

“MĀORI NEWS IS BAD NEWS”

That’s certainly so on television

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Abstract

A television news bulletin tells us, in effect, what we should think about and the preferred way in which we should think about it. Analyses of New Zealand media have consistently shown that news about Māori is both relatively rare and that it prioritises violence and criminality. Researchers conclude this encourages New Zealanders to see Māori as threatening the social order and burdening our society. We examined the few Māori stories broadcast in a large representative sample of English-language television news bulletins and found the same negativity. As our sample included Māori-language news bulletins from the same days we know there were other Māori news stories available, so we conclude that the prioritising of negative stories about Māori in English-language media is a matter of choice. Focus groups with Māori and non-Māori media consumers demonstrate the impact of the relentlessly negative portrayals of Māori in New Zealand media.

Keywords

Māori, television, news, coverage, comparative

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Introduction

Mass media¹ representations of indigenous peoples, especially in newscasts, have regularly been shown to be both minimal and negative (Abel, 1997; Colvin, 2010; Due, 2010; Hartley, 2004; Henry & Tator, 2002; Walker, 1990). Writing about the Australian situation, Gargett (2005) has argued that this is about power relations and the ways in which the mass media construct and maintain social norms: “The violence of colonialism is repeated over and over again as the media continue to write Indigeneity [sic] as deviant” (p. 4).

Media representations of Māori

Implicit in the formulation of Ranginui Walker (2002) that we have borrowed for the title of this paper is the conclusion that media in Aotearoa New Zealand want readers and viewers to think about Māori as poor citizens who, in a range of active and passive ways (McCreanor, 2008), threaten the comfortable, familiar Pākehā dominance. Walker drew his conclusion from more than two decades of media critique and commentary in which he evaluated, analysed, and illustrated the ways in which mass media, particularly newspaper, practices systematically maintained and legitimated Pākehā dominance and Māori subordination in Aotearoa (Walker, 1990; Walker, 1996). Like earlier researchers (Thompson, 1953, 1954a, 1954b) and his contemporaries (Cochrane, 1990; McGregor & Comrie, 1995), Walker analysed published or broadcast stories to show how Māori were represented—the second-level agenda setting. More recent analyses (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005; Nairn et al., 2009; Phelan, 2009; Rankine et al., 2008) add more detail while establishing that little has changed in media representations of Māori. However, to identify first-level

agenda setting (Poindexter, Smith, & Haider, 2003) most of those researchers had to rely on critical readings of the published materials and social-historical sources as they were unable to demonstrate that the analysed items were not the only “Māori news” available. As a result of the sampling technique adopted in our project which collected news bulletins from all television channels in Aotearoa on pre-selected sampling days, we are able to present an account of both first and second levels of agenda-setting that Poindexter et al. direct us to.

Central to construction of indigenous peoples as a threat is the surveillance of their organisations and practices; what Fiske (2000) refers to as “white watch” and Harding (2006, p. 231) calls “keeping aboriginal people ‘in their place’” (Nairn et al., 2009). Consistent with that sense of threat are representations of indigenous people as primitive and violent, an end achieved by telling stories about actual violence (Budarick & King, 2008; Harding, 2006) or stories in which violence is latent but available for readers’ interpretative work (Daniels, 2006; Due, 2010; Simmons & LeCouteur, 2008). Mass media have been shown to utilise other negative personal characteristics in their constructions of indigenous people: laziness, improvidence, and grasping opportunism (Furniss, 2001; Thompson, 1954a). McCallum (2007, p. 7) described such news items as “routine but not regular”: they were not common but those that appeared were commonly framed in these pejorative ways. As instanced by Haami (2008), Māori have been active critics of these denigrating representations:

Māori have been critical of their “archetypal” portrayal on television; as characters, and in storylines, which promote negative stereotypes and perceptions of Māori . . . Preoccupation with negativity, physical conflict, social oppression, or clashes of identity give a “two-dimensional” view of Māori. (p. 24)

1 Here we use the term “mass media” to mean colonial, settler press and broadcast services.

The media representations described support, and are legitimated by, expressions of dislike and distrust among the non-indigenous (Liu & Mills, 2006) especially among the elite (van Dijk, 1991).

The world of news... is viewed in the cultural analysis of journalism as a complex lattice of meanings for all involved in journalism, a tool kit of symbols, stories, rituals and world views, which people use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems. (Zelizer, 2004, cited in Matheson, 2007, p. 31)

In Aotearoa, the establishment of the independent Māori Television Service (MTS) provides a unique opportunity to compare media performance on news coverage between Māori-language bulletins and those provided by mass media channels. An initial approach to such comparative work involves identification of the first- and second-level agendas of broadcast items. As Poindexter et al. (2003) explain: “The first-level agenda setting told us what to think about; the second-level, as a result of selection, emphasis, or exclusion of attributes, told us *how* to think about [the item]” (p. 527).

While active audiences may develop their own oppositional readings of broadcast items, they cannot “think about” stories or events that are not broadcast—a consequence neatly captured by the phrase “what to think about”. For this article we adopted the agenda approach to the mass television news items because it supports an examination of what is present in, and absent from, broadcast bulletins without requiring the more detailed examination required to establish the preferred reading of each item (Richardson, 1998). Our two-level analysis is informed by items broadcast by MTS on the same days as the Māori stories broadcast in the representative sample of English-language news bulletins. To ground our interpretation of the first-level analysis in viewer understandings we drew on findings from audience focus groups conducted as a part of the larger project, “Media, health

and wellbeing in Aotearoa”.

Within the mediascape of Aotearoa, Māori journalists and their allies have pushed the boundaries (Archie, 2007). Radio stations have been established and, in most instances, succeed in providing powerful new services for Māori communities. Māori journalists have actively fought for a Māori Television Service (MTS) to provide a Māori controlled and led alternative to the mass media channels (Paul, 2005). Now, in news and current affairs MTS is able to provide an alternative to equivalent programmes on TV1, TV3 and Prime that, audience figures suggest, has strong appeal to both Māori and Pākehā viewers (Gregory et al., 2011; Māori Television, 2010). Because this alternative news bulletin exists, viewers can identify the first-level agenda of the English-language bulletins, as we do in this paper. To that end we examine a representative sample of television news coverage of Māori stories gathered from MTS, TV1, TV3 and Prime and identify the first- and second-level agendas in Māori stories in the English-language bulletins.

Method

We obtained a representative sample of television by identifying 21 sampling days: a random selection of 3 of each of the days of the week from the 6 months November 2007–April 2008, to create 3 “constructed weeks”, an enhancement of the 2 constructed weeks recommended for this purpose by Lacy, Riffe, Stoddard, Martin, & Chang (2001). Unlike our print sample, where the clipping service identified relevant items through a keyword search (Rankine et al., 2011), we obtained entire television news bulletins: *One News*, *Tonight*, *3 News*, *Nightline*, *Prime News*, *Te Kāea*, and *Te Karere*, giving us a total of 123 bulletins that broadcast some 2,100 news items within the collection period. Each bulletin was viewed by one of two researchers to identify stories that had a significant focus on Māori

people and Māori issues. Where the designation of items was uncertain, inclusion or exclusion was debated and decided by the entire team.

Findings

Our selection process identified a minority (278) of the news items as Māori stories, all but 28 of which were broadcast by the two Māori language bulletins (*Te Kāea* and *Te Karere*). The 28 items, 1.59% of the 1,757 news items carried by the five English-language news bulletins, told 17 distinct stories about Māori people or issues. On 8 of the 21 sampling days, no English-language bulletin carried any items of news about Māori or related topics. This minimal offering, tantamount to an absence, is a striking instance of what Gerbner (1972, p. 44), speaking about representations of women, termed “symbolic annihilation”.

First-level agenda setting

There are two parts to our analysis of what viewers are guided to think about by these Māori stories. First, as in earlier analyses of media coverage of Māori stories (Cochrane, 1990; McGregor & Comrie, 1995; Thompson, 1953, 1954a, 1954b; Walker, 1990), we outline the content of broadcast items. Then we address the issue of the broadcaster’s choice of those items by providing brief descriptions of items from Māori-language bulletins that could have been included in the English-language bulletins alongside or instead of those actually chosen. Establishing that there were alternatives to the broadcast items underpins our assertion that the first-level agenda was intended rather than resulting from a paucity of Māori stories to tell. Where possible we group stories by content.

Stories linking Māori to child abuse and other violence dominated the Māori stories in the English-language bulletins. Sixteen of the 28 items (57%) related to seven stories about

implied or acknowledged abuse of, or violence against, Māori children. Those seven stories, ordered chronologically, with date and bulletin in parentheses were:

1. The opening of a Māori-led conference intended to address the issue of Māori child-abuse (25/11/07, *Prime News*)
2. The rejection of Chris Kahui—accused of murdering his baby twins—by a community to which he had been released on bail (4/12/07, *Prime News*, *One News*, *3 News*, *Nightline*)
3. A Māori man is sent to trial for the killing of Nia Glassie, a Māori toddler (5/12/07, *Prime News*)
4. Mother and friends mark what would have been the 3rd birthday of Jhia Te Tua, a Māori toddler killed in a drive-by shooting (3/4/08, *3 News*, *Nightline*)
5. Several accused enter guilty pleas at deposition hearings about the drive-by shooting that killed Jhia Te Tua (9/4/08, *One News*, *3 News*, *Prime News*, *Nightline*, *Tonight*)
6. A child with a Māori name is taken to Starship Hospital with serious injuries (11/4/08, *3 News*)
7. The jury at Chris Kahui’s trial are shown an excerpt from his initial police interview (29/4/08, *One News*, *Tonight*)

Of these seven stories only three; the rejection of Chris Kahui (*Te Karere* and *Te Kāea*), the Nia Glassie killing (*Te Kāea*), and Kahui’s trial (*Te Kāea*), were also reported in a Māori-language bulletin in our sample. This apparent difference in first-level agendas of English- and Māori-language bulletins was exemplified by the non-inclusion of the only story reported by all English-language bulletins we monitored—the entering of guilty pleas by some of those accused of the drive-by shooting that killed Jhia Te Tua (5)—in either Māori-language bulletin.

Two further stories, neither of which was reported on a Māori-language bulletin, offered viewers opportunities to rehearse ideas about the violence, actual or implied, of Māori. The first

was a men's march against domestic violence on White Ribbon Day (25/11/07, *3 News*) in which Māori men and a banner: "Te Whare Tangata Te Ao Mārama" (The house of mankind, an enlightened approach) dominated the early visuals effectively framing the issue of domestic violence as a Māori story (Poindexter et al., 2003). The second story concerned the visit of young Māori men who had been attending Te Tomo, a course described by the newsreader as "designed to get young Māori men away from gangs", to the Parliamentary office of Māori MP Shane Jones (23/2/08, *Prime News*).

Three items reported the deaths of prominent Māori men:

1. The poet, Hone Tūwhare (17/1/08, *3 News*)
2. Barry Barclay, the first Māori to direct a feature film (19/2/08, *One News*)
3. Tāmami Parāone, described as "the eldest surviving member of the 28th Māori Battalion" (14/3/08, *One News*)

Each of these stories was carried by only one English-language bulletin although all were reported by both Māori-language bulletins. Items about two further stories each appeared on two English-language bulletins. An aerial protest by supporters of two helicopter pilots jailed for stealing large quantities of pounamu from Ngāi Tahu (3/4/08) was reported on *3 News* and *Nightline* though neither Māori-language bulletin mentioned the event. Carter Holt Harvey's closure of their mill at Te Kopu, near Thames (9/4/08), was reported on *One News*, *Tonight* and *Te Kāea*. The three remaining stories were each carried on a single English-language bulletin:

1. A piece of Tame Iti's art is auctioned at a kōhanga reo fund raiser (24/11/07, *3 News*)
2. The Stolen Generations Group looks to apologies included in NZ Treaty Settlements as a possible model for Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to them (1/2/08, *One News*)

3. The Honourable Parekura Horomia says some children skip breakfast to stay slim (11/4/08, *3 News*)

Only the last of these stories was reported on a Māori-language bulletin (*Te Kāea*) where it was an addendum to an item concerning the Labour Party's Māori Council recommendation that a Treaty Commissioner be established. Just over half (9/17, 53%) of the Māori stories broadcast on English-language bulletins were also broadcast on at least one Māori-language bulletin. To identify the first-level agenda set by this entire collection of stories it is necessary to establish that there were other Māori stories that could have been broadcast as well as, or instead of, these. To ensure we compared like with like we did not consider the numerous sports stories included in the Māori-language bulletins as there were no Māori stories in the sports section of the sampled English-language bulletins. Further, only items that were broadcast on the days that these news stories were broadcast on the English-language bulletins were considered. Māori-language bulletins broadcast 127 other Māori news items that met these criteria. Even if it is accepted that news editors might not see all these other stories as "national news" many of them did present important events or topics. Here is a small selection of items carried by *Te Kāea* and *Te Karere* on the relevant days.

- Carvers at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa creating a pou commemorating those of the 28th Māori Battalion who died in WWII fighting (24/11/07, *Te Kāea*)
- Launch of two books describing the help early settlers received from Māori peoples (24/11/07, *Te Kāea*)
- Tumu Te Heuheu is given an honorary doctorate for his work for Māori and for international conservation (25/11/07, *Te Kāea*)
- Māori Studies at Auckland University shocked to learn that access to its courses will be restricted (4/12/07, *Te Karere*)
- The Rūātoki community taking the first

- steps to ease their children's trauma caused by the police raid (4/12/07, *Te Kāea*)
- Dissension within the iwi has Te Arawa Settlements Bill put on hold (5/12/07, *Te Kāea*)
 - A carved pou is erected at Miropiko, site of an ancient fortified village above the Waikato River, in Hamilton (5/12/07, *Te Karere*)
 - Māori, as exemplified by the Māori wardens, are shown to be the most prolific volunteers in the community (5/12/07, *Te Kāea*)
 - Te Ata Tino Toa calls on everyone to fly the Māori flag for five days leading up to 6 February (17/1/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - Te Arawa and the Maketū swimming club work together to improve safety in the water (17/1/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - The appointment of a Māori, Edward Paul, to the District Court bench is celebrated in the Whakatāne Court (1/2/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - Ngāi Tahu and the Crown are working together to monitor fish stocks around the South Island (1/2/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - Māori parents agree that advertising of unhealthy foods should be banned from programmes aimed at children (19/2/08, *Te Karere*)
 - The Māori Party disputes a Human Rights Commission report that said discrimination is decreasing in New Zealand (19/2/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - Schools are short of experienced teachers for new entrants, a lack felt in Kura Kaupapa (19/2/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - Amendments to the just-passed Waitākere Ranges Heritage Bill arose through a consultation process instigated by the Māori Party (23/2/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - The Crown and Māori work together at the first meeting of the Waikato River Guardians Establishment Committee (14/3/08, *Te Kāea, Te Karere*)
 - Department of Conservation (DoC) has leased Te Paki farm (in the farthest North) to a Pākehā (3/4/08, *Te Karere*)
 - A workshop to help city Māori learn and observe tangihanga protocols has been prepared and run (3/4/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - The new arrivals area at Auckland International Airport has been opened (3/4/08, *Te Karere*)
 - Māori artefacts found in southern Hawkes Bay given to the Crown without consultation with Ngāti Kahungunu (3/4/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - A dawn ceremony to bless the widening of State Highway 20 by Te Puea Marae, Māngere (9/4/08, *Te Karere*)
 - GPs and nurses are retiring or going overseas and this has consequences for Māori people's health (9/4/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - It is desirable that all New Zealanders know about the meaning and purpose of the Tino Rangatiratanga flag (9/4/08, *Te Karere*)
 - The Māori Council of the Labour Party recommends the establishment of a Treaty Commissioner (11/4/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - Te Papa Tongarewa now holds so many repatriated Māori heads it has been called the country's largest urupā (11/4/08, *Te Kāea*)
 - Child Poverty Action Group lobbies government to provide tax relief for low income families (29/4/08, *Te Kāea, Te Karere*)
 - Marlborough Sounds coastal environment working group includes local iwi, Biosecurity NZ, Ministry of Fisheries, DoC and marine farmers (29/4/08, *Te Karere*)
 - Ngāti Whātua ki Ōrākei has made 450 educational grants (29/4/08, *Te Kāea*)
- The existence of such stories, and we have not included stories broadcast on the 8 days when no Māori stories were broadcast on English-language bulletins, establishes that

those responsible for the latter programmes by unreflectively following normal practice chose to present Māori stories that, in effect, directed viewers to think about events and situations in which Māori people are mostly dangerous and unattractive. This is consistent with the conclusions of earlier researchers (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005; Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005; Thompson, 1954a, 1954b; Walker, 2002).

Second-level agenda setting

Identification of second-level agendas requires more detailed analysis of how items are constructed to create the most immediately available reading (Poindexter et al., 2003; Richardson, 1998) through the use of language and visuals and the emphasis on or exclusion of particular characteristics and elements. Space does not permit such detailed analysis of all 28 Māori story items so we have focused on the 18 items linking Māori to child abuse and other violence that dominated our sample. Central to our analysis are the discourses through which inter-group relations between settler and Māori in this country have been and currently are constructed (McCreanor, 1989, 2008; Nairn & McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Phelan & Shearer, 2009; Tuffin, 2008; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). These common-sense discourses enable and encourage particular representations of Māori and of events in which they are involved that, concurrently, revitalise the discourses while apparently confirming the rightness of those representations (Nairn et al., 2009).

The majority of the items we have selected for this analysis rely on two such discourses: one representing Māori, especially Māori men, as inherently violent, and the other being the “Good Māori/Bad Māori” discourse (McCreanor, 2008). The latter allows the speaker to categorise Māori, individuals or groups as either Good (people, citizens, groups) or Bad (people, citizens, groups) according to the extent to which they collaborate with or

“fit into” Pākehā colonial culture, practices and imperatives. Bad Māori are routinely portrayed as aggressive, demanding, and irresponsible people who do not fit in New Zealand society (McCreanor, 2008). In television portrayals, the Māori violence discourse often utilises shots of haka bereft of the cultural context and meaning actuating the performers. Such media portrayals, dominated by close-ups of vigorous Māori men bearing and wielding weapons—taiaha, patu, mere, pūkana—are readily seen as expressions of barely contained aggression and anger.

The White Ribbon Day March item exemplifies how visuals cue such discourses. The opening shot of the march has it apparently led by a large Māori man who dominates the long shot (LS), his size enhanced relative to other marchers by his proximity to the camera. The camera cuts to a low angle, close-up (CU) of balloons and a young Māori boy holding one, before the camera draws back to a mid-shot (MS) in which a nearby Māori man seems particularly large compared to the boy because of the low angle. Shots of the banner “Te Whare Tangata Te Ao Mārama” (The house of mankind, an enlightened approach) are intercut with a CU of a Māori man blowing a conch; an instrument that media have increasingly linked to land occupations, protest marches, and challenges. These images occupy the first 13 seconds of the item’s 26 second film of the march and, not only create the impression that domestic violence is primarily a Māori issue—something confirmed by focus group members (Gregory et al., 2011)—but also, by cuing the physical size and implied power of Māori men, it offers strong cues to their threatening presence and presumed penchant for violence.

The item about the visit of the soon-to-be graduates of “Te Tomo” to Shane Jones’ office foregrounds (Māori) gangs: the newsreader referring to “gangs” twice in the introduction and, unique in our sample, the banner identifying the reporter and each of the three sources carried the tag question: “Gang solution?” As with news coverage of Māori hikoi, protests,

and land occupations, the item opened and closed with a haka that lacked a clear cultural context such as rituals of encounter (Salmond, 1975). As described above, deculturated haka are readily seen as declarations of strength—a reading encouraged by coverage of confrontations in which haka dominate the visuals. The frequently revived linking of haka to implied violence and, on occasion, apparent lawlessness, engages smoothly with this item's emphasis on Māori gangs (Walker, 1996) and Pākehā fears triggered by patch-wearing Māori gang members (Walker, 2002).

In the stories about abuse and other violence towards children another device encouraged viewers to see Māori, particularly men, as violent and irresponsible persons who are unable or unwilling to care for others. The device contrasted, implicitly or explicitly, the victims' helplessness or attractiveness with the abuser's physical maturity and behaviour expected of adults. Often (11 of the 16 items) the contrast was built around a photo of the child. For example, the photo of the Kahui twins in "stretch-n-grow" suits sprawled asleep on a blue and white check blanket emphasised their helplessness before the unidentified killer, while a photo of Nia Glassie in her matching sunflower print dress and hat spoke of childish vitality extinguished.

Prime News (25/11/07), employed images from the service that began the Hui of Hope—an ongoing Māori-led project to stop child abuse—to create a deeply affecting image of the plight of child abuse victims. Held in late 2007 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the hui began with a roll call of Māori children killed by abuse between 1996 and 2006. Each child was represented by a lit candle and this image provided the emotional core of the *Prime News* item. After a two sentence introduction, the newsreader (voice over—VO) told viewers: "15 candles, one for each Māori child killed since 2006 [sic] were lit, and then extinguished". For 9 seconds, until he said "...were lit", the screen was filled by an extreme close-up (ECU)

of two ranks of large, white, burning candles of which the farthest two, having been recently extinguished, were still smoking while a third was being snuffed out. For the last phrase, the camera drew back to an MS of a woman in white church vestments who snuffed a fourth and fifth candle (7 seconds) all the while one could faintly hear names being read. Seventeen seconds later the candles returned (3 seconds) and this time a Māori man snuffed more candles to the reading of names. Nearly a third of the broadcast item, 19 of 63 seconds, was focused on this ritual. Extinguishing a candle kills its light and the burnt wick symbolises what has been lost; for viewers the image was intensified, first by the precision of the number (15) of Māori children who had died and, second by the erroneous statement that these children had died "since 2006"—some 20 months at most rather than occurring between 1996 and 2006. The candles, excerpted from the context of the initial worship, offered viewers a particular interpretation of the Project Manager's statement: "We've [Māori] got the highest rates [of child abuse] in the country".

Further, newsreaders and reporters consistently foregrounded abuse and killing of children in these items: "A Māori child abuse summit", "man accused of killing his twin baby sons", "charged over the death of Rotorua toddler", "slain Wanganui toddler", "two of the men accused of killing 2-year-old toddler...pleaded guilty to her murder", "admitted to Starship Hospital with serious injuries", "twin boys admitted to hospital with head injuries". The moral charge was intensified by enlisting the victims: through photos, shots of unused toys, and candle flames, encouraging viewers to view the adults accused of their deaths as callous and worthless, bad Māori. That moral judgement became even more compelling when the accused appeared unkempt, unrepentant, or displayed a defiant pride. These were the only kind of Māori story that appeared regularly across the sampling period. Over the same period the English-language bulletins reported only one

story of such violence by non-Māori, the killing of a 2-year-old toddler by a paroled convict who was the babysitter.

Discussion

Māori stories make up a tiny proportion (less than 2%) of the news items in our representative sample of English-language newscasts and the majority of these items encourage viewers to think about Māori violence towards and abuse of babies and children in their care as if that were a defining characteristic of the people. Representing Māori parents and whānau as child abusers is consistent with analyses (McGregor, 1993, 2002; McGregor & Comrie, 1995; Nairn & McCreanor, 1991) that showed Māori crime was considered newsworthy, because the stories feed into a hegemonic narrative in which Māori are cast as inadequate, poorly socialised primitives unworthy of full citizenship. For whatever reason, the first-level agenda described here was consciously chosen. There were other Māori stories available but not broadcast, so we conclude that English-language television is, like other media, committed to promoting the hegemonic, racist narrative that excludes and denigrates Māori. The other 12 items did not offer balancing alternative portrayals. Most positive of those 12 were items about the deaths of three Māori men, each of which was framed by the achievements or status of the individual allowing viewers to differentiate each man from the unattractive bad Māori of so many other Māori story items. Similarly, the Māori woman who sketched the snowballing impact of the Kopu Mill closure (*One News, Tonight*) was shown as a responsible, thinking citizen but, as she was an unnamed vox pop, her presence could do little to counter the more common negative representations of Māori. In the items about the protest over sentences given two helicopter pilots who stole Ngāi Tahu pounamu, the Māori victims of the theft spoke into an unsympathetic context created by the visual

drama of the protest and the priority given the protestors' critical account of the theft and sentencing.

In contrast, representations of Māori in Māori-language news bulletins were more varied and lacked the relentless negativity of the English-language bulletins. More detailed analyses of Māori-language news is needed to establish whether, or to what extent, items broadcast by *Te Kāea* and *Te Karere* continue to be shaped by common-sense spun from colonial discourses (Rankine & McCreanor, 2004). Given that conscientisation is grounded in the naming of the world (Freire, 1970), such analyses are likely to show that items are constructed using both new, counter-hegemonic resources and settler racist common-sense as those involved participate in their own decolonisation.

We argue following Gerbner (1972) that the paucity of Māori stories in English-language news bulletins effectively erases Māori as responsible citizens, amounting to an assault on Māori health and wellbeing. That absence is a serious threat to New Zealand's ability to build an equitable society in which Māori participate fully both as tangata whenua and as responsible members of society.

Unfortunately, the negative effect of the first-level agenda is greatly intensified by the second-level agenda, the way viewers are encouraged to think about the few Māori people and events they are shown. In our sample, as in so much earlier research, the second-level agenda encourages viewers to see Māori as violent, criminal, and irresponsible apart from isolated exceptions (Nairn, Pega, McCreanor, Rankine, & Barnes, 2006). That assessment is not ours alone, focus group participants were very clear (Gregory et al., 2011) that Māori were represented negatively:

Wendy: ...See with Māori everything is bad. Education is bad, poverty, family violence, child abuse... (Gregory et al., 2011, p. 55)

Dave: When the majority of the minority commit something, for example like the majority of Māori do a lot of violent crimes in the society, then nobody interest [sic] to learn about Māori culture. (Gregory et al., 2011, p. 56)

The media created knowledge of Māori utilised by focus group participants has wider generality as shown by a recent report from Research New Zealand—“How the New Zealand public view the causes of child abuse” (Kalafatelis, 2011)—in which 51% of those surveyed viewed child abuse as a cultural issue. That explanation of child abuse appears to be a direct reflection of the English-language bulletins’ preference for negative news items. Both the focus group participants and those responding to the survey illustrate Hartley’s point that: in complex, plural societies we cannot know most of our fellow citizens directly and are forced to rely on the stories “both factual and fictional” told by our media (Hartley, 1996, p. 207). It follows, when the predominant representation of a particular group is negative, that becomes the reality for most media consumers.

What our analyses have shown and focus group members confirm is that, in English-language television news bulletins, Māori are both symbolically annihilated and demonised. And it does not have to be like that. First, *Te Kāea* (MTS) and *Te Karere* routinely broadcast Māori news stories in which Māori people fill diverse roles and events are placed within the appropriate cultural context. That means there is no justification for limiting Māori participation in English-language news stories to the current offerings that are so damaging for all living in Aotearoa. Second, there are excellent resources (Archie, 2007) to assist journalists and others involved to produce television news that is not prescribed by the derogatory common-sense and everyday production practices that produce the unacceptable, racist representations described above.

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