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Abstract

At a time when traditional media industries are searching for new models, the rapidly growing Indigenous media are gaining in confidence and influence. New Zealand's Māori Television Service (MTS) has been dubbed the country's only real provider of public service television and has appeal far beyond a narrow target audience. An analysis of 2008 national election coverage shows that MTS, while focused on Māori concerns, was closer to public service expectations on a number of measurements than the two mainstream prime-time news programs. The paper examines coverage on state-owned TVNZ, private channel TV, and MTS, aiming to throw light on the contribution that a different—indigenous—perspective can make.

Keywords

public service broadcasting, indigenous media, news media, minority media

Concern about the sheer survival of traditional media battered by new technology, fragmented audiences, and global recession is compounded by growing pessimism about their ability to deliver news to inform citizens. However, journalism, mass media, and the democratic process remain inexorably entwined (Strömbäck 2005: 332), while, despite the Internet, television news remains the main way people receive political information (Aalberg et al. 2010: 257; Bennett 2009). Journalism strives to meet three goals—serving democracy, cutting costs, and maximizing audiences (Corner and Pels 2003). Pressures to make news exciting are increasing, and Bennett (2009:

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21) is among those condemning the consequent “blurring of news and entertainment content, along with the emergence of journalists as more active storytellers and experts.”

Political journalists are particularly scrutinized because “What they choose to cover, what they ignore, and how they frame political stories influence the perceptions of elite and mass audiences” (Graber et al. 2008: 1). Research from the United States tends to dominate, but international findings are similar. Picard (2008: 222) contends important but less provocative issues are neglected in the ratings-driven approach that “emphasizes the sensational: scandals, conflicts, mud-slinging, allegations and investigations that produce little results.” Numbers of studies have reproduced Capella and Jamieson’s (1997) findings that news concentrates on the strategic game of politics neglecting issues in favor of the election “horserace.” While some scholars (e.g., Temple 2006) argue sensational political stories serve democracy by engaging more people with political issues, most remain concerned that coverage has become increasingly personalized, concerned with politicians’ private lives (Bennett 2009; Sabato 2007), and that reduced policy-centered coverage has been accompanied by shrinking sound bites (Hallin 1992). Furthermore, responding to political media management, journalists have developed a posture of “disdain”, cynicism, and mockery (Atkinson 2006; Levy 1981), while demand for excitement results in mindless attack journalism (Sabato 2007).

Altheide and Snow (1991: 241–51) conclude journalism is being replaced by “information mechanics” and that media culture cannot be altered. However, Picard (2008) and others argue that, although market-driven media economics make it hard to fulfil public service obligations, a true diversity of media combined with well-funded but independent public service broadcasting would improve quality and content. Encouragingly, Aalberg et al. (2010: 255) report that in continuing to provide political information in prime time, some European countries (including Britain) are “strongly resistant . . . to subordinating the needs of democracy to profit making.”

In fact, despite struggles to retain funding and maintain independence, permutations of public service broadcasting continue to show a way forward. As part of this sector, rapidly growing indigenous media, now making an impact far beyond local and national to global media (Wilson and Stewart 2008: 2), offer one such avenue. These media usually have a clear mission, are flexible, and used to surviving on small budgets.

Indigenous media’s rapid development has been paralleled by ethnic media expansion in the United States (Grose 2006) and across the globe where diaspora communities established their own media (Sinclair and Cunningham 2000). In both cases, the impetus has been exclusion of minority interests by majority media institutions (Fowler et al. 2009; Fox 1990; Grose 2006; Walker 2002). Although some anthropologists (e.g., Ginsburg 1991) say adopting Western media can further erode traditional models, indigenous media continue to gain ground despite often ad hoc funding and erratic policy initiatives. Indeed, Grose (2006: 117) finds that minority media thrive in times of major hostility and marginality.

The New Zealand Context

New Zealand's media market is small, deregulated, and highly competitive, with few of the public broadcasting provisions often present in British Commonwealth countries. State-owned TVNZ has always depended on advertising, and market-oriented restructuring in the late 1980s left it no programming requirements or legislative remit (Norris et al. 2003). Legislation allows complete overseas control of media and does little to discourage cross-media ownership. Not until 2003 was a public service charter, similar to those in Britain, Australia, and Canada, introduced to TVNZ. However, little funding for public service programming followed¹; TVNZ remained 90 percent dependent on advertising and expected to return a government dividend (Thompson 2007). The charter was abolished in 2011. Meanwhile, an official report on the future of public broadcasting described Māori Television as “the only true public broadcaster in television in New Zealand” (Norris et al. 2003: 10).

New Zealand's indigenous Māori people—14.6 percent of the 4.4 million population—are significant in the country's identity and economy. The special legal and representational place of Māori stems from the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, which in the absence of a written constitution has assumed growing significance (Palmer 2001) and been incorporated into legislation since the mid-1970s. The Treaty's Māori-language version guarantees “full authority” over *taonga* (or “treasures” including language and culture). Section 3 of the Māori Television Service Act 2003 states: “the Crown and Māori together have an obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi to preserve, protect, and promote te reo Māori [Māori language].” The Act also guarantees independence.

Compared to mainstream free-to-air television, Māori Television (MTS) is minimally funded. In 2009 it received NZ\$32.6 million from Government sources. Along with other broadcasters, MTS applies to commission programs from independent companies, receiving about NZ\$20 million annually. Advertising money was less than \$2 million in 2009 (Tahana 2010). Section 8 of the MTS Act says its principal function is promoting Māori language and culture. Most prime-time broadcasting must be in Māori. However, Māori Television's strategy since its first broadcast in 2004 is to be “the ‘face of New Zealand’ and a channel that offers something for all New Zealanders” (maoritelevision.com). Pressure on MTS for Māori language programming eased with the March 2008 launch of an entirely Māori Te Reo channel. Cumulative audience numbers (reach) on MTS have more than tripled to 1.6 million a month: “In an average month in 2008-09, 59 per cent of Māori 5+ and 41 per cent of All People 5+ tuned into Māori Television” (Ministry of Culture and Heritage 2010). The audience is partly attracted to local sports coverage, documentaries, foreign films, and innovative reporting of national events.

The hour-long prime-time (6 o'clock) news programs on the two dominant free-to-air channels between them garner 70 percent of the national television audience. TVNZ's *One News* has more viewers, but TV3's *3 News*, owned by Australian private equity company Ironbridge, provides close competition in the younger urban market. Financial pressures ensure commercial imperatives dominate and the programs are

very similar. At MTS, however, television news (*Te Kaea*) did not at the time of the study compete directly with mainstream news: the Māori language version of *Te Kaea* broadcast at 7:30 P.M. with a subtitled version at 11 P.M.²

Although MTS has rapidly become an established name in the broadcasting landscape, Fox (2009: 14) details a twenty-year battle to “wrestle acknowledgement, recognition and resources” to set it up. As in other countries, the push for indigenous media stemmed from mainstream media’s failure to meet Māori needs. Writing under the title “Māori News Is Bad News”, Walker (2002) claims media reinforce European domination and Māori subordination. Nairn et al. (2009: 132) cite evidence of similar patterns in Australia, Canada, and the United States.

News Values and Minority Media

There is little investigation of news in indigenous media, but some in minority media. Grose (2006) found U.S. legislators from ethnic minority groups received more favorable coverage from their minority media press, while mainstream sources gave them unfavorable coverage and less coverage compared with “white” legislators. Latino, African American, and Asian American print media gave more coverage to legislators from their own minority group and to those from other minority groups.

In New Zealand, there is continuing criticism that Māori are either absent or portrayed in damaging stereotypical news frames in mainstream media (Abel 1997; Nairn et al. 2009; Stuart 2005; Walker 2002). However, there has been little systematic investigation of news in Māori media. A study comparing Mana Māori News on National [Public Service] Radio with mainstream television and radio news showed it focused “not on dissension between people but rather on dilemmas for Maori” (McGregor and Comrie 1995: 36) and stories frequently referred to solutions. Stuart (2000) said of Māori media: “The focus is not just on action but also on issues and ideas. A greater range of voices is heard, modelled on *hui*³ [discussion meetings] and widening the definition of ‘newsmakers’” (cited in Addis et al. 2005: 43).

According to Stuart (2005: 22), growing Māori media are still “working out their own approaches and methodologies.” He says when reporting meetings on the Marae [Māori meeting space] they may not report all discussion, “but report the final decision, and, more importantly ask for people’s reaction . . . rather than commenting on the decision itself.” This, he argues, “presents a style of reporting on Māori decisions which does not transgress the ideals of the culture.” Outside the Marae, Stuart says, Māori media reporters challenge, question, and scrutinize. “However, this is still tempered by Māori approaches to conflict and discussion, which remain different to, through not uninfluenced by, mainstream media” (2005: 22).

Experienced broadcaster Carol Archie (2007: 66) makes the following generalizations: Māori media are more focused on issues, they give voice to a wider range of perspectives, and differing viewpoints are reported in a less adversarial manner. She says the formal nature of much Māori language means it takes longer to make points,

but language of journalists and younger speakers is rapidly adapting to modern usages (2007: 58).

Macdonald (2008) compared MTS's *Te Kaea* with mainstream television news, finding its thirty-minute program structure similar. *Te Kaea* had much less advertising and no international items. Politics, then crime stories, dominated both MTS and mainstream news. However, *Te Kaea* had little on accidents and disasters, no personality/celebrity stories, and gave proportionally more time to education, environment and Māori/Pākehā relations than mainstream news. MTS gave on-air sources significantly more time than mainstream channels. All channels featured members of the public frequently, but *Te Kaea* used more nonelite sources.

Method

Contemporary Māori media adapt Western news norms and practices to meet perceived Māori needs and are still developing their own approaches. In this exploratory study certain assumptions could be made from earlier investigations. Compared to mainstream news, *Te Kaea*'s political coverage was expected to concentrate on subjects of particular interest to Māori; spend more time on issues than strategy, with news topics reflecting a less adversarial stance (Archie 2007); news sources would have longer to speak and there would be a wider variety of news sources (Archie 2007; Macdonald 2008). If MTS is public service oriented, analysts might expect more political news than commercial channels, longer stories, more experts as news sources, less mediation and "celebrity journalism," but still a significant amount of analysis.

New Zealand's 2008 National General Election presented an opportunity to compare content and style of prime-time political reporting on MTS and mainstream media. The sample consisted of *One News* and *3 News* (both 60 minutes) and *Te Kaea* (30 minutes) recorded for thirty-one days of the official election campaign from Writ Day 8 October (when political party advertising began) to election eve 7 November.

The content analysis was restricted because the analysts, along with 96 percent of the population, were not fluent Māori language speakers and therefore relied on the subtitled version of *Te Kaea*. First, the topic of all lead headlines was recorded along with the total time given to national political stories in each news program. Each political item's length and program position was noted as was the story topic (chosen from thirty-eight potential election and policy issues). The story frame was recorded employing the categories "strategy," "issue," or "mixed" as used by Lawrence's (2000) adaptation of Capella and Jamieson's (1997) work.⁴ Each on-camera news source was analyzed according to thirty-seven categories, particularly emphasizing party leaders. For each source in each story, sound bites were cumulated to give total on-camera speaking time. Finally, the number of journalists' pieces to camera and "live crosses" was recorded and each story was coded as containing political analysis or not.⁵

Table 1. Number of Items, Amount of Coverage and Average Story Length for Whole Program and Political Stories

Program	Total No of Items	Total News Content ^a	Average Item Length	Political Items, No. and Percentage of Total	Total Time, Political Items	Average Political Item Length
<i>One News</i>	713	18 hr 6 min 4 sec	91.4 sec	106 (14.9%)	3 hr 30 min 1 sec	119 sec
<i>3 News</i>	708	18 hr 46 min 4 sec	95.4 sec	88 (12.4%)	3 hr 15 min 40 sec	133 sec
<i>Te Kaea</i>	357	11 hr 42 min 0 sec	118 sec	59 (16.5%)	2 hr 25 min 34 sec	148 sec

a. Total content discounts ads, weather, headlines and banter, but includes sports items.

Findings

New Zealand politics dominated all three channels during the campaign despite the unfolding global economic crisis and concurrent U.S. election campaign of Barack Obama. On MTS political coverage featured every night, while TVNZ and TV3 each had just one night without national politics. Analysis of lead headlines during the campaign showed political stories comprised just over a quarter of all headlines on all three channels—well ahead of crime news, which in nonelection time vies for first equal headline place. For most of the campaign, national politics led the news—twenty-one nights on MTS, eighteen on TVNZ, and seventeen on TV3.

As Table 1 shows, while *One News* ran the most political stories including a soft news “Roadtrip” series from various electorates, its political stories were shorter than those on the other channels. MTS’s average news program was shorter than mainstream news, but MTS devoted 21 percent of its news to politics, more than TVNZ (19.4 percent) or TV3 (17.4 percent). On *3 News*, all stories, including political ones, were fewer but slightly longer than those on *One News*. *Te Kaea*’s half-hour program meant fewer political stories, but item length (for all stories including political stories) was longer again. Additionally, each weekend night, *Te Kaea* featured an in-depth interview. During the campaign, two were political interviews. If these two items are excluded, the average length of the remaining fifty-seven political items matches that of *3 News*.⁶

Topics of Political News

MTS’s coverage of party policies concentrated on their impact on Māori. Table 2 shows MTS focused more on polling results, campaign “roadshow” (hustings) stories and the election “horserace” (distinguished from broader poll stories because of

Table 2. “Top Six” Political News Story Topics (Number and Percentage of All Political Items)

MTS	TVNZ	TV3
Polls = 11 (18.6%)	Scandals/gaffes = 14 (13.2%)	Scandals/gaffes = 18 (20.5%)
Roadshow = 10 (16.9%)	Economy = 13 (12.3%)	Tax funding = 8 (9.1%)
Māori issues = 9 (15.3%)	Roadshow = 12 (11.3%)	Economy = 8 (9.1%)
Horseshoe = 6 (10.2%)	One News Roadtrip ^a = 11 (10.4%)	Coalition = 7 (7.9%)
Economy = 4 (6.8%)	Tax funding = 7 (6.6%)	Roadshow = 6 (6.8%)
Candidates = 3 (5.1%)	Polls = 7 (6.6%)	Polls, candidates, and social welfare all = 5 (5.7%)

a. *One News Roadtrip* items from around New Zealand mixed travelogue, electorate information, and interviews.

concentration on campaigning performance of competing candidates). Such stories made up nearly half *Te Kaea*'s coverage; 46 percent, contrasting with 23 percent (*One News*) and 15 percent (*3 News*). Stories based entirely around individual political candidates were relatively infrequent on all channels.

However, on mainstream channels, the predominant strategy story frame (discussed later) meant poll positions and horseshoe aspects were emphasized in many stories. Furthermore, much mainstream coverage was personalized with visuals reinforcing the tendency to concentrate on leaders. In comparison, only three of ten MTS roadshow items concentrated on candidates out campaigning—the rest covered party launches, presentations, and meetings on policy issues. Like the other channels, MTS conducted its own polls. However, as Table 2 shows, it differed from mainstream channels in the length of analysis given to them. These polls concerned Māori electoral seats⁷ and policy issues important to Māori.

In contrast to *Te Kaea*, mainstream news emphasized political mini-scandals and gaffes (Table 2).⁸ *Te Kaea*'s only scandal/gaffe coverage was of the National Party's immigration spokesperson making racially charged comments about migrant workers. Mainstream channels devoted considerable space to this story over two days. MTS coverage was restricted to a relatively short item on day two.

MTS also differed in the limited emphasis placed on economic issues. TVNZ and TV3 regularly featured major parties' responses (e.g., a bank guarantee scheme, special unemployment benefits) to the international economic crisis. A further series of stories covered long-considered tax cut plans and related proposals to change KiwiSaver (a work-based savings scheme). On MTS, tax stories and broader economy stories were mentioned as part of party policy launches. *Te Kaea*'s four economy stories covered main parties' fiscal policies, “relief for recession victims” and policies targeting “loan sharks.”

When aggregated, the percentage of items on individual policy issues was similar across all channels (MTS 39 percent, TV3 38 percent, and TVNZ, 34 percent). Much of MTS policy coverage was on Māori issues—land, water, seabed, and foreshore

Table 3. Political Story Frames (Percentage and Number) during the Campaign

	TVNZ	TV3	MTS
Campaign Opening (8–16 October)			
Strategy	48% (13)	50% (14)	25% (4)
Issue	33% (9)	18% (5)	37.5% (6)
Mixed	19% (5)	32% (9)	37.5% (6)
Midcampaign (17–30 October)			
Strategy	55% (22)	52% (17)	26% (6)
Issue	20% (8)	21% (7)	26% (6)
Mixed	25% (10)	27% (9)	48% (11)
Campaign close (31 October–7 November)			
Strategy	70% (16)	76% (13)	44% (7)
Issue	22% (5)	None	37% (6)
Mixed	9% (2)	24% (4)	19% (3)
Campaign Overall			
Strategy	57% (51)	56% (44)	31% (17)
Issue	24% (22)	15% (12)	33% (18)
Mixed	19% (17)	28% (22)	36% (20)
Total	100% (90)	100% (78)	100% (55)

entitlements, and retention of Māori Parliamentary seats. Māori issue coverage on mainstream channels was far smaller. Both ran three stories speculating whether National was renegeing on pledges to abolish Māori seats, while TVNZ ran an additional story on Māori Party policies. Across all channels, key policy issues, such as health, education, immigration, transport, and the environment, were scarcely covered.

Additionally, TVNZ ran 11 *Election Roadtrip* items covering infrequently visited general electorates throughout the country. The two long interview items on *Te Kaea* featured the Māori Party education spokesperson (on October 25) and (on November 2) analysis of the campaign week by political expert Kaapua Smith.

Strategy Framing

To examine story treatment, items were analyzed using the strategy/issues framing model (Lawrence 2000). Table 3 indicates concentration on the strategy frame (emphasizing competition, “winners” and “losers” in the political “game”), versus an issue frame, and a third “mixed” frame. The mixed frame was helpful for stories blending strategy and issue frames in journalist voice-overs, or which shifted to strategy framing when journalists appeared on camera. Percentages in Table 3 refer to stories amendable to the framing categorization.

Analysis showed much less strategy framing on MTS. Only 31 percent of MTS coverage was strategy framed compared with 57 percent (TVNZ) and 56 percent

Table 4. Total Number of On-Air Sources and Source Speaking Time in Political Stories

On-Air Sources	MTS	TVNZ	TV3
Number of sources	110 (108) ^a	284	202
Average number per story	1.9 (1.9)	2.7	2.3
Total seconds on air	2660 (1937)	3016	2368
Average source speaking time	24.2 (17.9)	10.6	11.7

a. *Italic script* refers to results discounting two long interview items.

(TV3).⁹ The comparatively fewer strategy stories on *Te Kaea* appear surprising set beside its high percentage of poll and campaign roadshow stories. But because MTS polled for issues of importance to Māori as well as voting intentions, four (36 percent) of the poll stories were mixed. Polling on the mainstream channels focused on potential results. On MTS, two of ten “roadshow” stories detailed party policies and six others were a mix of candidate activity and policy issues. Roadshow stories on mainstream channels concentrated on candidates’ performance (except for two TVNZ stories on policy launches).

All channels increased strategy framing as election day loomed. Table 3 divides the campaign into three: nine days from Writ day through the official launches; the middle two weeks; and the final eight days. The table shows strategy framing particularly dominant at TV3 in the last week, where no stories dealt entirely with issues. Meanwhile on MTS, although strategy framing increased in the last week (to 44 percent), an almost equal number of stories were issues only.

News Sources

Table 4 shows results for all on-air news sources: including average number of sources per story, total seconds of source speech, and average source speaking time for each channel. Table 5 gives these results for political story categories.

Although MTS had fewer sources per story compared with TV3 and certainly TVNZ, the clearest difference lies in the amount of time allocated to on-air sources. News sources’ sound bites were cumulated in each item to give an overall on-air speaking time for each source. MTS sources had clearly longer to speak than those on TVNZ or TV3, even when the two long interviews were discounted.¹⁰

Table 5 shows the two main party leaders dominated mainstream channel coverage; 39 percent of all on-air source time on TVNZ and 49 percent on TV3. On MTS, however, the National and Labour Party leaders took just 4 percent of on-air source time. Nor did MTS give much airtime to Māori Party leaders, focusing instead on party candidates for Māori seats (34 percent of on-air source time). The Labour and Māori parties, providing the only viable candidates for Māori seats, dominated. Māori Party candidates appeared more frequently than Labour ones. When time given to all representatives of each party is cumulated, the notable feature is MTS’s virtual neglect of

Table 5. Number of Sources, Total On-air Speaking Time, Average Time per Story for All Source Categories in Political Stories

Source Type	TVNZ	TV3	MTS
Total	284; 3016 sec (10.6)	202; 2368 sec (11.7)	110; 2660 sec (24.2) <i>108; 1937 sec (17.9)</i>
Labour leader	37; 520 sec (14.05)	39; 510 sec (13.1)	6; 73 sec (9.0)
National leader	50; 670 sec (13.4)	35; 648 sec (18.5)	4; 26 sec (6.5)
NZ First leader	19; 240 sec (12.6)	20; 206 sec (10.3)	3; 31 sec (10.3)
Māori Party leader	5; 66 sec (13.2)	6; 97 sec (16.1)	6; 94 sec (15.6)
Other party leaders	12; 117 sec (9.8)	11; 131 sec (11.9)	2; 43 sec (21.5)
Rest of Labour	12; 174 sec (14.5)	10; 101 sec (10.1)	20; 330 sec (16.5)
Rest of National	11; 126 sec (11.5)	7; 130 sec (18.6)	3; 96 sec (32.0)
Rest of NZ First	2; 29 sec (14.5)	1; 12 sec (12.0)	3; 75 sec (25.0)
Rest of Māori Party	3; 32 sec (10.7)	1; 10 sec (10.0)	18; 638 sec (35.4) <i>17; 252 sec (14.8)</i>
Rest of other	2; 42 sec (21.0)	1; 9 sec (9.0)	1; 16 sec (16.0)
Govt. official		3; 37 sec (12.3)	
NGO Official	3; 15 sec (5.0)	5; 65 sec (13.0)	
Business representative	1; 14 sec (14.0)	1; 12 sec (12.0)	
Union representative	1; 10 Sec (10.0)	3; 12 sec (4.0)	2; 41 sec (20.5)
Māori/Iwi representative			7; 194 sec (27.7)
NGO member	4; 35 sec (8.8c)	3; 21 sec (7.0)	2; 6 sec (3.0)
Experts	10; 121 sec (12.1)	5; 53 sec (10.6)	13; 771 sec (59.3) <i>12; 434 sec (36.2)</i>
Various supporters	12; 112 sec (9.3)	9; 84 sec (9.3)	3; 34 sec (11.3)
Citizens	97; 693 sec (7.1)	42; 230 sec (5.5)	17; 192 sec (11.3)

Note: Italic script refers to results discounting tow long interview items.

National—which formed the next government and mainstream polls were picking as election winner. MTS also gave greater air time to Māori Party representatives than Labour Party representatives (even discounting the education spokesperson interview mentioned earlier). In terms of minor parties, time given to NZ First on mainstream channels reflects party spending “scandals” surrounding its leader while, on MTS, NZ First representatives spoke largely about immigration and other policy issues.

Party political sources dominate, especially on mainstream channels. Little room is left for other perspectives, particularly on TV3, where party sources took up 78 percent of total source time. On TVNZ, the figure was 66 percent. MTS (at 52 percent) gave comparatively greater scope for additional viewpoints.

Results show civic and lobby group representatives rarely appeared. Even though mainstream channels ran economic stories, business representatives were generally absent and unions fared little better. MTS gave comparatively more time to Māori iwi [tribal] representatives and union leaders, although these were just 9 percent of source

Table 6. Story Delivery (Percentage and Number of Political Items)

Delivery	TVNZ 106	TV3 88	MTS 59
1. Prerecorded journalist package only	11% (12)	10% (9)	76% (45)
2. Package plus piece to camera	37% (39)	33% (29)	12% (7)
3. Live cross to journalist—possibly package too	11% (12)	22% (19)	2% (1)
4. Live cross and interview with journalist	30% (32)	15% (13)	5% (3)
5. Spoken item only	10% (11)	21% (18)	5% (3)

time. Mainstream channels also used few experts, preferring their own correspondents. On MTS, however, experts comprised 28 percent of source time with the long feature interview, or 22 percent without.

Brief citizen interviews made up some of the shortfall in diversity on mainstream news. On TVNZ, citizen sources were 23 percent of the total news source time (reflecting the *Roadtrip* items). On TV3, the figure was 10 percent. MTS used fewer citizens, although these had more on-air time than those on mainstream television.

Journalists' Presence and Voice

The journalist's or presenter's voice made up most on-air speech in political stories: 80 percent on TV3, 76 percent on TVNZ, and 69 percent on MTS. Analysis of story packaging and journalistic presence in Table 6 shows political journalists on MTS are far less visible than those on mainstream television. Only 12 percent of MTS items involved a piece to camera and there were even fewer "live crosses." Consequently, MTS journalists appeared on camera in just 18.6 percent of stories compared with 69.3 percent on TV3 and 78.3 percent on TVNZ. Reflecting greater financial resources, TVNZ and TV3 items regularly featured correspondents on the campaign trail summarizing political winners and losers in live pieces to camera while political packages were "topped and tailed" by live commentary from political editors in the studio. Instead, MTS relied heavily on the traditional story structure of source sound bites and voiceover commentary. Mainstream channels also featured interviews with journalists, speculating on the impact of events, far more than MTS. However, MTS items were not devoid of analysis; 59 percent of MTS stories contained analysis, compared with 65 percent on TV3 and 71 percent on TVNZ.

Discussion

Māori Television news is clearly distinct from mainstream commercialized channels. Given its legislative brief, a greater concentration on Māori issues is expected, but the results also demonstrate different news selection, presentation, and story construction, bringing the Māori channel closer to some public service norms than state-owned TVNZ. They also reveal MTS is less constrained by normative expectations of "balanced" coverage.

In terms of public service expectations, all three channels performed well in the amount of time given to politics. Also there was little difference in the average length of political stories between MTS, TVNZ, and TV3. However, MTS's practice of broadcasting in-depth interviews on weekend nights provides a space for extended news interviewing within the program. Such interviews feature in news programs on North American and European public service channels (Esser 2008). Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged the two MTS extended interviews reflected an ad hoc approach to election coverage. TVNZ, for instance, would have felt constrained to demonstrate balance by conducting equivalent interviews with representatives from other parties and making the "campaign week" item a regular feature, instead of a one-off interview.

In choosing story topics, the Māori channel eschewed the mainstream's concentration on scandals and gaffes, and gave less attention to the broad economy and tax cuts. MTS focused instead on polling results for Māori Parliamentary seats, stories from the hustings and issues related specifically to Māori, all scarcely covered on TVNZ or TV3. *Te Kaea's* lack of interest in "showing up" politicians is related to the clear distinction between the mainstream and MTS in strategy framing. MTS used the strategy frame far less, despite its high percentage of poll stories.

Dominant strategy or game framing in political coverage is generally regarded as destructive, with Capella and Jamieson (1997) and others (like Lawrence 2000: 94) arguing that focus on strategic framing, minimizing political information, and showing politicians as self-interested increases political cynicism. More recent studies (e.g., Binderkrantz and Green-Pedersen 2009; Strömbäck and van Aelst 2010) explore the framing model in relation to different media and political systems. Strömbäck and van Aelst found game metaframes more common on commercial than public service television news in Belgium and Sweden. The New Zealand finding supports arguments (e.g., Atkinson 2004; Comrie and Fountaine 2005; Thompson 2007) that TVNZ news, although publicly owned and operating under a public service charter in 2008, followed a commercial television news model, largely because of its almost entire dependence on advertising revenue. In this respect, as in some others, MTS adheres more closely to the public service model. The findings are also interesting in relation to Binderkrantz and Green-Pedersen's 2009 argument that political factors, such as internal party conflicts or unstable parliamentary conditions, impact on framing. In the study, strategy framing and the related prominence of political scandal and gaffe stories were highly similar on the two mainstream channels. However, the different mission of MTS, along with a funding model allowing it to be less competitive, left it freer to examine politics with a different lens.

Another central finding was the greater time given on MTS to on-camera news sources and the lesser prominence of journalists. News source results confirm findings by Macdonald (2008) about MTS and earlier observations about Māori radio news (McGregor and Comrie 1995). While this analysis did not separately record sound bites, observation indicated MTS also had longer sound bites than mainstream channels, which customarily used two- or three-second bites of political leaders juxtaposed with jump-cut responses from opponents. Hallin (1992) linked shrinking sound bites

to snappy U.S. local television news, to journalists' desire to be more active in the face of manipulation and to a prevailing tone of cynicism. Others agree, including Atkinson (1994), who described the "morselization" of TVNZ news.

Esser (2008) relates sound and image bite length to political and media cultures. He predicts high journalistic intervention in political cultures with high levels of public cynicism, pragmatic media cultures and professionalized journalistic communities, highly professional election campaigning, weak political party loyalties, and light media regulation. As in the "high interventionist" United States, public trust in government has dropped in New Zealand; media is deregulated, journalism professionalized, election campaigning increasingly professional, and party loyalty weakening (Craig et al. 2009). In the late 1980s, TVNZ adopted America's local television tabloid journalism model, emphasizing crime, accidents, and human interest (Atkinson 1994; Comrie 1999). News on privately owned TV3 closely reflects its state-owned rival (Edwards 2002: 17).

Esser (2008: 413) points to "an almost universal transnational rule across Britain, Germany and the United States that reporters' narration outweighs that of candidates by three to one." Citing examples of lengthy interpretative pieces on BBC1 (Britain) and ARD (Germany), he says this *can* mean more in-depth reports for better informed voting decisions. However, evidence from New Zealand mainstream coverage is that political journalists' pieces to camera and voice-overs are marked by strategy framing and an often cynical voice. Atkinson (2006) says journalistic "disdain" and cynicism predominated in 2002's mainstream election coverage. Frequent instances of disdain and mocking humor were also recorded in 2008 mainstream election coverage (e.g., TVNZ repeating footage of Prime Minister Clark falling while referring to the Party "stumbling," or TV3 picturing National's Key eating while commenting he "almost chokes on a 3 *News* poll" (Comrie 2009)). These were exacerbated by the promotion of star journalists, a practice decried by Lawrence (2000: 95) as "ever more dramatized, assertive and interpretive reporting." On MTS, journalists' visual presence was less and the "fetish" of the live cross to the "expert" reporter (Winston 2002: 12) almost nonexistent. Although relying on subtitles made full analysis impossible, few instances of disdain were noted.¹¹ The limited live crosses on Māori television reflected scarce funding. However, this does not explain relatively infrequent pieces to camera. MTS sources confirm reporters were present at events covered (Charmaine Ngarimu, personal communication, June 10, 2011). Furthermore, more than half the MTS stories contained analysis, generally delivered over footage of the day's activities, summarizing policies and providing contextual information.

More on-air news source time reflects only partly the deliberate pace of formal Māori oratory. Longer speaking time has been noted in other Māori media studies and Archie (2007: 66-67) argues it reflects an ideal in Māori culture that "everyone who wants a say is entitled to be heard." More time given to sources to speak may reflect resourcing, and therefore inability to seek out sources. However, the average number of sources per story (2.7, TVNZ; 2.3, TV3; and 1.9, MTS) only partly bears out this explanation as it also corresponds to each channel's number of vox pop citizen interviews. The question for further investigation might be the reasons for the comparatively high

percentage of experts and lower presence of unaffiliated citizens on MTS. Whatever the cause of the low level of reportorial presence and commentary style, the result is in keeping with Capella and Jamieson's (1997) issue framing and the public broadcasting, citizen-focused approach commended by Esser (2008: 415).

While aspects of MTS coverage reflect the public service model better than mainstream coverage, the Māori channel seemed less bound by traditional notions of balance, as the time given to parties and candidates shows. New Zealand's Broadcasting Act (1989) Section 4 (d) requires "when controversial issues of public importance are discussed, reasonable efforts are made . . . to present significant points of view either in the same programme or in other programmes within the period of current interest." Since the advent of proportional voting in 1996 increased the presence of minor parties, balance has proved challenging. Election coverage has tended to focus on the two main party leaders and discussion of coalition prospects (Craig et al. 2009), precisely the approach of mainstream channels in 2008.

MTS focused heavily on the campaign for the Māori seats, although only 55 percent of voters enrolled as Māori choose to vote on the Māori roll (New Zealand Parliament Research Reports 2003/2009). Furthermore, MTS largely ignored the dominant National Party—relying on its own polling data indicating that Māori in their party vote would choose the left-of-center Labour Party. However, most polling indicated a National victory and MTS paid little attention to growing signs the Māori Party would join National in a coalition. The judgment must be that MTS performed well in covering aspects of interest to Māori people, especially those on the Māori roll and interested in Māori Party policies. They were less successful in providing discussion on the likely election outcome and analyzing the potential and importance of a Māori Party strategic alliance with National.

Conclusion

New Zealand television has long been in thrall to commercial pressures with the public service model unable to gain a foothold in news since TVNZ's 1980s restructuring. Strömbäck (2008: 242) believes strong public broadcasting "can help to create a counterweight towards the commercialization of the media." This study confirms state-owned TVNZ, despite its public service charter, was largely unable to provide that counterweight during the 2008 election. MTS, on the other hand, did offer difference—arguably richer, more informative coverage.

Undoubtedly, Māori Television has a different purpose than mainstream channels. Stuart (2003: 45-47) classified Māori media as developmental media, rebuilding a culture and creating a nation within the state. MTS, though, since its first broadcasts in 2004 has created something else. Robie (2008: 73-74) argues Māori Television "came of age" hosting the 2008 inaugural World Indigenous Broadcasting Conference. MTS's strategy, appealing to all New Zealanders, fits both commercial needs and its objective of ensuring Māori culture is increasingly valued and embraced. Most viewers are non-Māori and nearly half of all New Zealanders believe MTS makes a

valuable contribution to the country's sense of nationhood (Ministry of Culture and Heritage 2010).

Mainstream media diversity should not be a luxury. Traditional media hamstrung by commercial considerations and captured by elite interests seem unaware of pressing concerns of much of the population, as difficulty coming to grips with 2011's mass protests shows. While the current news media crisis has stimulated the search for new models (Waisbord 2009: 407), it would be naive to suggest MTS offers clear answers, especially as *Te Kaea*'s audience figures are small. Furthermore, as Temple (2006) argues, a golden age of political coverage is largely mythical, and entertaining, conflict-ridden stories can attract broader attention to political issues. Nevertheless, Temple bases his support for "dumbing-down" on the presence of a "heavier" mainstream alternative (e.g., BBC2's *Newsnight*) for engaged viewers. New Zealanders do not have this option.

Te Kaea's style—resulting from its mandate to promote language and culture, recognition of poor mainstream Māori coverage, public service journalism mores and a tight budget—offers an alternative model. MTS (presumably responding to the uncertainty of continued government funding) is moving more into mainstream television territory, bidding for and successfully broadcasting the Rugby World Cup series¹² and shifting *Te Kaea* to a more accessible time. TVNZ and TV3 management may yet respond to the knowledge that MTS's less glitzy rugby coverage pulled in audiences and that it is being increasingly regarded as *the* public television channel. This analysis demonstrates how a small indigenous channel contributes to the wider news industry. News research too will benefit from greater scrutiny of the currently marginalized areas of indigenous and ethnic media.

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Notes

1. From 2003, TVNZ received a direct annual subsidy of NZ\$12–15 million for "charter programming." However, the government continued to take a substantial dividend (the 2004 dividend exceeded the charter subsidy) and in June 2006 TVNZ paid a special \$70 million dividend (Thompson 2007).
2. In July 2011, MTS shifted *Te Kaea* to 5:30 P.M. (coinciding with mainstream, relatively low-rating news on Prime). The subtitled repeat shifted to 7:30 P.M.
3. *Hui* are formal gatherings generally held on *marae* (Māori meeting spaces). Traditional hui are conducted according to varying protocols; age, ancestry, oratory, and more recently professional status are important. In dispute, both sides present arguments in turn and discussion continues until consensus is reached.

4. Lawrence (2000: 100) defined issue stories as predominantly about public policy problems and solutions, legislation and its impacts, and politicians' statements about policy issues. Game/strategy stories were about winning or losing (elections, debates, etc.), strategies and tactics for winning, implications of events for parties/politicians and "tone" of debates. Mixed stories were a "roughly equal predominance of the issue and game frames."
5. Intercoder reliability was tested on a sample of four randomly selected days from the thirty-one campaign days for each channel: i.e., thirteen stories from TVNZ (12.3 percent of total political stories); twelve from TV3 (13.6 percent); and nine from MTS (15.3 percent), i.e. 13.4 percent of total stories. Cohen's Kappa measure of agreement was .894.
6. The nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test using a $p \leq .05$ level to determine significance, showed no significant differences between *One News* and *3 News*, nor between *3 News* and *Te Kaea* for political story length. But for *One News* vs. *Te Kaea*, the result was: $z = -2.43$, $p = .02$ (significantly different).
7. In New Zealand, those of Māori descent can either register on the "General" electoral roll, voting for their local Member of Parliament, or on the Māori roll, voting for a representative of one of seven Māori seats. All voters have an additional Party Vote.
8. No sexual scandals arose during the campaign. This category covered covert recordings of National Party MPs being indiscreet on international relations; speculation about and investigation into NZ First's spending and funding sources; Labour Party attempts to show earlier financial misconduct by National Leader Key; speculation that NZ First Leader Winston Peters and PM Helen Clark were arranging a diplomatic job for a rich donor; racially based comments on migrant workers by National's spokesperson on immigration.
9. The z test for two proportions revealed a significant difference between the number of strategy frame stories on MTS compared with numbers on TVNZ and TV3 and no difference between the two mainstream channels. *One News* vs. *Te Kaea*: $z = 3.48$, $p \leq .05$; *One News* vs. *3 News*: $z = -0.02$, $p > .05$; *3 News* vs. *Te Kaea*: $z = 3.27$, $p \leq .05$. The z test also showed significant difference in numbers of issue-framed stories on TV3 and *Te Kaea*: $z = 2.14$, $p \leq .05$; and in numbers of mixed-frame stories on TVNZ and *Te Kaea*: $z = 2.56$, $p \leq .05$.
10. The Mann-Whitney U test showed source speaking time on *Te Kaea* was significantly longer than on the mainstream channels. *One News* vs. *Te Kaea*: $z = -5.07$, $p = .001$ (significantly different); *One News* vs. *3 News*: $z = -0.80$, $p = .42$ (not significantly different); *3 News* vs. *Te Kaea*: $z = -4.35$, $p = .001$ (significantly different).
11. This assessment is based on judgment of the predominantly neutral tone, relative lack of adjectives, intensifiers, and emotive words used by reporters in MTS subtitles. Only three instances of mockery were noted. It must be stressed this was not a systematic analysis, relying on subtitles, rather than an understanding of nuances and tone of spoken words.
12. In early 2009 MTS made a \$3 million bid for the 2011 Rugby World Cup free-to-air broadcasting rights—outbidding TVNZ and TV3. With cup matches expected to draw huge audiences, MTS's bid was opposed by both major parties and criticised as a waste of taxpayers' money. Eventually a three-channel joint bid was accepted. MTS was the only channel to broadcast all forty-eight games and by the quarter finals its ratings for the main matches were well ahead of TVNZ and TV3.

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Bio

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