

Media representations are the ways in which the media portrays particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective. They shape our perceptions of experience and can influence our beliefs. Media representations of the Kiwi Bloke shape a perception and give New Zealand men an idealist perception of who they should be. These representations also convey to the rest of the world who they supposedly are. The television advertisements for the Mammoth Supply Co. (supported by the product packaging), the 'Mantrol' advertisement and the satire of the character of Fred Dagg and the film 'Footrot Flats', all portray varying representations of the "typical" Kiwi Bloke.

Representations of the Kiwi Bloke are conveyed through constructed realities, where males are presented as dressing, acting and behaving in a particular way. These constructed realities are used to influence Kiwi men by persuading them that it is necessary to be like this to be a 'real' man. This can have negative effects on kiwi men and young boys, who feel as though they may not be living up to particular expectations. Through these types of representations, stereotypes are formed which can create feelings of inferiority and discrimination.

The Media shows a particular 'breed' of males - the 'Kiwi Bloke'. As shown in Footrot Flats and the character of Fred Dagg, Kiwi men appear to be the rough and buff type, wearing a singlet, stubbies and jandals or gumboots. They're generally not groomed or very hygienic, and are typical of your hard working beer drinker. Wal Footrot, is the prime example of the 'Kiwi Bloke' that the media frequently portrays. Working on a farm with his dogs, Wallace is the "typical" bloke in the way he looks and acts. He is a do-it yourself kind of man, he works hard on his farm, he's unhygienic, (which is shown by the way he wears dirty socks from a previous day), he has 'manly pride' and he's even a rugby-fanatic, Matthew Bannister's essay quotes "In an autobiographical passage of his 1987 history of masculinity in New Zealand, A Man's Country?, Jock Phillips refers to "a powerful legend of pioneering manhood ... a model of courage and physical toughness". This extract displays how Matthew Bannister's research on Jock Phillips' work solidifies the assumptions towards the Kiwi Bloke and indicates that this representation has stemmed from historical attitudes, and is still portrayed today despite the constantly changing world. [some extracts removed]

The portrayal of the kiwi male's lack of emotional side assumes how kiwi men are meant to be - the "strong, silent type". When his dog goes missing, Wal is not openly willing to share his feelings with the other farmer as this is a trait associated with woman, and is therefore considered too "feminine" for Wallace. Also indicating his 'manly pride' is when Wal describes the dog to have "muscles like steel cables, fangs like a row of broken bottles", while 'Dog' is in fact a harmless puppy. This over exaggerating can also indicate that Kiwi Blokes are proud, tough and perhaps rough around the edges. It suggests that they try to impress one another by appearing as 'manly' as possible and attempting to better themselves unnecessarily because of their large ego. [some extracts removed]

The representation of the Kiwi Bloke implies that the majority of kiwi men are like Wal and this contributes to the 'manly' stereotype for kiwi blokes. This stereotyping is not the representation itself, but in fact the result of the representation, and could explain why Footrot Flats is such an iconic film for New Zealand - it is something they can identify with,

3 Wallace in particular. Although the majority of kiwi men are not like Wal in terms of the way he presents himself or act the way in which Mammoth ads instruct, New Zealand society; even the men, identify with this representation of the Kiwi Bloke due to it being a developed attitude or stereotype of society based on the media portrayal of the Kiwi Bloke. This stereotype is therefore an effect of the representation of Kiwi Blokes.

With this representation of the Kiwi Bloke in the media, advertising is more effective as it is identifiable, and often humorous. However, it can be prejudice, biased, and discriminatory. You don't have to be butch and masculine to be a 'real' Kiwi Bloke. Contradictory to the Mammoth Supply Co. and other media products that offer this representation, you can wear a man purse; you can groom your facial hair; you can choose not to watch rugby and not to drink superfluous amounts of beer; you can share an umbrella; and you can even put sunscreen on one another; it does not determine whether you're a 'real' man or not. The concept of the 'real' man is only strongly present due to the media representing Kiwi Blokes in such a way that they are the depiction of masculinity. The strong, silent type; the rugby player and beer drinker; the farmer and do-it-yourself kind of guy; the 'manly' man – is the representation of the Kiwi Bloke prevalent throughout the media. 2

Another extract from Matthew Bannister's writing states; "Historically, the country's national heroes and popular cultural icons, from sportsmen like the All Blacks rugby team and mountain climber Sir Edmund Hillary to war heroes (Sir Charles Upham), writers (Barry Crump), actors (Bruno Lawrence) and even scientists (Sir Ernest Rutherford) have been placed in a "history" of pioneering, usually white males." This extract identifies how these representations began, how the idea of the "typical Kiwi Bloke" arose from the past creating reason for these representations, however media is what encourages and enforces these views, and therefore enforcing stereotyping towards the Kiwi Bloke. We can see the influence of not only the characters like Fred Dagg and Wal Footrot from our history but even some of today's sports stars and how they are portrayed in the media, in particular our rugby stars such as Richie McCaw. The way the media covers him often focuses on those aspects that fit the 'typical kiwi man. Much is made of the fact he grew up on a farm and he embodies those characteristics found in the 'kiwi bloke' – he is the silent type who lets his actions speak rather than words. He doesn't show emotion or pain as was evidenced when he was hailed for winning the world cup 'on one foot' rather than admit how much pain he was in. He embodies the traits we like to see in our sports stars in that they are humble, tough and 'never up themselves'. The problem with this stereotype, like with the representations presented in the 'mammoth' adverts is forcing males to fit into a stereotype or mould. It could be argued that we should not be encouraging males to avoid expressing emotion or pain: doctors and medical advisors talk about the dangers of sports people playing with injuries while farmers themselves are so susceptible to depression that depression.org has started a campaign focusing on mental health issues in farmers. 4 5