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Portrayals of Māori Men in Comparison with Women and Pākehā Men in New Zealand Films

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes how New Zealand filmmakers portray masculinity among Māori men, in comparison to women and Pākehā (white) men, in four films spanning three decades. The films were chosen mainly based on their high revenues at the domestic box office. They are: Once Were Warriors (Tamahori 1994), Whale Rider (Caro 2002), Boy (Waititi 2010), and Hunt for the Wilderpeople (Waititi 2016). The methodological approach employs a forthright interpretative application of 'formal analysis,' which takes films 'at face value' in terms of seeing what the filmmakers make plain for audiences to see. This study finds that filmmakers adhere to an asymmetrical pattern of political correctness that prioritizes gender over race in how characters are depicted. The filmmakers studied have come up with several devices to portray men in negative ways, and this cuts across how races are depicted to show that the filmmakers hold no racial prejudice. The different tactics that are used to present negative portrayals of men mainly depend on the proportion of female representation. When Māori female representation is made abundant enough to establish a generally positive imagery of the Māori ethnicity, this clears the way for filmmakers to depict Māori men as evil without a need to make reference to Pākehā men. Because filmmakers have already allowed for positive portrayals of the Māori ethnicity (through positive depictions of Māori females), it is supposed to be obvious to audiences that Māori men are problematic due to their gender, not due to their race. When Māori female representation is too scarce to allow enough positive portrayals of the Māori ethnicity, Māori men are portrayed negatively so long

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as filmmakers cover themselves from accusations of racial discrimination by portraying Pākehā men in comparatively more negative ways. Again, the reason why men are problematic is because they are men, regardless of race. Although juvenile characters suffer abuse in three of the films, Māori female caregivers who neglect children are portrayed sympathetically by filmmakers. In contrast, Māori male caregivers who commit active forms of abuse are treated as blameworthy. In sum, characters belonging to either Māori or Pākehā ethnic groups can be portrayed negatively, but only so long as the negative portrayals involving the two ethnic groups are almost exclusively directed against male characters. This shows that gender, rather than race, is prioritized as an overriding social division.

Key words: gender role, Māori, misandry, New Zealand film, sexual discrimination

1. Introduction: Post-1985 Racial Equality and Cinematic Depictions.

In an era of globalization with increasing interconnectedness between different ethnic and cultural identities, numerous jurisdictions have adopted policies meant to address variations in group distinctiveness. Since 1985, New Zealand has implemented a national policy of biculturalism which recognizes the important place of both Māori and *Pākehā* in national identity formation. While the New Zealand film industry is cognizant of ethnic differences and adapts character development along ethnic lines, it tends to prioritize gender as an overriding social division. This study finds that when the representation of Māori female characters is abundant enough to be portrayed positively, portrayals of Māori males tend to be negative without any need to refer to *Pākehā* characters. This includes instances when Māori female characters are numerically scarce but their absence is compensated for by emphasizing positive memories of them to increase their positive footprint in the film. Second, when Māori female characters are scarce but the cast includes *Pākehā* men, Māori men are portrayed negatively so long as *Pākehā* men are portrayed in worse ways. Third, in making black-and-white character depictions, filmmakers present a skewed perception of parental child abuse by separating active and passive forms. This shows physical and verbal abuse by male caregivers as abusive, but excuses female caregivers from neglecting children. In sum, New Zealand films follow a formula in which masculine portrayals of Māori depend on how women are portrayed.

The research question of this paper asks how masculinity is portrayed among Māori adult male characters, vis-à-vis *Pākehā* men and the women of any ethnicity, in four New Zealand feature film productions spanning the past three decades. The four films studied in this research were chosen based on their popularity at the box office within the New Zealand market, their content which must at least depict Māori relations in New Zealand, and their availability for viewing in Taiwan. All but one of the filmmakers happens to be Māori (Niki Caro) and she also happens to be the only woman. The films

have a prevailing on-screen Māori presence, in the sense that the films chosen predominantly cast Māori actors playing Māori character roles largely within Māori family settings. The films are: *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori 1994), *Whale Rider* (Caro 2002), *Boy* (Waititi 2010), and *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (Waititi 2016). These films are case studies, set within a broader context of Māori-*Pākehā* relations, which can be used as points of reference in a snapshot spanning three decades when examining New Zealand's national race-relations narrative.

This study finds that in the broader context of the post-1985 era, following the new landmark settlement in Māori-*Pākehā* constitutional relations and the emergence of a national policy of biculturalism, cinematic portrayals of both Māori and *Pākehā* men are treated in an approximately similar manner. Māori men are not seen as an 'untouchable' group that filmmakers automatically feminize into 'honorary women.' Instead, filmmakers feel free enough from audience suspicions to treat Māori men on a roughly equal basis with *Pākehā* men. Ironically, this 'equality' means that filmmakers freely apply misandry against Māori men in a similar way to how it has been applied to *Pākehā* men. This means that Māori men are overwhelmingly portrayed as evil or otherwise incompetent such as mentally deficient. Thus, this 'equality' that Māori men gained vis-à-vis *Pākehā* men in the political realm led to their 'devaluation' in the cultural realm, in terms of receiving similar treatment when it comes to being targets of misandry, in a similar way to how it is experienced by *Pākehā* men.

The necessary alignment between social organization, in the form of polity, and cultural output is emphasized by Clifford Geertz (1973: 164). Geertz argues that when discontinuities exist between culture (as the framework of beliefs, symbols, and values of individuals) and social organization (as the form that action takes in the existing network of social relations) initial conflict arises because one of the two has changed and it is in not in sync with the other. When the other one changes in order to align itself with the first one that changed, this creates a new stable order (Ibid.: 144-145,

168-169). This explains how lasting change occurs. On the surface at least, this would appear to conflict with functionalism, which emphasizes stability and remains one of the most eminent patterns of explanation issued in twentieth-century social science (Burhenn 1980: 350).[1]

Because the two aspects of social organization and culture normally tend to be in harmony, the Māori representations that are constructed in film will tend to reflect how Māori portrayals are tolerated in New Zealand overall. This includes tolerance according to general public opinion as well as influential New Zealand social organizations such as government bodies. In other words, filmmakers' depictions of Māori are typically bounded within certain parameters of a common social ideology. Generally, filmmakers are not free to stray outside of those boundaries, and a similar situation would apply to gender-relations in terms of limiting the ways in which men can be portrayed.

Given that, in many cases, the racial identities of male characters are left ambiguous, this shows that, in such instances, filmmakers do not wish to ethnically differentiate the two groups. Because filmmakers choose to prioritize gender-relations over race-relations when it comes to making positive or negative portrayals, racial identity has comparatively less relevance than gender. This shows how race-relations in New Zealand, from the viewpoint of filmmakers at least, are generally seen as relatively tame in comparison to the more sensitive gender divide which demands ongoing infusions of misandry.

This study finds that filmmakers adhere to an asymmetrical pattern of

[1] Functionalist theory can account for the maintenance of stability both at the individual level and at the group level. The *sociological approach* posits that belief and ritual reinforce traditional social ties binding individuals, and the *social-psychological approach* emphasizes that religion satisfies cognitive and affective needs within individuals. Given that this rebalancing always leads back to a state of social stability, none of these approaches can account for lasting disruptions manifested in transformative social phenomenon (Geertz 1973: 142-143).

political correctness which subordinates race below gender. This is seen in how characters belonging to either racial group can be portrayed negatively on the condition that they are almost all men. The filmmakers studied apply several different devices to portray men in negative ways while being careful to clarify that they hold no racial prejudice. These tactics mainly depend on the abundance or scarcity of female representation. When Māori female character representation is abundant, such that Māori females can be portrayed positively, filmmakers are able to avoid allegations of racial discrimination when they then portray Māori males negatively in any number of different ways.

In cases where female character interactions are scarce, filmmakers can increase the positive footprint of the feminine through introducing nostalgic memories of positive femininity against which filmmakers juxtapose negative portrayals of Māori masculinity. Another tactic is to portray *Pākehā* masculinity in an even more negative light than Māori masculinity. Without an abundance of positive Māori femininity, however, filmmakers' negativity against Māori males remains timid, as portrayals are limited to incompetence rather than evil.

Another tactic that filmmakers use to negatively portray Māori masculinity against positive Māori femininity is to depict Māori men as blameworthy child abusers. When it comes to the child abuse committed by Māori women, however, such abuse is excused by filmmakers and the women are treated sympathetically. This is because when Māori women neglect children, such as abandoning minors for about two weeks, filmmakers do not see this as equivalent to active forms of abuse such as overt verbal or physical abuse.

2. Literature Review: Māori Portrayals versus Portrayals of Men.

New Zealand filmmaking, dating from 1898, has maintained a constant

pattern in which cinematic depictions of Māori-*Pākehā* interactions elevate race-relations as a dominant theme (New Zealand History n.d.; Sutton 2011: 15). This theme functions as a subtext which moralizes the trope "that for the nation to truly be harmonious, the relationship of Māori and Pākehā must be resolved" (Sutton 2011: 281). Even in films which do not explicitly address race-relations, they still privilege this theme as the "national dilemma" (Ibid.). Today, economic disparities of Māori include average lower incomes (amounting to 78.9% of that of the non-Māori), higher unemployment, less employment in professional occupations, and less home-ownership. Māori also experience average rates of lower educational attainment, higher incarceration, poorer health, and lower life expectancy (Pearson 2018). However, Sylvia Dixon and David C. Maré (2007: 571) suggest that Māori have experienced a trend toward greater income equality vis-à-vis *Pākehā* during the post-1985 era.

Underpinning national race-relations is a meta-narrative that frames debate according to a dichotomy pitting the culturally authentic against the culturally degenerate. Anna Sutton (2011: 22) claims that the "dichotomy posits Māori in a contradictory fashion as both crucial but also potentially problematic to the nation." This dichotomy is applied in films at the inter-personal level (in love affairs, friendships, and conflicts) as a microcosm meant to provide commentary on what brings the two national peoples together and what drives them apart. "Essentially, characters are employed in the films as representatives of particular social forces that frame concerns about Māori into the binary categories of 'good' and 'bad'" (Ibid.). Ultimately, this dichotomy of cultural authenticity versus cultural degeneration provides film directors with "the opportunity to make moral claims on how Māori should act within the national framework" (Ibid.).

As national narratives on race-relations impact how people think about Māori race-relations, new understandings are reflected in New Zealand films. In fact, over the history of New Zealand filmmaking, films have situated Māori race-relations within three consecutive themes. These themes run from

notions of Māori extinction, to rationalizing their assimilation, and finally to recognizing their place in a bicultural framework. The shift toward biculturalism, associated with the post-1985 era, was a gradual process that involved a continuous refiguring of race-relations to match contemporary standpoints (Ibid. 281-282).

This cinematic shift toward a theme of biculturalism reflected the socio-political ideology of the state at the time. In 1984, the state officially adopted biculturalism, which was based on the notion that two distinct peoples inhabit New Zealand: Māori and *Pākehā*. The Waitangi Tribunal was granted retrospective powers in 1985 which empowered it to settle historical grievances claimed from 1840 onwards. This was a defining feature in the era, meant to reconcile Māori and *Pākehā* peoples. A related development was the 1987 recognition of Te Reo Māori as an official language in New Zealand (Ibid. 56-57, 73, 196, 281-282).

This era soon witnessed the production of the first two feature films directed by Māori filmmakers about Māori, and they offered a Māori perspective on New Zealand history, society, politics, and race-relations (Ibid. 16). *Ngati* (1987) and *Mauri* (1988) occupy a critical place in the overall narrative of biculturalism. Key themes evident in films concern a reexamination of race-relations, remedying past injustices, and utilizing the Treaty of Waitangi in nation building. The films "offer the promise of an alternative New Zealand society, where Māori are co-equals, in accordance with the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi and under the auspices of biculturalism" (Sutton 2011: 235). Sutton suggests the films are somewhat subversive but not radical (Ibid.). However, the two Māori filmmakers faced political constraints in funding and reception that hampered their preferred creative expression. The directors "were bound within a complex set of power relations that required them to conform to guidelines, principles, ideological and fiscal demands" (Ibid. 236).

When it comes to leading male profiles in the media, J. R. Macnamara

(2006: 99) found that "more than 80 per cent of media profiles of men were negative, compared with 18.4 per cent of content which showed positive profiles or themes" (Ibid.: 99). While this may be surprising, Janice Fiamengo (2018: 5-7) notes that misandry is irrational 'group think' that has basically penetrated all areas of life. Its reach even infiltrates the supposedly scientifically-based STEM fields (including astronomy), and it is a Western taboo to oppose misandry's precepts (Ibid.: 10, 216-228). According to Fiamengo (2018: 6), the ideology of misandry as not "a matter of presenting compelling, fact-based evidence," since male disadvantage in many aspects of life has already been well-documented. These include aspects such as: "male suicide, depression, homelessness, joblessness, declining numbers at post-secondary institutions, unequal treatment in family court, disproportionate criminal sentences, and experience of discrimination in hiring practices" (Ibid. 5-6).[2]

Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young (2001: xiv, 7-8) purport that while negative male stereotypes are *pervasive*, misandry is applied in *divergent* ways to generally produce three categories of men. Men are portrayed as either *evil* (morally responsible as a chooser of evil) or *incapable* (amoral but

[2] Among other inequalities, Warren Farrell (1994: 14-15, 152) notes that men have lower life expectancy, and men are more likely to be victims of violent crime including spousal assault. American male children are routinely subjected to genital mutilation (i.e., circumcision), whereas genital mutilation against female children is illegal as it is considered child abuse. Men are subject to military conscription, and men have a higher casualty rate in combat (Ibid. 85-89, 156). Although different aspects of life may cause more disadvantage to one gender over another, there is likely to be a lot of gender crossover in suffering. In other words, when men (e.g., husbands, sons, etc.) suffer, the women (e.g., wives, mothers, etc.) in their lives are likely to suffer alongside them. For example, in a direct sense, war harms the men who are drafted when it puts their lives and safety at risk. Indirectly, however, war also causes suffering to soldiers' mothers, wives, and daughters whose male loved ones become casualties during wartime. Likewise, when women suffer, the men in their lives are also likely to experience suffering in response. In that sense, suffering is experienced by both genders, and it is in both genders' best interests to minimize suffering across the board.

still deficient), while token minority men, in particular, are often gifted the status of 'honorary women.' This latter group includes sexual and ethnic minority men, including African-American men (Ibid.: xiv, 44, 98, 174, 227).[3]

The reason for portraying sexual and ethnic minority men in this way appears to be filmmakers' fear of being accused of discrimination. When enough of these minority men are portrayed opposite minority women, this creates an opportunity for filmmakers to portray the minority women positively. By providing positive portrayals of minority women, this weakens any potential accusation of ethnic discrimination against the minority group. Consequently, the minority men lose their exemption, which means that misandry can now be applied against them (Ibid.: 14).

Outside influences from international sources affect how Māori are portrayed in New Zealand films according to Sandor Klapcsik and Monick Bartoňová (2023: 3). They claim that the influence of Hollywood crime-thrillers has steered the portrayal of Māori gang members into roles "connected to the drug business, family violence, alcoholism, and street crime" (Ibid.). At the same time, these lawless Māori characters respond to the loss of traditional culture and language by using their leadership, manifested in terms of intellectual and social skills, to strengthen local indigenous communities (Ibid.). Somewhat similarly, a two-part framework is asserted by Matthew Bannister (2022: 50) who argues that television commercial advertising confines Māori and Pacific Islanders representations in binary terms. Negative stereotypes tend to be featured in public service announcements, while 'positive' stereotypes that associate "ethnicity with fantasy elements and magical powers" occur more often in product advertisements (Ibid.).

[3] While Macnamara (2006: 167) does not explicitly use the term 'honorary women' to describe 'tolerable' men who have been de-masculinized, he still embraces the same concept. Other than a few exceptions, "the only males presented positively are men and boys who have been feminized, such as metrosexuals and males who exhibit a 'feminine side'" (Ibid.). In sum, "the only good in men, according to most discourse reflected and propagated in mass media, are traits identified as female" (Ibid.).

This exoticism is echoed by Vilsoni Hereniko (n.d.) who suggests that, historically, films depicted indigenous Pacific Islanders, especially Polynesians, in a 'one dimensional' way within tropical settings. Pacific characters were shown "as a simple people lacking in complexity, intellect, or ambition. Acting always as a group, Pacific characters can be seen running, fishing, eating, or playing with little or no differentiation between one individual and another" (Ibid.). Otherwise, their depictions were "as dangerous, evil, [or] even cannibalistic. […] [T]here is no complexity in this kind of portrayal" (Ibid.). He admits that contemporary representations are more complex mainly because indigenous Pacific Islanders make their own films (Ibid.).[4] While these concerns over unequal racial depictions are not to be dismissed, this paper argues that New Zealand films give precedence to gender as the main social division.

3. Methodology: Formal Analysis.

[4] When it comes to the overall role that Pacific Islanders play in major film productions, their role is miniscule. Out of 1,300 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2013, only 44 had Asia Pacific Islander (API) lead or co-lead actors. Among those, only 21 were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI). Among all API actors across 200 top-grossing films from 2018 to 2019, only 7 (or 2%) were Māori. As for behind-the-camera film crews in 1,300 top films, few APIs worked as directors (3.5%), producers (2.5%), casting directors (3.3%), or creatives (2.9%) (Yuen et al. 2021).

The New Zealand film industry contributes about NZD 2.7 billion to New Zealand's GDP annually and it supports about 21,000 local jobs (Jones 2020). While this may seem insignificant against a GDP of NZD 405 billion and a total workforce of 2,886,000, the screen sector makes a comparatively strong contribution toward GDP. Proportionally, its contribution is more than double that of Australia's (Stats NZ 2024; Stats NZ 2023; Olsberg SPI 2022: 9). According to the New Zealand Film Commission, "New Zealand is home to some of the most sophisticated film and television production on the globe," with international collaborations resulting in "[s]ome of the largest and most impressive films of the past two decades" (New Zealand Film Commission 2023a; New Zealand Film Commission 2023b). New Zealand is also a site of film-induced tourism, as exemplified in how The Lord of the Rings film trilogy exposed the country to a world-wide audience of potential travellers (Arnold 2019). Meanwhile, New Zealand markets itself as 'Home of Middle-Earth' to tourists (New Zealand Tourism n.d.).

The methodology of this study uses an interpretative approach that looks at *patterns* which repeat over and over again. This requires relying on a systematic effort known to art historians as 'formal analysis.' This method involves making close and disciplined 'readings' of 'text' by way of observing that which is actually presented in film in terms of both visual and verbal aspects. Careful observation of consistent patterns can be gleaned from the film's use of formal cinematic properties such as color, mise-en-scène, music, space, and time. Here, the focus is not primarily on what the creators *wanted* to say, which could be discovered by surveys but would not remotely establish a 'true interpretation.' Rather, the primary focus is on what the creators *do* say. This is uncovered after enough evidence has been accumulated that it is hard *not so see* the patterns and also hard to see other patterns that would negate them (Nathanson and Young, 2001: x-xi).[5]

As mentioned, one main reason for choosing the four films is based on their box office popularity within New Zealand's domestic market. According to the New Zealand Film Commission, Taika Waititi's 2016 and 2010 films are, respectively, the first and second highest grossing domestic films in New Zealand. The films by Lee Tamahori and Nicki Caro take the fourth and fifth places respectively. In third place is *The World's Fastest Indian* (Donaldson 2005), but this is not studied here because it has no main characters who are Māori and the film's setting largely takes place overseas (New Zealand Film Commission n.d.). As for viewing, Caro's film is available to watch in the main library of National Cheng Kung University in Tainan. All four films are

[5] In the philosophy of art, this approach complements 'aesthetic formalism.' Aesthetic formalism is the idea that the aesthetic nature of art (which is what essentially determines what art *is*) is determined by the art's properties which are formal, insomuch as its properties are accessible to direct sensation. In other words, how a 'thing' becomes art is determined by one's judgments and experiences of whether or not the 'thing' is aesthetic in its (formal) properties which are accessible by one's direct sensation. Such reactions are so straight forward that they arise independently of whatever one's knowledge or appreciation of the thing may be with regard to aspects of function, history, or context (Dowling, n.d.).

available in the main library of National Taiwan University in Taipei. Among the other fifteen films listed by the New Zealand Film Commission, only three films (in eighth, eleventh, and seventh places) are available for viewing in Taiwan. This is according to online searches made on a nationwide catalogue belonging to Taiwan's National Central Library (National Bibliographic Information Network n.d.).

When it comes to categorizing the portrayals of men, Macnamara (2006: 99-101) mentions eight positive and eight negative leading profiles (or overall themes). It may be possible to group these into two kinds of positive/negative binaries. The first consists of the protagonist/antagonist role: hero, protector, leader, good citizen, villain, aggressor, pervert, and power abuser. The second consists of responsibility/irresponsibility in work and family life: good father, good/loving husband/partner, good provider, handyman, philanderer, incompetent fool or lazy, deadbeat dad, or workaholic (Ibid. 101). These two main binary types appear to align with Nathanson and Young (2001: xiv, 7-8) who mainly discuss portrayals in terms of goodness/evil and competence/incompetence, even though the authors suggest that goodness or competence are not features usually assigned to men. This paper defines a positive portrayal as showing male goodness or competence while a negative portrayal shows evil or incompetence. As for specific types of goodness, evil, competence, or incompetence, they can be derived from the list of the sixteen leading profiles from Macnamara which were already mentioned.

4. Limitations: Racial Ambiguity.

A limitation concerns how to differentiate between Māori and *Pākehā* characters when the ethnicities are not evident, such as from physical appearance. In the case where a character's ethnicity is ambiguous, it can likely be assumed that the filmmaker does not feel that an ethnic delineation is necessary. In other words, if a filmmaker wants the audience to think that a character is Māori or *Pākehā*, he or she will make this clear. For example, when a female character's ethnicity is unknown by the audience, this means that it

is not particularly important to the film's message. However, the fact that she is known as a woman to the audience may have significance in terms of the message that the filmmaker wishes to convey.[6]

5. Film Morals: Men as a Destabilizing Influence if Left Unchecked.

5.1 Once Were Warriors, 1994: Return to Tradition to Escape Evil Men.

The moral of the film *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori 1994) is that Māori should get in touch with their Indigeneity, otherwise modernism leads to dysfunction. The wisdom of the elders, concerning the importance of social class distinctions, should have been heeded by Beth and Jake. Despite unequal backgrounds, the two ended up marrying to form an abusive relationship and moved from a rural to an urban setting. One of their sons, Mark (nicknamed Boogie), reforms from criminality by getting in touch with his Indigenous heritage through the martial art of *Mau rākau* after he is sent to live in a borstal (i.e., a school that provides vocational training and therapy for delinquent boys) (Ibid.).

The main source of tension in *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori 1994) pits unemployed husband Jake Heke, whose violent outbursts intensify when he

[6] Given that there are more than two ethnicities in New Zealand, one difficulty may be in identifying whether a character is meant to be Māori or Pacific Islander. For example, it may be unclear as to whether a character played by actor Oscar Kightley, who is of Samoan heritage, is meant to be a person of Māori or Samoan extraction (NZ On Screen 2022). If New Zealand audiences are already familiar with this actor's background of playing Samoan characters in such films as *Sione's Wedding* (Graham 2006) and *Sione 2: Unfinished Business* (Bennett 2012), they may see him as Samoan. It is controversial in New Zealand to award Māori character roles to non-Māori actors. According to one actor, it is also controversial to have a mismatch in terms of a Māori actor belonging to one *iwi* (tribe) and the Māori character role belonging to another *iwi* (NZ On Screen 2025). In that case, it is unlikely that filmmakers would lead audiences to believe that any of Kightley's characters are Māori.

is drunk, against his housewife Beth, who receives Jake's beatings and yet remains steadfast in preserving family life with five children. Originally, tribal elders had disapproved of the relationship, as Beth (of royal lineage) was next in line for tribal leadership, while Jake was a descendent of slaves (i.e., captives of inter-tribal warfare). The couple ignored these warnings, moved to Auckland, and started a family together (Ibid.).

Eighteen years later, their eldest son, Nig, joins a gang, while the next eldest son, Boogie, gets sent to a borstal after frequent breaches of the law. The borstal manager inspires Boogie to find his own inner power and teaches him Māori chants as well as *Mau rākau*. The eldest daughter, 13-year-old Grace, is sexually abused by Jake's friend, Bully, at a drunken party in the Heke family house. Later, she commits suicide by hanging herself on a tree next to the house. This marks as turning point, as a religious leader from Beth's tribe comes to exorcise demons from the family home, and soon Beth learns about the assault from reading Grace's diary. Beth shows the diary to Jake who murders Bully in revenge, and this prompts Beth to leave Jake for good (Ibid.).

This theme about turning from modernism toward traditional Indigeneity is not new in Indigenous-themed cinema. For example, it has also featured in films depicting Formosan Indigenes (Friedman 2021: 95-96; Sterk 2021: 71-72). However, this nostalgia toward tradition is not ubiquitous among Indigenous-themed films. Houston Wood (2012: 93) claims that while some films in this genre aim to "strengthen and perpetuate pre-contact traditions," others "seem determined to avoid showing behaviors that might emphasize differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples."

In a way, this appreciation of traditional lifestyles tends to align itself with Bronisław Malinowski's functionalist approach in anthropological theory which holds that traditional culture arises either to satisfy biological needs or to satisfy the secondary needs which arose from the procurement of culture itself (Kuper 1983: 30). A basic example of how culture becomes manifested is in religion. According to Geertz (1973: 142-143), religion is a

stabilizing force which functions not only to satisfy the cognitive and affective needs of individuals as they strive to navigate an insecure world, but it also reinforces traditional social ties binding individuals in complex groups by strengthening underlying community values. With this in mind, traditional Māori culture should generally be seen as a positive influence in helping to support the long-term continuation of Māori existence.[7]

5.2 Whale Rider, 2002: Breach Tradition to Escape an Evil Man.

The moral of the film *Whale Rider* (Caro 2002) is that traditionalists, like Grandpa Paka (also called Koro), should give way to modern notions of gender equality. It could be retorted that the film's 'argument' is a 'straw man fallacy,' since, over most of the film, Koro's lopsided approach toward gender relations is not likely in tune with traditional notions of gender complementarity. Instead of respecting his granddaughter Pai's separate femininity as a positive and necessary contribution to the tribe's thriving, most of the films sees Koro confine himself within a mental framework that does not truly see Pai as a girl should be seen with the different expectations that would imply. Instead, Koro sees her as a kind of substandard 'boy' who is not real enough to assume succession. This puts Pai into limbo, stuck between two genders. In the background, Pai's twin brother and mother died following childbirth, and Pai's father, Porourangi, who refuses to assume tribal leadership, moved to Germany where he worked as an artist. Additionally, Pai's grandparents do not provide her with female-oriented traditional Māori

[7] Functionalism applies to more than just one aspect of society, like religion. Instead, functionalism is premised on the idea that all aspects of society (including institutions, roles, and norms) serve a purpose and all are indispensable for society's long-term survival (Encyclopedia Britannica 2024). As a metaphor, functionalists liken different aspects of society to different body parts within a living organism. Like the different body parts that function in a harmonious way to sustain biological life, the different parts of society work together in a coordinated interaction to maintain society's essential processes. This analogy likens religion, kinship, and economy to bodily organs, and it likens individuals to cells in an organism (Porth, Neutzling, and Edwards 2024).

activities (Ibid.). These factors may have prepared Pai to gravitate toward traditional activities that are male-only and, in a context where a male successor has been long absent, act as a male substitute to bring about more stability than has been experienced over recent decades.

The film's tension is a strained relationship between 12-year-old Paikea (Pai) Apirana and her paternal grandfather Koro. Pai is the only living child within a line of chiefly succession, but she is ineligible because tradition mandates that leadership is the preserve of the first-born son. This heritage of patrilineal descent stretches all the way back to an ancient male ancestor (who is also called Paikea). He was the original 'whale rider' who rode to New Zealand on the top of a whale from his homeland Hawaiki. Without a grandson to fulfill succession, Koro vents his anger against Pai, who he blames for causing various calamities in the tribe (Ibid.).

When Porourangi makes a return visit to New Zealand, he agrees to take Pai away from her grandparents' home to live him. This was a response to Koro expressing that he no longer wants to live with Pai. As they drive away, however, Pai decides to return to her grandparents' home because she cannot part with the sea as a whale seems to call her back (Ibid.).

In addition to tribal songs and dances, Pai is interested in tribal leadership which she feels that she can fulfill and is determined to achieve, even though it is without precedent for a female to acquire. Meanwhile, Koro forms a cultural school where he teaches village boys to use a *taiaha* (fighting stick). As Pai is not allowed to join, she secretly learns the skill from her Uncle Rawiri who won a *taiaha* tournament in his youth. When she wins an informal match against a boy in training, it is uncovered by Koro who is outraged. Also, in a clandestine way, Pai recovers a sunken *rei puta* (whale tooth) which Koro had previously thrown into the ocean for the boys to recover. Even though none of the boys eventually succeed in finding it, this task was supposed to prove that one of them was worthy of leadership (Ibid.).

When villagers are unable to save a pod of right whales who beached themselves on the shoreline, Koro sees this as a sign of personal failure. The largest whale, which is associated with their tribal ancestor, is mounted by Pai. She coaxes it to return to the ocean, and the rest of the pod follows. When Pai goes out to sea, Pai's grandmother Nanny Flowers shows Koro the whale tooth recovered by Pai. Later, Pai heals in a hospital after having nearly drowned at sea. At her bedside, Koro declares Pai the leader and seeks her forgiveness (Ibid.).

Given that Koro shames Pai's female identity in the sense of making his preference for a grandson known in a context where female-related Māori culture is absent, Pai may have gravitated toward male activities as a way of pleasing Koro (Ibid.). In this way, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy on Koro's part. Had Koro stuck to a complementary gender framework which properly treasured Pai's female identity, Pai may have followed traditional gender roles, which would have been left intact, rather than challenging them by trying to assume male-only tribal leadership. In sum, this film may prove the opposite of what it is trying to teach. Namely, instead of showing how traditional gender roles are bad, it shows that a family's deviation from a balanced understanding of two harmonious gender roles leads to unnecessary family dysfunction.

5.3 Boy, 2010: Unsupervised Men Are Childish.

The moral of the film *Boy* (Waititi 2010) is that men, when left on their own, are a thoroughly negative influence, whereas women are a stabilizing influence who can tame men through harsh treatment. The key is that had the boy's mother survived, all would have been radically better off. In this way, the film is an exaggerated expression of grief as a response to female absence. To show the natural imbalance caused by a lack of female presence, the film imbues men with a naïveté that manifests in a dysfunction reminiscent of the children's story *The Cat in the Hat* (Suess 1957). In that story, two siblings unwisely invite an unruly cat into their house while their parents are absent. The film's title 'Boy,' may even refer to the immature mental state of the father

in the film rather than to the 11-year-old boy protagonist.

The film's tension pits 11-year-old Boy against his criminal father, Alamein, who recently got out of prison after having served a long sentence for robbery. At the time, in late 1984, Boy's grandmother left Boy in charge of a farm with his 7-year-old-brother, Rocky, as well as several young cousins while she went away for a week or two to attend a funeral in Wellington. Boy, who yearns for a relationship with his father Alamein, invites Alamein and two of his friends to take up residence in the house. Alamein's main purpose for the visit is to find a 'buried treasure,' which is actually loot from a robbery, but he cannot remember exactly where he buried it. After days of digging, Alamein gets discouraged and leaves the home for a few days. Boy finds the money, but before Alamein returns, it is eaten by a goat. Before long, Alamein's two friends flee with the car, which prompts Alamein to trash the house (Waititi 2010).

A turning point happens when Boy reflects at his mother's grave under the influence of alcohol and marijuana. He gives up any hope that he had about his father, who he later confronts about the lost money. He finally allows himself to express anger at his father's selfishness. Enraged, Boy downgrades the relationship by withdrawing his affections. Then, Alamain, who only viewed his wife's grave through the cemetery's outer fence, passes through the gate and sits in front of the grave to reflect. Finally, Alamein leaves the house for good, the children clean it up, and the grandmother returns (Ibid.).

5.4 Hunt for the Wilderpeople, 2016: Unsupervised Men Are Incompetent and Evil.

The moral of the film *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (Waititi 2016) is that men's incompetence makes them so adrift, and run into trouble, when they are not subsumed under female authority. The film's tension mainly pits child services worker Paula against a 13-year-old Māori orphan, Ricky, who Paula tries to capture. After foster father, 65-year-old Hector (Hec) Faulkner, tries to

find Ricky who ran away into the forest, Hec's injury causes a delay in returning to the farm. Although Hec was not originally interested in hosting an orphan at his farm, as this was the idea of his deceased wife, Hec eventually decides not to return to the farm with Ricky since Hec is not good at farming and he is worried that a previous conviction will put him under suspicion (Ibid.).

In their journey through the wilderness, they spot a bird believed to be extinct. They can gain fame if they can provide proof of its existence, but they are without a camera. Later, they enter a shelter where they see a newspaper article with their pictures. They learn of the allegation that Hec kidnapped Ricky and he may be dangerous. After several encounters with people and animals, Hec drives Ricky in a hermit's pickup truck across a desert used for military training. Tailed by authorities, the truck crashes into a junkyard and the pair eventually get captured. Ricky's custody is subject to a court decision, while Hec ends up doing time. At a halfway house, Ricky finds Hec and they decide to return to the bush together to find the bird (Ibid.).

6. Research Findings: Race-Relations Lower than Gender-Relations.

6.1 Ample Māori Female Characters and Evil Men: Tamahori (1994) and Caro (2002).

When the cast of Māori female characters is abundant enough to be portrayed positively, filmmakers tend to portray Māori males negatively without reference to *Pākehā* characters. By portraying Māori females positively, filmmakers can free themselves from accusations of racial discrimination, and this allows them to portray Māori males negatively. This is exemplified in *Once Were Warrior*s (Tamahori 1994) and *Whale Rider* (Caro 2002) where an abundant cast of Māori females allowed the filmmakers to make enough positive portrayals of the Māori ethnicity, so as to clear the way for the

filmmakers to portray almost all male characters negatively. This aligns with the pattern articulated by Nathanson and Young (2001: 13-14), which shows that when films portray an ethnic minority group amply consisting of men and women, the women are portrayed positively while the men are portrayed negatively.

The film *Once Were Warrior*s (Tamahori 1994) does not show any *Pākehā* characters who are more than 'one dimensional,' in the sense that these characters are briefly shown and have scant dialogue such as during the legal-related proceedings concerning Boogie. Among the main staple of around half a dozen or so Māori men, all are overwhelmingly shown in a negative light with the exception of the borstal manager who helps Boogie reclaim his Indigeneity. All other men are involved in mischief of some kind or another such as drunkenness, battery, sexual abuse, or manslaughter (Ibid.).

In contrast, Beth is the main character who receives the largest portion of positive cinematic exposure. She is portrayed sympathetically despite the fact that she keeps her children in a home with domestic violence while, at the same time, she is oblivious to the inner workings of her children's minds and thus unable to prevent them from acting out in troubling ways. While drunk, she slaps Nig on the face, but she apologizes and this behavior does not repeat itself (Ibid.).[8]

The film *Whale Rider* (Caro 2002) depicts all men in a negative light. Pai's father, Porourangi, abandoned his daughter soon after birth and put her under the authority of his nasty father. As Koro's son, Porourangi would have known about Koro's cruel personality, and this may have been the underlying

[8] Even if Beth, herself, does not presently take any initiative in getting to know her children, her many previous years of childrearing should have already built up a vast reservoir of strong bonds with her children. In that way, her children should readily come to her with their problems because they are convinced that they can trust her. Because Beth's children did not use Beth as a pathway of resolution, this shows that Beth does not parent properly. Beth's culpability in not preventing her children from making such obvious poor decision-making seems to be 'lost' on the filmmaker.

reason why he distanced himself from the family by moving to Germany. After he reunits with Pai for the first time in 12 years, and becomes aware of Koro's mistreatment of Pai, he does not insist on honoring Pai's best interests by permanently removing her from Koro's control. Porourangi impregnated a woman in Germany outside of wedlock, but this information is obtained only after Koro corners him. Pai's obese Uncle Rawiri, who jokes about the fornication, is a drug user. His drug habit is uncovered by Pai when she visits his home (Ibid.).

Koro appears to view Pai as an extension of his ego since he slaps a boy on the head at Pai's school for allegedly disrespecting Pai. When Koro teaches the *taiaha* class, he says that the boys' genitalia will drop off if they do not succeed. The boys take it as a joke, but the underlying message is that the boys' masculinity is not inalienable. In a way, Koro's judgment has the power to take it away from them. No prominent *Pākehā* male characters appear in this film (Ibid.).

In contrast, Pai's grandmother Nanny Flower is portrayed sympathetically. A few times she mentions that she may divorce Koro, but this appears to be a device used to excuse her from not protecting Pai against Koro's mean behavior. Nanny Flower is presented as a wise peacemaker who mediates between Koro and Pai. If only her will were followed would there be family harmony. However, instead of giving Pai something to do in the traditional female realm of Māori culture, which might compensate for Pai's interest in the Māori culture that Koro presents to boys, Nanny Flower plays cards in a group of women which includes a smoker. After Pai protests against the smoking, which happens in the house where she lives, her comment is ridiculed by the women and the smoking continues (Ibid.).

It may be that Pai is just interested in Māori culture, but because her exposure is limited to the opposite-gender type presented by Koro, her interest may create the misunderstanding that she is gender confused or deliberately trying to subvert tradition. In this confined scenario which the Māori women

help perpetuate, Pai has no choice but to practice male-only traditions if she is to indulge in authentic Māori culture at all. This seems to be 'lost' on the filmmaker, who sees the women as passive bodies without any agency, while all blame is to be placed on Koro for his stubborn refusal to breach tradition. Like the filmmaker of *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori 1994), Caro allows negative depictions of Māori men when enough 'positive' portrayals of Māori women can offer a defense against accusations of discrimination against the Māori ethnicity.

6.2 Scarce Māori Female Characters and Female Nostalgia: Waititi (2010).

In films where Māori female cast members are scarce, positive memories of them can be emphasized to contrast with negative portrayals of men. This is a way for filmmakers to increase the positive footprint that Māori femininity has in films without including as many female main characters in the storyline. Against this backdrop of positive representation for Māori females, filmmakers can portray Māori males negatively without fear of being accused of racial discrimination. In *Boy* (Waititi 2010), the boy protagonist and his criminal father frequently refer back to memories of the Māori mother's goodness. Without using this device to create a contrast of positive Māori females against negative Māori males, filmmakers would have to increase negative *Pākehā* representation to make it clear that no racial discrimination against the Māori ethnicity is intended.

In the film *Boy* (Waititi 2010), all men are portrayed in a negative light without exception. Alamein is named after El Alamein, Egypt, which was a battle site in World War II. Alamein alludes that he was a fan of the Third Reich as a youth but now, as an adult, he often wears a World War II helmet (even when driving). While wearing the helmet in a garage, he often sits in front of a pair of stag antlers which align with his head to create the illusion that he is part animal (Ibid.). Not only does it make him look ridiculous, but it may symbolically refer to him as a 'stag' in the sense of a man who attends a

social gathering without female accompaniment.

Alamein asks that others call him Shogun, after James Clavell's 1975 novel called *Shōgun: A Novel of Japan* (Clavell 1975) (Waititi 2010). He says that he has watched the film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (Spielberg 1982) five times and he uses sparklers (reminiscent of E.T.'s glowing finger) to give the children a message about how he hates the world (Waititi 2010). In this way, he positions himself as a benevolent outsider, but this is actually a way for him to mask his malevolent intention of taking repossession of stolen money that he previously hid under a field (Ibid.).

This theme of childish men is reinforced in how Boy idolizes Michael Jackson, whose Neverland ranch refers to the fantasy land of Peter Pan as "the boy who never grew up" (Savage 2009; Waititi 2010). In the novel, Peter leads a band of "lost boys" with the decree that "growing up […] is against the rules" (Barrie 2008: 46). Alamein's gang, which uses marijuana, trespasses onto a neighboring farm to steal marijuana and sell it. Later, they are beaten up by another gang of men in revenge. Allemein and one of his gang members are Māori. The other member appears to be *Pākehā.* (Waititi 2010).

Another childish man, a recurrent character, who the boys call a "mental fella" and a "weirdo," is a middle-aged, obese, bald man who admits that he has no friends and lives with his mother (Ibid.). He appears developmentally handicapped and unemployed. Like a child, he fishes objects out of a river. Eventually, this includes removing Boy from the river, who tries to commit suicide by deliberately falling from a bridge. Rocky believes that Rocky has magical powers over people, but this is an unwieldly clairvoyant force that only causes harm to others. Rocky is burdened with guilt for even existing, since his entry into the world caused his mother to die during the childbirth process (Ibid.).

As for women, a female clerk, who appears to be Māori, angrily reprimands Alamein and calls him an "idiot" when he falsely accuses Boy of

stealing products from a store (Ibid.). This causes Alamein to flee in a hurry. Boy's Māori grandmother, who is also Alamein's mother, wisely refuses to give Alamein a loan when he calls her on a telephone. When she returns to the farm, after Alamein's departure, the film treats her sympathetically by showing her all smiles exiting a taxi. This is despite the fact that she left an 11-year-old in charge of a farm with a 7-year-old and several toddlers (Ibid.).

In reality, the grandmother's neglect is an act of child abuse. This is 'lost' on the filmmaker, who may believe that because the many children appear to be male, *male expendability* makes the grandmother morally exempt. Like the other two films before this one, Māori men are overwhelmingly depicted in a negative light, but unlike the other two films, which have ample female representation and focus on the wickedness of men, Waititi's 2010 film mainly focuses on male characters and how they are generally incompetent without women's supervision. Adding nostalgic memories about the Māori mother allowed Waititi to balance his negative portrayals against Māori men with positive portrayals of Māori women, so as to avoid accusations of discrimination against the Māori ethnicity.

6.3 Scarce Māori Female Characters and Pākehā Men: Waititi (2016).

In films with an abundant cast of *Pākehā* and Māori male characters but few Māori females, filmmakers are free to negatively portray Māori males but only so long as it is made clear that *Pākehā* males are portrayed in worse ways. Because both ethnic groups are depicted negatively, this frees the filmmaker from the accusation that he is picking on Māori people and holds racial prejudice. By purposely treating *Pākehā* males in an even worse way than Māori males, this further hedges the filmmaker against such an accusation. This is seen in *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (Waititi 2016), where the 'evil' man, Hugh, is a *Pākehā* who tries to murder one of the main protagonists, Hec. The other men in the film are mentally incapable in one way or another. Such discriminatory behavior by filmmakers against males and *Pākehā* show that although the filmmakers do not adhere to a non-discriminatory ethic of

treating both genders with fairness, these filmmakers are, nonetheless, not unable to distinguish between right and wrong. This is because they would have to know which acts are right and wrong before they can then associate immorality with men and associate morality with women.

One to the main characters, Hec, is a *Pākehā* who fears Māori child services worker Paula, so he runs away with Māori foster child Ricky (13-years-old) in the New Zealand wilderness. In the past, Hec served time for manslaughter, so his fear of potentially returning to prison motivates him to run. This puts both his and Ricky's lives at risk. Of course, like all male endeavors, this is useless, and eventually Paula catches up to him and reins him in (Ibid.).

At the beginning of the film, Hec lives in quiet submission to his domineering wife Bella. His obedience reaches the point where Bella forces him to accept Ricky as a foster child despite the fact that Hec is against this from happening. Bella calls Hec a "bloody idiot" who, when the couple first met, was not "much good to anyone. Just a scruffy white drifter who smelt like methylated spirits" (Ibid.). Hec claims that Bella took pity on him and rescued him like a stray dog. After Bella passes away, Hec claims that because the farm is "without a woman to run the show," Child Services will take Ricky away (Ibid.).

As for other men that Hec and Ricky meet, one is a preacher (played by Waititi) who delivers a convoluted sermon at Bella's funeral. When on the run, Hec and Ricky meet a hermit *Pākehā* called Psycho Sam who has lived 15 years in isolation. Sam's inclusion gives Hec a preview to see what he would be like if he, too, were successful in evading a world with women: insane. The three hunters who help pursue Hec and Ricky consist of two *Pākehā* and one Māori. Because they are mainly an isolated group, this allows them to act as violent fools when not under female supervision. The leader of the hunters is Hugh, who is unambiguously *Pākehā*. He is evil as he makes false accusations against Hec and even tries to murder him, before his attempt is foiled by Andy, the policeman who acts as Paula's sidekick. Andy is obese, clumsy, and dimwitted.

When Paula tries to get Andy's attention, which often drifts, Paula tries to kick him (Ibid.). Andy's role is played by a Samoan immigrant, so his character's ethnic identity may be Pacific Islander rather than Māori (NZ On Screen 2022; Waititi 2016).

When Ricky visits the home of a Māori girl called Kahu, her Māori father TK, identifies Ricky as a missing child but does nothing to return Ricky to authorities. Instead, he mainly takes several preposterous photos with Ricky. In one pose, TK holds a knife in one hand while his arm is around Ricky's shoulder. Common sense should tell TK that such an act could be traumatic for Ricky if he had been kidnapped, but TK is clueless. Kahu calls her father an "idiot" and tells him to "shut up" (Ibid.). After the father leaves, Ricky sleeps overnight on a couch. He wakes up to leave the next morning and rejoin Hec in the forest (Ibid.).

In contrast, both Bella and Paula appear domineering in terms of their determination in leadership and savvy intelligence over the incompetent men under their domain (Ibid.). While one could interpret this as a negative portrayal of women, this is unlikely to be the filmmaker's intention. This is because the women have no choice but to take up this role given that the men are too evil, unintelligent, or both to do anything of positive significance by themselves. In that sense, no one can blame the women for behaving in a maternal way toward the men while feeling resentful against the men for being so deficient.[9]

In sum, all men in *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (Waititi 2016) are portrayed in a negative light. All of them are mentally incompetent, in terms of being

[9] When Kahu is introduced, she is riding a horse with wispy flowing hair drenched in sunshine from behind. Harp music and a choir play for added effect, as Ricky gasps in astonishment. A similar pattern with hair, light, and choir music repeats when Kahu is in her kitchen (Ibid.). It is obvious that Kahu is supposed to be an angelic figure. If she is to have just one frailty, it is her inability to completely control her inept father. Perhaps this is due to a lack of physical prowess at such a young age. She is meant to create a light-dark contrast with Ricky. Ricky is about the same age as Kahu, but he has committed several legal offenses such as stealing, graffiti, and running away (Waititi 2016).

unintelligent (like illiterate Hec or bumbling Andy) or crazy (like Psycho Sam), except perhaps for Hugh who is portrayed as evil by picking fights and trying to murder Hec (Ibid.). The filmmaker appears to have singled him out to be the evil one because he is unambiguously *Pākehā*. Because there were few Māori female characters who received much cinematic exposure by the filmmaker, Waititi may have felt too insecure to depict any Māori characters as evil as Hugh.

6.4 Dividing Active and Passive Abuse: Tamahori (1994), Caro (2002), Waititi (2010).

Filmmakers appear to have overly simplified views when it comes to moral questions, particularly with regard to parental abuse against children. They artificially separate *active* versus *passive* forms of abuse. In reality, not only do both forms qualify as adverse childhood experiences but passive forms (e.g., abandonment, lack of care or love, alcoholism or depression in the household, and witnessing battery between adult householders) can outnumber the various active forms against children (California Surgeon General's Clinical Advisory Committee 2020). Among parents, mothers are more likely to commit more child maltreatment than fathers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2022: 23, 46). Overall, the number of child abuse perpetrators who are women are more numerous than those who are men (Statistica 2025).

Cinematically, in the New Zealand films studied, physical and verbal abuse by male caregivers is seen as abusive, but female caregivers are excused from their neglect of children. In *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori 1994), after years of marriage, Beth, finally decides to remove her children from their abusive father, Jake. This did not come in the immediate aftermath of Grace's suicide, but rather it came just after Jake murders Bully. In *Whale Rider* (Caro 2002), the grandmother, Nanny Flower, keeps making excuses as to why she keeps her granddaughter, Pai, in an abusive home with the cruel grandfather, Koro. These two films also show how women are portrayed as passive victims

under the bad influence of men without any ability to make a plan and be masters of their own fate.

Like the other two films, *Boy* (Waititi 2010) treats the mostly-absent female caregiver sympathetically even though this grandmother neglects the several children under her care by leaving them alone on a farm for about two weeks to fend for themselves. These examples show how filmmakers employ a double standard by excusing female characters' neglect of children while assigning active forms of child abuse to male characters who are blameworthy.[10]

7. Conclusion: Political Correctness Elevates Gender over Race.

Although the four films overwhelmingly portray men in negative terms, they follow a precise formula that adheres to priorities of politically correctness. While filmmakers must avoid accusations of breaching political correctness in the realms of race and gender, it is abundantly clear that filmmakers prioritized both concerns asymmetrically. In this way, political correctness does not allow a filmmaker to get away with depicting all Māori (men and women) negatively while portraying all *Pākehā* (men and women) positively. In contrast, it is acceptable, and maybe even expected, that the filmmaker divide people based on gender. Characters of either Māori or *Pākehā*

[10] *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (Waititi 2016) does not depict child abuse by any female, or for that matter by any male, characters. When Ricky comes under the roof of TK's house, Kahu's father neither harms nor helps Ricky. Given that Ricky is believed to be a victim of kidnapping and that Ricky stays overnight in TK's house, it is unknown whether TK has an obligation to contact appropriate government authorities. Nonetheless, Waititi (2016) portrays TK unsympathetically as TK's constant buffoonery leads Kahu to humiliate her father by repeatedly insulting him in front of Ricky. It is reasonable to claim that Hec should have made more of an effort, as early as possible, to return Ricky to Child Services even though Ricky was strongly opposed to the notion of returning. Their prolonged trek in the wilderness may have unnecessarily put both of their lives at risk (Ibid.).

ethnic groups may be portrayed negatively, but only so long as the characters are men. While this study finds that *almost* all negative portrayals are reserved for men, and *almost* all positive portrayals are reserved for women, filmmakers go out of their way to fiercely guard against accusations of racial discrimination by being sure to allude that it is gender-based, rather than race-based, discrimination.[11]

The ways in which men are portrayed largely depend on how women are portrayed. Although it is preferable to avoid negative portrayals of Māori, a politically correct perspective could see it as beneficial to portray Māori men as 'darkness' since this creates an opportunity to contrast them against Māori women as 'light.' This shows that, in reality, politically correctness does not protect Māori men against negative stereotypes as some advocates of racial harmony might imagine. Rather, political correctness actually serves for Māori men's persecution, not based on anything that they did, but based on *what they are*: men.

In cases where Māori female characters receive ample cinematic representation, such exposure overwhelmingly follows a pattern of positive female images. This gives filmmakers a wide range of choices in how to negatively portray Māori men, which can move beyond dimwitted toward making them look as evil as possible. This pattern has already been mentioned, and Nathanson and Young (2001: 13-14) explicate it with regard to *The Color Purple* (Spielberg 1985). Both *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori 1994) and *Whale Rider* (Caro 2002) mainly focused on female protagonists, which the films

[11] The reason for this particular configuration is likely due to biologically-based *male expendability*, which concerns the economics involved in reproduction when women's ova are rare in comparison to men's sperm which is abundant. Because this asymmetry implies that women are a bottleneck in human reproduction, women will tend to be choosier when it comes to mate selection than men. At an individual level, the maximum biological limit of a woman's offspring, which is only a few dozen, is far less than that of a man's, which is virtually unlimited. Moreover, reproduction is a far more troublesome process for women because, unlike men, pregnancy is more of a physical burden which makes them more inclined to rely on a dependable spouse for material support (Block 2010: 290).

treated sympathetically, and this opened up a wide playing field for any number of disparaging portrayals against Māori men.[12]

Although *Boy* (Waititi 2010) did not have an excess of *Pākehā* men to denigrate and function as a safeguard while mistreating Māori men, Waititi seems to have negotiated his way through this dilemma in two ways. First, he mainly portrayed men (both Māori and *Pākehā*) as extremely childish, which, in a way, can mitigate against the accusation that he portrays Māori men as evil because their childish innocence handicaps them from understanding any moral law for which they might otherwise be held accountable.[13] Second, Waititi deflects accusations of discrimination against the Māori ethnicity by kowtowing toward women's 'perfection,' despite having few women characters. He does this by idolizing Alamein's deceased Māori wife to the elevated status of sainthood. Waititi portrays her passing as the root of all suffering. By paying 'penance' to a Māori female in this way, Waititi can artificially increase the positive female footprint in the film without increasing female characters or slotting Māori men into the 'honorary women' category. He likely does this to cover himself against allegations of discrimination against the Māori ethnicity when he goes on to disparage the images of Māori male characters.

Another main tactic that filmmakers use in applying political correctness against Māori men, when female representation is scarce, is to cast lots of Māori and *Pākehā* characters together. In this situation, both ethnicities can be

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[12] In Tamahori's film, almost all men were depicted as evil, whereas in Caro's film, the grandfather acted in wicked ways toward others while other men were too weak to do anything about it. Even though the two films espouse contradictory messages, as Tamahori's film promotes the preservation of tradition and Caro's film promotes the breaching of tradition, what they both have in common is their prioritization of femininity as beyond criticism while demoting race as subservient to it.

[13] According to this perspective, no Māori men can be seen as evil because they are blind toward moral questions. Overall, Waititi shows creativity when it comes to negotiating his commitment to political correctness in a situation involving many Māori male characters and scant female characters.

treated 'equally,' in the sense that misandry can now be applied against Māori men without alarming audiences because misandry already applies against *Pākehā* men. However, if there is any doubt, as when a filmmaker feels the need to make a character 'evil,' the filmmaker will tend to default toward the *Pākehā* man over a Māori man. This contingency was seen in *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (Waititi 2016). Of course, it seems reasonable to assume that if enough *Pākehā* men are depicted as evil, this would reduce the potential for doubt and clear the way for a filmmaker to add Māori men as evil also.

Another technique employed by filmmakers is to apply a double standard in terms of how child abuse is depicted in three of the films. Filmmakers excuse the child abuse committed by the Māori women and they treat the women sympathetically. This is because filmmakers do not recognize that the female characters' neglect of children is child abuse. Meanwhile, filmmakers assign child abuser roles to Māori men and filmmakers treat these men as blameworthy because their abuse is manifested in active, as opposed to passive, forms of abuse.

In sum, when there is a conflict in the New Zealand films between prioritizing race or gender under the auspices of political correctness, it is clear that gender is given precedence. In that way, the politically correct message propagated by the filmmakers is a 'group think' tenet which repeats the notion that gender relations is necessarily an antagonistic competition, or zero-sum game, overshadowing racial concerns. In reality, this negative view of gender relations contradicts that alternative viewpoint of gender complementarity, a likely feature in Māori culture, which rightly values the essential contributions made by both men and women.

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紐西蘭電影中毛利男性與女性及白人男性的刻畫比較

Mark Rostern*

摘要

本研究論文分析了紐西蘭電影製作人如何在跨越三十年的四部電影中刻畫毛利男性與女性及白人男性的陽剛之氣。選擇這四部電影的原因主要在於其在國內的高票房收入。這四部電影分別是：《曾經是戰士》（Tamahori 1994）、《鯨騎士》（Caro 2002）、《男孩》（Waititi 2010）和《追捕野蠻人》（Wat for the Wilderpeople 2016）。本研究方法透過直截了當的闡釋方式來進行「形式分析」，即從電影製作人欲向觀眾清晰呈現的「表面價值」出發解讀電影。本研究發現，電影製作人秉持一種不對稱的政治正確模式，在人物刻畫上優先考慮性別而非種族。受訪的電影製作人想出了多種手段來以負面的方式刻畫男性，這與種族刻畫方式截然相反，表明電影製作人並無種族偏見。呈現男性負面形象的不同策略主要取決於女性角色的比例。當毛利女性角色夠豐富、足以樹立毛利族群的正面形象時，電影製作人便可以毫不費力地將毛利男性描繪成邪惡的形象，而無需提及白人男性。由於電影製作人已經在正面刻畫毛利族群（透過正面刻畫毛利女性的方式），因此觀眾應該能夠清楚了解毛利男性的問題在於其性別，而非種族。當毛利女性角色過少、無法提供足夠的正面刻畫時，只要電影製作人為了逃避種族歧視的指控而刻畫白人男性，毛利男性就會有負面刻畫。再次強調，男性之所以有問題，是因為他們是男性，與種族無關。儘管其中三部電影中的青少年角色遭受虐待，但電影製作人卻對忽視兒童的毛利女性照顧者有著讓人同情的刻畫。相較之下，主動實施虐待的毛利男性照顧者則應受譴責。總而言之，毛利族或白人族裔的角色可以被負面刻畫，但前提是涉及這兩個族裔的負面刻畫幾乎完全針對男性角色。這表明，性別（而非種族）被優先視為一種壓倒性的社會分工。

關鍵字：性別角色、毛利人、厭男症、紐西蘭電影、性別歧視

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