

## Modes of Representation in Māori documentary

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**Abstract:** Bill Nichols has written a number of books pertaining to audio/visual documentary. Throughout, he has highlighted some of the many ethical issues surrounding documentary procedures. Throughout time, documentary has produced reoccurring conventions and techniques that Nichols has grouped into what he calls modes of representation. The focus of the present study is an exploration of these modes of representation in relation to their effectiveness when applied to Te Ao Māori. This leads to a discussion of some issues Māori might face when utilising these modes in a Māori context, and an exploration of aspects in the modes that are inappropriate, that need to be altered or that need to be discarded.

**Keywords:** documentary, film, Māori

### Introduction

The Māori context here, refers to Māori who are filming within a Māori community or family. This study begins with an examination of the main modes of representation highlighted by Nichols and the intention these modes have as techniques of representation. We will consider how important documentary can be in a contemporary Māori context; ethical issues will be discussed in relation to the effectiveness of the modes within Te Ao Māori. Finally, we will explore the creation of a documentary framework for Māori that provide sensitivity to the subject and a safe working environment for the filmmaker. Personal experiences of filming my Father who served in the 28th Māori Battalion and is now 85 years old, are drawn upon, as is my life experiences that stem from Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa and living in a rural Māori community. Documentary has potential to communicate to our younger generations which is something that should not be ignored. To be effective for Māori, this genre of communication needs to be developed by Māori because the conventions used have been developed by Western/European filmmakers and do not consider indigenous Māori needs.

### What are the Documentary modes of representation?

If we are to understand the intentions of the modes of representation and how they can apply to a Māori context, then it is of paramount importance that we first look at the purpose of documentary and how it communicates to its audiences. Documentary has no one concrete definition; however, in order to orientate ourselves within this argument, it is important to highlight the fundamental ingredients that make documentary. Like fictional movies, documentary tells stories. Documentary uses images, people and/or voice-overs convey a particular perspective. Nichols (2001) describes the fundamental difference between fiction and non-fiction “Fiction maybe content to suspend disbelief (to accept its world as plausible, but non-fiction often wants to instill belief (to accept its world as actual). This is what aligns documentary with the rhetorical tradition, in which eloquence serves as a social as well as an aesthetic purpose. We take not only pleasure from documentary but direction as well. This is the appeal and power of documentary.” (2001, p.2)

The use of interviews, actual accounts, evidential editing (photos, memorabilia) and the filming

of actual events, give the audience a perspective of the truth. As Nichols suggests documentary is not simply a reproduction of reality, it is one part of the total picture, the total picture being the world we exist in. "It stands for a particular view of the world, one we may never have encountered before even if the aspect of the world that is represented are familiar to us." (Nichols, 2001, p.20). Therefore, documentary serves as a representation rather than a reproduction.

The modes of representation in documentary are techniques that have formed over the space of documenting time that will essentially portray a subject or topic in a certain way, depending on the intentions of the filmmaker. Nichols explains the development of the modes; "Situations and events, actions and issues may be represented in a variety of ways. Strategies arise, conventions take shape, constraints come into play; these factors work to establish commonality among different texts, to place them with in the same discursive formation at a given historical moment." (1991, p.32). The modes of representation have been developed by the reoccurring features and conventions within documentary history. The features and conventions represent basic ways of organising text into the modes of representation. The three main modes highlighted by Nichols are the dominating organizational patterns around which text is structured. These are expository, observational and interactive modes. These modes have given rise to more contemporary styles of documentary that are not holistically one mode or the other, but can be amalgamations of old and new conventions. New contemporary modes of representation stem from these three ancestral modes; limitations and constraints are challenged and revised in order to accommodate changing social expectations (Nichols, 1991).

### **The Expository Mode**

Filmmakers in the expository mode adopt the role of the reporter who directs the argument. The expository mode emphasizes a subjective point and often has the 'voice-of-god' narrative running over images and footage to help develop the argument. Expository is one of the earlier established modes but despite some of its more 'out of date' techniques it is still very much used in today's contemporary settings as Nichols explains "Expository documentary goes back to the 1920s but remains highly influential today. Most television news and reality TV shows depend heavily on its quite dated conventions, as do most all science and nature documentaries, biographies such as the A&E biography series and the majority of the large scale historical documentaries." (Nichols, 2001, p.100). The author or the 'voice-of-god' addresses the viewers directly to advance the argument about the social-historical world. Expository is very much a directed story line where the text takes place around the solution to the problem. The argument is built similarly to the way a lawyer builds his or her case. Evidential editing presents images and testimonies in a way that directs the argument towards the filmmaker's final intention, just as a lawyer would produce the evidence in a logical directed manner.

### **The Observational Mode**

The observational mode is conducted by the camera following the subject or subjects around, creating a fly-on-the-wall tone to the documentary. This mode eventuated because the expository was thought to be ethically too directed, rather than constructing the argument in an evidential manner, the observation creates the sense of unmediated time by the audience not seeing the direct involvement of the filmmaker. This mode allows the filmmaker to give the pretence that he or she has not intervened, as they do not show themselves in front of the camera but as Nichols describes this is not only an inflection of ethical consideration "Since the mode hinges on the ability of the filmmaker to be unobtrusive, the issue of intrusion over and over within the institutional discourse" (1991, p.39). The observational mode is a technique that instills the perception of 'real time', achieved by creating a sense of unmediated access to the world. The editing enhances the perception of lived time by showing the events unfold as they would in time. The observational mode creates a 'present tense' form of direction. However, by using this

method the documentary is usually restricted to only the 'present tense' and cannot delve into historical viewpoints as the expository does.

### **The Interactive Mode**

This mode eventuated because of the ethical issue observational enforced of access, where the camera should or should not go.

The Interactive mode gives way to the observational notion of the filmmaker being invisible. The filmmaker is now actively involved by interacting and reacting with the social actors (subjects) "The filmmakers voice could be heard as readily as any others, not subsequently, in a organizing voice over commentary, but on the spot, in face to face encounters with others." (1999, p. 44). The interactions highlight images of testimony and verbal exchange, this is where Interactive generates its argument. (Nichols,1999). By working with the participants of the documentary the textual authority shifts from the filmmaker to the social actors. The focus is now not on the filmmakers direct commentary but the argument is now generated around the comments and responses that the social actors provide. The audience is able to engage with the body language and reactions of the filmmaker and subject/s as they would when assessing and reading their own conversations, Nichols (1999) explains the implications of this "Issues of comprehension and interpretation as a function of physical encounter arise: how do filmmaker and social actor respond to each other; do they respond to overtones or implications in each other speech?" (1999, p. 44).

### **Why should documentary be important to Māori?**

Now that I have clarified the purpose and the techniques of the modes of representation, it is important to explore the relationships that exist between indigenous Māori and documentary. These relationships will highlight how important documentary can be to Māori. This will be explored in relation to a question that perhaps has helped generate the need for this study, why should documentary be important to Māori?

The attraction of documentary lies in its promise to engage the audience with a representation of the world in which we live. Documentary can entertain and inform us about social issues pertaining to the world in which we live as Nichols explains that the pleasure and appeal of documentary lies in its ability to highlight timely issues that need attention "We see aspects and perspectives of the world, and what they put before us are social issues and cultural values, current problems and possible solutions, actual situation and specific ways of representing them" (Nichols, 1999). Documentary's ability to raise timely issues can be an extremely viable port to express social issues and cultural values that need to be represented in some form or manner. Personal cultural thoughts are difficult to articulate into spoken and written words, especially when these words originate from within the coloniser. Māori written history has derived from the imperial perspective of the Pākehā, a documented history formed by the idealistic approach of a scientist researching a new breed of insects. Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes the patronizing history of writing "Writing has been viewed as a mark of superior civilisation and other societies have been judged, by this view, to be incapable of thinking critically and objectively, or having distance between ideas and emotions. Writing is a part of theorising and writing is apart of history." (1999, p. 28-29). More contemporary or maybe not so contemporary methods of aesthetical expression have generated through our Māori people. Perhaps this is due to the perception that art forms cannot be totally conformed to a structure; they cannot be put into a box and labeled with a neat, tidy title giving a clear and to the point explanation. This has been discussed in relation to a contemporary context but if we look back on our history we can see that art expression was an important part of our Tipuna's (ancestors) lives. Therefore, it is only natural

that we feel relief in the process of creating and a connection to aesthetic forms of expression. Hirini Moko Mead expresses the value of Māori art in today's society "The art legacy passed down from the ancestors to the generations of today is a gift of great magnificence, a thing of beauty to many, a gift that touches our very souls. We are enriched and we can stand tall in the international arena of art." (2003, p. 253).

When we think of blockbuster documentary we may think of films such as *Fahrenheit 11* (2004) directed by Mike Moore, these films are often politically driven and have helped give documentary a political stigma. Art can be a form of expressing political opinion as much as documentary can, however, in my opinion I associate art with being able to express dreams, thoughts, opinions, desires and world views, documentary can also express these things but because of conventions that can mask the audience from seeing the intentions of the filmmaker it can be a less obvious form of expression. A filmmaker can lay clips and images into what seems to be a perfectly logical story that looks like it encompasses the truth by representing aspects of reality that resemble the world the viewers live in. With art I think people tend to understand that it is a point of view, but documentary is different, I think people associate documentary as being an accurate account of the world, which as we have discussed is not always the case.

I view documentary as an art form, even though it often can have a very political agenda associated with it. I ponder over the fact that perhaps this consideration is due to my own worldly view which I predominantly deem to be Māori. If I enter into creating a documentary with the pretence of creating a form of aesthetic work rather than reinforcing ideas on viewers, then this in turn will affect change in tone, pace or expression of the documentary. Nichols talks about the ability of documentary to act as a form of persuasion by representing segments of the truth "When we believe that what we see bears witness to the way the world is, it can form the basis of our orientation to or action within the world. This is obviously true in science, where medical imaging provides a vital diagnostic role in almost all branches of medicine. Propaganda, like advertising also relies on our belief in bond between what we see and the way the world is, or how we might act within it. So do many documentaries when they set out to persuade us to adopt a given perspective or point of view about the world." (Nichols, 2001, p. xiv).

Of course, my own perspective will no doubt come out through my own films, although my wish is that it does not generate propaganda or force a point-of-view but rather focuses on creation of discussion and debate. In saying this art is not always detached from the realm of politics. In fact, art can be a favoured form of political expression that does not have a reinforced narrative running through it that tells you what to think, as can be apparent in the documentary especially within the expositional mode.

Merata Mita's documentary on Ralph Hotere, titled *Hotere* (2004), a well respected Māori artist, in my view illustrates the creation of documentary as an art form. The imagery and tone of the documentary evokes the imagination and is aesthetically beautiful to watch as she plays with Hotere's art work with different angles, light and provocative sound. The main difference lies in the fact that if art is talking political then it can be fairly obvious (depending on the form), when documentary talks political then it can at times be harder to identify due to conventions and techniques that do not directly show the intentions of the filmmaker, but rather build on an argument around what seems to be real life occurrences.

Another key aspect of documentary and its importance to Māori is that it has the ability to appeal to rangatahi (youth). Consider that rangatahi of today are not restricted by the forms in which they learn. New technologies have created opportunities to learn via a number of very different and exciting methods. For that matter, audio/visual technologies have occupied the imaginations of the rangatahi and adults as well. These technologies serve as an everyday form of entertainment in New Zealand whether it be television, movies or computer games. This is

testament that rangatahi are open to the form of documentary, perhaps more so than they would be to reading books, reports or essays. Documentary has the potential to speak to rangatahi because not only is it a form that they find appealing, contemporary and entertaining, it provides a platform to provoke discussion and engage debate.

As we have discussed, documentary can highlight social issues and cultural values, therefore, it is important that Māori get to express these significant aspects of being in their own ways and in their own voices. Barry Barclay a leading Māori filmmaker has been at the forefront of the development of Māori documentary in New Zealand. He was one of the initiators that formed a national organisation of Māori communicators in the late 1980's, called Te Manu Aute (Barclay,1990). A key clause within the constitution of Te Manu Aute highlighted the fact that Māori need to have the means of expression to both themselves and to tauwi (others) "Every culture has a right and responsibility to present its own culture to its own people. That responsibility is so fundamental it cannot be left in the hands of outsiders, nor be usurped by them. Furthermore, any culture living closely with another ought to have regular opportunities to express itself to that other culture in ways that are true to its own values and needs"(Barclay,1990, p.7). This articulates a true need for Māori to be involved in the documentary process. The past has shown, if we do not make a point to represent ourselves in the realm of documentary then someone else will. Nichols explains one of the principal ways in which documentary engages with the world it tries to represent "Documentary filmmakers often take on the role of public representatives. They speak for the interest of others, both for individuals whom they represent and for the institution or agency that supports their filmmaking activity." (2001, p.3). Therefore, who but Māori have the right to speak on behalf Māori? We need to take up the documentary camera ourselves.

### **What then is a Māori Documentary?**

The controversy of who has the right to represent Māori highlights another highly debatable question 'What is a Māori documentary? Is it a film made by Māori? Is it a film with Māori in it? Is it a film about Māori? If so is film about Māori made by Pākehā, still a Māori film? Is a film about the weather in china still a Māori film if it is made by a Māori?

These are all contemporary questions that have been raised in an industry that strives for definition and categories. The question of defining a Māori film is indeed a difficult one. Essentially, a Māori film should be a film that expresses Māori value. Consider then, if a Māori film should be made by Māori, then the contributions that the late Micheal King gave to Māori film would mean very little. There are people who are not Māori but are passionate about Māori issues. It would be a disservice to deny people the opportunity. Micheal King adopted and experienced Māori philosophies and techniques when researching, which created a sensitive working environment, unfortunately there are many more who enter Māori communities without understanding our values such as the first of Vincent Wards films *In Spring One Plants Alone*(1981) is an example. Ward went into the Uruwera's, Tuhoe country with very little knowledge about Māori values, beliefs and customs. Ward discovered his naivety early on in the making of the film "Generally the community tolerated me. They were often friendly, but then I'd feel undercurrent of criticism and suspicion and knew I had made another mistake, although I rarely discovered what it was. I had walked blind into a situation I did not understand." (Ward, 1990, p. 20). If Māori values are the key to a Māori film, are films like *In Spring One Plants Alone* a Māori film? Barclay has an extremely strong answer for this, as the question has been posed to him many times. Barclay talks about the need for more Māori films to be made in order to explore the question with depth "But to float a Māori film, you can feel you have to float Māori values, whatever they might be. We shall get to know what a Māori film is when we get a chance to make more films, just as the majority culture here, having now made a substantial body of work, can review its efforts and reflect on the way it has created images of our country." (1990, p.

20). Personally, I do see why there is so much emphasis on defining a Māori film, I do not feel the reasons for defining them are just. How do you adequately label values, traditions, beliefs, customs and world-views? We are constantly asked to define our “Māoriness” in a way that is acceptable and understandable to the Western regime. The stress that is forced on to the question of defining Māori film lies with the criteria needed to get funding for making the films. In order to get funding from various funding bodies it is important for them to know that the film you are trying to create is worth backing. The government provides bodies such as The New Zealand Film Commission and Creative New Zealand with a budget to fund Māori art or films. In order to become eligible for funding the filmmaker must answer questions that articulate how their film will benefit Māori and why it is a Māori film? Barclay has found this an all too familiar experience as he talks about answering some of these questions:

"...a documentary synopsis is expected to lay out a clear thesis in as few words as possible.

'What is your point?

'The point is that it is not my point at all. I wish to record and present what the people think.'

'Then what is your target audience?'

When you reply, 'The target audience is people' you get the sort of look a headmaster shoots at a cheeky pupil." (Barclay,1990, p.9-10)

Planning the structure and layout of your film is of course very important but trying to categorise how Māori your film is difficult especially when this processes is economically driven.

### **Documentary issues to be considered in a Māori context**

The funding issue that Māori face is only an initial obstacle. The actual documenting process of Māori, leads to a collection of ethical implications and issues that need to be highlighted and discussed. Understanding the complexities of defining a Māori film sets a base for the discussion of the ethical issues involved in making documentary involving Māori. Parts of this discussion address documentary issues in a broad and general sense and part of the discussion will be focused on the ethical issues directly involved with applying the modes of representation to a Māori context. As Nichols (2001) himself asserts documentary is constructed on ethical issues, therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that applying the modes of representation to Te Ao Māori is challenging and in some cases even inappropriate. New technologies combined with Pākehā conventions, by any means can be very invasive as Barclay explains “As a Māori technician the filmmaker is faced with the challenge of how to respect this age old process of discussion and decision making while using the technology within a climate that so often demands precision and answers.”(1990, p. 9). When Barclay talks about "this age old process of discussion and decision making" he highlights the importance of respecting these processes that require time, talking, debating, pondering, eating, joking, laughing, respect and discussion. This is often difficult because the nature of film making requires precision in that they want deadlines to be reached in order to make the time spent filming financially feasible. This cannot be applied to Māoridom as that would be like asking a kaumātua (elder) to get to point A by 1pm and then point B by 2pm. He or she may politely comply however, the information they give will be empty in real meaning and the potential for rich information will be lost.

Central to the ethical issues within documentary is the fact that the filmmaker is representing an individual or a group which evokes the fundamental question ‘How does a filmmaker represent other people? What do we do with people when we make documentary?’ This is the question that fuels the ethical debate on representation. My own challenge involving creating a documentary about a person who is Māori is that I do not see myself as representing an individual, I envisage the connections of the whanau (family), hapu (sub-tribe), iwi (tribe) and whenua (land) that this

person also represents. Therefore, respect to all these connections must be considered. This is a huge challenge because if I was to misrepresent them, then I would not only be accountable to them but also to those that are intertwined within their lives.

Puketapu – Hetet uses a harakeke (flax) metaphor to explain the importance of being connected and intertwined with family “People are like weaving, they hold each other together. I am talking about Māori families. We need to interweave our lives to make the fibre strong.” (Puketapu-Hetet, 1989, p. 26). When filming my Father I have to consider that he is not viewed as being a separate entity and because I am collecting and filming the inside of my own whanau (family), hapu (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe), I do so with the up most respect for them as well as my Father. He belongs to my hapu (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe), just as he belongs to me and my immediate family. He is my Father but he is also a taonga (treasure) as a kaumātua (elders) that is connected to the whole iwi.

One of the foremost issues that are not always apparent to the audience when viewing documentary, is that there are very blurred lines between fiction and non-fiction. What we see are events unfolding or an argument developing toward a solution or outcome, we do not see the processes and the manipulations that take place on the filmmakers behalf to build the argument in the direction they wish. These adjustments can be made during the process of making the film and/or in the post-production stage within editing, as seen in a very classical documentary, *Nanook of the North* (1922). This was Robert Flaherty’s story of an Inuit family and their struggle for survival in the unforgiving climate of the Arctic. *Nanook of the North* “is generally regarded as the work from which all subsequent efforts to bring real life to the screen have steamed.” (Rothman, 1997, p. 1). This classic documentary is a prime example of what Nichols calls ‘wish-fulfilment’ by the filmmakers. Flaherty filmed the Inuit family going about their day to day lives; lighting camp fires, paddling kayaks, trapping foxes and making igloo’s, or so it seemed to be. In reality Flaherty arranged a lot of the events that transpired during what seemed to be the impression of lived time as described by Rothman (1997) “Flaherty did not ... simply directly film Nanook and his family going about their lives. Many actions on view in the film were performed for the camera and not simply ‘documented’ by it. The filmmaker actively involved his subjects in the filming, telling them what he wanted them to do, responding to their suggestions, and directing their performance with the camera.” (ibid). This is not a technique that is restricted to classic filmmaking and is still used today in many respects this emphasises the distorted realm in which fiction and non-fiction can be blurred.

Not only does this emphasise the blurred boundaries between what we see and what is constructed but it also highlights an important ethical issue pertaining to Māori. Past documentaries have portrayed Māori in the same subjective light as Nanook and his family were shown to the world. Flaherty shows his audacity and his lack of respect for a culture he could not understand and insults their integrity as human beings by imposing his romanticised ideology of what a noble savage like Nanook should look and act like. Nanook’s skills as a hunter were tested even though the Eskimos of the 1920’s no longer relied on traditional methods of hunting to survive (Nichols, 2001). This is indeed a wish-fulfilment on Flaherty’s part, this showed the kind of people he wished to see in the world. Māori have often in film history been subjected to the romanticised ideals of the Pākehā. Colonisers who assure themselves that they are in the position to identify and characterise cultures that they feel superior to. Merata Mita has articulated this point very well in a statement she made in the Listener (October, 1989) “We have a history of people putting Māori under a microscope in the same way a scientist looks at an insect. The ones doing the looking are giving them the power to define.” (Smith, 1999, p.58).

Nichols calls the undermining constructs of *Nanook of the North* ‘Wish-fulfilment’, I call it ‘Imperial definement’. Too often documentary is used by the West to define the meaning of

another peoples values and beliefs. This has always been rewarded handsomely by those of the dominant culture who have the authority to pick and choose the documentaries they deem outstanding. Barclay (1990) talks about this in relation to his own experiences with the making of a documentary series called *Tangata Whenua* (1974). This was a series by Māori about Māori which was very rare in the 1970's. In the same year another documentary had been made by a Pākehā filmmaker pertaining to the plight Papa New Guinea faced during the struggle to gain independence (Barclay 1990). Yet the annual television awards surprised Barclay with their decision and their excuse "The Papua New Guinea programme carried out the main documentary prize. There was a certain irony in that, because they showed the white man talking about the natives, while the *Tangata Whenua* series showed the natives talking about their own lives. We shrugged it off as one of those quirks in life, but the judge's words giving the reason for rejecting the *Tangata Whenua* series: "The series raised more questions than it answered," still rings in my ears." (Barclay, 1990, p.14). The fact that there were (and are for that matter) more questions than answers was not considered to be of any value to New Zealand's film industry at the time. This is another element of precision that is associated with filmmaking that is not always appropriate in Māoridom. Coming to nicely boxed answers in nicely labeled categories is very rare when working with Māori as a lot of aspects of our world is intertwined and a lot of korero (talking) is metaphoric with not just one precise meaning.

### **Issues in the Expository mode**

As we have discussed the Expository mode is built around the solution to the argument. Everything expository does is aimed at generating an argument in a logical and evidential way in order to reach the filmmakers subjective destination. The voice over or as it is known in the film arena the 'voice-of-god' is paramount to directing this argument. Fitting that such a technique should be called the voice-of-god as this can be associated with the superior attitude that Western filmmakers have taken towards filming other people and cultures. Nichols explains the intention of the voice over "The voice-over commentary seems literally "above" the fray; it has the capacity to judge actions in the historical world without being caught up in them. The professional commentators official tones, like the authoritative manner of news anchors and reporters, strives to build a sense of credibility from qualities such as distance, neutrality, disinterestness, or omniscience." (2001, p.107). In the past this has been the technique used to document our culture, values and beliefs, now the irony is that this technique is now thought to be out-dated in the light of expressing peoples way of life. However, there is one domain in which expository still dominates; wildlife films, documentaries on animals. It is ironic that this method was once acceptable when documenting Māori but is now deemed more appropriate for animal documentaries. Derek Bouse an authority on wildlife films makes this comment about the preconception one has when watching wildlife films "The idea is to present the audiences with something recognizable, for which they already have conceptual categories; to be consistent with their previous viewing experiences, to fulfill not thwart their expectations, and to do all this by employing already familiar conventions of realism, not by trying to reproduce reality itself" (Bouse, 2000, p. 5). If we apply what he states here to filming Māori, then we can see the oppression within the theory quite clearly, does not represent the truth, but represents what the audience wants to hear. This works off the already inaccurate ideas the audience has of Māori and then give them something that perpetuates those ideas.

Documentary has changed over time and today the brutal use of the voice-of-god is no longer acceptable (except in parody). Social concerns grew over the relative autonomy and social distinctiveness of marginalized groups "These films rejected techniques such as the voice-of-god commentary not because it lacked humility but because it belonged to an entire epistemology, or way of seeing and knowing the world, no longer deemed acceptable." (Nichols, 2001, p.101). The voice-of-god is too dictative to use in a Māori context. The process of collecting information



should be treated and edited like you were being gifted the information. This would mean that your primary role was to be a listener, to in take the knowledge, as it is a privilege and not an expectation. Barclay (1990) writes about the importance of being able to listen in Māoridom “To be any sort of Māori, you have to be a listener. You do not interrupt a person who is talking, no matter how humble a person maybe – the rules about that are quite clear when formal talk is in progress. But a similar spirit is maintained even at informal occasions, such as a meal among relations or chatting over a beer at a hotel. The liveliness of Pākehā groups on the other hand, seems based on thrusting yourself forward” (1990, p. 14). By instilling the listening concept into documentary for example presenting the argument in a way that is uninterrupted by the authoritative voice-of-god, it allows conversation to flow without needing to build an argument around enforcing the direction, it will help to create a tone that is nurturing to the vales of Māori. When filming my Father I do take on the role of the listener but it is not a conscious decision, it is what I do naturally as a Māori who has been brought up in Māori values.

For this reason, filming Māori is not going to be inexpensive, you do not ask the kaumātua (elders) to get to the point so the camera must keep rolling. My Father speaks with long life experience so when you ask him about point B, you can expect to hear about points C, D, E and H not realising how the whole picture relates until he finally finishes and then you see the relevance of understanding his journey. Barclay (1990) has expressed the difficulties he has had with explaining this concept to an industry that has the philosophy of ‘time is money’. The process of talking and being allowed to do so, is an important part of expressing Māori knowledge and should be respected when documenting Māori. If this respect is not shown then what you will be given from your participants is shallow comments and ideas that do not do them or the filmmaker justice.

### **Issues in the Observational mode**

The observational mode adopted a very different method of representing, due to the out-dated method of the voice-over. Vincent Ward's documentary *In Spring one Plants Alone* (1981) primarily uses the observational mode. Ward followed the day-to-day lives of an elderly Māori women named Puhi and her mentally ill son, Niki. Puhi and Niki lived in a very rural part of New Zealand, Tuhoe Ruatoki, known as the land of the 'children of the mist'. A fundamental problem for Māori within the observational mode is an aspect of Manaaki Tangata that has to be neglected due to the need of the filmmaker to act as an observer only. In Ward's case he encountered this issue on a number of occasions, one recalls filming Puhi when she did not realise “Hauling them over her shoulder she started wearily up the drive and then suddenly she flung them down, broke into a angry scream, stamped her foot and squatted on the road. She had spotted us in the meeting house and was furious we hadn't helped her... This incident summed up our dilemma: should we help her or film her?” (Ward, 1990, p. 23). This question would not have been raised by a Māori because the answer should have been obvious. I know I would not be able to use the observational mode because of the need to help the kaumātua (elders). That need to help would have also been an expectation on Puhi's part as people of the younger generation are always obligated to assist their kaumātua (elders) in Māoridom, it is not seen as a burden to do so but an honour to help and in turn learn from them. Patterson (1992) talks about the special treatment reserved for the kaumātua (elders) “The elderly are to be respected anyway, being the tribes link with its ancestors, And they may well have the monopoly of having esoteric knowledge, subject to the overriding need to make sure that it is in the end passed on” (1992, p.68). The observational mode brings up further ethical moral questions, to take this matter further, which I think could have been touched upon *In Spring One Plants Alone*, Ward filmed Puhi one day while she was outside very upset over one of Niki's violent outbursts. If Ward had of been there when it happened would he have helped Puhi or would he have helped the documentary by filming the intense situation? This question is raised frequently in the domain of documentary. A

parallel story of interest which illustrates the very issue of ethical intervention, pertains to a photographer, Kevin Carter who was awarded a most prestigious Pulitzer award for a photograph he took of a severely starving African girl being stalked by a vulture. He is reported to have taken the photo, chased the vulture away, and then sat down under a tree and cried (Williams, 1997). This situation warrants careful ethical consideration. "Like Many other stories of supposedly objective observers of human tragedy, this one poses the question of what might be called the ethics of intervention: when should a journalist or documentarian cease to occupy the position of objective observer to intervene in the lives of his or her subjects? Should Carter have scared away the vulture – in which case his photo would not have been so likely to grab the attention that won him the Pulitzer?" (Williams, 1997, p.79). What if the photo inspired people to sponsor or donate to the African plight? Would that make taking the photo right? The boundaries of when to intervene and when not to intervene are highly debatable. Considering my reaction to Ward not helping Puihi with her bags, it is only fitting that I object to taking the photo as this does to comply with the notion of manaaki tangata. Yet Carter's situation is a little different in that there is a possibility that lives could be saved by the prospect of taking the photo, and also the fact that he is not Māori and therefore not governed by the manaaki tangata concept.

### **Issues in the Interactive mode**

The interactive mode is constructed by the filmmaker taking a participatory role with the subjects he or she is focused on. The techniques used within this mode are interviews and/or interactions with the subjects. At times the filmmaker can become central to the argument because the documentary focuses on the interaction and relationship of the filmmaker and the subject. The main ethical issue that rises from the interactive mode is the question, how does the presence of the filmmaker affect those he is interacting with? The interactive mode makes no attempt to conceal the interaction and the filmmaker's presence. This presence combated the ethical issue of access which was predominant in the observational mode. In the interactive mode there may be the opportunity for the filmmaker to actually live in the environment of the people they are filming, to create an experience as Nichols explains "Documentary filmmakers also go into the field; too, live among others and speak about or represent what they experience" (2001, p. 116).

People coming in to a Māori community to take information out of the rohe (region) with the intention of representing his or her interactions with the people via audio/visual means can be an issue. A reason why filmmakers often live and stay within a community or family for period of time is that it allows them to gain the people's trust and have access to information a stranger would not normally get. This can be a highly controversial element and has been at the centre of debate concerning a small outback Australian town called Cunnamulla. The filmmaker, Dennis O'Rourke, lived in the small town and the documentary is based on his interactions with the people of the small rural outback town. Some of the town's people of Cunnamulla had taken exception to the documentary and pursued legal action against him. The documentary named after the town *Cunnamulla* (2000), offended two of the young teenage girls and their families involved in the film. The girls talk freely in the documentary about their sexual experiences which resulted in their parents taking legal action "lawyers for the plaintiffs claimed the girls suffered stress embarrassment and humiliation when the film was shown, were forced to leave town, and that O'Rourke had not told them when he sought permission from their parents that he would ask about their sexual activity" (Cathcart, 2001). The town's people trusted him and because of this they told him things in confidence without realising how they might be represented by what he chose to include or exclude.

Māori have a history of being mis-represented, therefore, caution is always present in Māori communities when working with outsiders, especially the media. But what about the insiders? If Māori are to express their own stories then the stories are better coming from those that live on

the inside. Smith explains the issues involved with being an insider “At a general level insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationships and the quality and richness of their data analysis. So to do outsiders, but the major difference is that insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities.” (1999, p. 137). The interactive mode would be more suitable mode for Māori than the expositional and observational mode because it deals with connections and relationships. It shows peoples interactions, which is a huge part of being Māori. A widely quoted whakatauki (saying) goes “ He aha te mea nui ki tenei ao, maku e ki atu, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata” translated ‘what is the most important thing in this world? I will say, it is people, it is people, it is people’. There is also much emphasis in Māoridom to talk ‘kanohi ki te kanohi’ (face to face), this is a sign of respect and good intentions. By letting people see your interactions let’s them judge the situation, the body language and the tone. When filming my Father, our interactions are not the primary focus but they do help the audience understand his values pertaining to people and family, which as we have discussed is fundamental when trying to express such intimate parts of ourselves and our culture.

### **Creating a Māori framework when working in documentary**

The intention here is not to impose strict instructions about the best means of creating a documentary in a Māori setting, but rather to offer guidelines that can be adapted by Māori for an appropriate representation of Māori. Too often have we been categorised as "all Māori" and therefore all the same, which is not true. We are all Māori, yet many of us come from different iwi (tribes), hapu (sub-tribe) and whanau (family). The rituals and protocols I relate to in my iwi (tribes) of Te Whanau a Apanui may differ to those of someone with a Tainui or Kai Tahu background, therefore, it is important to adjust aspects of this framework to accommodate those differences accordingly.

This framework is a guideline that will continue to develop as I further my career in documentary and continue to learn and embrace new and old ideas. To begin let me say, if you are not Māori or have not experienced Māori values and beliefs in-depth, it will be difficult to film in a Māori setting for one primary reason, gaining the trust of the community will be challenging as fear of mis-representation will be associated with people that do not have a cultural understanding of their values and ways of life. Parts of this framework are a product of my own experience filming my Father a World War 2 service man. While I was in the documenting process of filming my Father and various family members, there were instances where I knew what not to ask and where I should not be, when the camera was filming, and also what should be discussed before hand. I had not read or researched any of these restrictions but attribute my intuition to my Māori world view and to the Māori immersion I have grown up in. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2001) has highlighted a set of responsibilities that Māori researchers need to consider in order to create a safe environment for both the researcher and those participating. These responsibilities will be used throughout the documentary framework.

1. Aroha ki te tangata (respect for people).
  2. Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face).
  3. Titiro, whakarongo... korero (look, listen... speak).
  4. Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people).
  5. Kia tupato (be cautious).
  6. Kaua e takahi te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of the people).
  7. Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge)
- (Smith, 2001, p. 120)

These values are paramount to the safety of the filmmaker and those involved in the documentary. By following these concepts it will provide the necessary base needed to construct a Māori documentary that will have rich and in-depth quality of whakaaro (thought) and korero (talking). The process of filmmaking needs to be looked at in terms of these responsibilities.

### **Pre-production**

Pre-Production is the stage where the planning takes place. Planning is a crucial factor in any type of research and documentary requires research. A proposal that shows the primary focus and what you intend on doing needs to be made. The objectives must be clear for a number of reasons:

1. Firstly: the filmmaker must have a firm understanding on the direction of the documentary so they can keep focused. It is common to lose bearings on a specific path and start to branch off, however, doing so will make the documenting process seem much too huge and finishing the documentary out of reach if the direction and intension of the film is not clear.
2. Secondly: it is important that the people in the documentary are aware of what is trying to be achieved. People that will be shown in the documentary need to understand what you are trying to do and how you plan on doing it. It is important to keep these lines of communication open and flowing to avoid insulting or hurting people.
3. Thirdly: it needs to be clearly defined and fit a criteria in order to receive funding. Although this can be quite difficult to define specific aspects of your research it is inevitably important to do so in the order to get funding. Criteria's need to be met so that funding agencies can see that the documentary is worth making.

As previously noted, in order to get funding it is necessary to conform ideas to the criteria of a funding body this can be problematic for Māori, who need to articulate and define cultural values and beliefs within a set of criteria. Key preparations measures that should be considered are:

- Respect for People - The first responsibility highlighted by Smith (2001) is respect for people. This is necessary in the entire documenting process but is most important to begin with as first impressions must be ones that represent good faith and strong vision. A respect needs to be held in every aspect of the persons life even activities that seem mundane “Family and tribal mana and tapu are involved in every day activities such as hospitality, work and sport.” (Patterson, p. 1992, p. 26). If respect is given then respect will be received.
- Korero - Talking to people is a fundamental component of documentary and is an essential aspect in Māoridom. Talking needs to start right from the beginning. Kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) is the best way to engage with Māori people as it shows respect, dedication and effort.
- Involving the Community - Depending on what your documentary is about there may be a need to call a hui (meeting). Especially, if your filming involves the community directly. These are aspects such as, marae , hui (meetings), urupa (burial sites) and waahi tapu (sacred areas) that are interconnected with people. Your intension must be made clear to them.

### **Production**

Production is the phase in which filming takes place. Filming needs to be highly organised yet allow room for flexibility. Documentary is not always a straight forward act of collecting information and footage, it is time consuming and usually does not always go to plan. A Māori filmmaker needs to be patient if they have not already been taught this virtue. As discussed the

filmmaker must embrace the role of the listener in order to qualify for the rich conversation and knowledge that will come. Listening is also a sign of respect which will be rewarded in time.

- Karakia – Depending on what the filmmaker and the subjects are comfortable with, a karakia (prayer) at the beginning and end of the korero (talks) may help to prepare both parties for what is about to be remembered, especially if the topic is of historical significance such as Tipuna, tikanga, tapu, mauri or past wars.
- Being a listener – Turn the camera into a listener by just letting it roll, this is expensive because of high stock use but will benefit the film by eventually producing in-depth conversation, philosophies and world views held by participants.
- Hidden camera - The invading presence of the camera can be a very worrying factor for people being filmed, especially for those that have not been filmed before. Barclay (1990) suggests removing the camera from the space of those being interviewed. This can be achieved by using cameras with a strong zoom lens so that the film crew can sit further away and also by using small lapel microphones that attach to clothing to replace the intrusion of big boom microphones.
- Conversation – Māori people are often more comfortable and will be more willing to engage in conversation when they are allowed to converse in small groups of people they know. These interactions are unique to Māori and can express values otherwise not seen, non-Māori filmmakers can find this hard to understand. Barclay (1990) recalls an event that shocked him “I was astonished when the producer flatly refused to allow the friends of Ngoi Pewhairangi to sit with her while she was being interviewed.” (Barclay, 1990, p. 12).

### **Post-Production**

Post-production is the process that occurs after all the footage has been captured. This is where the chopping and changing happens in the editing suite and this is crucial to creating the tone and storyline of the documentary. There are many ethical issues to be aware of as shown in *Cunnamulla* within the editing. The editing process should be discussed with the participants involved in the documentary as this is an area that is usually only reserved for the filmmaker.

- Involvement – The filmmaker when possible should involve the participants in the editing process when possible. Actively involving the main people or person in this process may save tension over the final production if they do not agree with how they have been portrayed, e.g let them help with the music choice or feel creatively involved. However, in saying this it is important to note that not everybody likes to watch themselves, so objection to certain aspects of the film is inevitable. To help with this problem it might be more effective to show them takes of what you have filmed in camera or as you are filming.
- Photos and memorabilia – Peoples photos and personal items can be very close and personal. If the filmmaker wishes to use people’s personal memorabilia then it is important to do so in a respectful manner. In Māoridom there is a lot wairua (spirit) associated with photos. When Māori first encountered the camera it was believed that photos captured peoples spirits. There is something sacred about old photos especially those with people that have past on. I encountered this while deciding what old war photos to put into my documentary. I decided that I would seek the approval of the families of the soldiers before using the images of their tipuna. Most families are happy to comply as the documentary also honours those in the photos as well.
- Metaphors –Māori often rely on metaphors to tell their stories as they did in the past. Using unconventional methods to provoke the senses can tell a more complex and layered story than can ever be told in words. It may help Māori to view documentary

as an art form rather than a political representation, so the real, even if what is being said is highly contentious. Metaphors were used beautifully in the past and should continue to be used for our present day forms of expression. It encourages multiple readings and healthy discussions.

## Conclusions

There has been a lot written about the Māori and indigenous research, yet one of the more difficult aspects of my own research has been the lack of literature available on the actual process of making Māori or indigenous documentary. At the same time this is exciting as it means there is room to develop further discussion and debate. Documentary is such an ethically loaded subject that combining it with Te Ao Māori seems at first to be impossible. It is not impossible but the challenges it generates are thought provoking. We have seen that in the past, documentary has been dominated by Western filmmakers who have taken the liberty to define and therefore, marginalise cultures (such as Nanook and his Inuit family). Bill Nichols' modes of representation have been built by Western values and beliefs which in turn create imperial motives. Therefore, the modes of representation in most cases are not suitable when working with Māori.

The modes of representation provide a necessary base to analyse where Māori fit into the realm of documentary, yet there are only a few instances where the modes can be adjusted and molded so they are more appropriate to be used by Māori. But for the larger part, these modes are unable to cohere to Te Ao Māori because they effectively believe in different ways of communicating knowledge and thought. Western history has used documentary as a tool to inform in a way that the conventions mould the story into something the filmmaker wants you to think. Māori filmmakers such as Barry Barclay talk about turning the camera into a listening tool, which derives from the tikanga one should have regarding the process of taking in knowledge. It is important that we look at the appropriateness of these modes for both the purpose of keeping the filmmaker safe and respecting the participants.

This mutual respect is paramount in Māoridom and should be carried forward into all contemporary facets of representation such as documentary that involve Māori. Western documentary tells stories, Māori documentary listens to stories and communicates them. Nichols modes do not always prioritise both parties and this can be troublesome. Documentaries made by Māori will usually include people within their own communities and families, people whom they must live or engage with in their day-to-day lives. I have suggested looking at the creation of documentary in a different light altogether. Not adapting the theory of representing the truth but looking at it in terms of creating an expression or metaphor, similar to the creation of a piece of art work. Māori must try techniques of evoking the human senses as means of articulation because it is difficult to explain cultural values and view-point by language alone.

Creating a framework to work with is difficult as it must be broad enough to consider many different situations, yet specific enough to encompass Māori whakaaro (thought). Those who have grown up immersed in all aspects of Māoridom, should follow their instincts when filming, as these are the learnt beliefs that our ancestors have bestowed. Documentary can be used to benefit Māori if we are able to create them under our own terms and conditions, not somebody else's. This can be difficult at times when you must define conventions and show you have acquired the necessary western research knowledge to conduct filming, in order to gain funding. Documentary can engage with our rangatahi (youth) as it is a medium that they can readily access and is a technology they are happy to use. The future of Māori in documentary is exciting and constantly evolving. This is an area more Māori need to be involved in so that we have the

opportunity to show the world our own stories and our own methods of expression. This is an empowering vision that will no doubt be beneficial to Māori and all New Zealanders. It also has the relevance for other indigenous cultures who wish to apply indigenous epistemology to the process and manifestation of their representation in the media.

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## Filmology

*Hotere* (2004) directed by Merata Mita

*In Spring one Plants Alone* (1981) directed by Vincent Ward

*Cunnamulla* (2000) directed by Dennis O'Rourke

*Fahrenheit 11* (2004) directed by Mike Moore

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