- ARTICLE -

Diversity, Inclusivity and the News: Coverage of the 2014 New Zealand General Election

Verica Rupar, Thomas Owen, Sarah Baker

Abstract

Upon winning his third term as Prime Minister, John Key announced that he would lead a government for 'all New Zealanders'. This study takes this statement of inclusivity as its point of departure for an analysis of diversity issues within the 2014 General Election news coverage. Conducting a content analysis of 575 *New Zealand Herald*, *Morning Report*, and *One News at 6pm* news stories from the four weeks leading up to Election Day 2014, the study examines who gets to speak in the coverage, and who and what gets spoken about. News media provide a crucial function in democratic societies, one never so indispensable as during election times. For a cosmopolitan and diverse contemporary nation-state such as New Zealand, issues of inclusivity and representation become critical considerations for news media tasked with providing all citizens the information they require to participate in democratic governance. This study finds that despite the initial appearance of an election out of the ordinary, dominated by scandal, surprise, and the influence of minor parties, the statistical data on the election coverage presents a picture of a traditional status quo—dominated by male, white, major party, affluent voices, in a media gaze consumed with political process over political issues.

Verica Rupar is an Associate Professor at the School of Communication Studies, AUT, New Zealand. She has edited and authored *Journalism and meaning-making* (Hampton Press, 2010), *Scooped: Politics and power of journalism in Aoteraoa New Zealand* (co-edited with Sean Phelan and Martin Hirst, AUT Media 2012), *Getting the facts right: reporting ethnicity and religion in Europe* (IFJ, 2012). Her research has appeared in international journals including *Journalism*, *Journalism studies*, and *Journalism Practice.* Verica serves as an academic consultant for the London-based Media Diversity Institute.

Dr Thomas Owen (PhD Massey University) is a lecturer at Auckland University of Technology. He researchers in the fields of global journalism, indigenous education, intellectual property protection, and political communication. See his latest book, *Patents, Pills and the Press*, from Peter Lang Publishers.

Dr Sarah Baker is a lecturer in the AUT School of Communications. She is the co-founder of the AUT Popular Culture Centre and a member of JMAD and the AUT Media Observatory Group. Her research interests include political economy, current affairs television programmes, and popular culture. Her doctoral research examined the impact of deregulation on current affairs programmes in New Zealand and is titled The Changing Face of Current Affairs Television Programmes in New Zealand 1984-2004.

Introduction

The normative demand that media communications serve democracy is at its most salient during election time. Public interest in media performance significantly increases as the voting comes closer, raising questions over the place of media in society, accuracy and fairness, power and disparity, social integration and identity, and political and social change. The idea of the *inclusive society*—a society based on equality of opportunities and the equal capacity of all members regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, faith, religion, language, gender, social status, (dis)abilities, or sexual orientation (United Nations 2009)—underpins political speeches[1] on both sides of the political spectrum, aiming to maintain social distinctions while attracting both media and voter attention. A 'wider social interest' colours the pages of party manifestos and serves as a stage for managing diversity as collectivity of difference and cultural diversity as cultural difference (Bhabha 2006), especially in social situations when 'equal' and 'different' might collide. Academics warn that society depends on the quality of radio and television bulletins, print and online news for the efficiency of its democratic institutions (Carey 1997). At election time—a period of high political activity—the media's duty to provide information and alert the public to the events and issues of the day is often invoked.

This process in turn ignites additional responsibilities around the formation of public opinion, public engagement, and the encouragement of political participation (Blumer and Cushion 2014). While the Electoral Commission is charged with ensuring that general election advice is communicated to all eligible voters regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation or family status, the media's task is often understood to ensure that members of the public are able to draw upon a 'diverse marketplace of ideas' in order to decide who to vote for (Strömbäck and Kaid 2008). This liberal conception of diversity[2] (Boswick and Husband 2005), associated with the spectrum of political options and equal access to political and media arenas, promotes the idea that virtues of tolerance and respect for 'otherness' allow harmonious functioning of society and put a barrier to discrimination on any ground. These progressive (van Dijk 1989) discourses create a normative framework for the news media's approach to elections in democratic societies.

For these reasons, elections provide a fertile context for looking closely at journalism, democracy, and the diversity of voices and ideas in the media. The New Zealand 2014 General Election, described as a 'no change election' and an 'indisputable triumph for one man' (Armstrong 2014), brought the National Party a third term in office. Prime Minister John Key claimed it as 'a victory for those who refused to be distracted and for those who knew a vote for National was a vote for a brighter future in New Zealand' (*The New Zealand Herald* 2014). On election night, John Key repeated a phrase often heard during the elections: 'I will lead a Government that governs for all New Zealanders' (*The New Zealand Herald* 2014).

John Key's explicit reference to inclusivity provides the point of departure from which this study examines media coverage of the 2014 New Zealand General Election. Progressive discourses may drive the news media's approach to elections, but research has repeatedly demonstrated discrepancy between normative ideas of journalism and its actual everyday practice. Specifically, this study focuses on the relationship between the election news and social diversity. Based on the project *AUT Media Observatory: News, politics and diversity in the 2014 New Zealand General Election[3],* it aimed to address the following questions: Who is engaged in the election debate? Who is talked about in the media? And what is talked about in the election coverage? The research was conducted from 23 August until 19 September 2014—the four weeks leading up to the General Election on September 20. Using a content analysis framework (Krippendorff 2013), the study investigated election reports published in *The New Zealand Herald* newspaper, and broadcast on Radio New Zealand's *Morning Report* and Television New Zealand's *ONE News at 6pm*.

Journalism, democracy, and diversity

The examination of media roles in democracy has historically developed around the question of what media practice means in terms of how people can live well together (Couldry 2012). The news media occupy a central space in the political communication process, and the examination of how news media encourage community cohesion around shared values has become ingrained into any purposeful communication about politics. This centrality comes with a good reason. Academic research on political reporting and the forms of journalism that support democratic practice (Blumler and Cushion 2014) has foregrounded concerns about the disconnection between what the media highlight and what the public consider important (Norris 2000). Mainstream political journalism has also been criticised for its inability to support serious political discourse; for its treatment of politics as spectacle; its focus on events rather than issues; obsession with personalities over policies; approach to election campaigns as horse races; preference for conflict over debate; and its strong implication in what has commonly been described as the regression of public life (Curran et al. 2009). At the core of all these indictments sits a critical question concerning the forum-creating capacity of the press. Almost a century since the journalist Walter Lippmann (1922) and the philosopher John Dewey (1927) started a debate on the nature of politics, the role of experts, and the place of journalism in society, an urge for democratic improvement of the news has repeatedly reemerged to underpin conversations about communication and its strategic use in political matters.

In a world characterised by diversity and inequality, the ultimate goal of dialogic democracy may be seen not as 'consensus', but rather the production of a space for 'multiple voices', where '"closure" is not achieved at the expense of failing to question prevailing relations of power' (Dobson 2014, 130). News media's role in processing, distributing and receiving social information ensures it occupies a central position in

providing a forum for public debate helping citizens to participate in public life. Being inclusive of the community defines what media do—or are expected to do—in terms of the civic values of equality and diversity, universally and not only in the time of elections. 'Can we live together, equal and different?' So asked Alain Touraine (1998, 140) in an essay challenging conventional, socio-centric approaches to inclusion and exclusion, equality and difference, diversity and multiculturalism. Touraine asserts:

> We must acknowledge that laws are increasingly being replaced by contracts and processes of arbitration and mediation, and most of all that norms fade away or are suppressed. . . . The disappearance of what we formally called society, which was neither diverse nor egalitarian, but rather integrated and hierarchical, opens the way for equality and diversity. (Touraine 1998, 157)

It is the commitment to a diversity of voices that is crucial for understanding journalism's place in society—its pledge to provide accurate, fair and impartial reporting, and to promote public participation in the democratic process. Expressions of reference to specific social groups, for example young and old, poor and rich, political left and right, are considered to be signs of belief in common origin and joint action. These expressions also indicate a certain level of distinctiveness that—in the everyday production of news—journalists transparently recognise as a 'plural subject' (Day 2006) worth mentioning in order to understand the election debate. Journalism's intervention, visible in the choice of sources, references to social groups and selection of topics, has been considered an important element within the wider process of 'mediatization' of politics (Cushion and Thomas 2013). This paper focuses on these three aspects of journalism practices to investigate the role news media played in structuring public debate during the 2014 election campaign.

Media's ambition to fulfil their public sphere ideals—in Habermas' (1989) definition of the concept as a realm of social life in which public opinion can be formed and where access is guaranteed to all citizens—becomes most visible in election time. While political and corporate interests and institutional routines within the journalistic field determine professional orientation towards power elites—'The news media do not passively describe or record news events in the world, but actively (re-)construct them, mostly on the basis of many types of source discourses' (van Dijk 1989, 203)—media carry a capacity to bring diversity of voices in public arena (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). People, issues and events: three domains most relevant for the news media operation, co-exist in public space but are forced to compete for public attention. For the majority of citizens who go to the ballot box, news is a type of discourse they engage with most frequently in their everyday lives (van Dijk 1986). The investigation of discursive pluralism in news media, as crucial sites for affirmation or discrimination of social and cultural diversity, therefore has a potential to reveal insight into the forum-creating capacity of the press. However, this capacity is far from given.

While the answer to the question 'who can talk' in the news defines journalists' approach to political reality, the frequent appearance of official sources in reporting indicates a 'perpetuation of the status quo' (Johnson-Cartee 2005, 236) because the legitimate institutions with privileged access to the news are also the sources with economic or political power. This influence of the powerful on the content of news reporting has further consequences for life in democratic societies because it limits the scope of critical public dialogue. The decision of whose voices and viewpoints should inform and structure the news discourse 'goes to the heart of democratic views of, and radical concerns about, the news media' (Cottle 2003, 5). Extensive scholarship on the position of the elite who have privileged access to news and an advantage in defining reality (Gitlin 1980; Herman and Chomsky 1988) reveals how the news media legitimise social inequality. For example, a lack of female voices when compared to men suggests an erasure of female points of view. Marginalising women's candidacy and voice at election time compromises the practice of a deliberative democracy and despite some improvement in coverage of political stories of women over time, women politicians mostly remain obstinately 'othered' by and in media discourse (Ross and Comrie 2011).

Using the concept of the press as a forum for public debate, this paper approaches the question of politics, news and diversity through an analysis of the topics of election reports, the use of sources, and references to social groups as elements of journalism practice.

Research design

This study analyses media coverage of the 2014 NZ General Election through a content analysis of articles in *The New Zealand Herald*, broadcasts on Radio New Zealand's (RNZ) *Morning Report* and Television New Zealand's (TVNZ) *ONE News at 6pm.*[4] These three news outlets were selected for their audience reach and for the central space they occupy in the New Zealand media landscape. A pilot week of coding ran from 11 August to 17 August, with final coding checks completed during the week beginning 18 August. The resulting study examined media coverage from the four weeks leading up to Election Day on 20 September 2014 (that is, coverage from 23 August to 19 September). Only stories that focused on the General Election were coded. This included stories that either mentioned the election in the introduction, or in which more than a third of the story dealt with the election.[5] These criteria generated a sample of 575 news stories (valid coding sheets) that were used as unit of analysis, including 116 from *TVNZ* (20.2% of the sample), 193 from *Radio NZ* (33.6% of the sample) and 266 from the *New Zealand Herald* (46.2% of the sample).

Each of the 575 articles was then coded into sixteen categories related to our investigation of news, politics and diversity. These included the topic of the news story (with coders selecting up to three main topics for each story), the sources referred to

(coded by organisation, affiliation, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, where specifically defined), as well as further references in the articles to various groups of people, as defined by age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical ability, and organisational and professional affiliation.[6] References to social groups were focused upon in this study in order to help unpack those identified as most frequently targeted for discrimination. The different categories were determined in reference to the Human Rights Act 1993 and although not comprehensive, provide a ground for exploring journalism's tendency to either single out or marginalise certain voices in the public domain. In terms of affiliations, particular attention was paid to references to political parties, and to the use of individuals from political parties as sources – in particular, the use of party leaders. Furthermore, for the category of sources and gender, codes were developed in order to distinguish whether the source was directly quoted or referred to through reported speech, and also in what order the sources appeared in the story (up to the first three sources).

These coding categories were thus designed to identify: 1) what types of social groups, identities, organisations, and individuals were represented in the election coverage; 2) which individuals from which groups were used as sources; and 3) what the topics of the election articles were. In this way, the coding categories relate to the three original research questions of this study: Who is engaged in debate in the election coverage? Who is talked about? And what is talked about? For all coding categories, reliability checks were conducted using Holsti's formula[7] and inter-coder agreement overall reached 94% (North et al. 1963), ensuring that all coders were working to the same consistent standard.

Before presenting the findings of the study, this section will first provide further detail on the context of the election media coverage by briefly introducing each of the three media outlets under investigation in light of their commitments towards diversity. Radio NZ Ltd is a Crown Entity company that operates under a charter outlining what the non-commercial, publicly funded national broadcaster is expected to provide. Section One (f), for example, directs RNZ to deliver 'comprehensive, independent, impartial and balanced national news services and current affairs; including items with a regional aspect' (Radio NZ 2007, 8). Editorial independence is guaranteed by this Act. Recognising and respecting diversity is highlighted as an aspect of serving the nation in the Charter and in the 1989 Broadcasting Act's codes of broadcasting. RNZ sees its role in news and current affairs as one concerned with the broad interests and diversity of its audience (Radio NZ 2007, 23). This is corroborated by public opinion: in an RNZ survey in March-April 2014, 88% of respondents thought a public service radio broadcaster important for the country (5% disagreed) and 80% thought RNZ provided a valuable service for New Zealanders (5% disagreed). A 'live listening' survey for the final quarter of 2013 revealed that the weekly live cumulative audience for RNZ National was 493,000, or 15% of the 15+ population. The same measurement for *Morning Report* was 355,000 (the highest audience numbers for national news, current

affairs, documentary, magazine, talk programmes). RNZ National's share of all radio station listening was 10.3%; *Morning Report*'s station share was 13.8%. In terms of audience size, the cumulative figures place RNZ National as second of all radio stations nationwide, while its station share puts it as first nationwide.

TVNZ, on the other hand, is a Crown-owned enterprise, operating independently from the State, yet required to return dividends to the government (Myllylahti 2014). TVNZ operates four national television channels: TV One, TV2, TVNZ Heartland, and TVNZ Kidzone24 (although the latter two are only available via pay channels on Sky, and online). TV One's target demographic is viewers in the 25-54 age bracket, and it has a total channel share of around 30%.[8] The channel's 6pm news bulletin remains New Zealand's most-watched television programme, reaching more than 700,000 people each night as of July 2014. Helen Clark's Labour government introduced a Charter for the broadcaster in 2003, however this was abandoned by the subsequent National government under John Key, which passed the Television New Zealand Amendment Bill on 12 July 2011 (New Zealand Parliament 2011). With this bill, TVNZ was released from its public service obligations and encouraged to return to a commercial agenda (Lealand 2011). Section 12 of the new bill stipulates that: 'The functions of TVNZ are to be a successful national television and digital media company providing a range of content and services on a choice of delivery platforms and maintaining its commercial performance' (Thompson 2010).

The New Zealand Herald (NZH) is New Zealand's largest daily newspaper. It is also one of the oldest, having been launched in 1863. Ownership has changed numerous times throughout its history, although it has consistently remained a privately owned and operated enterprise. It is currently part of NZME's (New Zealand Media Entertainment, previously known as APN News and Media) portfolio. The *New Zealand Herald* is published Monday to Friday, *The Weekend Herald* on Saturday, and the week is rounded out by the *Herald on Sunday*. *The New Zealand Herald's* circulation has remained steady at around 170,000 for seven consecutive audit periods, and the nzherald.co.nz website usually gets around 2.4 million page views of content per day. This is spread across around 360,000 unique browsers, with around 1.33 million people engaging with *Herald* journalism each week (*The New Zealand Herald*, 2012), and a daily brand audience of 818,000. The New Zealand Media branch of APN (which includes the *Herald* brands) posted revenue of AU$135.6 million for the six months ended June 30, 2014 (StopPress 2014).

Who is engaged in debate: sources of news
Parties and leaders
The findings of this study indicate that recognised political party sources dominated over non-political party sources in the election news coverage. There were approximately one and a half times more political party sources (784) in election news

coverage than other non-political party sources combined (571). The current governing major party, National, was the most frequent of political sources (209), while members of the public were the most frequent non-political source (215). The coding of a source as Political/National or Political/Labour was based on the presenter identifying the source as a National or Labour Member of Parliament as well as a party member.

(N = 1355)	
Variables	**Frequency**
Political parties	**[784]**
National Party	209
Labour Party	178
Internet-Mana group	92
New Zealand First	81
The Greens	80
Conservative party	52
Māori party	43
ACT New Zealand	24
United Future	23
Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis	2
The Alliance	0
DPSC	0
Focus New Zealand	0

Figure 1: Political party sources

These results demonstrate a dominance of the two main political parties in the frequency of sources. Interestingly, the number of times each party was used as a political source roughly corresponded with their ranking in the polls. The Internet Mana group's (including references to the Internet Party and Mana Movement as a combined coalition) media appearances outnumbered the Greens, New Zealand First and the Conservatives. As a new party/coalition it was perceived to have greater news value; it was also an alliance formed under MMP, which attracted greater attention than other similar parties. The Internet Mana group was also followed closely by media as there was often drama, controversy and conflict associated with the alliance and the stories surrounding it (the strong link between the group and Kim Dotcom and the controversy around the Moment of Truth event, for example) was a major focus of the media coverage. References to the main political leaders in the coverage followed similar patterns to the political party references. The most prominently referred to political leaders were John Key, David Cunliffe, Winston Peters, and the Greens' co-leaders, Metiria Turei and Russel Norman. Colin Craig (Conservative party) also featured prominently.

(N = 1355)	
Variables	**Frequency**
Other sources	**[571]**
Members of the public	215
Central Government[9]	76
Media/Other journalists	55
Academia	44
Business and Economy	41
Other	25
Law and Order	22
NGO	18
Public Services	17
Intelligence	15
Prof. Association	10
Trade union	7
Celebrities/Entertainment	6
Pollsters	6
Think tank	5
Anonymous	4
Sport	2
Local Government	1
Medical	1
Military	1
Religion	0

Figure 2: Other sources (non-political party sources)

In terms of non-political party sources, the main sources featured in stories were 'Members of the public' (215). Public voices were heard in vox populi interviews, whose short snippets of quotations raised the overall number of direct quotes from sources. Typically, the reporter would pose a question to a number of people on the street or at a public meeting. These were short comments and direct quotes edited to form collages rather than longer interviews. The quotations came across as brief comments rather than detailed interviews or analysis. Some of the vox pops were on topics such as the drinking age, pensioner travel entitlements, the minimum wage and mass surveillance.

Notably, in terms of economy and labour issues, Business and Economy sources (41) far out-numbered the Trade Union sources (7). In one prominent piece of coverage on RNZ there was a discussion on August 25 between the Economics Correspondent, several chief executives, and one trade union official. This highlighted a reliance and emphasis on business and economic sources and relative lack of engagement with trade unions and workers. Interestingly there was a relatively low use of celebrity and entertainment sources, which is counter to previous news and current affairs research where there has

been a strong focus on celebrity and entertainment rather than political stories or subject matter (Baker 2012; Comrie 1996; Cook 2000).

Gender of sources
Overall more than two thirds of the people talking in the election news were men with a total figure of 71% with the frequency 962 and women sources were 22.73% and had a frequency of 308. There was one transgender source (0.07% of total), while 84 sources were not identifiable (6.2%). This highlights a large gender imbalance in news sources. This study is consistent with other studies that show that women are underrepresented in news stories (Hernandez 1995; Lichler and Smith 1997). The choice of information sources is one of the most important decisions that journalists make and the inclusion of who will be represented in the news is a vital area for analysis. The findings of this research replicate international research into gender sources where it was found that women are seldom used for stories of national and international importance (Zoch and VanSlyke Turke 1998).

The gender inequality in the election coverage may be attributed to the overall gender gap in political party structure where the leaders and spokespeople are predominantly male. For instance, the two major party leaders, John Key and David Cunliffe, were the two most frequent sources. Six of the minor parties had male leaders, and even though the Green Party had male and female co-leaders, Russel Norman appeared much more frequently than Metiria Turei. The minor parties had six male leaders and were sources as follows: New Zealand First's Winston Peters (25), the Māori Party's Te Uroroa Flavell (12), Mana's Hone Harawira (10), the Conservative Party's Colin Craig (9), United Future's Peter Dunne (9) and ACT's Jamie White (6).

On the other hand, however, this does not account for the entire gender bias found in the research. For example, a 2012 study analysing media coverage of the United States election demonstrated that male reporters were assigned more hard stories than female reporters and that male sources were used more frequently by both female and male reporters (Irvin, 2013). By focusing on male sources media then reflect a society that regard women's opinions as less important than men and are part of the general inequality of women. As such the gender bias demonstrated in this study is part of a continuing trend of under-representing women sources in news stories. This could be a result of a focus on male politicians as well as a general media bias that favours male sources.
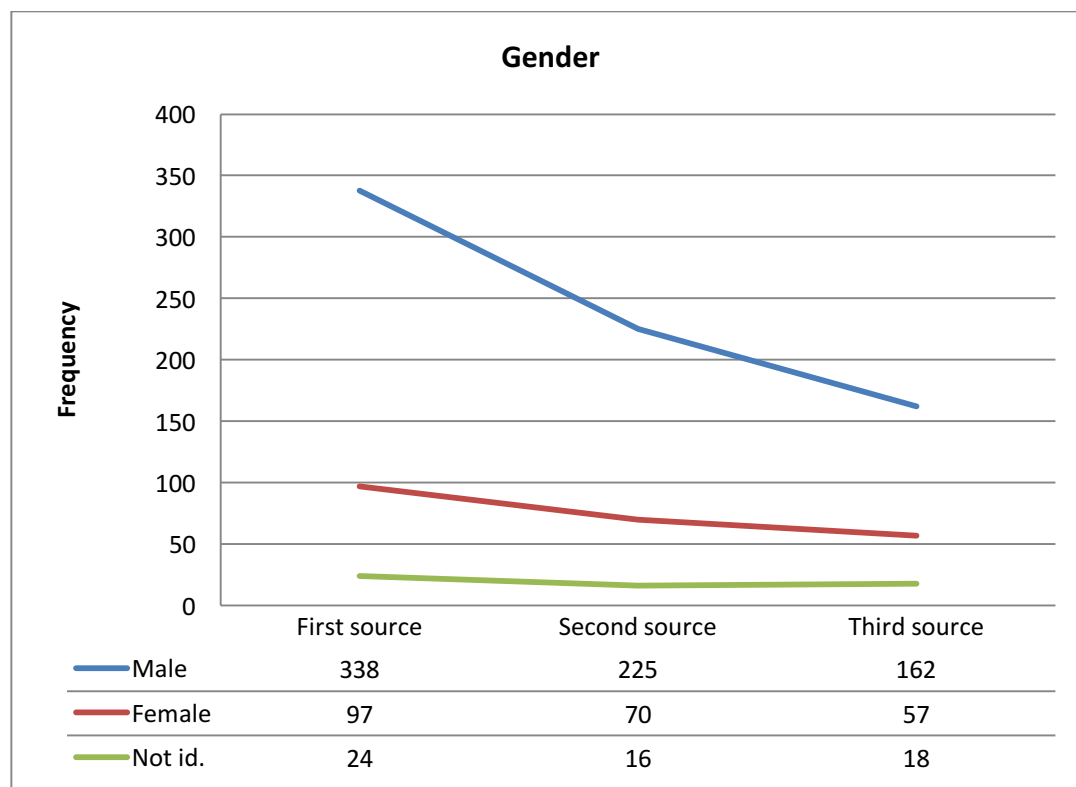
Figure 3: Representation and order of appearance of sources by gender

Figure 3 shows the overall representation of sources by gender in the sample. The sample is divided into the categories male, female and a further category where gender could not be determined. Frequency of sources was also measured and divided into the categories: first source, second source and third source. The highest number of those identified as first sources were male with 338 occurrences. The sources with the second highest frequency were also male with 225 occurrences while the third highest were also male sources with 162 occurrences. There was a substantial discrepancy in the number of female first sources compared to male sources. The highest frequency of female sources was 97 which is well under half that of the first male sources. The next highest frequency of female sources is 70 (which is less than half that of male second sources) while the third female sources category is 57 (which is less than half of those of male third sources). Of those sources not identified as either gender there were 24 first sources without a gender, 16 second sources that were not identified as either gender and 18 third sources without a gender identified.

The gender inequality represented in these findings demonstrates an unfair and inaccurate image of society when women who make up at least 50% of the population are thus grossly underrepresented in news coverage. However, this is consistent with studies that show that media coverage often focuses on male authorities and officials (Brown et al. 1987; Zoch and VanSlyke Turke 1998). In the 1998 Zoch and VanSlyke Turke study 7 out of 10 sources used were male and male sources outnumbered female sources. The time given to the sources also favoured men over women, with male

sources speaking substantially longer than female sources. Male sources were also quoted for longer in stories that were considered more important. By emphasising male sources audiences may conclude that women do not hold positions of authority or have much to say about important issues when they are not used as sources. Female reporters were more likely to report on human interest and health stories, while males reported on politics. Within those stories, males were more often cited as experts and sourced more frequently than female experts, while there were no major differences between male and female non-experts. Reporters were often more likely to choose a source of their own gender, which therefore gave male sources more prominence as there were more male reporters addressing hard news issues (Craft and Wanta 2004). The removal of women's voices as sources is an area of continued concern for media diversity and inclusivity.
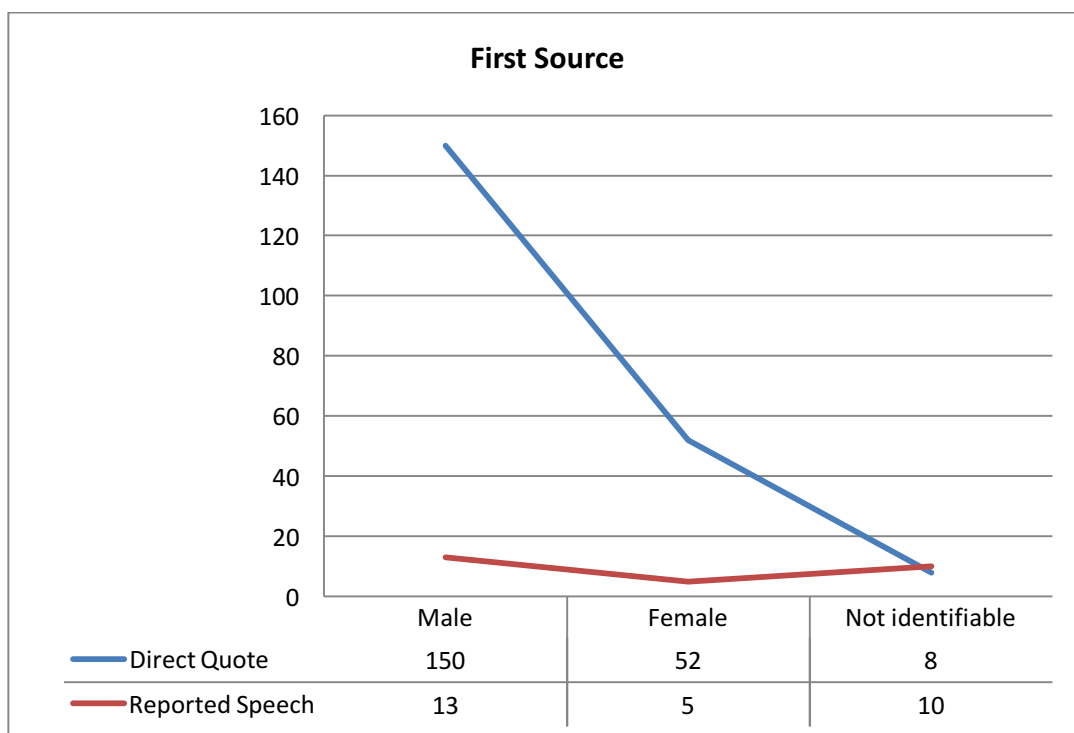

Figure 4: First source by gender and mode of speech

The gender of the sources was then measured for the frequency of direct quotes and reported speech (see Figure 4). In the first sources sample there are 150 instances of direct quotes attributed to men and 13 instances of reported speech. The male first sources predominantly used direct quotes rather than reported speech. The female first sources however had only 52 instances of direct quotes and five instances of reported speech; less than half the number of direct quotes of the male first sources. There were eight instances of the first sources sample that were not identifiable as either gender and there were 10 instances of reported speech with no identifiable gender.

In the second sources sample there were 150 male sources credited with direct quotes and 13 of reported speech (see Figure 5). This continued the overall trend of male

sources using direct quotes. The female second sources in contrast had 52 direct quotes and five of reported speech, which was lower than the male sources use of direct quotes. There were eight non-identifiable direct quotes and 10 instances of reported speech. The third sources had 150 instances of male sources with direct quotes and the female sources 52 instances of direct quotes.

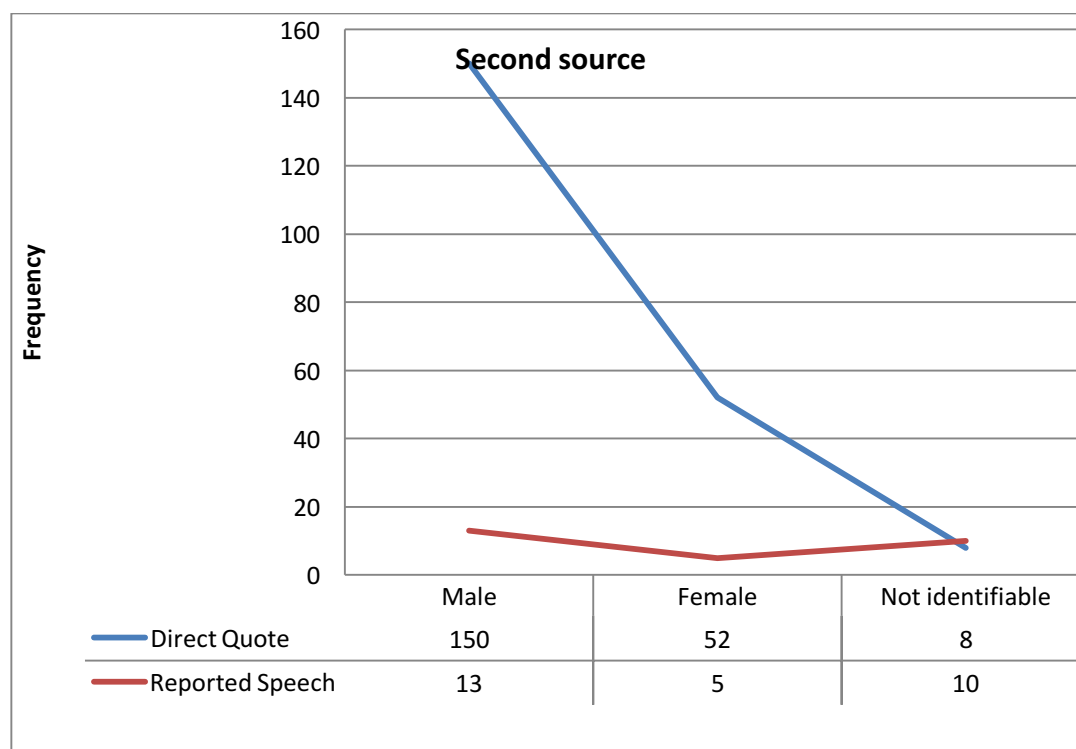|	Male	Female	Not identifiable
Direct Quote	150	52	8
Reported Speech	13	5	10

Figure 5: Second source by gender and mode of speech

This demonstrates that in all of the source categories (whether first or second) there was a larger representation of male sources than female sources and more examples of male sources using direct quotes rather than reported speech. A substantial difference in the level of representation of both men and women 'indicates to the reader who is in possession of knowledge that is important enough to report' (Zoch and VanSlyke Turke 1998, 765), and 'suggests by relegation to a minor role and by omission, who is excluded from having a say in important matters' (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989, 4). The journalists' use of sources creates a representation of who is important in news stories. This representation of authority creates a system where women lose their voices and become invisible.

Who is talked about?

References to social groups

Groups of people explicitly referred to in the media coverage of the elections were identified following categories established by the Human Rights Act 1993 as a possible ground for discrimination. We wanted to find out how often the news text makes reference to voters as seen through gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status,

nationality, political orientation, religion, physical ability, and marital status—in all variables of these categories. For instance, the category *nationality* included 'New Zealander' and 'foreigner' (as non-New Zealander), while the category *economic status* included variables of low, middle and high income. The category *ethnicity* listed all ethnic categories defined by the New Zealand Census. The category *religion* included the variables: 'No-religion', 'Buddhist', 'Christian', 'Muslim', and 'Hindu'. We coded only explicit references to these groups. Table 6 exhibits the range of groups of people referred to, ranked in order of frequency of references.

Variables	Frequency
New Zealanders	103
Young	60
Low income	52
Māori	51
Conservative/Right wing	27
Liberal/Left wing	26
Foreigners	24
Middle income	23
High income	23
Elderly	21
Asian	20
Centrist/Swing voter	18
Pacific	10
Women	10
Beneficiaries	9
Unemployed	9
Men	8
Relationship	7
Christians	6
Pākehā	5
Muslims	3
Homosexual	3
Middle aged	3
Disabled	2
Able-bodied	1
European	1
MELAA	1
Single	1

Figure 6: Reference to social groups (N = 527)

These statistics show that around one in five of all references to a specific group of voters referred to the group 'New Zealanders' (103 references). This reflects the way that the selected media organisations—all with nationwide audiences—appealed to

voters with the inclusive use of the word 'New Zealander'. In the television sample for example, 'New Zealanders' were the social group most often referred to with a total of 11 references (18.7%). This also reflects the way that major parties took in appealing to voters, opting for nationality as the inclusive term to cover as many people as possible. Examples of this include Labour's release of its final policy, in which it said it would set up a corporation called NZ Inc. to protect assets and generate wealth for New Zealanders.

The second most frequent group of people media referred to was young people (60 references). This is consistent with the parties' appeals to young people to both enrol and vote, an attempt to break perceived apathy among the youth vote. The use of the terms low and middle-income earners was frequently reported and was the third most featured social group. There were many stories that contained references to possible tax cuts, fairer tax systems and child poverty.

Ethnic Groups

The fourth most prominent social group was related to ethnicity: 'Māori' with 51 references—half that for the nationality category of 'New Zealander'. Five ethic groups were specifically referred to in the election coverage: 'Māori'; 'Asian'; 'Pacific'; 'Pākehā'; and 'European', with a special coding category also for the combined ethnic group, 'MELAA' (Middle Eastern, Latin American or African). With a total of 88 references to any one of the ethnic groups, 'Māori' were by far the most referred to (58% of all references to an ethnic group referred to Māori), followed by 'Asian' (22.7% of all references), 'Pacific' (11.4%), 'Pākehā' (5.7%), 'European' (1.1%), and 'MELAA' (1.1%).

Ethnicity

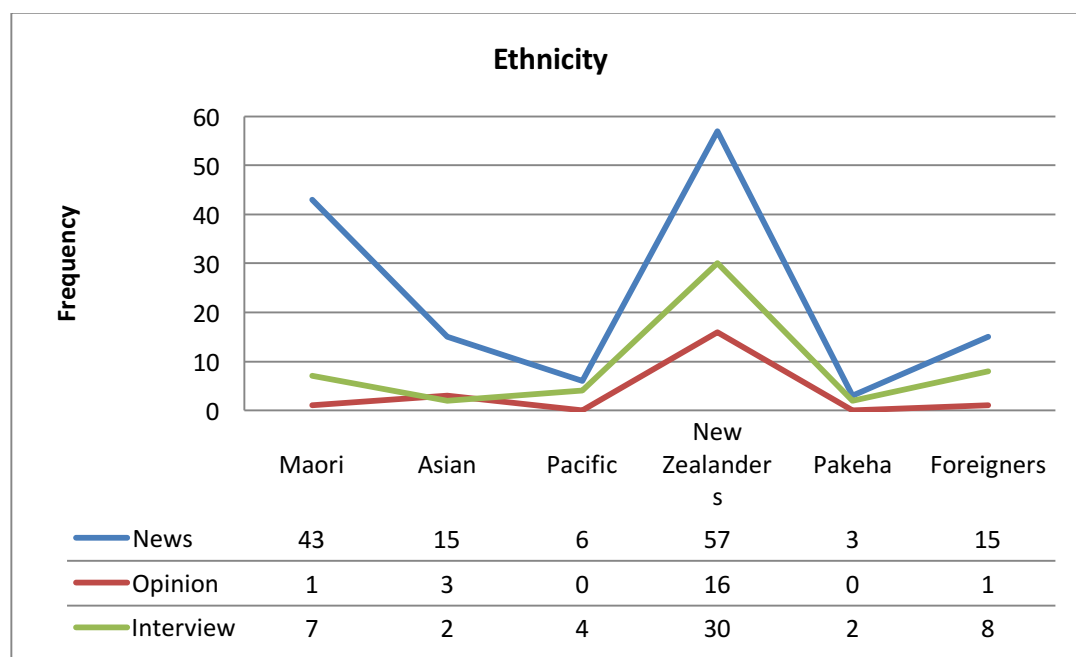|	Maori	Asian	Pacific	New Zealanders	Pakeha	Foreigners
News	43	15	6	57	3	15
Opinion	1	3	0	16	0	1
Interview	7	2	4	30	2	8

Figure 7: Ethnicity and genre of news

Figure 7 exhibits references to different ethnic groups in relation to the story genres: news; opinion; and interview. For the sake of comparison, the two national categories 'New Zealander' and 'foreigner' are also included in this graph. The table shows how for specific references to nationality and ethnic groups, the category 'New Zealander' was by far the most referred-to group. Out of all references to any of the top six most frequently cited ethnic and nationality groups (Māori, Asian, Pacific, New Zealander, Pākehā, Foreigner), 48% of references across news, opinion, and interviews were for 'New Zealanders', while 24% were for 'Māori', 11% for 'Foreigner', 9% 'Asian', 5% 'Pacific', and 2% 'Pākehā'. The category of 'New Zealander' was also the most diversely spread category referred to across news, opinion, and interview stories. Other ethnic categories barely appeared in opinion and interview stories, while for 'New Zealander', almost half (45%) of all stories referring to the group were opinion or interview.

'Māori', on the other hand, were referred to in a relatively large number of news stories (43, compared to 57 for 'New Zealander' and 15 for 'Asian' and 'Foreigner'), but not in opinion or interview stories. This means that while a news story was almost equally likely to refer to 'Māori' as to 'New Zealander', interview stories were 4.3 times more likely to refer to 'New Zealander' over 'Māori', while opinion stories were 16 times more likely. These interview and opinion ratios were similar for 'Foreigner', while all other ethnic groups were barely referenced in opinion and interview stories. References to Māori as an ethnic group were highest on Radio New Zealand—whose public service charter requires it to address all New Zealanders while having a responsibility to address New Zealand's diversity including Māori language and culture (Radio NZ 2013). However, the majority of references to Māori occurred during *Morning Report*'s segment, Te Manu Korihi. Only a few other references to Māori appeared in the main segment of the programme. It appears that people are given voices more often when they identify or are identified by nationality as New Zealanders than when they identify as non-New Zealanders or a minority ethnic group, such as Māori. References to Pākehā were far less common—only five news stories contained explicit denotation 'Pākehā' as opposed to 103 to 'New Zealanders'.

Socio-economic groups
Figure 8 exhibits references to different socio-economic groups in relation to the story genres: news; opinion; and interview. Socio-economic groups were coded by either explicit reference to 'low income', 'middle income' etc., or else synonymous reference (e.g., 'poor', 'deprived' for 'low income'; 'middle class' for 'middle income'; and 'rich', 'wealthy', 'affluent' for 'high income', etc.). Low-income, as a social group, was referred to more than any group across each genre of news, opinion, and interview. This difference was most apparent in news stories, but pertained also in opinion and interview stories. Overall, 45% of all news, opinion, and interview stories referring to a socio-economic group referred to low income, while 20% referred to middle income, 20% to high income, 8% to beneficiary, and 8% to unemployed. These statistics suggest that discussion of low income groups—for instance, in media and political commentary

on poverty—dominated the socio-economic conversation during election coverage, followed by a moderate interest in middle and high income groups, and relatively little discussion of beneficiaries or unemployed people.

In terms of respective proportions of news/opinion/interview stories across the different socio-economic categories, 'high income' had the highest proportion of interview stories, while 'beneficiary' and 'unemployed' had the least. Of the 23 stories referring to 'high income', 56.5% were news, 17.4% were opinion, and 26.1% interview. For the 9 'beneficiary' stories these proportions were 66.7% news, 22.2% opinion and 11.1% interview; while for the 9 'unemployed' stories they were 88.9% news, 11.1% opinion, and 0% interview. If the 'beneficiary' and 'unemployed' categories are combined, this means that while over a quarter (26.1%) of stories referring to 'high income' were interviews, only 5.6% referring to 'beneficiaries' or 'unemployed' were. For the 52 'low income' stories, the proportions were 69.2% news, 13.5% opinion, and 17.3% interview. These statistics indicate that while 'low income' was the most talked about socio-economic group in the election coverage, 'high income' was proportionately given more news space in the interview genre, while 'beneficiary' and 'unemployed' were given very little coverage in interview stories.
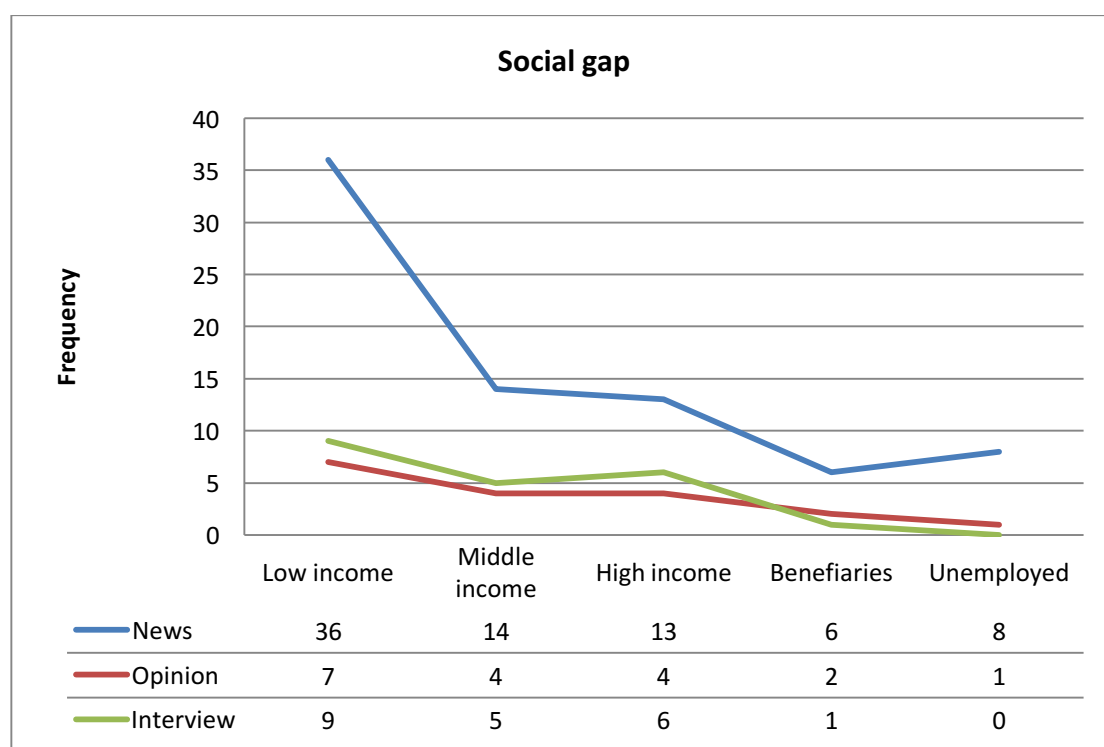

Social gap

	Low income	Middle income	High income	Benefiaries	Unemployed
News	36	14	13	6	8
Opinion	7	4	4	2	1
Interview	9	5	6	1	0

Figure 8: Social gap and genre of news

What was talked about?

Topics

The topics of each news story were also coded, with up to three main topics recorded per story. Figure 9 exhibits the topics in order of most prominent, demonstrating how

'Political Process', as one would expect from the election coverage, dominated the news focus, with three quarters of all articles (74.8%) referring to it—either as the sole focus, or in relation to other main topics. Following 'Political Process', 'Business and Economy' (21%), 'Polls' (17.4%, 'Intelligence' (10.1%), and 'Law and Order' (7.8%) constituted the five major topics of interest within the election coverage. Importantly for diversity issues, however, reference to 'Māori Affairs' was the sixth most referred to topic, with 5.7% of all articles referring to it as one of their main three topics.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Political Process	430	74.8
Business and Economy	121	21
Polls	100	17.4
Intelligence	58	10.1
Law and Order	45	7.8
Māori affairs	33	5.7
Housing	31	5.4
Inequality/Poverty	31	5.4
Environment	26	4.5
Employment	18	3.1
Education	16	2.8
Health	12	2.1
Personal profile	10	1.7
Immigration	6	1
Transport	6	1
Race Relations	4	0.7
Religion	1	0.2
Science and Technology	4	0.7
Celebrity/Entertainment	3	0.5
Crisis	2	0.3
Disaster	2	0.3
Local Government	2	0.3
Sports	2	0.3
Arts	1	0.2
Defence	1	0.2
International news	1	0.2
Other	38	6.6

Figure 9: News story's topic (N = 575)

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of 2014 New Zealand General Election news coverage demonstrates that mainstream media have indeed provided political candidates and parties the opportunity to access a wide audience on a range of social, political, economic, and cultural issues. However, the investigation of media's role in ensuring citizens can draw

upon a diverse marketplace of ideas suggests that the actual diversity of the contemporary marketplace has its limitations. Although the *New Zealand Herald*, *Morning Report* and *One News at 6pm* covered the elections by paying attention to the balance between their informative and interpretative function, providing news access to political parties, and opening space for public dialogue about a range of issues, our analysis reveals issues surrounding the relationship between news, politics, and diversity that go beyond assumptions of classical liberal thought, which places journalists in the centre of public life due to their responsibility 'for giving expression to a richly pluralistic spectrum of information sources' (Allan 2004, 47). For instance, our question *'Who is engaged in debate?'* uncovered a striking dominance of political parties as the most drawn-upon news source—58% of all sources drawn upon in the election coverage were from political parties, with 49% of these coming from the major two parties, despite media claims to provide equal access to news for all involved in the election campaign.

The 2014 elections were not only highly mediated by political parties, but also highly mediatised by news media (Strömbäck and Kaid 2008)—with clear willingness from media outlets to represent the dominant sources of information and prioritise political parties and leaders within the coverage. One might argue that this is merely a reflection of rules that the political system sets for media operation (Schudson 2005). Indeed, in election time those who contest parliamentary seats have to be heard so citizens can make informed decisions. However, focusing so heavily on party voices—more than all other voices combined—carries a danger of reducing the media's role of informing the public to simply replaying party messages and adopting parties' agendas. Perhaps most concerning, the disproportionate focus on politicians and political parties minimised space for citizens' voices in the coverage, to the degree that citizens—the uniquely empowered subject during an election period, regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, nationality, religion or marital status—were used only slightly more as sources than the National Party alone (215 to 209, respectively), and considerably less than political party sources in general. The members of the public—representing the diversity of voices ingrained in media's promises to carry the democratic torch on behalf of the citizenry—were deployed here and there to give their opinion on the issues of a day, but their presence was minor. These findings engender the critical question, asked by previous scholars (Negrine 1996), as to whether it is indeed the source of information or the information itself that journalists are seeking in their everyday work - election coverage included.

The media's contribution to creating an equally accessible space for public discussion about matters political also becomes intriguing when considering the above data on 'source gender' in the election coverage: more than two thirds of the people talking in the election news were male. As other studies show, this 'discrepancy disadvantages women, not just in tone and content but also in visibility' (Ross and Comrie 2011, 981). The New Zealand Government stresses that the country 'continues to maintain its role

as a leader in the field of gender equality' (Ministry for Women, New Zealand Government 2015), but that equality was not reflected in the mainstream media's election reports. Male sources not only dominated quantitatively in the election coverage, when they spoke their words were reported verbatim. That is, in the presentation of male sources, journalists predominantly used direct quotes rather than reported speech. Female sources, on the other hand, were both less in frequency, and featured considerably less direct quotes and more reported speech than male sources.

In terms of the diversity of people, social and interest groups, the election reports contained slightly fewer references to specific groups of people than the total number of articles sampled (527 and 575, respectively), meaning that the answer to the question '*Who is talked about?*' was not straightforward. Within the normative principle of diversity, what journalists produce, who they talk to and who they refer to, is based on their own social cognition intertwined with that of readers, viewers and listeners. The clear dominant group most frequently referred to in the 2014 election campaign was the safe nationality category 'New Zealander'—referred to 103 times, constituting 20% of all social group references. The dominance of 'New Zealander', an appealing reference to national identity as a safe ideological standpoint, has been reinforced both by media and politicians—captured also by John Key's opening statement that his election victory was for 'all New Zealanders'. But how may we understand this in the light of Touraine's statement on diversity and equality: 'Can we live together, equal and different?' On the one hand, the catch-all 'New Zealander' category includes all eligible voting citizens in the General Election in a way no other category can—an authentic signal of inclusivity. On the other hand, the generic term ignores any sense of diversity or otherness, effectively concealing the many lines of difference constituting the New Zealand nation-state, whether in terms of ethnic, ideological, socio-economic, sexual, or physical and mental ability difference, among others. The use of the 'New Zealander' in the election coverage thus delivers a dual message: not only of 'we are one'; but also evoking a particular kind of 'one'—New Zealanders that are white and middle class, as prior research on immigration (Munshi et al. 2014) and bicultural (Phelan 2009) discourses in New Zealand suggest.

The generic nature of the 'New Zealander' category is further illuminated by the fact that other subject identities are indeed referred to in the news coverage, albeit to a much smaller degree. Unlike 'New Zealander', whose 103 references were relatively evenly spread across news, opinion, and interview genres, almost all references to 'Māori' appeared in news stories—revealing a reluctance on the part of the media to fragmentise the notion of 'New Zealanders' by referring to ethnic group, Māori (or 'Pākehā') in openly interpretative news story forms. Nevertheless, the relatively frequent references to youth and low-income citizens demonstrate that not all difference was subordinated beneath generic allusions to inclusivity. Such representations of diversity, however, can only be understood to have occurred in the

shadow of a greater homogenous category 'New Zealander', disingenuously covering both everyone, and no one, at once.

Finally, it is important to consider the topics of focus in the election coverage – addressing the question '*What was talked about?*' In this sense, the category 'Political Process' dominated news topics with 75% of all stories including this as one of their three main topics. To put this in perspective, the second most common topic—'Business and Economics'—appeared in only 21% of stories. 'Political Process' stories included both focus on campaign strategy, developments, and performance, as well as information about how voters may exercise their rights and participate in the electoral process. Given the dominance of this topic, it can be said that the New Zealand media performed its conventional role of reporting about the candidates and campaign, while informing the citizenry of their democratic participatory rights. However, the overwhelming dominance of this category must also be understood in terms of its impact upon wider diversity issues in the news, for if coverage is so disproportionately focused upon the protagonists and action of the campaign itself, then it is unsurprising that the diversity of voices and representations within the coverage should be so narrow—in turn only reflecting the disproportionate predominance of the white, male, affluent politicians inhabiting 2014 political party positions. In this sense, one could argue that the lack of diversity in the election coverage is not symptomatic of news media processes and priorities, but rather of institutional/political ones. However, as it is a media choice to focus so overwhelmingly upon this one aspect of political process at the expense of other potential issues in election time, the responsibility for diversity reporting cannot be so easily evaded. Either way, it must be recognised that when so much news space is taken up with 'Political Process' attention, the wider myriad potential political issues—and the diverse citizenry affected by them—are relegated to compete for attention within the narrow spaces left at the margins, existing only in the shadow of the relatively homogenous political projects that represent them.

To conclude, perhaps the most conspicuous finding of this research is that in an election that on the surface appeared to differ from the norm—with scandal, surprise, and media stunts from minor parties leading much of the public discourse—statistically, the coverage paints a picture of a conservative status quo, prioritising the traditional categories of privilege (white, male, business) and the traditionally dominant two major parties. The seemingly inclusive concept of 'all New Zealanders' provides a master category to unify all of the diverse ethnic, gender, socio-economic, variously-abled, religious, and political identities included in the New Zealand nation-state. The picture of contemporary New Zealand represented in the mainstream media election coverage, however, does not adequately articulate this diversity. Instead, a relatively homogenous dominant identity is prioritised, constructing an ostensibly universal, and yet ultimately narrow, image that the rest of 'all New Zealanders' are insinuated within. While various groups and identities were indeed present in the coverage, and at times given voice, the disproportionate space dedicated to the status quo (white, male, business-centric, major

party) considerably reduced the space available to the multiple 'others.' Thus, this brief snapshot of media content analysis at election time suggests there is still some way to go before the mainstream news media, as John Key might say, can adequately stand for all its citizens.

Notes

1. For example *"A More Inclusive New Zealand Forum"* organised by the New Zealand Treasury, in Wellington, New Zealand on July 27th, 2015
2. Nation-state capacity for maintaining social cohesion is based on liberal conception of individual rights (Boswick and Husband 2005).
3. Funded by the AUT DCT Strategic Fund, principal investigator Dr Verica Rupar.
4. This study's content analysis of election news coverage follows the method developed in Wahl-Jorgensen et al.'s (2013) recent study of impartiality at the BBC.
5. The study follows methodology applied in the investigation of the UK elections. For example: Cushion et al. (2006).
6. For a full list of further coding categories not discussed in this article, see the AUT Media Observatory report of the research at http://www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/540506/AUT-Media-Observatory-News,-politics-and-diversity-report.pdf
7. 2 (C1,2)

   R = ____

   C1 + C2

   C1,2 is the number of category assignments both coders agreed on, and C1 + C2 is the total category assignments made by both coders.
8. 2014 data, available at www.throng.co.nz
9. We coded separately explicit reference to Central Government to analyse attribution of sources (by political affiliation or by government for all and of all) as element of journalism practice. This article does not cover that part of the study.

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