

Diversity Dividends and the Dehumanisation of Immigrants in the News Media in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

In New Zealand and elsewhere, immigration and ethnic diversity continues to be a highly contentious issue. Immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities have often been portrayed in the media in negative ways, yet neoliberal agendas have also actively promoted capturing diversity dividends and the benefits of immigration. In this paper, we examine the discursive representations of immigration and ethnic diversity in a prominent national newspaper, the *New Zealand Herald*. We found media reporting tended to focus on three themes: economic benefits, pressure on infrastructure, and criminality. Our critical, contextualised analysis of media coverage revealed problematic latent constructions of immigrants underlying these explicit discourses. Immigrants as a group are denied their humanity and constructed as merely economic objects, while ethnic minority immigrants, in particular, are cast as morally inferior. We argue that these subtle dehumanising representations are underpinned by liberal expectations of an economic 'diversity dividend' that stresses 'quality migrants' and reinforces xenophobia and long-standing public and political anxieties in New Zealand about immigration and ethnic diversity.

Keywords: media, ethnic diversity, immigrants, diversity dividend, dehumanisation, Aotearoa New Zealand

The media's role in shaping public perceptions and opinions about immigration and ethnic diversity is well known. Scholars have taken issue with media reporting that casts immigrants and ethnic minorities as threats, raising concerns about the way in which such portrayals incite conflict (for example, Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013;

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Pugh, 2004). But in many Western nations today, neoliberal ideologies have normalised a new public rhetoric regarding the ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec, 2007) immigrants introduce. Within the rubric of competition, diversity is now frequently promoted as a competitive advantage (Florida, 2002; Hasmath, 2016) with immigration policies now favouring wealthy/skilled migrants of any nationality rather than focusing on race (Simon-Kumar, 2015). An overt discourse around the economic benefits and ‘diversity dividends’ (Terruhn, 2020) now exists, even though these tend to exclude the non-economic contributions of working-class migrants (Syrett & Sepulveda, 2011). Despite its prevalence, this positive discourse has largely been neglected in critical media studies. Though it is indeed imperative that inflammatory portrayals are highlighted and urgently addressed, we insist that other dominant representations must also be scrutinised as they too influence the minds and opinions of readers regarding immigration and diversity. This is particularly important given that diversity programmes in organisational contexts have long been critiqued as merely window dressing that conceal existing relations of power while doing little to achieve true inclusion (Marques, 2010). Examining the range of representations in the media is thus necessary to uncover the nuanced messages that are being communicated and how different migrant groups may be implicated in them.

In this paper, we explore these issues in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. We draw on research examining the dominant discourses related to immigration and ethnic diversity in the *New Zealand Herald*, a prominent newspaper produced in Auckland but with a national readership. Immigration, and the related social transformation it produces, have been contentious issues in New Zealand where Asian and ethnic minority immigrants have been the target of institutional as well as everyday racial discrimination. The government’s intention for a ‘little Britain in the South Seas’ actively restricted Asian migration with its disguised White New Zealand policy up until the 1980s (Brawley, 1993). And contrary to the promotion of a national image of racial harmony and equality (Brawley, 1993; Nolan, 2007; Skilling, 2013), racism and discrimination have been directed towards and experienced by Asians, Pacific Islanders and other non-European migrant groups (Bedford, 2002; Brawley, 1993; Loto et al., 2006; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012), along with Indigenous Māori. Neoliberal reform has significantly increased the ethno-cultural diversity of immigrants over the last three decades, with the benefits of superdiversity

and its 'dividends' becoming a common trope (for example, Siu, 2017). But, despite this, immigration and ethnic diversity remain a controversial issue debated in the media while immigration itself creates inequalities among diverse migrant groups arriving in New Zealand (Simon-Kumar, Collins, & Friesen, 2020).

The paper begins with a brief review of the current international literature on media representations of immigration and immigrants, highlighting a preoccupation with negative portrayals and a relative absence of positive framings that recognise immigrants' heterogeneity. We then introduce our study which addresses this lacuna by looking at the range of discourses that are prominent in the *New Zealand Herald* articles about immigration and ethnic diversity and their implications. We first attend to the explicit representations, identifying overtly positive as well as negative portrayals of immigrants, before progressing with a critical analysis of underlying assumptions in these representations. In doing so, we extend the current literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of how media in the contemporary neoliberal context reinforce problematic views of immigrants in general, and ethnic minority migrants in particular, in ways that are much more insidious.

Media representations of immigration and ethnic minorities

International scholarship on media representations of immigrants and ethnic minorities has focused almost exclusively on negative portrayals and raised concerns about how these messages inflame anti-immigration sentiment, discrimination and exclusion. A common approach used by researchers has been to examine the contexts and conditions in which immigrants are framed. Many studies have critiqued the prevalence of reporting on criminal activities and arrests, creating stereotypes that reinforce fear and aversion of immigrants (for example, Eberl et al., 2018; Farris & Mohamed, 2018). These studies take issue with the partiality of media coverage that portray minorities only in unfavourable situations. This is particularly problematic with regards to Muslims, where negligent reporting has perpetuated the rise of Islamophobia. Courty and Rane (2018) argue that through careless and simplistic reporting, the Western news media have helped to feed into dominant narratives that falsely link Islam with terrorism. Though an important distinction between Islam (the religion) and Islamism (the political ideology) exists, groups such as al Qaida

and the Islamic State have strategically and selectively used Islamic teachings to justify violence against non-Muslims. But with the media's failure to more critically interrogate the conflation of Islam with terrorism, and to underreport on Muslims condemning such acts of violence, the authors argue that the media indirectly advances the interests of these terrorist groups and contributes to the marginalisation of Muslim communities.

Media representations do not necessarily need to overtly associate immigrants and minorities with dangerous behaviours in order to invoke fear towards them in the public. Many studies have found the use of metaphors to play into broader concerns about migrants. The use of liquid metaphors such as 'leaks', 'flows', 'floods' and 'waves' (Charteris-Black, 2006; Khosravini, 2009; Musolff, 2015; Pugh, 2004) invoke associations with natural disasters and appeal to public fears not only about a loss of control in regards to the influx of people across national borders but also about the rate of societal change (Charteris-Black, 2006). Other metaphors may also have much more visceral reactions of disgust and aversion. Cisneros's (2008) study of media in the United States, for instance, illustrates the way in which immigrants are visually and metaphorically represented as "dangerous and destructive pollutants" that contaminate local communities. Portraying immigrants as toxic pollutants dehumanises them in similar ways to reporting that draws on metaphors of parasites, leeches, bloodsuckers and insects (for example, Musolff, 2015; Russell, 1996). Such dehumanising representations generate disdain and disgust that help to shore up public support for stricter legislation and securitisation of national borders.

Some scholars have argued that media are now much more subtle in their dehumanising depictions of immigrants (Leyens et al., 2001). These more difficult-to-detect forms of dehumanisation deny members of 'out-groups' their humanity by ascribing fewer human qualities to them, particularly uniquely human emotions and attributes associated with 'human nature' (Haslam, Bastian, & Loughnan, 2010). An example of this is in Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchinson, and Nicholson's (2013) study of the representation of refugees in Australian news media. Analysing cover-page images in *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the researchers found that images predominantly captured refugees in large anonymous groups, or what Faist (2018) describes as a nameless and faceless

“undifferentiated mass”, rather than as individuals with recognisable facial features. With the relative absence of images depicting individuals and their emotional experiences, the images constrain feelings of empathy and compassion in readers. This then obscures the humanitarian challenge of the refugee issue (Bleiker et al., 2013). At the same time, the dominance of group images plays into broader concerns about refugees and immigrants ‘flooding’ the country and being ‘burdens’ on society.

The studies above reveal various mechanisms through which the news media create problematic perceptions of immigrants and minorities that, at their best, generate apathy, but at their worst, evoke fear and aversion. These representations have real-world consequences as they generate public support for more punitive immigration policies (Farris & Mohamed, 2018). But the existing studies neglect the fact that immigrants are a significantly diverse group who range in ethnicity, nationality, religion, class and gender, amongst a host of other differences. Very few studies have acknowledged this heterogeneity and instead conflate immigrants with the ‘ethnic other’. Eberl and colleagues’ (2018) literature review on European media discourses on immigration indicated differences in the way media frame different migrant groups, including depictions of Roma as economic threats, North Africans as cultural threats and Eastern Europeans as threats to the economy and welfare system (p. 212). But while they register these differences, the authors nevertheless argue that immigration coverage in general tends to be negative.

While few in number, researchers in New Zealand have begun to acknowledge the different realities of migrant groups, their unequal positions, and the differing portrayals of them in the media. Loto et al.’s (2006) study revealed how Pacific Islanders are framed as unmotivated, unhealthy criminals who are dependent on European support while, in contrast, Palagi (White European) migrants are implied as active, independent, competent and caring. This is one of the very few studies that draws attention to positive portrayals of certain immigrants and the significance of contextual relations of power. Other recent work in New Zealand has directly challenged the dominant, one-sided focus on negative representations through metaphors in the media. Analysing a major Auckland newspaper, Salahshour (2016) asserts that, while discourses did exist around the burden of immigrants on society, liquid metaphors were also used to depict the positive economic benefits of mass migration. She

argues that this positive view is unique to New Zealand and suggests distinct characteristics of the country's geography and economy that give rise to these more favourable depictions. However, this acceptance of the discourse of economic benefits at face value neglects the historical – and ongoing – stratification of immigrants and reinforces the myth of egalitarianism (Nolan, 2007). What it fails to recognise is the exclusionary nature of this neoliberal reframing (Jones, Ram, & Villares-Varela, 2019) and how it reinforces dominance and control over immigrants. As such, the positive representations do not necessarily reflect the absence of discriminatory attitudes toward immigrants.

What is lacking in existing literature is the acknowledgement of immigrants' diversity, the varied positions different migrant groups occupy in society, and how they are differentially represented in the media. Our study therefore seeks to address this gap by broadening the lens to consider not only the negative portrayals of immigrants but positive and ambivalent ones as well. However, we also take seriously the fact that dominant views of immigration and diversity in the media are shaped by those with power (Ellis & Wright, 1998; Teo, 2000), which leads us to remain sceptical about accepting positive renderings at face value. Instead, we look beyond surface-level representations to unpack how discourses may reinforce the unequal positions of different migrant groups in society.

Immigration in Auckland, New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries in the world (International Organization for Migration, 2015), with more than 200 ethnic groups represented and more than 160 languages spoken, as reported in the 2013 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2013; Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013). After 1840, the population of Māori drastically declined as a result of British settler colonialism, with their numbers hitting a low of around 42,000 by the start of the twentieth century (Durie, 2005), while the settler population grew substantially. A race- or kinship-based immigration policy favoured and privileged new settlers from the British Isles (Cain, 2017), and by 1986, Pākehā were the dominant ethnic group, at 86 per cent of the population, while Māori made up 12 per cent (Pool, 1991). As noted earlier, immigration policy was liberalised in 1986, opening the country's borders to greater numbers of migrants from a greater number of source countries. Subsequent policy

changes included the introduction of points-based selection criteria in 1991 which rated prospective immigrants on a range of factors including qualifications, work experience and age, as well as a series of policies implemented in the 2000s to facilitate pathways to residency for international students (Ho, 2015). The softening of national borders to reflect a neoliberal, skills- and capital-based immigration policy resulted in rapid ethno-cultural diversification as the country competed in a global race for talent (Simon-Kumar, 2015).

Such rapid demographic changes and population growth occurred especially quickly in the superdiverse context of Auckland, the country's largest city where most new migrants settle (Spoonley, 2016). Auckland has a population of around 1.66 million people, 39 per cent of whom were born overseas (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Although the United Kingdom remains one of the top source countries, increasing numbers of migrants have arrived in Auckland from across South East Asia and India – 23 per cent of Aucklanders identified with the broad category 'Asian' at the most recent census, an increase from 5 per cent in 1991 (see Friesen (2015) for a detailed overview of migration flows from across Asia). These new migration and settlement pathways have resulted in newly emerging residential (Friesen, 2015) and business concentrations (Meares et al., 2015), new employment trajectories (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012) and, more recently, new patterns of transnational mobility (Ho, 2015). It is in the context of these new patterns of ethnic diversity and population change in Auckland that this research is carried out.

Method

We collated *New Zealand Herald* articles over the one-year period between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017, examining the ways in which immigration and ethnic diversity were discussed and represented. This period led up to the New Zealand general elections in September 2017, which – as was the case in the lead up to the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom (Gavin, 2018) and the election of Trump in the United States (Clawson & Jengelly, 2018) – generated much media discussion about immigration. The study was also conducted at a time when changes were being made to Skilled Migrant visa categories in New Zealand, including the introduction of remuneration bands and increasing the number of required points for securing a visa,

changes ostensibly designed to support the needs of prospective employers and foster better outcomes for migrants.

A website search (<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/>) of *New Zealand Herald* articles for the period was carried out using the keywords ‘ethnic diversity’ and/or ‘immigration’. The decision to use these distinct but interconnected search terms was informed by an understanding that Auckland’s ethnic diversity *results* from periods of immigration in the first instance, in addition to longer-term patterns of settlement whereby residents might or might not identify as migrants; for example, as in the case of children of migrants, or new settlers from the United Kingdom who might not think of themselves as ‘ethnically diverse’. In all, 518 articles were identified and read to determine their relevance to the study. Relevance was determined by the article’s focus on and engagement with key issues associated with ethnic diversity and/or immigration specifically in Auckland. Articles that were only peripherally related to immigration or diversity issues were discarded. This process eliminated nearly 350 articles, leaving 174 articles as the final data set. These articles comprised opinion pieces from a range of academics, politicians, business leaders, social justice advocates and other professionals, as well as editorials and regular contributions from *New Zealand Herald* journalists.

Data analysis was informed by an understanding of the news media producing and shaping dominant discursive understandings of social phenomena. Language – the words that are chosen, the way those words are framed, and the context in which they appear – is an important contributor to the construction of dominant attitudes towards migrants and immigration (Blinder & Allen, 2016; Hall, 1995; Wodak & Reisigl, 2015). As power relations shape the dominant discourses, it was important to delve deeper than the surface-level topics discussed in the articles. Accordingly, we used a generative and inductive approach and conducted a thematic analysis of the data, identifying both the explicit themes and more latent ideas behind them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, we generated descriptive codes to reflect the ways in which immigration and ethnic diversity are explicitly discussed and represented in the articles. Three themes were then extracted: (1) economic benefits to the country – ostensibly the diversity dividend, (2) burdens on infrastructure and services, and (3) criminal activities. We then undertook a critical analysis to draw out some of the more-latent underlying ideas and assumptions that gave rise to the thematic content (Braun &

Clarke, 2006, p. 84). By looking closely at the discursive framing of the issues, we found an implicit denial of the basic human needs of immigrants in general, and a subtle portrayal of ethnic minority migrants as morally inferior. We argue that these discourses dehumanise immigrants, create apathy towards the lives and experiences of immigrants, and reinforce the stratification of immigrants in ways that reflect long-standing racial hierarchies in New Zealand.

Results

Immigration and ethnic diversity were explicitly discussed in relation to the economic benefits to New Zealand society; the impact on Auckland's infrastructure, services and resources; and criminal activities, including fraud and exploitation of employees. Almost a third of the articles reported on some form of direct or indirect economic contribution that immigrants make, which formed the basic premise for their presence in New Zealand. Reporters drew on statements from politicians and business leaders insisting that immigrants provide labour in key industries such as dairying, farming, horticulture, hospitality, aged care and construction where employers have difficulty filling positions with local workers. As such, immigrants were portrayed as fundamental to these industries that support the country's economy. But labour was not the only contribution that immigrants were portrayed as making. Articles reporting on the success of migrant businesses also drew on the notion of population diversity itself as an economic asset, insinuating a diversity dividend. Immigrants were recognised for their entrepreneurial activities setting up successful businesses that often leveraged their cultural resources, skills and existing networks. The Indian restaurant Cassia winning the Restaurant of the Year award in 2017, for instance, was described as the owners "exploring their culinary heritage" to show "Auckland diners there were more to the subcontinent's cuisine than curry" (Nichol, 2017). This cultural diversity was itself celebrated for adding "vibrancy" to communities while also emphasising the economic contribution. Festivals celebrating ethnic holidays such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, amongst others, were said to bring a "boom" to the tourism industry with more than "33,000 Chinese holidaymakers from China anticipated to arrive for the lunar celebration", visitors who are "traditionally big spenders, with an average spend of \$5000 per head" (Tan, 2017).

At the same time that immigration and diversity are portrayed as desirable for the economy, a paradoxical discourse was also evident that cast immigrants as burdening the city. More than 40 articles made some reference to the impact of immigration on infrastructure, housing and services in Auckland. Like the findings in the existing literature, water metaphors, along with other pressure-based metaphors, were used frequently in many of the articles to depict the issues. This included descriptions of the city “swelling” (Gray, 2017), “bursting” and “creaking at the seams” (Higgins, 2017; New Zealand Herald, 2017), with “creaking infrastructure” (Hisco, 2016), roads that are “choked” (Higgins, 2017), and the city “sinking” (Orsman, 2017) under extreme population size pressures, all of which contribute to a threat narrative and the need for border control (Nguyen & McCallum, 2016). The articles also frequently quoted politicians expressing their concerns about the impact of immigration. Then Labour Party leader Phil Goff, for instance, was quoted as saying:

Immigration is good for New Zealand, but we need to ease the level down until housing and transport infrastructure catches up with the growth, or we will end up with worsening congestion and even less affordable housing. (Phil Goff, in Jones, 2016)

With the relative authority of politicians making such claims, the role of immigration in burdening the city and pushing up Auckland’s house prices was largely unchallenged. While a few articles cited a study by economists Bill Cochrane and Jacques Poot (2016) finding no conclusive evidence to support the assertion that immigrants drive up house prices, this did little to change the prevailing discourse. Instead, discussions moved to demands for reducing immigration numbers as means of resolving the issues.

The third thematic portrayal of immigrants in the articles was in relation to criminal activities. More than 50 of the articles in the one-year period reported on stories of crime where immigrants were either the perpetrator or the victim, and also in some cases, both. This included a range of offences such as money laundering, drug smuggling, deception, cases of domestic violence and sexual assault. The most frequent, however, were cases of immigration fraud and exploitation, which accounted for more than three-quarters of the articles. Some cases placed the blame squarely on migrants exploiting fellow nationals (Feek, 2017a, 2017b), but others drew attention to migrant vulnerability. A 2016 case, for example, involved a

group of Indian international students misled by immigration agents about the legitimacy of their immigration documents. After initially seeking refuge in a central Auckland church, the students were eventually deported. The case gave voice to a range of competing opinions. Some articles quoted the students' lawyer, Alistair McClymont, who blamed the government for narrowly focusing on profits from international education (Collins, 2016, 2017). Other articles cited the Tertiary Education Minister Steven Joyce who defended the legitimacy and robustness of the Government's policies and blamed the individual students (for example, Laxon, 2017). Though there may not have been consensus regarding responsibility, it has been argued that the frequent association of immigrants with crime in the media nevertheless represents them as deeply problematic for society as a whole (Bleich, Bloemraad, & Graauw, 2015).

In summary, the semantic themes identified in the *New Zealand Herald* articles indicate ambivalent representations of immigrants consistent with Salahshour's (2016) study discussed earlier. While immigrants are cast as problematic due to their physical demands on the city as well as their threat to safety and security, they are also actively portrayed as vital contributors to the economy and the vibrancy of communities. In the next section, we critically analyse how these issues are discursively framed and reveal the implicit underlying assumptions.

Denying the humanity of immigrants

The discursive framing of immigration and its impact on the city negates the human needs, desires and aspirations of immigrants. In eighty per cent of the articles, the reporters and the experts they cited used terms such as 'net migration', 'immigration figures', 'immigration policy', 'record migration', 'immigration' and 'high migration' to talk about the issues associated with increased population sizes putting pressure on the city. These terms obscure the actual people who make up the numbers. The most prominent reports in the *New Zealand Herald* portrayed 'high immigration' as the cause of Auckland's traffic congestion, inadequate provision of health care and schools, and inflated house prices that are unaffordable for 'everyday Kiwis'. While this avoids directly blaming immigrants, the linguistic framing also defines what counts as a 'problem' and constrains the set of issues relevant for debate and, with that, the solutions to address the problem (Lakoff & Ferguson, 2006). As the problem is with the figures and policy, it logically

flows that reducing the number of immigrants would be the reasonable solution. Numerous articles cited statements from key politicians insisting the need for changes to immigration to minimise pressures on housing and infrastructure. In emphasising the system, policy and figures, what becomes obscured is the fact that migrants themselves are people who, like all other residents, have needs and desires for housing, education, health care and mobility in and around the city. Acknowledging these human emotions is critical in humanising migration (Carling & Collins, 2018; Collins, 2018), but the discourses wholly neglect the fact that these emotional drivers are what cause extra demands on the existing infrastructure and services when the focus is exclusively on immigration policy and numbers.

The discursive construction of immigrants as economic resources is folded into decision-making around solutions to alleviating the pressures of immigration on the city. This is particularly striking in the report *The New New Zealanders – Why Migrants Make Good Kiwis*, where the authors recommend charging migrants a levy to help the Government fund infrastructure developments (see Hodder & Krupp, 2017), which was discussed in Liam Dann's (2017) article 'Should migrants pay for infrastructure costs?' While the report's authors warn against blaming immigrants for rising house prices, they concede that high levels of migration have increased pressures on the need to fund more roads, schools and hospitals. The authors note:

No research seems to have been conducted at a local level on whether the financial contribution of migrants sufficiently offsets the costs it imposes on local jurisdictions in the long run. (Hodder & Krupp, 2017, p. 29)

Recommendations are based purely on an objective cost-benefit analysis suggesting that only a financial gain warrants the presence of immigrants in the country. Their need for housing, health care, education and transport are seen as a 'cost' and added pressure on the 'already stretched' infrastructure and portrays immigrants as a physical and financial burden. Despite substantial economic and cultural contributions which are readily welcomed, immigrants themselves are not entitled any rights to the basic services and necessities of living in a city.

With the relative power and authority of politicians, these discourses normalise a public disregard for the basic needs and desires that immigrants inevitably have. A *New Zealand Herald* reader, Don Conway, for instance,

was quoted discriminating specifically against immigrants' use of resources and services:

120,000 new residents was too many. It was okay for returning New Zealanders, but the others are clogging infrastructure – schooling, health, facilities, etc. (Don Conway, in Orsman 2017)

That “returning New Zealanders” are permissible despite the inevitable pressure they would also put on infrastructure and services highlights the fact that it is more than merely the capacity of the city to accommodate increased population that is of concern. Instead, this comment highlights a normative discourse that fails to recognise the human dimension of immigrant labour, which reinforces indifference towards their needs.

Critique of this singular view of immigrants as economic resources devoid of needs and desires was evident in a small number of articles that directly attempted to challenge the prevalence and ubiquity of these discourses. But not only were these few in number, the authors of the articles had little authority and power in shaping dominant views. For example, one opinion piece titled ‘Why are so many New Zealanders so scared of immigrants?’ was written by German migrant Laura Kneer, who warned against the rise of xenophobia in political debates about immigration and stressed the shared humanity of immigrants:

Immigrants too want to be able to afford their own home. We hate being stuck in traffic or waiting on hospital lists because budgets haven't appropriately been adjusted to the amount of people they cater for. We are worried about the quality of our water and air as much as you are. (Kneer, 2017)

Kneer draws commonalities in the desires, emotions and experiences of immigrants with those of New Zealanders, inserting a human dimension into media discussions about the pressures on infrastructure, services and housing.

Deborah Hill Cone, a columnist for the *New Zealand Herald*, also rejected the uncritically accepted commodification of immigrants. In her 2017 article ‘On immigration we're looking in the wrong queue’, Cone, who migrated to New Zealand with her family at the age of eight from South Africa, directly challenged the normalised framing of immigrants as either the cause or the solution to the country's economic woes:

Our economy seems to function largely through the import of people. This notion, that immigration is a valid instrument of growth, seems to have become so accepted that it doesn't even get questioned much. So, when Immigration Minister Michael Woodhouse said last week the new immigration policies announced are about "attracting migrants who bring the most economic benefits to New Zealand" no one bats an eyelid. It is a given. We are just bringing in a better-quality commodity. Ahem, these are human beings, not merely an apparatus to use to boost our GDP.

Immigration is not the cause of our economic woes ... But immigrants are not the solution, either. Immigrants are people, like my family, who are would-be citizens, who want to make a life for themselves, human beings, not economic levers. (Cone, 2017)

While both Kneer and Cone occupy relatively privileged positions as White immigrants and are likely to have very different experiences to racialised migrants in New Zealand, their exasperated challenges to the dominant economic framing of immigrants makes evident the influence exerted by the powerful in the political-economic arena of the media (Teo, 2000). Both these migrants provide an explicit assertion – and reminder – of the humanity of immigrants amongst an otherwise relatively complicit acceptance of their economic utility. Decisions and opinions regarding immigration changes are based purely on cost-benefit assessments without any concern for the desires and emotions that drive migration or the needs that migrants have for resources and services in the city.

Ethnic minority immigrants as lesser-than

While immigrants in general were objectified without acknowledging their needs, desires or aspirations, we found ethnic minority immigrants were constructed as morally lesser than New Zealanders. This was particularly notable in the articles discussing the issue of immigrants, particularly Chinese immigrants, pushing up Auckland's house prices. Though few in number relative to the articles assigning blame to immigrants more broadly, the articles reinforced earlier concerns and discourses of Chinese investors buying Auckland property and *causing* the housing problems. This included an article on 26 July 2016 reporting on the move by Ray White Real Estate to link up with a major real estate agency in China to list properties for sale in New Zealand (Gibson, 2016) and another on 27 October about real-estate agents urging property owners in Auckland to sell up due to the "looming decline in cashed-up Asian property buyers" (Tapaleao, 2016). Aside from the lack of reliable data to corroborate the accusations, these discourses

actively encourage New Zealanders to exploit the opportunity of “cashed-up” Asian migrants, reinforcing their economic objectification. Yet, media reports constructed those of Chinese ethnicity as violating certain moral principles when they are seen to profit from property. An opinion piece by an anonymous Chinese real estate agent who reproduces the racial profiling of Chinese house buyers pushing up Auckland’s house prices is instructive:

I remember seeing young couples with their hands clenched and eyes glued to the auction screen, only to find their first dream house outbid by someone screaming in Mandarin. And I shudder to imagine their feeling when they see the very house they missed out on back on the market within a couple of months, this time, with 200k added on top ... meanwhile, a champagne is uncorked at another New Zealand property expo in China. (anonymous Chinese real estate agent quoted in *NZ Herald*, 2016)

Aside from the fact that the Mandarin speaker is assumed not to be a New Zealand citizen, there are several ways that those of Chinese ethnicity are discursively constructed as other and morally lesser-than in this extract. Uniquely human emotions are attributed only to the young couple who have their “hands clenched” and “eyes glued”, capturing their state of nervous anticipation. This evokes empathy in the reader for the couple losing their ‘dream home’ to a supposed foreigner who lacks refined emotions and comportment and is “screaming” in Mandarin. Portraying the Chinese buyer as an investor who intends to on-sell the house to turn a sizeable profit also reinforces a view of them as lesser than moral New Zealanders. There is an assumption that the Chinese buyer is not purchasing the house for themselves or their family, again negating any needs and desires they have for shelter and familial responsibilities. Instead, the Chinese buyer is portrayed as ruthless in their actions, taking the house away from the young couple who are ostensibly there to find a dream home. Societal biases towards couples and parenthood (DePaulo & Morris, 2006) are also folded into this narrative. The motivations of the young couple are not interrogated, with the implication that their intention is to raise a family rather than purchase an investment property. Thus, while it is acceptable, and explicitly encouraged, that New Zealanders profit economically from migrants, when these migrants themselves are seen to profit, there is a disdain of such practices and the migrants are implicitly constructed as lacking in moral values and refinement.

There were also implications of immorality in the reporting of criminal activities involving Asian and ethnic minority migrants. Existing studies have shown how frequent coverage of immigrants as delinquents or criminals leads to negative public attitudes and stereotypes (Bleich et al., 2015; Eberl et al., 2018). Almost a third of the *New Zealand Herald* articles over the one-year period related to criminal activities including cases of money laundering, drug smuggling, domestic violence and sexual assault. But the most frequent cases reported on were of immigration fraud and exploitation where ethnic minority immigrants were often both the victims and perpetrators. Numerous articles reported on the fraud and exploitation involving Indian international students, international education agents and private training establishments in New Zealand. Many focused on the structural issues and the Government's prioritisation of profit as the underlying cause; some pointed to the fraudulent activities of education agents in India; and others framed the international students as the perpetrators. Yet, it is not so much who the sole blame is placed upon here that is of concern, but the way these discourses construct those of Indian ethnicity, including immigrants, as lacking moral decency and civility compared with New Zealanders. For example, the article in December by *New Zealand Herald* News Editor Andrew Laxon portrays Indian education agents and bank managers as the ones responsible for "significant, organised financial document fraud", corrupt practices that posed "a significant threat to NZ's education integrity" with possible links to organised crime (Laxon, 2016).

Casting Indian nationals as the problematic other is further supported in an opinion piece titled 'Indian students need to go' by Rachel Smalley, who has a relatively public profile working as a television and radio journalist and presenter. In the article, Smalley draws on her experience of returning to New Zealand from London with her White South African spouse as a comparison that leads her to blame the students themselves for the fraud:

It is they who are at fault and whether it's knowingly or unknowingly, the students have committed fraud.

I have been through a similar process. I married a South African in London and when our son was one, we moved to New Zealand.

It was all quite sudden. I had a week until I was on-air hosting Nightline on TV3 and I was trying to find somewhere to live, so I employed an agent to look after my husband's visa.

You have to jump through a lot of hoops to get a resident's visa... in our case, we had to prove our marriage wasn't a sham, both of us needed police checks from the British Police and in my husband's case, from South Africa too. He needed full medicals, authenticated birth certificates, proof that we'd lived together for some time... you name it, we needed it. And that's why I used an agent. (Smalley, 2017)

Using her personal experience to assess the actions of the Indian student migrants neglects the historical privileges she and her husband have had (as a European New Zealander and White South African migrant to New Zealand, respectively) over those of Asian descent (see Brawley, 1993), while her reasoning also draws a moral distinction between herself and these other morally inferior immigrants (Jones et al., 2017) who have committed fraud. Thus, while these two articles may direct the blame differently, they both contribute to the construction of Indian migrants as lacking the moral values that define (white) New Zealand.

The reporting on exploitation also contributed to the discursive construction of ethnic minority immigrants as lesser than New Zealanders. Exploitation included various cases of tax evasion, money laundering and under-payment of hours worked, and these were often in businesses owned and staffed by co-ethnic minority groups. While we recognise the need to bring awareness to and understand the conditions that give rise to exploitation in New Zealand (see Stringer (2016) for details), we argue that the prevalence of mainstream media reports on crimes committed by ethnic minorities implicitly reinforces moral hierarchies. For instance, the articles covering the "first human trafficking convictions in New Zealand" (Carville, 2016, 15 September, 14 December, 15 December) detailed the "elaborate trafficking scam" by Faroz Ali, his wife and her twin sister. Together the trio "lured" fifteen "established middle-aged men and women with families" from Fiji to New Zealand under the pretence they would be paid \$900 a week to work in construction and fruit picking. The perpetrator is described as a "Fijian national with New Zealand residency" and the "first" to be convicted of human trafficking in the country. There is, therefore, a subtle suggestion that these inhumane acts did not exist before the arrival of these migrants.

Like the immigration fraud committed by Filipino mother Loraine Jayme (Feek, 2017a, 2017b), it is the New Zealand law enforcers who intervene to help the “vulnerable” migrants “ripped off” by the migrant perpetrator. Immigration New Zealand’s assistant general manager Peter Devoy’s insistence that the “victim” is the “New Zealand citizen” is telling:

The situation from our point of view is that the victim here is very much the New Zealand citizen. It’s the systems that Immigration have in place to protect New Zealand, to protect the border, which have been the subject of the offending more so than the 17 victims named in the case. (Feek, 2017b)

As the ‘victim’, Devoy suggests that New Zealanders are devoid of such criminal inclinations, and that they are no longer ‘protected’ from these morally inferior immigrants who have now crossed the border. This echoes commonly invoked imaginations by right-wing parties of a better past, free from the issues brought about by increased immigration (Charteris-Black, 2006), although in a much more subtle manner. Thus, while the cases of exploitation and fraud frequently reported on in the *New Zealand Herald* may at first appear to be about bringing awareness to the plight and injustice suffered by vulnerable immigrants, there is also a more insidious discourse here. This discourse portrays New Zealanders as embodying moral virtues, of upholding basic human rights and dignity, that is put in contrast to the less civilised and less ethically refined ethnic minority immigrant other.

Conclusion

In this paper we set out to examine the representations of immigration and ethnic diversity in the *New Zealand Herald* at a time when capturing diversity dividends is a normative goal in the current era of neoliberal capitalism. Looking closely at the seeming ambivalence found in the positive and negative portrayals of immigrants, we identified particularly concerning issues. As we indicated, immigrants in general are denied any acknowledgement of their humanity through discourses that focus exclusively on immigration figures and policy when discussing problems related to the pressures on the city. Compounded by the dominating logic of economic utility, abstracting the cause of the issues to highlight the system rather than migrants’ needs and desires for housing, education, medical care and mobility in and around the city, leads to support for policy changes that

are indifferent to the experiences of immigrants themselves. And for Asian and ethnic minority migrants, their morality is also called into question. As we demonstrated, the discursive framing of issues in relation to Chinese property investors and the prevalent reporting of criminal activities, in which ethnic minorities are implicated, construct these immigrants as callous and lacking certain moral values. What is implied is that the values of fairness, honesty, dignity and empathy, as well as care and concern for others, are violated through these acts – values that are supposedly upheld in New Zealand society. As such, ethnic minority immigrants are portrayed as lesser than White immigrants and New Zealanders.

These underlying ideas and assumptions of different immigrant groups reveal subtle forms of dehumanisation in the *New Zealand Herald* produced in part by the emphasis on ‘quality migrants’ to reap the diversity dividends. Through a singular focus on what can be gained from immigration-led diversity, the media discourses discount the needs and desires of immigrants as a group, denying their human right to the city (Harvey, 2003), and cast them as merely disposable objects for the economy. And, alongside portrayals of ethnic minority migrants as morally inferior, what this creates is not just public concern regarding the overall number of immigrants, but anxieties about the presence and number of Asian and ethnic minority migrants in particular (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). These anxieties are not entirely new. As noted at the outset, immigration policy up until the 1980s in New Zealand intentionally discriminated against Asians and others of non-European ethnicity. Claims of an ‘Asian invasion’ have long instilled concerns about this ‘alien culture’ and the ability of these immigrants to integrate into society (Bedford, 2002). What this racialised and racialising discourse in the media enables, then, is ongoing xenophobia but in a much more covert manner that is buttressed by concerns about the impact of these immigrants on moral society. Consequently, this perpetuates the long-standing racial hierarchies and exclusions in New Zealand society.

An emphasis on the benefits of immigration and diversity dividends discursively frames immigrants in a favourable light. This is undeniably a more positive view of immigrants than media reports that explicitly demonise immigrants and encourage discrimination and aversion. But, as we have indicated, there are also significant problems associated with these subtly dehumanising representations. Given that migrants are important contributors to the socio-cultural, political and economic fabric of New

Zealand, media reporting needs to provide fuller, more rounded stories of migrants' lives. This means providing important context when presenting complex socio-political stories, ensuring that there are balanced depictions of diverse migrants, and that authority figures are also cited when they assert the humanity of immigrants. Importantly, it also means amplifying the voices of migrants through personalised narratives while recognising that not everything a migrant achieves is attributable to their ethnicity or migrant status.

The present study raises additional questions about the media's role in constructing public understanding of immigrants and ethnic diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand. As noted by Vertovec (2007), superdiverse populations have emerged from new patterns of global mobility which has included increasing movements of people from more varied national, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds, diversification of migration channels, legal statuses and conditions, and gender and age ratios. In this research, we chose not to explore the intersectionality implied in these newly complex configurations of human mobility, nor did we examine the differing media constructions between immigrant groups. Further work could investigate specific migrant groups who experience high rates of discrimination, such as Muslims, or disaggregate the term 'Asian' to explore the differences or similarities between subgroup representations, and explicitly look at how migrants from the United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa are discursively portrayed. This will help to generate much more nuanced understandings of the diversity of immigrants and how the media reproduces and/or challenges racial hierarchies in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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