if not national, issues. To do this, places are required where the marginalised can have a voice, and where that voice is heard. A start might be burying the neoliberal agenda which reinforces inequality, teaching a more nuanced history which includes Māori, indigeneity and the impact of colonisation, and, as David McKay (2013) argues, building an understanding of environmental connections and inter-relationships, the interdependence of living and non-living things, and ecological principles and timescales, all of which are inherent in the holistic, tikanga-based Māori worldview. Manuka Henare's

(2011) discussion on economic development provides a comprehensive outline of tikanga values and an articulation of what a tikanga-based Māori worldview in business looks like.

Sean Markey, Greg Halseth and Laura Ryser (2019) also argue for a different way of doing place-based development, one which focuses on community development rather than on sector development (since the latter leads to weakened, vulnerable economies), and where 'Māori exert control (if not outright ownership) over the development agenda' (Markey et al., 2019). In their view indigenous policy-making and attention to holistic interpretations of health and well-being offer interesting insights and strategies which may well take us beyond the impasse of current approaches to economic development and shift us towards new ways of imagining rural futures. This new way of thinking could be achieved by teaching tikanga as part of school civics education, public service training, and, as recently suggested by several academics (McCrone, 2021), taught within university law-school curricula.

## Conclusion

By focusing mainly on primary production/biological economies and the dominant group within that sector, rural sociology has unintentionally overlooked the citizens who make up the bulk of the rural population: those not farming or owning farms. This analysis of mostly post-1980s rural research on rural people *not* primarily engaged in agriculture, plus farm people often missed in the literature (female farmers, farm managers/ workers and their spouses), and Māori, found these people were virtually invisible, and without voice in policy and decision-making. The combination of racism, class elitism, colonisation and patriarchal prejudice was shown as having deleterious effects on individuals, families and communities in rural areas, as well as the economy, and the environment.

Using Bourdieu's concept of habitus has cast light on why social divisions, and attitudes and behaviour shaped by social conditioning, all so evident in the research literature, persist. The research literature revealed that colonial attitudes and beliefs were pervasive, long-lived, and detrimental, particularly to Māori, women, and people on low incomes. Rural society is still shaped by colonial attitudes manifesting through the relationship of capital with power, masculine hegemony, and beliefs of racial supremacy. While these attitudes are starting to change, it is the dominant power elite in rural New Zealand, male Pākehā farm owners, whose voices and worldview still tend to control the narrative, and the agri-food economy which dominates the research agenda.

Given that habitus is a set of acquired characteristics and a product of social conditioning and history, expectations and attitudes can be changed through consciousness raising and shifting the narrative. Thus landowners' control of rural affairs can be reduced by taking account of diverse community perspectives, including those of Māori, women, workers, and the resource-deprived, in decision-making and power sharing. Women and Māori have begun to break their own and others' social conditioning and the 'self-evident truths' that block their ideas and limit their life chances, to overcome opposition and change perceptions. The slow shift from colonial attitudes accompanying increased understanding of Māori history and indigenous ways of thinking about society, the

environment and economy, could be supercharged by giving recognition to the value of tikanga and ensuring it is taught widely to those in a position to make change.

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