

Ethically Framed or Framed Ethnically?

A Study of the Coverage of Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in New Zealand's Print Media from 2004-2007

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New Zealand: an Immigrant Nation

Through immigration, especially since the late 1980s, New Zealand's ethnic makeup has been changing. The 2006 national census reported that 30 percent of New Zealanders were born overseas. In 2006, the percentage of overseas-born people from Asia had risen to 29 percent, to be in line with the 29 percent of overseas-born people from the United Kingdom and Ireland (Statistics New Zealand 2007b: 6-7). In the year ending June 2006, 51,236 migrants were approved for residence in New Zealand (The Human Rights Commission and Race Relations 2007). This amounted to a net inflow of 10,688 migrants, rising from 8,593 in 2005 (Statistics New Zealand 2007a: 104). In 2005-06, 791 refugees were accepted into New Zealand under the refugee quota programme, the majority coming from Myanmar, Iran, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, and Afghanistan (The Human Rights Commission and Race Relations 2007). However, the number of asylum seekers has been falling and is likely to continue to decrease. In 1998-99 there were around 2,700 asylum seekers, but by 2005-06 there were only around 300, with only 67 being successful refugee claimants (Department of Labour 2006: 83).

Although New Zealand claims to be an open and progressive society, New Zealanders' reactions to immigration vary considerably depending on where immigrants are from, how many are accepted into New Zealand, and through which category they are admitted (Hunt 1995: 115). In 1996, the Massey University Department of Marketing undertook a survey on New Zealanders' attitudes towards immigration. The survey found that 60 percent of respondents believed that the levels of immigration to New Zealand should be reduced. In addition, 40 percent believed that Asian immigrants took jobs away from New Zealanders and 62 percent believed that Pacific Islanders were responsible for a higher crime rate (Fleras and Spoonley 1999: 178). In 2001, a National Business

Review poll found that 37 percent of New Zealanders believed that the refugee quota of 750 per year was too high (Spoonley and Trlin 2004: 30). New Zealand politicians are also feeding anti-immigration sentiment, for example, New Zealand First leader Winston Peters capitalised on the public's anti-immigration sentiment to win votes at New Zealand general elections in the 1990s. In April 2008, Statistics New Zealand released figures projecting that Asians would be the fastest growing ethnic group over the next twenty years. New Zealand First's Peter Brown said that this was "disgusting", and claimed that "[Asians] will form their own mini-societies to the detriment of integration and that will lead to division, friction and resentment" (New Zealand Herald 2008).

Like other liberal democracies, New Zealand enjoys a freedom of press where the media both mirror societal attitudes and help shape these attitudes. Discovering how the press frames the coverage of immigrant groups helps to explain relations between these minorities and dominant groups in society. The media confirms individual identity, as well as local and national identity, and thus contributes crucially to public perceptions and intergroup relations. The print media performs a highly political role as it contributes to the quality of public debate. The media can also play a vital part in communicating and encouraging a measure of understanding between immigrant and host communities (Spoonley and Trlin 2004: v). There is no guarantee, however, that the mass media do make a positive contribution to public debate in general or that they foster tolerance and understanding between cultural groups in particular. The research reported in this article examines how the major newspapers in New Zealand frame stories covering immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The article begins by outlining the practice of framing by journalists and explores previous research on media representation of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Using a coding framework derived from overseas studies, the article then examines the characteristics of newspaper coverage of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in New Zealand. Finally, the results of the content analysis are compared with previous research and the broader implications of the findings on society are discussed.

Theoretical Framework: The Framing of News Stories Covering Immigrants

'Cultural racism' is the exclusion of other cultures based on national identity or 'common values' (Wren 2001: 147). In this discourse, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are not seen as belonging 'naturally' to their adopted country. They are expected to assimilate and adopt a prosthetic national body by disowning their former language, culture and religion, especially if they are of a different race. Not all immigrants are accorded the same degree of legitimation. For example, white British males are not seen as being fundamentally different from the socially legitimated body in New Zealand. They are offered the same rights and protections as natives of the host nation because they will not "disrupt the system of patriarchy nor foul the bloodline" (Takacs 1999: 596-7).

Immigrants who do not originate from similar cultures are racialised, demonised, and represented as 'aliens' (Takacs 1999: 598). The differences between immigrants and native citizens are reinforced and these differences are depicted as unnatural (Gabriel 1998: 105). Their otherness is characterised as a threat to the national body, with immigrants labelled as 'riddled' with dangerous diseases and other undesirable characteristics that would contaminate the bloodline which "guarantees the essence of the national body" (Takacs 1999: 598). This encourages discrimination – resulting in denying or restricting the access of these aliens to national resources (such as welfare services). It is a proactive and offensive reaction. However, this response is depicted as a reactive and defensive response to a formidable threat (Takacs 1999: 598).

The media has played a large role in advancing and encouraging a culturally racist discourse (Wren 2001: 156). Many studies have found that the media, influenced by news values, are stereotypical in their portrayal of ethnic minorities, and focus heavily on problems and threats in ethnic news (van Dijk 1991; Cottle 2000; ter Wal et al 2005). In New Zealand, Spoonley and Hirsh found that the media inaccurately represented Pacific Islanders in the early 1990s, especially regarding the issue of overstaying. In the mid-1980s, one-third of all overstayers were from the United States or Britain and less than one-third were from the Pacific Islands. However, the prosecution of Pacific Islander overstayers amounted to 86 percent of all prosecutions against overstayers and only 5 percent of the prosecutions were against people from the United States or Britain, the larger group. The media did not challenge the disproportionate prosecution of Pacific Islanders, but simply

reported the prosecutions, thus reinforcing and encouraging widespread anti-Polynesian sentiment and contributing to inter-group hostility in New Zealand (Spoonley 1990: 32). By the early 1990s, this coverage had resulted in a firm stereotype of Pacific Islanders as overstayers and illegal immigrants ('Ofa Kolo 1990: 120). Spoonley (1990: 33) found that the media connected ethnic issues with conflict words such as 'threat', especially when reporting violent offending. When reporting crime stories about people of Polynesian or Maori ethnicity, these labels were used three to four times more than when reporting stories about people of European ethnicity. It is acknowledged that this research is now almost 20 years old and so may not be a true indication of the situation today.

More recently, however, Spoonley and Trlin (2004: 4) found similar results in the coverage of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. They investigated the way the New Zealand print media dealt with immigration and immigrant settlement through a content analysis of the print media from 1993 to 2003, focusing especially on the New Zealand Herald, and also focus group interviews. They found that the issue of 'bogus refugees' repeatedly rose to the forefront of immigration dialogue, and that the media did not clearly distinguish between officially sanctioned 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers' (Spoonley and Trlin 2004: iv). The articles analysed were grouped into the categories of Politicisation of Immigration, Refugees, Asians, South Africans, Economic Growth, Employment and Welfare, and Crime and Immigrants (2004: 22). They found that most of the focus in the mid-1990s was on Asian immigration, and the media did not cover refugees in much detail until 1997. Coverage began to increase when then Minister of Immigration, Max Bradford, announced the tightening up of rules to clamp down on non-genuine or 'bogus' asylum seekers entering New Zealand. He claimed that 70 percent of asylum seekers were bogus (Spoonley and Trlin 2004: 29).

In overseas research, van Dijk (2006: 5) found that in European newspapers, news reports, editorials and opinion articles have certain characteristics, which reflect biased underlying mental models of ethnic events. The first such characteristic is a focus on a limited number of negative topics when covering news about immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These negative topics include: framing the immigration of non-Europeans as a threat to the host nation; the impossibility of integrating these groups into society because 'they' do not want to integrate; associating them with illegality, crime, violence, terrorism, and

deviance; and associating refugees and asylum seekers, in particular, with the abuse of social services. Van Dijk (2006: 6-7) also found that the press ignores or downplays topics that would portray the dominant white ingroup or its elite institutions in a negative way, such as racism and discrimination, and ignores economic, cultural, and social contributions of minorities to the welfare of society. In addition, the press was found to ignore research findings about its role in the reproduction of racism.

The second characteristic is that immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are described in a negative way within these confined negative topics. For example, the press call them 'parasites', use military or threatening metaphors like 'invasion' and water metaphors such as 'wave' and 'flood', and use irrelevant ethnic labels in crime stories. Their negative acts are displayed prominently and in precise details that are exaggerated, in stark contrast to the coverage of white ingroup members, whose negative acts are ignored, excused or minimised, especially in discrimination stories (van Dijk 2006: 7-8).

Between 1963 and 1970, Hartmann and Husband (1974: 27-29) undertook a content analysis of the coverage of race in the British national press. Although this research is now well dated, Hartmann and Husband's work has formed the basis of, and has been heavily cited in, much of the research relating to the representation of ethnicity in the press. Articles mentioning race were classified into one category according to the central theme of the article, and then placed into secondary categories according to secondary themes. Hartmann and Husband found that the most common central theme relating to race was immigration. The second most common theme was race relations, followed by crime, then human interest and 'coloured' people as victims of accidents (Hartmann and Husband 1974: 136-137). In line with theory mentioned above, Hartmann and Husband (1974: 146) accuse the press of projecting an image of Britain as a white society, where ethnic minorities are a problem or 'aberration', rather than groups that belong to British society. They claim that the press is not simply a reflection of public opinion on racial issues but that the press actively plays a role in shaping this opinion.

The University of Limerick in Ireland, undertook a multi-annual research project between 2000 and 2004 called 'Conflation, Construction and Content' which looked at the production, content and reception of news relating to immigrants. In

this research, Haynes, Breen, and Devereaux (2004: 12) analysed the response of Irish print, television and radio media to the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees. The overall aim of the wider project was to deconstruct negative media discourses and highlight the media's role in perpetuating the 'otherness' of refugees and asylum seekers and maintaining, rather than reducing, the social distance between them and the readers.

Two subsets of this study are of particular relevance for the research reported here. The first is a study of the Irish press coverage of asylum seekers and refugees between 2001 and 2002, which looked at how often certain frames occur, and how much of the coverage is negatively framed. The second is an international study of newspaper coverage between 2003 and 2004 which confirmed the universality of the frames identified in the Irish print media by analysing press coverage of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia (Haynes, et al. 2004: 6). In the Irish study, Breen et al. formulated five negative frames and three non-negative frames from inductive content analysis of these newspapers and then undertook deductive content analysis to find out which frames were the most prevalent (Breen et al 2005: 3). The negative frames were similar in that they all represented asylum seekers and refugees as the 'other'.

The first negative frame identified in the Irish study was 'The Illegitimacy of Asylum Seekers and Seeking' frame. This included discourses representing asylum seeking as inherently illegal and casting doubt on the genuineness of most asylum seekers. The frame created an 'in' group and 'out' group divide, focusing on negativity and threat, especially the abuse of 'us', the victims, perpetrated by 'them' (Haynes et al. 2004: 7). It covered issues such as fraudulent entry, deportation and evasion of deportation, illegal entry and trafficking tragedies (Breen et al 2005: 15).

The second negative frame was the 'Threat to National or Local Integrity'. It focused on contrasting the racialisation of the 'other' to the hegemonic assumption of homogeneity of the host nation, which was depicted as crucial to the nation's national identity. It also linked the population of asylum seekers and refugees to an increase in racial conflict and dramatised words such as 'flood' and 'influx' were used, playing up the 'threat' of asylum seekers and refugees even more (Haynes et al 2004: 9).

The third negative frame was 'The 'Other' as Contaminant' or 'Social Deviancy' frame. This fabricated the 'other' as being degenerate and alien, justifying an exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers from access to resources and opportunities, thus allowing 'us' to retain privileged access. It focused on discourses such as disease (especially AIDS), mental illness, fundamentalism and extremism (such as self-harm as a means of protesting deportation), and sexual deviancy. This meant asylum seekers and refugees were framed as both a physical and moral contaminant. The threat of the 'other' was exaggerated through words such as 'epidemic' and 'infect' and dichotomies were created between 'us' as civilised, pure, and rational, versus 'them' as barbaric, dirty and emotional. These dichotomies are typical of racist discourses (Haynes et al 2004: 9-10).

The fourth frame was the 'Criminality' frame. Asylum seekers and refugees were framed as a threat to the safety of native citizens and their property. Their immigration status and nationality was linked to the crime they were accused of, even when these facts were irrelevant to the crime committed. The media was found to focus unevenly on ethnic crime and court appearances by ethnic minorities. Asylum seekers and refugees were found to be explicitly linked to terrorism, war crimes, riots and street violence (Haynes et al 2004: 10-11).

The final negative frame was the 'Economic Threat' frame. This frame represented asylum seekers and refugees as ungrateful and dishonest. It focused primarily on the huge cost of the asylum system to taxpayers, and on benefits fraud, compensation claims, and the cost of providing health care and other services (Haynes et al 2004: 11).

The three non-negative frames were 'Human Interest', 'Support' and 'Exclusively Positive' (Breen, et al 2005: 25), but they were not elucidated by Breen et al. in much detail, suffice to say that these frames represented asylum seekers and refugees in a positive, supportive and sympathetic way.

The Irish press deductive research comprised 188 articles from four newspapers (Breen et al 2005: 3). The results of this analysis found that the Illegitimacy frame was the most common, with 59 out of the 188 articles classed in this category. The second most common category was the Support category; followed by the

Threat to Integrity and the Contaminant frames. The least common frames were the Human Interest, Economic Threat, Criminality, and Exclusively Positive frames. Overall, 67.6 percent of the articles were classed as negatively framed and just 32.4 percent non-negatively framed (Breen et al. 2005: 26). The six-month international study illustrated that all of these frames could be applied to the press coverage of asylum seekers and refugees anywhere in the world, in any type of media outlet.

Research Questions

The findings in previous research about the negativity of newspaper coverage of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers leads to the first hypothesis: In the New Zealand mainstream print media, articles about immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are more likely to be framed negatively than either neutrally or positively.

The previous research outlined above points to the over-emphasis on crime in relation to ethnic minorities and the routine coverage of ethnic crime stories. In addition, the illegitimacy frame was found to be the most common frame in the international study of the framing of refugees and asylum seekers by Breen et al. These two findings lead to the second hypothesis: The Illegitimacy and Criminality frames will be the most used negative frames in news items covering immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The most used non-negative frame found by Breen et al was the Support frame. However, that research only focused on coverage of asylum seekers and refugees. The research by Hartmann and Husband, which included immigrants, found human interest to be the most used non-negative frame, which leads to the third hypothesis: The Human Interest frame will be the most used positive frame in news items covering immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Because of the tendency to demonise immigrants who originate from different cultures, especially if they are also of a different race as mentioned in the theory above, it is expected that immigrants from White European countries such as Britain, will be the least negatively framed group. This reasoning leads to the fourth hypothesis: White Europeans will be the most positively framed ethnic group in articles covering immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Within the negative framing of ethnic news, coverage of Muslims has been found to be even more negative and increasingly so since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Rita Verma (2005: 12), an Assistant Professor at Adelphi University, claims that since 9/11, the media has linked the dangerous 'otherness' of immigrants to Arab Muslims with beards and turbans, representing them all as terrorists. The media link cultural and religious symbols to terrorism although they are clearly unrelated, which dehumanises and victimises Arabs, creating an erroneous stereotype of all Middle Eastern people and Muslims in general. Hussain (2002: 105) found that out of the 27 news stories in the Danish press covering crime, 24 of these implicated Muslim immigrants in the crime. This high number was not because of the high rate of offending of Muslims but because of repetition of the same events. The media seized upon such a story and replayed it and published it from different angles to exploit its news value, but consequently distorted the reality of criminal offending. This leads to the fifth hypothesis: Articles about immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers that refer to Middle Eastern people are more likely to be framed negatively than articles that refer to other ethnic groups.

The category of 'Immigrants' includes 'skilled' immigrants - immigrants who are considered able to positively contribute to the economy. It is more likely that the framing of immigrants will be less negative than of refugees and asylum seekers because there are a higher percentage of immigrants from culturally similar countries, compared to refugees and asylum seekers, who are more likely to be from Third World countries. Even though refugees and asylum seekers have been severely victimised in their home country, hence their refugee status or their appeal for asylum, they are more likely to be considered a threat to their adopted country than immigrants (Haynes et al 2004: 7). This leads to the final hypothesis: News articles about refugees and asylum seekers are more likely to be negatively framed than news articles about immigrants.

Methodology

The mainstream newspaper coverage of immigrants from 2004 to 2007 was investigated by conducting content analysis of the three largest New Zealand daily metropolitan newspapers, the New Zealand Herald, Dominion Post, and Christchurch Press. First, an exploratory content analysis was carried out to determine what frames were represented in New Zealand press coverage, and then a full content analysis of 370 articles was carried out to measure the

frequency of occurrence of each of these frames. The analysis also included categorising articles according to whether they covered immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers; and what ethnic group, if any, was referred to in an article. The New Zealand Herald, Dominion Post, and Christchurch Press were chosen as they are broadly representative of daily newspapers in New Zealand in terms of style and format. They also have the largest newspaper readerships in New Zealand, with a combined total of over one million readers on any given weekday (New Zealand Herald 2007; NZPA Content Services 2007).

All articles from these newspapers were retrieved from the electronic database Factiva. The search terms required that articles be from 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2007. The key-words 'immigrant/s', 'migrant/s', 'asylum seeker/s', and 'refugee/s' were entered in a search of articles that contained headlines or lead paragraphs dealing substantially with these groups. The articles retrieved were then sorted to include only those articles that dealt with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in New Zealand, or relations between these groups and native New Zealanders. The articles also needed to deal substantially with immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers; passing references to these groups in items on other subjects were rejected. The articles were further sorted so that only every third month was analysed in each year to make a total of four months for each year. Each month was covered at least once in the analysis. This meant that in 2004 and 2007, the months of March, June, September and December were analysed; in 2005, it was February, May, August and November; and in 2006, January, April, July, and October were used.

Following the approach of Breen et al in their Irish and international studies of asylum seekers and refugees, two types of content analysis were carried out, inductive and then deductive. A sample of 20 articles was selected from the four-year period studied, and an inductive content analysis was undertaken of these articles. This sought to determine whether the same frames in Breen et al's research appeared in the New Zealand mainstream press and whether these frames were also relevant to immigrants, a group not covered in Breen et al's study. The inductive analysis undertaken found that all frames in Breen et al.'s research (negative frames of Illegitimacy, Contaminant, Threat to Integrity, Criminality, Economic Threat, and positive frames of Support, Human Interest, Exclusively Positive) were present in the New Zealand press. However, an additional positive frame had to be included to accurately categorise the coverage

of immigrants in New Zealand, the 'Economic Advantage' frame. In addition to this, a small percentage of articles did not fit into either a negative or positive frame, so a 'Neutral' category needed to be created.

For the deductive content analysis once the frames were established, articles were qualitatively assessed as to whether the articles were positive, neutral or negative in the way the immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers were framed. Articles were put into the category they most substantially dealt with, for example, an article about a Pacific Island immigrant committing a crime was put in the criminality category, which is a subsection of the negative frame category. An article that would be put into the neutral category is one which was neither positive nor negative and so did not fit into any subsection in those groups; an example of this is an article about immigrants finding it hard to get jobs in New Zealand.

Once put into a frame category, the articles were separated into various categories. They were separated into one of three categories depending on whether they covered immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers. They were also separated into ethnic groups (if one was explicitly stated), which were White European, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, Asian, African and Latin American. If the article referred to more than one ethnic group, it was classed in all relevant categories.

Following the approach of Hartmann and Husband, most of the results are based on the findings for all three newspapers combined. This is because there is no a priori reason to believe there will be significant variation across the newspapers studied in their coverage of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. There is no 'tabloid' versus 'quality' newspaper distinction amongst New Zealand's metropolitan newspapers as there is in the United Kingdom. The only factor that may create a difference between newspapers is the higher concentration of ethnic people in Auckland, meaning the relative amount of coverage may be greater in the New Zealand Herald than the Dominion Post, and Christchurch Press. In 2006, the percentages of overseas-born people in the areas these newspapers are circulated were 37 percent for Auckland, 24 percent for Wellington and 18 percent for Christchurch. The New Zealand average is 23 percent (Statistics New Zealand 2007b: 6-7). However, this study is more concerned with the type of news about immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers generally available to the New Zealand public as a whole (Hartmann and Husband 1974: 132).

Results

Table 1 Frames used in the New Zealand Press (%)

	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total (No.)
NZ Herald	50.4	25.2	24.4	135
Dominion Post	58.5	20.0	21.5	135
Christchurch Press	61.0	19.0	20.0	100
Total	56.2 (208)	21.6 (80)	22.2 (82)	370

Table 1 shows the percentage of articles about immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers that were framed negatively, neutrally and positively in the sample. 56.2 percent were framed negatively, compared to 21.6 percent neutrally and 22.2 percent positively. This supports the first hypothesis that more articles would be framed negatively than either neutrally or positively. If all neutrally and positively framed articles were classed broadly as non-negative, there would still be 56.2 percent negative compared to 43.8 percent non-negative. However, if articles had to be put into either positive or negative, a more realistic assumption is that the neutral articles would be spread evenly among the two categories, the ratio of negative to positive being closer to 67.0 percent to 33.0 percent.

There are significantly fewer negative stories in the New Zealand Herald and this may reflect Auckland being a more ethnically diverse community than the other two cities. The editor of the New Zealand Herald may be more sensitive to printing stories that may cause offence to ethnic groups than his counterpart at the Christchurch Press whose readership is overwhelmingly white.

Breakdown of Frames in the Press

Table 2 provides a breakdown of particular frames used in the content of articles in New Zealand press when covering immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The table shows that the negative frames of 'Criminality' and 'Illegitimacy' were the most commonly used frames, with the positive 'Human Interest' and 'Threat to Integrity' being the next most utilised frames. These findings support the second hypothesis that 'Criminality' and 'Illegitimacy' would be the most used negative frames, and 'Human Interest' would be the most used positive frame.

Table 2 Breakdown of Frames excluding Neutral Frames (No.)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total	Total (%)
Illegitimacy	20	24	7	13	64	22.1
Criminality	10	23	15	9	57	19.7
Human interest	14	15	8	11	47	16.2
Threat to Integrity	28	7	1	7	43	14.8
Economic advantage	5	7	9	4	25	8.6
Economic threat	11	2	4	7	24	8.3
Contaminant	2	6	7	5	19	6.6
Exclusively positive	2	-	-	3	5	1.7
Support for	-	-	4	-	4	1.4
Total	92	84	55	57	290	

Although the ratio of negatively framed articles to non-negatively framed articles was similar to the Irish study by Breen et al., the prevalence of the frames was somewhat different. Breen et al found that the second most common frame in the Irish press was a positive frame - the 'Support for' frame - whereas it was found to be the least common frame in the present study. This may be because Breen et al's study only examined articles about refugees and asylum seekers, whereas the present study includes immigrants. Conversely, Breen et al. found that 'Criminality' was the second least common frame, whereas it was found to be the second most common frame. The 'Exclusively positive' and 'Support for' frames were barely used at all, the two most positive frames.

Framing of Articles that Mention Race

Of the 370 articles analysed, 274 articles mentioned the race or races of the immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Table 3 sets out the number of articles referring to each racial group and how many were framed negatively, neutrally and positively. The table shows the disproportionate attention placed on Middle Eastern and people, with 43.8 percent of all relevant articles (120 out of 274) covering this racial group. This is hugely disproportionate to their representation in the New Zealand population, as no Middle Eastern country even features in the top nine most common overseas birthplaces in New Zealand's 2006 census. This census also found that less than one percent of New Zealand's usually resident

population were from the 'Middle Eastern, Latin American or African' grouping, while 23 percent of New Zealand's usually resident population are immigrants (Statistics New Zealand 2007b: 6-7).

At least 50 percent of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers entering New Zealand in 2005 to 2006 were from white ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand 2007a: 114), yet only 14.2 percent of articles explicitly named the White European ethnic group. Table 3 shows that the White European category was the only racial group with a higher percentage of positive frames (61.5%) than negative frames (20.5%). This supports the fourth hypothesis that the White European ethnic group would have the highest percentage of positively framed articles. Conversely, the Middle Eastern category has a much higher percentage of negatively framed articles than other racial groups, with 78.3 percent of articles being negatively framed. This finding supports the fifth hypothesis that articles referring to Middle Eastern people or Muslims would be framed the most negatively out of all the ethnic groups.

Table 3 Articles in the New Zealand Press that Mention Race: 2004-2007 (%)

	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total (No.)
African	46.4	17.9	35.7	28
Asian	48.6	32.9	18.6	70
Latin American	66.7	0.0	33.3	3
Middle Eastern	78.3	13.3	8.3	120
Pacific Islander	57.1	21.4	21.4	14
White European	20.5	17.9	61.5	39
Total (No.)	159	54	61	274

Comparison of Representation of Immigrants, and Refugees/Asylum Seekers

This section compares the representation of immigrants to refugees and asylum seekers. The reason that refugees and asylum seekers are grouped together is because these two terms are used interchangeably by the newspapers, as was found by Haynes, Breen and Devereaux (2004) and Spoonley and Trlin (2004: iv). In particular, 'refugee' was much used more than 'asylum seeker'. These terms are actually quite different. A refugee is someone who has been granted refugee

status, whereas an asylum seeker is someone who is seeking refugee status (Amnesty International 2007). The category ‘Immigrants’ included overstayers and illegal immigrants – two groups that were almost universally negatively framed. This increased the percentage of negatively framed articles about immigrants, so arguably, if these were classed in a separate group, there would be a much greater disparity between framing of immigrants and refugees/asylum seekers.

Table 4 shows that immigrants are less negatively framed than refugees and asylum seekers, which supports the final hypothesis that immigrants would be less negatively framed than refugees and asylum seekers. Just under one-half of the immigrant articles were classed as negative (49.1%), compared to almost two-thirds (66.4%) of refugee and asylum seeker articles. More immigrant articles were framed non-negatively than negatively. The 66.4% of negative frames for articles about refugees and asylum seekers is close to the 67.6% of negative frames found by Breen et al in their Irish study.

Table 4 Framing of Immigrants versus Refugees and Asylum Seekers (%)

	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total (No.)
Immigrants	49.1	26.6	24.3	218
Refugees/Asylum Seekers	66.4	14.4	19.1	152

Discussion

The findings reported above may be challenged on the grounds that most news stories focus on the negative – the wrongdoings of public officials, politicians with hidden agendas, businesses engaged in shady dealings, the under-performance of sports coaches and their teams. Perhaps negative stories are just more newsworthy than positive ones! Ter Wal, d’Haenens and Koeman (2005: 948-949) explored this question through a content analysis of newspaper coverage in fifteen European Union (EU) Member States in 2003. They found that on average ethnic stories stressed more negative aspects than non-ethnic stories. Some topics, such as crime and demonstrations, even appear to only gain news value when related to ethnicity. While the current study did not examine non-ethnic stories, there is little reason to believe New Zealand would differ from the EU findings once we control for asylum seekers that are more of an issue in Europe than New Zealand.

It may be argued that the negative behaviour of all ethnic groups is disproportionately covered by the media – negative stories sell newspapers! While this may unfortunately be true, it is still the case that there were marked differences found in the framing of white and non-white immigrants. Those identified as Middle Eastern were found to be the group most regularly framed in a negative fashion, which is in keeping with earlier literature that has found that the media coverage of this minority group has become increasingly negative since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In contrast, the White European ethnic group was the only ethnic group with more positively framed articles than neutrally or negatively framed articles. This supports previous literature, which has shown that the dominant group in society will be represented in a more positive way than other ethnic groups, who are not accorded the same degree of legitimation as white immigrants.

It may be the case that the articles that did not mention any ethnicity did not do so because it was seen as irrelevant as the subjects were white. “Ethnicity is often a ‘minus-one’ category, whereby every minority group is seen by the majority group members as ethnic, but the dominant group is not” (Fleras and Spoonley 1999: 84). This would explain the extremely low percentage of articles that name the white ethnic group even though they are overwhelmingly the largest immigrant group. Roediger writes that “a silence on the ethnic politics of a majority group serves to intensify (or redouble) that group’s hegemony” (Roediger 1994: 12).

Two years ago, National MP Pansy Wong (2007) complained to the New Zealand Herald and Christchurch Press about their coverage of two Asian schoolgirls who exposed GlaxoSmithKline’s misrepresentation of the Vitamin C content in their blackcurrant fruit drink Ribena. Wong questioned the newspapers on why they did not state that these girls were Asian – they called them ‘Kiwi schoolgirls’. She claimed that newspapers are more likely to mention the race of a non-white person when the news is bad, for example, crime stories, but are less likely to when the news is good. Her claim supports the literature outlined earlier, which has shown that immigrants who do not originate from similar cultures are racialised and demonised.

Does the Negative Framing Matter?

Paul Spoonley (1990: 31) writes, “[i]f the media are racist, then it will be because the wider society is racist. The media reflect and appeal to commonly held values to varying degrees.” Although there has been very little research on the media’s role in causing or contributing to racism in New Zealand, research from other countries indicates that there is a strong link between media coverage of minority groups and racist attitudes. The media’s negative representation of minority groups is a reflection of the views of dominant groups in society. The media, through negative representations of minorities, do not create the prejudice in society but merely reinforce and legitimise the existing prejudice in society. Hartmann and Husband (1974: 146) found that the British media’s negative representation of Afro-Caribbeans and Asians was part of a circular process. The public had negative attitudes towards non-white minorities and this was reflected in the media coverage. This media coverage then reinforced the existing negative attitudes. The circular process concept is supported by McCreanor (1993), who writes that “[m]edia stories both construct and are constructed by those commonsense ideological patterns and associations shared by their audience. The patterns act as boundaries or fields within which the commonsense of a social group can flow with ease. It is the reliance of media accounts and other discourse on the kinds of pattern described here which ensures the reproduction of our social order without recourse to an ideological police force”.

Due to limited space, the media has to select and structure information, which presents a partial picture of the story. This practice determines what the public learns about and thus what the public considers ‘newsworthy’. As the audience is not in a position to judge the accuracy of the reporting, the selection of information by the media influences what attitude the audience decides is appropriate. The influence of the media on audience attitudes is further heightened by the inability of minority groups to counter the negative images portrayed by the media (Spoonley 1990: 31-32).

Broader Implications for Society

“To ignore or marginalise ethnic groups (be they indigenous or immigrant) is incompatible with the democratic role of the media” (Barker 1990: 78). However, as newspapers are privately owned commercial enterprises that are self-regulated

by the Press Council, they have no obligation to provide a 'public service'. Therefore, if they cater to populist mainstream sentiments, the findings of this research are not surprising, especially as each of these newspapers has a regional monopoly and as such, cannot afford to appeal to a niche. The press will reflect and validate commonly held opinions because as a commercial entity, they need to stay on the good side of the dominant group in society because these are the readers who attract advertisers, who are their primary source of revenue. Therefore, the market plays a huge role in how ethnic minorities are represented in the media (Spoonley et al 2004: 196).

The question this then raises is should there be some sort of public service requirement for newspapers to fulfil? Fogtmann et al (2006: 4) raise this question in their research of media representation of immigrants in Denmark. They ask whether the media has a greater responsibility given the finding that the media "acts as an important gatekeeper to the integration of immigrants" because of its influence on the majority's perceptions of minority groups. "Does the media have a duty to actively level the playing field for immigrants attempting to enter the labor market, or can we only expect them to continue peddling the stories about conflict that are known to sell?" They argue that "newspapers should challenge their readers and not just cater to their opinions", but question whether the media can "tear down barriers or can they only build up and solidify already existing stereotypes and prejudices that stem from a majority segregated from the minority groups?" (Fogtmann et al. 2006: 6). The media has the power to either continue to reinforce Pakeha prejudices, or to be a vessel which challenges these prejudicial ideas and opinions (Spoonley 1990: 36-37).

In the case of the New Zealand print media, there has been some industry self-regulation. One such example is section 41 of the Rules of the New Zealand Amalgamated Engineering Printing & Manufacturing Union. Section 41 is the journalistic code of ethics; with section 41(b) stating that journalists shall not place unnecessary emphasis on race (New Zealand Amalgamated Engineering Printing & Manufacturing Union 2008). While this recognises that there is a potential problem, the findings of this research show that, in practice such an 'unnecessary' emphasis on race is still occurring by New Zealand's three major daily newspapers.

Although media coverage of ethnic affairs has improved since the mid-1990s, the media still use crude all-inclusive labels which do not acknowledge significant differences between people that are grouped together, and there is still a tendency to focus on negative aspects of ethnic affairs, especially crime (Spoonley and Trlin 2004: 61). Spoonley and Trlin provide a concise summary of suggestions that have been made to improve the performance of the print media in New Zealand when covering ethnic minorities. These include the introduction of a specific code of ethics for ethnic reporting (Tully 1990), better representation of ethnic journalists in newsrooms (Webber 1990: 148), ensuring journalists covering ethnic relations are appropriately qualified and do not lack understanding of ethnic groups (Jakubowicz 1994; McGregor 1991), and creating an in-house ombudsman to ensure journalists comply with professional standards (Stannard 1989).

The implementation of any of these suggestions would be in addition to the existing measures of redress that are available. The New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority and the Press Council are relatively independent organisations and the importance of these organisations must not be downplayed. However, these formal avenues of complaint may not be utilised in many cases, where immigrants may not be happy with coverage of ethnic affairs, but they do not yet have an adequate grasp on the language or they may feel vulnerable. Even when there is a valid complaint laid, there is the possibility that those responsible for investigating the complaint will not have the required expertise or alternatively, they may be unwilling to criticise the media (Spoonley and Trlin 2004: 63). A complainant can also write a letter to the editor of the publication in question, issue a press release, or take legal action. However, most of these options do not achieve much of consequence. The editor of the publication at fault has the discretion to decide whether or not to publish a complaint or if the publication prints a correction, it is unlikely to be as prominently displayed as the earlier offending article (Spoonley 1990: 35).

Roth (1998: 495) argues that industry self-regulation will not result in a 'socially responsible media' that accurately explores and reflects the multicultural reality of society, but political and social activities are required to challenge the status quo. Canada has passed legislation to protect "the right to receive and transmit an appropriately balanced depiction of Canadian multicultural society." However,

legislating to ensure that the media accurately depicts New Zealand's multicultural reality takes away from the freedom of the press.

There are various ways that these findings on the negative framing of immigrants can be used to contribute to society without legislating. Firstly, because the media reflects society's views, steps must be taken to address negative attitudes toward immigrant groups. More initiatives such as Settling In are needed to increase interaction between immigrants and non-immigrants. Settling In is a programme that is run in seven regions in New Zealand that works with refugee and migrant groups as well as local governments and NGOs. The programme identifies their needs and helps them to form relationships with other New Zealanders with the aim of bridging religious, cultural and ethnic divides (The Human Rights Commission and Race Relations 2007). Successes of such programmes would mean that the media may gradually frame immigrants less negatively because the media would reflect a change in the public view to be less negative towards immigrant groups.

Secondly, the media's production of negative minority discourses needs to be addressed. One way this could occur would be a more representative number of minority journalists in the mainstream media. However, this is difficult to achieve, as the government cannot legislate to ensure privately owned newspapers employ a certain percentage of minority journalists. It also requires that minorities be educated and encouraged to enter the field of journalism. The New Zealand Journalism Training Organisation's 2006 National Survey of Journalists found that two-thirds of journalists believed that minorities were underrepresented in newsrooms in New Zealand. It also found that journalists believed there was a need especially for more Maori, Pacific Island and Asian journalists (The Human Rights Commission and Race Relations 2007). On a positive note, recently there have been voluntary steps taken to address this problem, such as the annual journalist internship intake by Fairfax media that began in 2006, which among its aims, seeks to increase the diversity of journalists. In 2006, out of the seventeen successful applicants, five were Maori, one was Asian and one was Polynesian (The Human Rights Commission and Race Relations 2007).

Conclusion

In 1990, Spoonley and Hirsh presented the media with two choices based on their findings of media bias towards immigrants. The media could ignore the findings and hide behind their presumed 'objectivity', or they could reassess themselves and their contribution to racism in society (Webber 1990: 148). Now towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, have the media taken the second option or have they simply followed along the same road? The evidence of this research suggests the latter.

Note on the contributor

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