Articles

The Māori Party and the media: Representations in mainstream print leading to the 2005 election

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the 2005 pre-election print media coverage of the Māori Party and its candidates. It shows that while the reporters and journalists generally represented the Māori Party in a fair and unbiased manner, at times their reporting was undermined by unbalanced or biased editing or subediting.

Keywords: balance; ethnicity foreshore and seabed issue; fairness; impartiality; Māori Party; political journalism; tino rangatiratanga

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Introduction

RACE issues featured in political campaigns leading up to the 2005 election. A speech made by the leader of the National Party, Don Brash, at Orewa, 27 January 2004 decrying racial separatism and accusing the government of supporting race-based policies resonated with a considerable sector of the populace and public polling at that time showed increased popular support for the National party (Miller, 2005, p. 166). There was considerable media exposure to race issues following the Brash speech and it contributed to a re-evaluation of Māori policy by the 1999-2005 Labour coalition government which in turn resolved to remove ethnic targeting from public policy (see Miller, 2005, p. 168). Traditional Māori support for the Labour party dissipated because of the 'foreshore and seabed' issue (see Waitangi Tribunal, 2004) and the newly created Māori Party

subsequently won four of the 121 parliamentary seats. This article analyses media representations of the emering indigenous political movement, the 'Māori Party', as it struggled to gain legitimacy and access to political power leading up to the 2005 general election. It investigates whether or not the pre-election media coverage about the Māori Party was responsible, because much of the literature on Māori and the media suggests that media depictions of Māori tend to be negative, that Māori are marginalised or that media representations of Māori are biased.

To better understand the political context of media representations of Māori and the Māori Party, a brief background to Māori representation and contemporary public policy developments will preface the print media case-study. This case-study evaluates electoral media coverage of Māori in terms of neutrality, impartiality and balance and concludes that the reporting in the print media was generally very responsible but that the editing or subediting in terms of accompanying pictures, placement and headlines often misrepresented the content of the story and negatively stereotyped Māori.

The New Zealand media and Māori

There has been considerable research on racism, racist discourse and the media in New Zealand. Walker (2004, p. 229-232) shows how the media can distort and define reality for its consumers and thereby maintain a structural relationship that has Māori dominated by a powerful Pākehā. Spoonley and Hirsh (1990) demonstrate well media bias against Māori. McGregor and Comrie (2002) show how the marginalisation of Māori by the media reinforces and maintains the existing state of affairs, that is, Pākehā domination of Māori. Abel (1997) demonstrates how Television New Zealand, by constantly reinforcing the notion of 'we are all one people', effectively assigns a lesser value to Māori news and Māori culture than the dominant Pākehā norms, because the selection and decisions on what is newsworthy are made by non-Māori who have little or no understanding of Māori values and culture. Barnes, Gregory et al (2004) found in their empirical study on *The Media and the Treaty of Waitangi 2004*, that their findings echoed earlier studies showing that the media systematically depicted Māori in a negative manner. They argue the media provides little context for the reporting on and about Māori issues or interpreting Māori statistics and commonly uses Pākehā voices instead of Māori voices to comment on Māori issues.

The normalisation of Pākehā values therefore, are reinforced at the expense of Māori. Rankine and McCreanor (2004) similarly found a preference for non-Māori sources which has an overall effect of reinforcing Māori as subordinate to Pākehā in both terms of status and cultural norms. Adds et al's (2005) report on broadcasting standards suggests that on radio, aside from Māori radio, individual stories continue to be unbalanced, that the Māori voice is not commonly used, rather, there is a preference for political sources, often politicians, that are biased and frequently with limited knowledge or understanding of a Māori perspective. They also suggest there is often an unfair and unchallenged characterisation of good/bad stereotypes of Māori.

There tend to be two mainstream perspectives on the relationship of the media with society. One is that the media serves the public, it has a public good function and the other is the view that the media serves its shareholders and is influenced by commercial considerations. Herman and Chomsky (2002, p. 303) go further, however, and say that

> [t]he national media typically target and serve elite opinion, groups that, on the one hand, provide an optimal 'profile' for advertising purposes, and, on the other, play a role in decision-making in the private and public spheres. The national media would be failing to meet their elite audience's needs if they did not present a tolerably realistic portrayal of the world. But their 'societal purpose' also requires that the media's interpretation of the world reflects the interests and concerns of the sellers, the buyers, and the governmental and private institutions dominated by these groups.

Basically this Marxist perspective holds that the media is the apparatus that promotes and serves the interests of the 'ruling elite'. The underlying theme of this article is that while there may be a public good role that the media plays, for the most part the media is presenting a world view that is a response to mainstream Pākehā values and norms, therefore representations of Māori are targeting mainstream New Zealanders.

Street (2001, p. 5, 142) contends that a politician's desperation to appear in the media (and create the correct image) is matched by the media's capacity to make or break political careers. He also argues that the media has to be attractive to advertisers. If advertisers find the media outlet appeals to their

target audience then the advertiser-media relationship predisposes the media outlet to address some topics and not others. Media relationships are built on common interests not difference (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985) and Street (2001, p. 22) maintains that readers of newspapers tend to see them reflecting their own prejudices rather than in opposition to their ideological viewpoint. Since Māori are not the primary purchasers of the daily or weekly newspapers (Statistics New Zealand, 2007 show that Māori are only 14.6 percent of the population) what type of exposure and media attention was given to the fledgling Māori Party in the weeks leading up to the 2005 general election? In a political climate where public polling[1] was suggesting that race relations between Māori and non-Māori were deteriorating did the print media provide fair, accurate, balanced and unbiased representations of the Māori Party? The first principle of the New Zealand Press Council is that '(p)ublications (newspapers and magazines) should be guided at all times by accuracy, fairness and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission, or omission (New Zealand Press Council, 2007). The issue of whether media coverage reflects established prejudices is important to democracy as elected representatives should 'reflect the people by mirroring, at least in part, their varying characteristics; that is to say, Parliament should ideally have within its membership individuals from all major groups in society (Royal Commission on the Electoral System, 1986, p. 7). Street (2001, p. 16) cautions that '(i)f the media systematically promote some interests and misinform the citizenry, the democratic process itself will not operate effectively'.

Māori and the franchise

The 2005 general election in New Zealand transformed Māori representation in Parliament. For the first time in New Zealand's Westminster history of governance Māori voted into Parliament a Māori political party (the commonly referred to 'Young Maori Party' was an association of old boys from Te Aute College and not an organised Maori political party in the Pākehā sense of the term (see Sorrenson, 1986, p. B-31; R. J. Walker, 2001, p. 107). In the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)[2] electoral environment minor political parties are an important component of Parliament as either junior coalition government partners or possible supporters of government bills/legislation. The entry of a Māori political party into the mainstream political arena has the potential to influence policy direction and to advance the Māori goal of tino rangatiratanga/self-determination.

It is only since 1996 that the proportion of Māori MPs has been more or less proportional to the Māori population (17.5 percent of the 2005 Parliament—21 of 121 parliamentarians). Until 2005 Maori representation was via mainstream political parties but the election of a Māori Party has now provided Māori with a separate party voice in Parliament. Previously, Māori had four designated parliamentary seats since 1867 but that representation was never proportional, guaranteed, nor equal. Until 1975 it was compulsory for Māori to exercise their democratic right to participate in elections only through the four separate Māori electorates (half-caste or lesser blood quantum Māori were allowed to register on the general or non-Māori roll), regardless of the size of the Māori population. Only after legislative changes were made in the 1975 *Electoral Amendment Act* did Māori have the right to choose between General or Māori electoral roll registration and stand as candidates in general electorates. The Māori electoral boundaries made no tribal sense. Māori representation was an arbitrary geographic divide of the whole country into four Māori regions. Very few Māori became elected representatives of general electorates and the Māori electorates and geographic boundaries remained fixed regardless of the size of the Māori population. Conversely the non-Māori population, had a population quotient for the general electorates which was reviewed every five years to ensure a population variance of no more than five percent. There was little incentive for Māori to register and vote in the Māori electorates as bigger numbers in the Māori electorates meant that Māori and non-Māori votes were not of equal value. This discriminatory feature of the New Zealand electoral act was only removed when the *Electoral Act 1993* changed electoral systems from FPP to MMP. Once the electoral system was changed the potential for a successful separate Māori political party became a possibility (see Sullivan, 2003a).

The 1993 Act provides for the number of Māori seats to be determined by the number of Māori who chose to register on the Māori electoral roll and Māori are given the option to change their registration every five years. The impact of this change has seen the number of Māori choosing to register on the Māori electoral roll rise from 50 percent of enrolled Māori in 1996 to 55 percent in 2001 (Electoral Commission, 2006). Additionally most political parties now have Māori representatives in Parliament because they have ranked Māori candidates favourably on their party lists. This has provided Māori with proportional representation. Correspondingly the Māori

electorates have increased from four in 1993 to five in 1996, six in 1999 and seven in 2002. Because MMP is a proportional electoral system, it has better provided for minority representation than the former FPP system. Since 1996, small political parties such as the Greens, New Zealand First and United Future have been a feature of New Zealand politics (Miller, 2005) but it was not until 2005 that Māori voted into Parliament a political party based on ethnicity. Coalition governments have become a feature of our MMP environment and because minor political parties can be influential in the determination of government, 'how news coverage mediates the election experience and influences voters is important' (Banducci & Vowles, 2002, p. 48).

In the two decades leading up to the Māori Party electoral success, radical economic and public sector reforms had taken place. In the 1980s a number of government services were devolved from government departments to Māori tribal organisations giving Māori organisations for the first time, the opportunity to deliver social programs and services to Māori (Sullivan, 2003b). At the same time references to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi were inserted into legislation such as the *State Owned Enterprises Act 1986*, giving Māori for the first time, access to the courts for determinations on the principles of the treaty. Also, the jurisdiction of the Waitangi Tribunal was extended to allow examination of Māori grievances relating to breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi since 1840. In the 1990s, the National government finalised three major treaty settlements, the 1992 Fisheries Settlement ($170m), the 1995 Tainui Settlement ($170m) and the 1997 Nga Tahu Settlement ($170m). These measures had a cumulative effective of channelling Māori discontent and protest actions either through the courts or the Waitangi Tribunal while the process of recognising Māori service providers enhanced Māori self-determination goals. What had not been substantively addressed was the ongoing poor socio-economic standing of Māori relative to that of non-Māori as identified in the report *Progress Towards Closing Social and Economic Gaps Between Māori and Non-Māori* (Te Puni Kokiri, 1998). Nevertheless, Māori self-determination through tribal developments was rapidly progressing, to the extent that by 2003 a small but growing Māori economy was beginning to emerge (New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2003). It appeared that race relations in New Zealand had reached a point whereby the general populace was reasonably amenable[3] to the Crown getting on and resolving Māori grievances of the past.

However, the two-year period leading up to the 2005 elections became

an increasingly hostile environment in which to promote Māori policies. There were two developments that resulted in a polarisation of the nation along racial lines—the National party leader in his 'Orewa' speech (Brash, 2004) targeted race relations to boost the party's flagging electoral support and the foreshore and seabed issue became the catalyst for the formation of a new Māori political party (see Smith, 2003). The political environment of treaty settlements and tribal self-determination driven by considerable Māori economic development coupled with Pākehā resentment of Māori success resulted in a new era of Māori politics whereby Māori used their electoral strength to give Māori their own voice in Parliament. Previous Māori representations were through coalitions between the Ratana church and the Labour party and between Mana Motuhake and other smaller parties which made up the Alliance party. These coalitions merged Māori issues with a variety of mainstream political perspectives so the electoral success of the Māori Party winning four parliamentary seats in 2005 is a unique development in New Zealand politics. Banducci and Vowles (2002, p. 34) have expressed concern that in their view the campaign reporting and political coverage in general has become increasingly negative. In a political climate where racial issues were a feature of political environment, did the print media seek to influence voting behaviour by misrepresenting the Māori Party to their target non-Māori readership and shape their stories accordingly? The following section considers these issues when assessing how Māori were represented to the mainly non-Māori readership.

Māori, the Māori Party and the print media

An important element of political parties' electoral campaigns is to seek to secure widespread coverage of their activities. The media plays an important role in the process of representing and communicating political policies and values so the 11 weeks leading up to the 2005 general election provided an ideal opportunity to assess how the media portrayed the Māori Party and its candidates. Was the media guided by the principles of 'neutrality, impartiality and balance' and/or was it as Maharey (1990) suggests, based on the worldview of the majority thereby marginalising the Māori worldview? Recognising that television and radio have considerable impact on voters and electoral campaigns target viewer and listener audiences as well as readers of various material, this study has focussed on the print media and

how three major newspapers reported and portrayed the new indigenous political party contesting the New Zealand 2005 general election. Data was collected from two daily newspapers, *The New Zealand Herald* and the *Dominion Post* and a major national weekly, the *Sunday Star-Times*.

Most of the daily print media in New Zealand is owned by either Australian-owned APN or Fairfax Media, and Fairfax have a virtual monopoly on the weekly print media (Rosenberg, 2003). *The New Zealand Herald* is owned by APN and Fairfax own the *Dominion Post* and the weekly newspaper, the *Sunday Star-Times*. According to Abel (2004) such a duopoly of ownership can potentially be a cause for concern as the opportunity for diverse voices diminishes and power to control the news is vested in a few which can prevent a free flow of information in a democratic society. The text of media messages constructs the world in a meaningful way and the way words, pictures, layout, design, format, linkage and editing are combined, construct consciously or unconsciously established discourse or reality (Maharey, 1990, p. 17-18). Deciding what story to pursue, which sources will be quoted, bringing together materials to be edited and selecting the stories to be published are all value judgements which have an influence on the discourse that determines what is news worthy (Adds et al., 2005). That established discourse is unlikely to show the significantly different news values of Māori tikanga/culture because of their limited consumer purchasing power. Pictures, headlines, the size of headlines, placement and page all have a bearing on how a reader views or reads an article so print editions of these newspapers were surveyed rather than online versions as any of these factors can be missing with online reports. The content analysis approach[4] for the research focused on the official electoral campaign period leading up to the general election and all articles relating to Māori were viewed[5].

The articles included all news stories, images, cartoons and opinion pieces such as letters to the editor, perspectives and editorials articles that had a Māori focus. Table 1 shows that in the period 1 July 2005 to 16 September 2005 Māori issues featured in a total of 348 articles in the three newspapers and more than 40 percent of those articles were accompanied by a picture. Twenty five percent of the total number of articles mentioned either the Māori Party or made reference to a Māori Party candidate and half of those articles were accompanied by a picture or image. *The New Zealand Herald* coupled images with Māori Party stories more frequently than with its

Table 1: Print media

	Readership	Number of articles	References to Māori Party	Images	Images with Māori Party story
New Zealand Herald	547,000[1] daily 628,000 weekends	197	60 (30%)	74 (37%)	28 (47%)*
Dominion Post	237,000[2]	124	20 (16%)	62 (50%)	11 (55%)*
Sunday Star-Times	625,000[3]	25	8 (32%)	13 (52%)	4 (%)*
Total		348	88 (25%)	149 (43%)	43 (49%)*

* % refers to total Māori Party stories, not total articles
1. www.nzherald.co.nz/info/advertising/print/accessed 18 June 2006
2. www.fairfaxnz.co.nz/publications/general/into92.html accessed 18 June 2006
3. www.fairfaxnz.co.nz/publications/general/info10.html accessed 18 June 2006

non-election Māori stories and its coverage of the Māori Party far exceeded that of the combined Fairfax group (*Dominion Post* and *Sunday Star-Times*). Only 16 percent of the total Māori articles in the *Dominion Post* featured the Māori Party whereas nearly a third of the articles in *The New Zealand Herald* and the *Sunday Star-Times* focused on the Māori Party. The combined Fairfax coverage was less than half that of the APN-owned newspaper.

The contrast in reporting Māori election issues is quite marked between *The New Zealand Herald* and the *Dominion Post*. A major target audience of the *Dominion Post* is the lower North Island catchment area which includes government and the people associated with the machinery of government. It can only be assumed that either the *Dominion Post's* political reporters were not aware of the level of new Māori activity in the lead up to the election or its editors did not believe the Māori Party was particularly newsworthy or of interest to its readership. A substantial amount of the *Dominion Post* Māori coverage during the election period focused on the criminal trial of a former ACT party MP, Donna Awatere-Huata.

Bias and balance

Articles referring to the Māori Party or its candidates were assessed for bias; balance; accuracy and fairness; attitude and tone; image and text relationship. Bias is defined as favouring one perspective over another (which in itself is problematic as Street, 2001 points out), and because Barnes et al

(2004) found that Pākehā were more likely to be commentators on Māori issues rather than Māori commenting on issues important to Māori, balance was included in this variable. Only two fifths of the articles were found to be biased with a quarter (26 percent) having a Pākehā bias and less than a fifth (17 percent) with a Māori bias. More than half (56 percent) of the articles were found to reasonably balanced. Overall the perception of partiality in the stories was fairly well balanced and where bias was considered to be evident there was not a big difference in the number of articles that had an evident Pākehā or Māori bias. Having said that, one article in the (weekly) *Sunday Star-Times* did stand out as being particularly subjective. The context was a profile of a female Māori Party candidate in one of the Māori electorates. Some of the descriptives that were used in the article were 'scary', 'radical', 'militant', 'scrubs up extraordinarily well', 'has an iciness' (Hubbard, 2005). The article concentrated on supposed personal traits and alleged personality rather than issues. It was presented in a way that failed to be objective, impartial, or balanced and was most likely to reinforce negative attitudes that were particularly prevalent at that time. It is an example of vested interest reporting aimed at the Pākehā readership. This is not unusual reporting on and about Māori (see Adds et al, 2002, p. 47) but in this pre-election coverage it was exceptional rather than indicative of the way the Māori Party and its candidates were portrayed.

Downing and Husband (2005) suggest that a negative attitude and stereo -typing is generally only found in opinion pieces or letters to the editor. The opinion pieces published in the weekly newspaper, the *Sunday Star-Times*, support that finding as 12 out of the 13 letters to the editor and opinion pieces were not favourably disposed toward Māori. The one perspective article that was classified as neutral had some references to Māori but it used an image

Table 2: Opinion articles

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
New Zealand Herald	32	22	14	68
Dominion Post	15	4	3	22
Sunday Star Times	-	1	12	13
Total	47	27	29	103

of Māori warriors along side a text that focused on the leader of the National Party which does perpetuate racial stereotyping (Macdonald, 2005). On the other hand Table 2 shows the two daily newspapers were more likely to publish either neutral or positive opinion pieces about Māori rather than opinion articles unsympathetic or hostile to Māori concerns. In the *Dominion Post,* three (13 percent) opinion pieces out of 22 gave a negative view of Māori. Similarly only 14 out of 68 (about 20 percent) of the opinion pieces in the New Zealand were negative articles. Neither of the dailies provided much space for voices to systematically stereotype Māori nor did they give effect to the racial overtones of some of the political campaigning.

Table 3: Accuracy and fairness of voice

	Frequency	Percentage
Accurate and fair	267	76.7%
Inaccurate and unfair	58	16.7%
Inaccurate, unfair and misleading	23	6.6%
Total	348	100%

Accuracy and fairness

Articles were assessed for their accuracy and fairness. Adds et al (2005, p. 129) claim that in broadcasting, standards of fairness and accuracy have been achieved although they do note that broadcasting standards may not be fair according to Māori values because they are based on Pākehā values or assumptions. In this respect it should be noted that the construction, selection and interpretation of media representations are relative, they carry the bias of a particular person or group of people (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2004, p. 50) and the target audience of the media in this study was non-Māori. Further study could assess this variable from a Māori perspective but this paper is reflecting the values being transmitted to the predominantly Pākehā audience. Table 3 shows that more than three quarters of all the media stories in this study were considered to be reasonably accurate and fair.

Less than a quarter were inaccurate, and only slightly more than five percent of the articles were misleading. These results concur with the Adds et al (2005) broadcasting assessment of fairness and accuracy but

similar to their conclusions, these variables are only part of a number of variables that need to be considered when drawing conclusions about the total representations of Māori.

Image headlines and text relationship

What was noticeable in *The New Zealand Herald* was the way cartoons on the letters to the editor page represented Māori compared to the journalists' stories or reports. Three of its four cartoons during the research period promoted negativity towards Māori with one alluding to unacceptable traits in that it depicted a dark coloured robber and a stolen car (Emmerson, 2005). The problem with this particular image is that directly below the cartoon is a large headline 'Māori and crime stats' accompanied by a number of letters to the editor about Māori crime. It is also directly flanked down the side by another four articles under the headline 'Haka shift driven by money'. The perception invoked by surrounding the cartoon with those headlines and letters is stereotypically negative. The next day on the same 'letters to the editor' page the eye catching headlines said 'Looking after the natives'. The story was about birds, nothing to do with Māori but the impact of the headline does serve to perpetuate old colonial stereotypes. Similarly, a headline a week later 'Māori veteran fears uprising' (Harvey, 2005) could have more fairly represented Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan as a former long serving Māori woman MP rather than 'veteran' which conjures up images of war, especially since the substance of the text was not on the former MP but on a speech by the leader of the National Party. The headline served to sensationalise rather than fairly portray Māori.

What effect are representations of Māori as criminals and warriors likely to have on the readership? Are they designed to influence voters to support the more conservative parties such as National or Act? Much more research would need to be done to be able to answer these questions but they do raise serious issues about the subjectivity of editors and subeditors who choose the pictures, write the headlines and arrange their placement.

The New Zealand Herald and images

Images can be interpreted in many ways but the pictures or images that accompany text can also be misleading. There were a number of times when the images used by *The New Zealand Herald* were either unrepresentative

of the story they accompanied or stereotyped Māori. The story 'Thieves take off with Māori Party campaign wagon' (Stokes, 2005) shows a smiling Don Brash, leader of the National Party in his campaign bus. The actual story only says three words about the National Party but the party and the leader are given a big visual boost at the expense of the Māori Party. The article titled 'Time to wipe the gravy train label: Māori Party' (Berry, 2005) was reasonable but its major focus was on the Labour Party policy. The image that accompanied the story, however, was one of Māori protesters displaying tino rangatiratanga/Māori sovereignty flags and holding a banner saying 'Honour the Treaty'. Given the political climate at the time, the images were quite provocative and likely to perpetuate racist views that were already being inflamed by the National Party.

Stereotyping can also be seen in the pictures that accompanied the 'Tamihere v Sharples' article (*New Zealand Herald*, 2005a). The picture of the Labour candidate, John Tamihere, was a corporate type image. It was a very conservative photo showing him dressed in a suit and white shirt. The adjacent photo showed the Māori Party candidate in traditional Māori costume portraying a warrior (or noble savage) going to 'battle' as used in headlines. The image for the majority of readers' is stereotypical native versus assimilated Māori (Māori viewers would be more likely to value the warrior image positively because of its symbolism and recognition of Māori tikanga/culture but Māori are not the targeted audience). The headlines of another article state 'Tamihere-Sharples debate draws crowd' (*New Zealand Herald, 2005b)* and shows a picture of Tamihere (Labour Party) and others but not Sharples, the leader of the Māori Party. He made the headlines but not the picture. Aside from the one corporate warrior image (*New Zealand Herald, 2005a)*, the other 19 Māori images used by *The New Zealand Herald* were positive representations of Māori. Similarly the four images used by the *Sunday Star-Times* did not invoke negative stereotypes. Of the nine images used by the *Dominion Post* in the pre-election period, the last two Māori party candidate pictures published just prior to the election (September 14 and 16) were noticeably unflattering of the candidate and both were accompanied by a smaller picture positive corporate image of the rival Labour party candidate.

The Dominion Post and images

The *Dominion Post* generally tended not to use pictures when it wrote a story that referred to the Māori Party. Instead, it deemed it much more

newsworthy to constantly report with lots of pictures, the trial and subsequent downfall of former ACT party MP. The first time the *Dominion Post* published a picture to go with any of its stories that referred to the Māori Party was in relation to the criminal trial under the headline 'Anger as Huata call racist victim'(Jacobson, 2005). When the *Dominion Post* finally did print a candidate picture it was relegated to a lower space, beneath the other four leaders of minor political parties (Kay, 2005). Linked to the article 'battle for the Māori vote'(Field, 2005) was a very unflattering picture of the co-leaders of the Māori Party but very positive picture of the Prime Minister and a Māori Labour party candidate. A further image used with the headline 'the Māori challenge' (McLoughlin, 2005) was a large picture of the hikoi/protest march. How would the non-Māori target readership view the image of thousands of Māori protesting in an era of heightened racial sensitivity over the foreshore and seabed issue? The Prime Minister had already referred to the tens of thousands of Māori protestors as 'haters and wreckers' (TVNZ One News, 2004), so revisiting the scene was likely to rekindle some of the feelings of animosity towards Māori.

Figure 1: The *Dominion Post*, 16 September 2005.

Equally problematic was the placement of images that indirectly foster negative attitudes towards Māori. An article titled 'Labour sets Treaty claim target' (Small, 2005) reports on the Labour party's policy. Directly below the report is a picture of a person relaxing at the beach. Given that the foreshore and seabed issue was particularly pertinent at that time, the placement of the picture could invoke racist fears. A front page picture (Figure 1) demonstrated clearly the political bias of the

Dominion Post (2005). The powerfully presented image was of the Māori Party co-leader Dr Pita Sharples with a 'Vote for JT Labour' sticker across his mouth. Directly below was a smaller positive image of the Labour candidate John Tamihere (Diaz & Field, 2005). The pictures, printed on the front page of the newspaper the day before the election coupled with an emotive headliner 'Māori "kidnap" stoush' beneath the Sharples image was targeting mainstream political opinion, interests and concerns. Images are value-laden and as far as the *Dominion Post* was concerned there was a visual bias for the Labour party the day before the election.

Editors and subeditors

Not only did a number of images appear to encourage negative responses from the readers, some of the images used by the two daily newspapers did not reflect accurately the content of the stories. Instead the images were used to sensationalise or emphasise a very minor or inconsequential aspect of the story. Some images were used in opposition to the other, mostly at the expense of the new Māori Party (the warrior image or unflattering images alongside a corporate image) while others made the Māori Party invisible. Adds et al. (2005, p. 46) found that the New Zealand literature on the impact of media portrayals of Māori is very clear in that they do have an effect on the way issues are perceived. Interpretations of both text and visuals are contingent but the overall effect of Māori misrepresentations linked with text is that they present an unfavourable view of Māori to the majority of the readers, regardless of the text that accompanies them. It is evident that the editors and subeditors are portraying a very different picture of Māori than the journalists. The New Zealand Press Council principle not to deliberately mislead or misinform readers is not evident in the way images and headlines are being presented.

Conclusion

During the official electoral campaign period most journalists and reporters were very responsible in the manner in which they represented the Māori Party and its candidates. Although race issues had been a major feature of the National Party electoral campaign the stories, articles and items covering the new entrant in the political arena adhered to Press Council principles of fairness, balance and accuracy. This finding is in contrast to most of the

literature on media portrayals of Māori. The same cannot be said for some of the editors or subeditors. Even though an article may be impartial, neutral, balanced or unbiased it does not necessarily mean it is 'objective' because 'how' it is presented can reinforce certain assumptions and values. The negative stereotyping of Māori through the use and placement of images, headlines and political bias is a cause for concern. These portrayals continue to fuel prejudice because the targeted mainstream Pākehā readership sees the misleading pictures or cartoons even if the articles are not read. Given that race relations featured regularly following the Brash Orewa speech, it is possible that the misrepresentations could have played on non-Māori fears of Māori political power and influenced voters towards particular political parties.

The research has noted some 'ownership effect' differences insofar as reporters for the APN-owned *New Zealand Herald* were less willing to stereotype, reinforce prejudice or misrepresent Māori than its opposition. All three newspapers however, placed headlines and cartoons in ways that gave negative perceptions of Māori. The Fairfax *Dominion Post* newspaper not only used images that misrepresented stories or were unflattering candidate pictures, but also presented front page value-laden, political images on the last day of the electoral period. The two competing newspapers did provide some diversity of opinion and in the process responsible reporting standards were maintained. A comparison was not made of space and number of articles written about other political parties. It would be reasonable to assume that because the Māori Party was a new party and because the National Party generated considerable interest in the Māori seats by portraying them as privileging Māori, combined with a growing realisation of potential alliance implications for forming coalition governments, the Māori Party would gain at least as much attention as other minor parties. The electoral success of the Māori Party was not dependent on the way the media choose to report and portray the party because Māori voters are not the target audience of mainstream media. However, if it is expected that the media does have a public good function in a democratic society as well as being responsive to its shareholders and that it is does not just serve the interests of the ruling elite then the disseminating of information should (as was) be done in a fair and unbiased manner. This research shows that contrary to much of the earlier Māori media research, reporters and journalists did meet these criteria but their efforts were undermined because of the quality of the subediting.

Notes

1. www.nbr.co.nz/search/search_article.asp?id=8634&cid=0&cname=Results and www.onenews.nzoom.com/onenews_detail/0%2C1227%2C215453-1-8%2C00.html
2. In 1996 the New Zealand electoral system changed from a simple majority system, FPP (First Past the Post) to a form of proportional representation MMP (Mixed Member Proportional).
3. Both Walker (2004) and Spoonley (1996) show ethnic tension was evident during this time but tribes became very focused on building tribal infrastructures during the 1980s and 1990s.
4. It is recognised that analysis of media articles is subjective and based on the researcher's coding of the content.
5. The word 'Māori' was searched on the Newztext Plus database to ensure relevant articles were not missed.

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