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The mass media have long been seen as an important mechanism in constructing and brokering relations between host and immigrant minorities. Their role has typically been portrayed as endorsing, if not, initiating racist imagery. New Zealand significantly altered its recruitment of immigrants in terms of source countries in 1986–87. The resulting superdiversity presents new challenges for the mainstream media. In the early phase of this recently enhanced cultural diversity, the mass media (here represented by the print media) contributed to a publically articulated racialisation. However, the growing engagement (embeddedness) of the media workers in the reality of this enhanced diversity was subsequently reflected in more nuanced and sympathetic reporting after 2000, thereby confounding classic approaches which stress the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of immigrants by the mass media. There remain important exceptions to this shift towards a broadly sympathetic representation of immigrants by the media; there is evidence of ongoing racist 'Othering' in news reporting and by particular journalists. This paper argues that there is evidence of a recent and partial transformation in the nature of media discourses concerning immigrants and immigration in New Zealand.

Keywords: Mass Media; New Zealand; Racialisation; Representation of Immigrants

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New Zealand as one of the classic settler societies is distinctive in two regards; the first is that for most of its colonial history, almost all of its immigrants were recruited from the UK and Ireland. The resulting largely homogeneous immigration flows were only disrupted from the 1960s as labour was recruited from the Polynesian Pacific and then subsequently from Asia. The second aspect has been the presence of a significant (relative to the total population but also in political terms) indigenous population. Inevitably, there has been interest in the degree to which the media have constructed particular discourses concerning these aspects of diversity, with the predominant conclusion being that the mass media have reflected a narrow, Euro(Pakeha)-centric[1] view of cultural and racial Others (see Spoonley and Hirsh; Fleras and Spoonley). Our interest here, however, is in the media representations of the second major wave of non-European migration, in this case from Asia after 1986. How have the media responded to this immigrant-derived diversity? Do the classic theorisations that the mass media contribute significantly to racialisation still hold true?

The Mass Media and Understanding Immigrants

The mass media's construction of immigrants, often as an exotic or threatening 'Other', has been a focus of the social sciences for many decades, especially given the early work of Hartmann and Husband and Bagley. Van Dijk has provided a critical analysis of the media's contribution to the retailing and reproduction of racist imagery. The concern then, and now, is that the mainstream media "have produced a narrative that conditions the public to associate immigration with illegality, crises, controversy and government failure" (Akdenizli et al. VI).

Mahtani observes that media–minority relations are a matter for concern given that the latter are routinely either underrepresented or misrepresented. The first indicates a tendency to 'normalise invisibility' (Fleras), the second to 'problematise visibility' (Fleras) whereby the presence of a culturally different Other is portrayed in the media as a threat to the host or dominant culture in a variety of ways. Fleras contends that the news media coverage of minorities reflects a structural and systemic bias because of the news values which are implicit in a 'conventional news paradigm' (Fleras).

> [...] newsworthiness prefers the negative and adversarial over the positive and cooperative, the processing of news information reflects systemic bias – namely, a bias that is institutional, not personal; consequential, not intentional; routine, not random; cultural, not conspiratorial; and structural, not attitudinal. (Fleras 4)

News-speak distorts and objectifies, not the least in relation to racialising others (constructing a group in racial terms and indicating that they present a 'problem' in various ways), in this case, specific immigrant groups (see Hier and Greenberg). Which immigrants are the focus depends on the context, specifically the historical construction of a culturally different and threatening 'Other', as well as the contemporary practices and values of dominant groups and institutions. Downing

and Husband argue that the media have an enduring role in "articulating racist frameworks and stereotypes [...] because it is their overall *role* to define and massage the present and the past for us" (39). In this, the media provide a dominant form of 'imaging and story-telling' and a 'control over mediated narratives and representations' by virtue of their status as the dominant institution in conveying information to the largest variety of audiences (cf. Silverstone and Georgiou). At a given point, and with an escalation in public concern over a particular issue, the media play a critical role in transforming negative stereotypes and discourses into a heightened sense of crisis, a moral panic (Hier and Greenberg 151).

These dynamics and the construction of racialised discourses apply to New Zealand (Spoonley and Hirsh), especially given the issues of enhanced contact with Maori (from the 1950s), Pacific peoples (from the 1960s) and Asian peoples (from the 1990s). In relation to immigrants, there is historical research that documents the evidence for, and the nature of, this mass media racialisation (Spoonley and Hirsh). Recent research continues to stress the media's negative perceptions of immigrants. In the case of Pacific peoples, media reports tend to note the number of negative attributes while positive attributes have a much lower frequency (Loto et al. 105).[2] The researchers concluded that such reporting played an important role in stigmatising Pacific communities (Loto et al. 105). Indeed, when positive reporting did occur, it tended "to reflect processes of cultural assimilation, where Pacific people can be reported as successful if they conform to Palagi[3] norms, or if their creativity can be assimilated into the dominant culture" (Loto et al. 115).

We want to test whether this characterisation of the media as stigmatising others, or as a major contributor to this stigmatisation, is inevitable and unchanging. We do this via a content analysis of the print media in New Zealand. But to foreshadow our conclusions, we now want to argue that media have recently altered the nature of their portrayal of immigrants, specifically those immigrants from various parts of Asia. The adjustment in the way that immigration has been framed is, we would argue, a reflection of a greater degree of 'embeddedness' by media workers (although there are important exceptions) as well as the influence of contextual issues (the altered political economy and impact of immigration). The concept, 'embeddedness', is borrowed from two distinct and very different sources. The first is the use of the term in the context of the second US-led war in Iraq and the suspicion that those journalists who were given approval to operate alongside American (and other) troops were compromised in various ways. Here, we use it to indicate the embeddedness of media workers in a culturally diverse society, both as media workers but also as engaged individuals whose daily existence results in contact with immigrants in a variety of settings: the corner store, restaurants, taxis or at festivals. While this interaction often reflects vicarious and ritualised encounters, there is evidence to suggest that the agency of media workers is going to be influenced by such encounters – at least, for some. Research indicates that contact, along with education levels, are the two most significant variables associated with positive attitudes to immigrants in New Zealand (Johnston et al.).

The second origin of the term derives from the explanations for immigrant entrepreneurialism, especially the theoretical contributions of Rath and Kloosterman (Rath "Needle Games"; Kloosterman and Rath). They note that immigrant agency is not simply a function of their cultural proclivities, ambitions and access to particular forms of social capital; there are also exogenous opportunity structures that reflect situational and contextual locations:

> We want to understand the socio-economic position of immigrant entrepreneurs by taking into account not only their concrete embeddedness in social networks of immigrants but also their more abstract embeddedness in the socio-economic and politico-institutional environment of the country of settlement. (Kloosterman et al. cited in Kloosterman and Rath 190)

As Granovetter goes on to note: "Embeddedness refers to the fact that economic action and outcomes [...] are affected by actors' dyadic (pair wise) relations *and* by the structure of the overall network of relationships" (cited in Vertovec *Transnationalism* 37). Actors are vertically connected by various linkages to the "larger society, culture, economy and polity" (Schweitzer quoted in Vertovec *Transnationalism* 37).

We want to apply the same logic to the media and media workers. They are professionally embedded in a concrete sense in their industry so that a mix of personal trajectories (their training, their individual personal belief systems and political inclinations, their position and responsibilities inside a particular media organisation) interact with the culture and political economy of the industry and its organisations. But to detach these trajectories or the nature of the industry from other contextual factors, even if these are more 'abstract' as Kloosterman and Rath suggest, is to deny the two-way nature of agency–structure interactions. Here, we depart from many of our colleagues in arguing that the media, as a result of such interactions, do not inevitably portray immigrant minorities as a racialised 'Other'. In particular, the research below indicates that there were broad political influences as well as personal experiences and inclinations which influenced the significantly altered media discourses about Asian immigrants after 2000. In the first case, there were instrumental reasons. The Asian financial crises of 1997–98 saw a significant drop in the arrival of Asian migrants into New Zealand and this highlighted how much domestic demand (for housing, consumer goods, employment) was driven by this immigration, especially given the size of the immigrant-spend in a city economy such as Auckland's. The second issue was the (at times) extreme anti-immigration arguments of a particular political party, New Zealand First.[4] New Zealand First inspired significant public opposition to Asian immigration, an opposition that was as apparent amongst the media as it was also in liberal and centre-left civic society groupings. The subsequent shift in media values and approach reflected highly individual personal experiences as journalists, editors and media managers began to engage with immigrants, both in professional and personal settings.

Immigrant behaviours and outcomes reflect their mixed embeddedness as "social relations and transactions [relate] to wider political and economic structures" (Rath "Entrepreneurship Among Migrants and Returnees" 5). The media and its workers are equally a product of mixed embeddedness as structural factors interact with (and sometimes compete with) agency. While there are profound institutional pressures to conform inside the media, there are also obvious and important expressions of agency, sometimes highly individualised, at other times, as a reflection of shared concerns and dynamics at different levels of an organisation. There are a range of reasons why media workers might adopt a more positive and constructive approach to immigrants. Market demand has changed significantly. Immigrants constitute a major readership audience as well as a potential client base (e.g. in terms of advertising revenue); 23 per cent of New Zealand and almost 40 per cent of Auckland's residents are overseas-born and while these immigrants do not necessarily share common views about any issue, including each other, they represent a significant constituency for media organisations. Moreover, media training organisations have been sensitised to Maori concerns about media practice from the 1970s and there are now well-established programmes that concern media sensitivity to cultural diversity. This is underpinned by locational and transnational dimensions. As Rath observes:

> Gateway cities have become nodes in national and international networks, bridging migrant communities and linking businesses and consumers all over the world. High-skilled professionals, low-skilled job seekers, students and holiday travellers alike are gravitating there. They are part and parcel of the rapid transformation of these cities from sites of industrial production into spaces of information circulation and consumption. ("Entrepreneurship Among Migrants and Returnees" 2)

Media organisations are a critical part of such transformations and there are strong economic incentives to understand and respond to the changed political economies of culturally diverse cities or nations. There are important social imperatives as "opportunity structures [are altered and as they] shape and reshape forms of inclusion and exclusion, and add new dimensions to the already existing economic, social and cultural diversity" (Rath "Entrepreneurship Among Migrants and Returnees" 2).

The social embeddedness of media workers, along with new influences on the political economy and economic viability of media organisations, combine (we argue) to encourage some of these workers to represent immigrants in more sympathetic and nuanced ways. Accordingly, we will argue that the initial period of immigrant diversification (involving Asian migrants) did result in media racialisation but that this characterisation of media discourses is increasingly inaccurate after 2000. Media representations of Asian immigrants were significantly more nuanced and favourable. But does that mean that stereotyping and racist commentary are now absent from media representations?

There has been a considerable investment in research which has demonstrated that the media has, and continues, to contribute to a process of racialisation, of problematising certain groups (in this case, particular immigrant groups) as constituting a threat or problem in various ways (Mahtani "Media, Diversity and Identity"; Fleras). We will argue that there continue to be examples of such racialisation so that media representations of immigrants provide both positive and negative versions simultaneously. The mixed embeddedness of media workers and organisations does not necessarily or inevitably result in shifts to a more positive mode of immigrant representation for *all* media workers or in *all* forms of media practice. It is possible, for example, that some in the media continue to reproduce racist arguments within more carefully articulated discourses. Reeves identifies a process called discursive de-racialisation, or speaking about racial matters in a way that avoids "the overt deployment of racial descriptions, evaluations and prescriptions" (Reeves quoted in Downing and Husband 7). Van Dijk had earlier discussed the way in which discourses are structured so that "lay people simultaneously speak 'prejudice' while attempting to avoid being described as prejudiced" (Wetherell and Potter 211). Downing and Husband go on to note that "meanings can be embedded in linked signifiers that allow for the exchange of shared meanings in the absence of an explicit denotative lexicon" (7). Liu and Mills, drawing on Reeves to discuss New Zealand examples, consider the same phenomena but provide a different label, 'plausible deniability'.

> Plausible deniability is a communication tactic that is used to warrant or defend public discourse about minority groups against accusations of racism by constructing statements in such a way that the speaker can convincingly disavow any racist intent ... the language used by Western political elites to criticize members of a minority group is couched in language wherein it is plausible that an alternative besides racism is motivating the speaker's criticism. (Liu and Mills 84)

Liu and Mills use two examples to explore plausible deniability in relation to political commentaries and events in New Zealand, including the way in which the media covered these events. In the case of the New Zealand First leader, Winston Peters, they note that two themes are repeatedly used in his public statements: an affirmation of the majority group's status and values (the irony is that Peters is Maori) and a denial of any racist intent (Liu and Mills 90). They point out that:

> While a single, vivid instance is used to illustrate the need for a general policy or principle, the speaker explicitly denies any categorical dislike for the minority group as a whole. (Liu and Mills 91)

This notion of plausible deniability is a helpful concept to employ in any analysis of the media as it sensitises us to new forms of racial discourses that are less direct than the racial categorisations and arguments of a classic racism. We will refer to one specific example of contemporary media plausible deniability below.

In summary, we argue that there are three distinct possibilities in terms of the contemporary media portrayal of immigrants. The first is that there continues to be

examples of explicit racism. This is most associated with a period of New Zealand that was dominated by British and Irish immigration, in which there were hegemonic views about the nature of the nation-state (that it would assume a singular citizenship and a loyalty based on a homogeneity) and that this was very apparent until the politics of biculturalism challenged such assumptions through the 1970s and 1980s. The second possibility is that media, reflecting the mixed embeddedness of its workers and organisations, has adjusted to the enhanced cultural diversity in New Zealand as a result of new political imperatives as well as personal engagement so that more sensitive orientations to this diversity are apparent. In contrast to many analyses of media representations of immigration, we see this as not only a theoretical possibility but supported by empirical evidence. The third option is that there are new discourses that maintain racist imagery and assumptions but which are worded to deny that there is any racist intent. This discursive de-racialisation or plausible deniability reflects an awareness that a traditional racism is no longer publically acceptable and so new ways of continuing to characterise an unacceptable 'Other' are deployed. Inevitably, these examples of media reporting are similar to the first option. Before we turn to evidence of whether media reporting has altered in a context of enhanced diversity, some discussion of the nature of this contemporary diversity is required.

The Arrival of Superdiversity

For most of New Zealand's colonial history, in excess of 95 per cent of immigrants came from Britain and Ireland (Belich). This began to change in the 1960s with the arrival of significant numbers of immigrants from the Polynesian Pacific. This produced something of a moral panic in the 1970s about the 'cultural difference' of these immigrants who were portrayed as an economic and cultural 'threat' by the mass media, admittedly echoing the views of the political elite. The 'threat' of Pacific peoples has never entirely disappeared and contemporary surveys of attitudes towards immigrants continue to identify Pacific groups as the least 'desirable' immigrants (Spoonley and Gendall).

However, the role of Pacific peoples as the most visible 'other' was to change significantly after 1987. In 1986, a review of immigration policy was carried out by a Labour Government and this was followed by legislation in 1987. The effect was dramatic in that New Zealand rapidly changed the ethnic/national mix and country origin of its immigrants. By 1990, the traditional source countries (Britain and Ireland in particular) had been displaced in dominance by the arrival of Asian immigrants. The early 1990s were to see Koreans, Taiwanese and Hong Kong Chinese arriving in increased numbers but after 2000, PRC Chinese and Indians (both from the Indian sub-continent and Fiji) provided the largest inflows, alongside ongoing British migration. There were also refugees from a wide variety of countries, South African migrants and a continuing migration from the Pacific. By the 2006 census, almost 40 per cent of Auckland's population were immigrants (i.e. born

outside New Zealand, a figure that does not include New Zealand-born children) from a large number of source countries.

The situation was now significantly different in terms of where immigrants came from and the cultural/national diversity of both resident and temporary immigrant populations. In less than 20 years, immigration to New Zealand, which had been dominated by British migrants with an important but smaller flow of Pacific migrants, was now diverse, with various Asian migrants contributing significantly to arrivals. Vertovec uses the terms 'superdiversity' to apply to a situation of cultural complexity which is greater than "anything the country has previously experienced" and, as a result, "significant new conjunctions and interactions" occur so that the "outcomes surpass the ways – in public discourse, policy debates and academic literature – that we usually understand diversity" (*New Complexities of Cohesion in Britain* 3, 9). By the mid-1990s, New Zealand was experiencing superdiversity. By 2016, Auckland's population (based on medium level flows and assumptions) is projected to be 25 per cent Maori and Pacific residents, 25 per cent Asian communities (both immigrant and New Zealand-born) with the remaining 50 per cent New Zealand Pakeha and immigrant/ethnic communities of European-descent populations, including those from South Africa, non-British European and North American. Given these developments, how responsive has the mass media been to the presence of this superdiversity?

Media Reporting, 1993–2003

We were involved in a project to examine the key images and discourses of immigrants provided in the print media. What was the orientation in media reports? Were they accurate and balanced? What themes predominated? In part, we were keen to see whether the media might have got it right (see Mahtani "Media, Diversity and Identity").

In asking these questions, we do not want to suggest that the mass media are necessarily responsible for creating racist discourses. Rather, we want to argue that there are multiple sources for such discourses; including family, peer and community settings and that the mass media give voice to these expressions of lived reality, sometimes to embellish and certainly to give authority to them. In New Zealand, there is ample evidence of racist discourses which are commonly held and shared by communities and individuals (see Wetherell and Potter). As Silverstone and Georgiou argue, the media "contribute to the creation of symbolic community spaces in which identities are constructed" (436). One of the issues which is not canvassed here but which we regard as critical for a more nuanced understanding of this issue is the relationship between the discourses constructed in various media settings and the way in which different audiences receive and interpret these discourses. How do these discourses impact on the construction and reproduction of communal and more personalised understandings of issues associated with immigrants and immigration? Moreover, the construction of exclusionary or hostile discourses requires an analysis

of boundary creation and the reproduction of negative stereotypes and prejudice in a variety of intimate settings. In addition, we would note that commercial imperatives drive media decisions and that most of New Zealand's print media (with the exception of the *Otago Daily Times*) is owned by Australian and other foreign media organisations. Downing and Husband add that "there is a huge amount of research to be done on the mesh between corporate cultures in the media industries and the production of 'racially'-inflected news, entertainment, ads, computer games, popular music and the rest" (51). Having acknowledged that there are important questions concerning discourse construction and reflection that are not canvassed here, we now discuss the discourses of this media landscape and how these have changed.

As part of a major externally funded project, a content analysis of the print media during the decade 1993–2003 was completed (Spoonley and Trlin; Spoonley "Print Media Representations"). The main paper surveyed was the *New Zealand Herald* which is an Auckland-based paper and New Zealand's largest daily, although other major centre papers were also included. All articles, including editorials, feature articles, columns and news reports, that concerned immigrants or immigration were identified and they were coded according to main focus, the use of key imagery and words/labels, and whether they were positive, negative or neutral. The results indicated quite distinct periods in terms of media coverage and approach. The first was characterised by what can only be described as a moral panic to which the media contributed.

The starting point was the appearance in 1993 of a series of articles in Auckland community (free) newspapers on what was labelled the 'Inv-Asian'. These articles contributed to what became a moral panic about the recent and dramatic increase in the arrival of Asian immigrants (see *Eastern Courier*, 16 and 23 April 1993). The text included the following:

> What lies behind the image of crowds of Asian children coming out of the best schools, the buy-up of expensive homes, slow, erratic drivers in big Mercedes and migration figures which suggest Auckland is becoming the Taipei/Hong Kong/Seoul of the South Pacific. (*Eastern Courier*, 23 April 1993)

These articles set the tone for much of the print media coverage, at least until the 1996 general election when the anti-immigrant politics of the New Zealand First political party gained prominence. The 'Inv-Asian' articles were significant for a number of reasons: they represented a racialising of recent immigrants with a particular focus on Asians and the problems they presented; the tone was a mix of outraged concern and fear and set the tone for many subsequent media reports and commentaries; the focus was almost exclusively on such migration, with considerable attention, both from the media and public, on the negative consequences of Asian migration and frequently negative judgements about Asians as individuals and communities; anti-(Asian)immigration sentiments and policies became part of politics in New Zealand, especially through the intense period of the moral panic as it peaked for the general election in 1996; and the 'Inv-Asian' articles became seen

as symptomatic amongst immigrants of the hostility felt by (some) communities towards them.

Given this media attention on the negative aspects of immigration, it is not surprising that in the content analysis of all articles that referred to immigrants and immigration over the decade from 1993 to 2003, the largest number are associated with the comments from New Zealand First and its leader, Winston Peters. He contributed to the explicit (re)politicisation of immigration, following on from a previous moral panic during the mid-1970s concerning migrants from the Pacific (see Fleras and Spoonley). By the year of the general election, 1996, Peters had specifically targeted immigration as his most important political concern, arguing that there should only be 10,000 immigrants approved for permanent residence rather than the 55,000 that had been approved during 1995. This stance earned significant public recognition and eventually electoral support at the time of the election.

But it was not simply that immigrants were an issue for Peters and New Zealand First; he 'Asianised' immigration debates. Nearly all his examples and concerns were focused on the culturally and 'racially' different Asians. Even when he disavowed this focus, his audiences were clear that he was not talking about all immigrants, only Asians. This reading was provided in semantic cues and codes, and was clear in the anecdotes used. And as with other anti-immigrant politicians, there was a strong 'threat' emphasis in his comments. There is evidence of both the plausible deniability attributed to Peters by Liu and Mills, and of an explicit racism towards Asian immigrants that did little to conceal his hostility. Denials that he was anti-Asian and/ or racist coexisted with commentaries about immigration that deployed a crude and direct construction of a racial Other. In the decade encompassed by the content analysis, it is the politics of immigration and specifically the views of the anti-immigrant New Zealand First which dominate. It is underscored by the fact that the party made immigration a key part of its campaign in the 1996 election, and then in subsequent elections, through to its departure from Parliament in the 2008 election. However, the way in which the mass media reported (and commented) on these anti-immigration politics had shifted by the early 2000s. We will return to this shortly.

The other topics which were to receive significant attention over the decade were refugees (often confused with asylum seekers in the media coverage), crime and immigrants and the economic integration of immigrants. But following the example of the 'Inv-Asian' articles and New Zealand First, most of the negative media coverage concerned Asian immigration through the 1990s. A number of specific themes emerged early on. They included: the involvement of Asians in certain crimes, notably extortion and kidnapping, the presence of Triads and what were deemed culturally based and inappropriate activities such as gambling and poor driving; the inability to speak English and the associated issue of speaking languages other than English in public spaces; the wealth of Asian immigrants which had consequences for housing demand and interest rates; the impact on schools as large numbers arrived and put pressure on resources, especially in the state system; and a generalised threat to the 'culture' of New Zealand, whatever that might be. These issues were given extensive

and repeated coverage in the print media covered by this survey. But there is a shift in the dominance of this negative coverage between the 1996 and 1999 elections.

Increasingly, after 1996, feature writers, columnists and editorial writers took a much more positive view of immigration, including Asian immigration. Some were from the communities concerned (Raybon Kan and Tapu Misa are two prominent columnists) whilst elsewhere, editorials were dismissive of the anti-immigration politics that had emerged in 1996. By the 2002 election, most of the major newspapers had adopted an editorial position which was highly critical of such politics. Moreover, all the major metropolitan newspapers ran features during 2002 (prior to the election) which sought to put immigration into context, which profiled immigrants and presented their stories in a generally positive light (if there were criticisms, they were often directed at the host population) and as a way of personalising the communities concerned. The simplistic racial labels and general-isations which had previously been common were largely absent although there were some exceptions (see the article below on Maori concerns). For example, the *Dominion Post* ran a series in September 2002 titled "The Immigration Debate" which included the following:

> 16 September: "Why Maori fear being swamped", "National identity crises behind rhetoric of fear" and "Welfare statistics shatter bludger myth";
>
> 17 September: "Looking for the magic number";
>
> 18 September: "Paradise postponed" and "The tough questions that won't go away";
>
> 19 September: "Why the melting pot doesn't work".

Despite the wording of some of the headlines, the articles were extensive, sympathetic to immigrants, provided nuanced and detailed explanations of current immigration trends and outcomes and offered a challenge to those who were sceptical or opposed to immigration. The paper also included profiles of immigrant groups under the heading "Ethnicity. Celebrating Cultural Diversity".

The shift in the representation of Asian immigrants after 2000 can be explained by a number of factors. The first is the decline in Asian immigrants during and immediately after the 1997–98 Asian economic downturn. There was a significant economic impact as the demand for housing dropped, along with various consumer goods (cars, household appliances). Economics reporters began to highlight these negative impacts and to re-assess the implications for the New Zealand economy, both in terms of domestic demand and international competitiveness. Something of a turning point was achieved and a number of positive stories started to appear (e.g. "Asian Migrants – The Myth and the Reality", *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1997). Once the numbers of immigrants from Asia began to rise again after 2000, the positive stories continued, especially in terms of what immigrants did for economic growth. But this was accompanied by contributions from senior journalists,

columnists and editors who adopted a positive approach to immigration and immigrants. There was a significant shift in terms of the willingness of media workers to articulate opinions that were pro-immigration and sympathetic to Asian immigrants. By the end of the survey period, the number of articles concerning immigration remained high but the tenor of the majority was now positive as opposed to the period of moral panic from 1993 to 1996.

In a limited number of interviews with media workers, combined with the tenor of the opinions expressed in editorials and columns, it became clear that those responsible had been influenced by their increasing interactions with immigrant communities and growing (personal) concerns about the level of anti-Asian sentiments by some politicians and one political party. This shift coincided with changing public opinion as the proportion expressing positive views towards immigrants grew (Spoonley and Gendall). As we indicated above, we are not in a position to identify causality, notably the possibility that media coverage played a role in shifting public opinion or that media workers altered their discourses as they realised that the constituency for anti-immigrant discourses declined. Audience research is required to explore such causality. There was, however, an important exception to this shift: news reporting. In the survey, news reports continued to focus on negative issues or perceptions after 2000. In interviews with managers in the media, they tended to offer a number of explanations for this fact: news reporters were operating under very different deadlines unlike, for example, feature writers; they tended to report more or less verbatim the comments of anti-immigrant politicians or others; and they tended not to have good connections to members of the immigrant communities concerned. By 2002–2003, the majority of negative coverage came from news reports and was in sharp contrast to other material in the same edition of the newspaper dealing with more or less the same topics.

In summary, the decade can be divided into two parts. The first is dominated by a moral panic about immigration, specifically from Asia, which was reflected in media reporting. The politicisation and problematisation of Asian migration was mirrored in the print media. After 1997, and certainly since 2000, opinion and feature writers adopted a very different approach, prompted in part by a major downturn in Asian immigration and a greater appreciation of at least the economic benefits of immigration but also as a result of a growing awareness amongst journalists that they had a role to play in explaining (positively) the complex issues of immigration. There was a realisation, from both managers and the journalists concerned, that these new migrants were an increasingly significant audience in their own right, underlined by the decline in print sales and revenue. There were some exceptions in terms of a small number of columnists in particular and of news reporting generally.

Fleras has argued that the "mainstream news media remains diversity-aversive, preferring instead the 'pretend pluralism' that fits into a business as usual mindset" (5). In the review outlined above, this argument does not generally hold although there are important exceptions. This suggests two things at least: that media practice even inside the same organisation is variable and that media coverage can

accommodate socio-historical shifts. There was little doubt that through the mid-1990s, the print media in New Zealand contributed negative and hostile reporting on immigrants (and specifically 'visible' and culturally different immigrants) and said little about the benefits of immigration. But there was, subsequently, a noticeable shift, especially in terms of the more in-depth reporting provided by feature writers as well as the opinions offered in editorials and columns. There remain occasions when a writer or a publication provides an example of problematising migrants as 'troublesome constituents' (Fleras 5). We highlight an important example next.

Problematising Asian Immigrants

Fleras argues that questionable coverage of migrants and minorities occurs because:

> [. . .] they are (a) miniaturized as irrelevant or inferior, (b) demonized as a social menace to society, (c) scapegoated as the source of all problems, (d) 'otherized' for being too different or not different enough, (e) refracted through the prism of Eurocentric fears and fantasies and (f) subjected to double standards that lampoons minorities regardless of what they do or didn't do. (9)

In New Zealand, Asian immigrants have been demonised and scapegoated as a cultural and problematic 'Other' since the early 1990s[5] and although the extent of this negative reporting in the mass media has significantly decreased, it has not disappeared. Research on the 'invasion' of Asian students and the use of "animalistic attributes and metaphors" continue (Li 13).

> These media presentations suggest that Asian students as the 'other' are seen as a threat to "the presence of 'us' in the city" (Collins 2006, p. 229). Collins believed that adverse and marginalising attitudes such as these, when extensively reported by the media, reinforced the perceptions that Chinese students were not welcome in this country [New Zealand]. (Li 14)

An article published in one of New Zealand's widely read monthly journals provides evidence of nearly all of the above aspects. *North and South* aspires to provide in-depth articles of interest. It is difficult to categorise its general approach to political and social issues and it has adopted both liberal and conservative positions on a range of issues. However, an article in 2006 titled "Asian Angst. Is it Time to Send Some Back?" (Coddington) certainly positioned the journalist concerned, the magazine and its then editor in relation to Asian immigrants. The writer was a former parliamentarian for the ACT Party, a conservative, free-market party that occupies the most right-wing position on New Zealand's parliamentary spectrum. However, this party has not adopted a hostile position on immigration and certainly not the racialised arguments apparent in the "Asian Angst" article.[6] At the time of researching and writing the article, Deborah Coddington had left parliament and was back working as a journalist. She wrote a feature article which became the cover story for that month's edition.

The "Asian Angst" article did several things: it illustrated the willingness of a journalist to set out, in a lengthy article, a position which constructed Asians as a 'cultural Other' who were a threat in terms of their involvement in criminal or anti-social activity; it highlighted the willingness of the editor to make this the cover piece for that issue, thereby endorsing the journalism involved, and she went on to vigorously defend the article as robust and appropriate journalism once it came under attack; and the fact that the appearance of the article and its defence by the editor prompted a range of organisations and communities to confront the journalist and editor to counter the negativity of the article.

There was an outraged response to the "Asian Angst" article from individuals and some organisations, querying the detail of the article but also the intentions of both the author and the magazine (see "The Write of Reply", *North and South*, January 2007). Public scrutiny of the article was quickly channelled into three complaints to the Press Council: one from Grant Hannis (journalism lecturer), one from Charles Mabbett (Media Advisor, Asia New Zealand Foundation) while the third was from Tze Ming Mok and 18 others (15 of whom were Asian). The key concerns were the accuracy of the comments made in the article, especially in relation to the statistics used and phrases such as 'Asian menace' and 'the gathering crime tide', and that the article was discriminatory. The Press Council treated these three complaints together and upheld the complaint, especially in relation to Coddington's misuse of statistics to argue that there was an Asian 'crime wave' and held that the "language was emotionally loaded". There was also some highly critical analysis of the article on blogs (see http://www.publicaddress.net/) and occasionally, supportive comments, in one case from another journalist ("The Crucifixion of Deborah Coddington", http://karldufresne.blogspot.com). Hannis went on to analyse the content of the article and concluded that the negative column centimetres (539.5) significantly outweighed the positive (53.1) or neutral (115.4) material (Hannis "New Zealand Press Council"). Coddington, more recently a columnist for a Sunday newspaper, continued to refer to her "Asian Angst" piece, sometimes to acknowledge her supporters (*Herald on Sunday*, 20 July 2008; see also Monk and Coddington's comment: "... I honestly did not foresee that innocent people of Asian descent would be hugely offended by it ... ") and sometimes to concede that she had caused offence ("I Wish I Hadn't Written That Asian Angst Article", *Herald on Sunday*, 7 September 2008). The latter was undermined by her reference to 'sadists' who committed 'the media equivalent of gang rape', a comment that immediately attracted further criticism (see "Weekend Warriors", http://www.publicaddress.net/default,5302.sm#post5302).

The original article, the response it engendered especially amongst those communities identified as Asian along with the defence of the journalist and the process by which the accuracy of the article was checked raised some interesting questions. It reinforced a number of the already existing concerns of academic researchers and community representatives at the willingness of some in the mass media to articulate negative discourses. In this case, the elements which Liu and Mills

found elsewhere in political and media commentary in New Zealand apply to the "Asian Angst" piece:

> Minority group members are criticized for specific misdeeds that violate traditional majority group values. (2) The specific criticism against minority group member(s) is qualified using various discursive repertoires. (3) Majority group values (e.g. some high-minded principle of morality or justice marshalled under the banner of nationality) are affirmed. (4) Racism or racist intent is denied. (Liu and Mills 96)

To paraphrase Poynting et al. (15), the racialisation of Asian criminal and social incivility was seen by Coddington as related in various pathological ways to the values and culture of those involved. Alongside evidence that indicates that media reporting elsewhere has shifted, the "Asian Angst" article is a reminder that there is still a willingness amongst some media workers to criminalise Asians as "deviant, difference and dangerous" (Mahtani "How are Immigrants Seen" 234).

Conclusion

The growing cultural diversity associated with very different immigrant flows to New Zealand has prompted new interest amongst researchers on the reporting of this diversity by the mainstream media. The question posed at the beginning about the responsiveness of key institutions to changed circumstances has been partially answered. The survey indicates a shift in how immigrants and immigration issues have been reported. There is evidence that the "more or less standardized patterns of action and ideas with a normative validity" (Rath "Needle Games" 15) in the mass media have shifted through the late 1990s and after 2000. This was particularly obvious in the opposition expressed in editorials, columns and feature articles to the anti-immigration politics of Winston Peters and New Zealand First, as well as attempts to more positively portray immigrants. But this is counterbalanced by the ongoing willingness in some quarters to problematise certain immigrants – notably Asians – and not others. The "Asian Angst" article represented one recent example of such willingness. But those who were problematised in this way have increasingly sought to contest such constructions with some success. The issues raised by the "Asian Angst" article pose the question of how best to further encourage the appropriate coverage of diversity in the mass media. The mechanisms for this have been compromised to some extent by the emphasis on the privatisation of media ownership in the wake of the neo-liberal reforms of the 1980s. The 1999 Labour-led coalition government sought to counterbalance this by reinforcing the institutional measures for complaints against the media and certainly the Press Council played an important role in the "Asian Angst" case. The government also provided funding for public good and local content broadcasting, although the latter has been subverted by the inclination of public television (in particular) to divert this to fund populist programmes. Canada provides an alternative. In 2002, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was convinced by a consultation exercise that it was not adequately

reflecting the diversity of Canadian society and it initiated a number of measures to ensure that it "mirrored the country" (Simon 5). Ironically, the recently established Maori Television channel in New Zealand is probably the best example of diversity-sensitive media, along with what is available on TVNZ's Freeview channel and Triangle Television.

What we have not discussed is how various immigrant audiences understand and react to the images provided by the media. As Mahtani notes, there is a need for studies which "explore the relationship between identity formation, minority images and the variations within different minority communities" ("Media, Diversity and Identity" 42). Focus group discussions that were part of the current research was completed with two immigrant communities – South African and Korean – and analysis of these indicates that the immigrants concerned were certainly very sensitive to negative media reports but they also understand what is happening with more insight than researchers and others might credit them with. While annoyed at negative coverage, they also understood that the media operate within a certain political economy and a set of commercial imperatives. But this does suggest the need for a better understanding of both alternative media (sphericles) which meet immigrant community needs more directly and sympathetically (Georgiou), and how different immigrant audiences understand media messages within these sphericles as well as in relation to the mainstream media. After all, immigrant communities are neither more homogeneous nor share a similar level of media literacy and engagement than do host communities.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1]   Pakeha is used here to refer to members of the majority group who are of European descent but whose cultural values and practices reflect their New Zealand location. The use of the label is seen by some as evidence of postcolonial politics (see Spoonley "Constructing Ourselves") and as part of complex contemporary cultural politics (see Bell).

[2]   This research on the media coverage of Pacific peoples examined 65 news items from three newspapers with consistency checked by an intercoder reliability measure.

[3]   Palagi is the Samoan equivalent to Pakeha, hence New Zealand Europeans.

[4]   New Zealand First emerged in the early 1990s after Winston Peters was ejected from a Cabinet position with the then ruling (conservative) National Party. New Zealand First adopted an explicit anti-immigration position in its first General Election in 1996, and has done so since.

[5]   This refers only to post-war events. There is a history of anti-Asian politics in the late 1800s and early 1900s that was the subject of a formal apology by the then Prime Minister of New Zealand, Rt. Hon. Helen Clark. There is also an irony in that public surveys of

New Zealanders readily acknowledge that Asian peoples are most likely to be discriminated against in contemporary New Zealand (Race Relations Commissioner).

[6] New Zealand First, another conservative party represented in parliament until 2008, had this position to itself until the Maori Party began to query the benefits of immigration after it was elected to parliament in 2006.

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