

Mediating publicness:

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An analysis of Pacific audiences' desire for a sphere of their own in Aotearoa/New Zealand

ISSN: 2463-641X

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Abstract

This paper suggests that Pacific groups are positioned narrowly in New Zealand publicness, often in ways that run counter to Pacific audiences' demand for in-depth news and information and public debate. Focus groups held with Pacific audiences at several urban centres in New Zealand found that Pacific news media are a key site of Pacific people's publicness in New Zealand. Audiences looked to Pacific media (and, interestingly, Māori media) to fulfil their expectations for timely, in-depth and high-quality journalism, and for a space in which their communities could safely discuss issues and enact their citizenship. However, it is clear that more could be done to realise this role, not just on the part of Pacific media producers, but also funders and policy makers whose focus on Pacific media in terms of ethnicity and culture tends to overlook audiences' demand for in-depth news and debate. This paper concludes that viewing ethnic media within categories of ethnicity or culture (as do funders, scholars and, often, media producers) risks both exaggerating the 'otherness' of ethnic minority groups *and* overlooking Pacific audiences' media needs in terms of their participation in society. Instead, it suggests, policy-makers and funders could do more to recognise the journalistic and public sphere roles of the Pacific news media they fund.

Keywords: Pacific media, journalism, public sphere, ethnic minority media

Introduction

Gaps in the literature on the relationships between ethnic media and their audiences mean there is much we do not understand about audiences' media preferences or media habits (Ogunyemi, 2015). This paper aims to address these gaps with regard to Aotearoa/New Zealand's Pacific news media by examining how Pacific audience members value the material they get from Pacific media sources. Earlier analysis (Ross, 2016) suggested that ideas of journalism are more central to audiences' assessments of media than may be accounted for in some ethnic media research. Building on that work, this paper further argues that widely studied ethnic media dimensions of community-building, cultural values and information deficit fall short of explaining Pacific audiences' emphasis on journalism and public debate, and instead directs attention to Pacific audiences as publics.

Viewed in these terms, research with Pacific audiences suggests they have few fora in which to enact everyday citizenship (particularly to learn about and debate issues, and agree on solutions to social problems). When this lack is coupled with the appeal of Pacific audiences for a space in which they can work out internal issues, audience participants' talk about journalism and news reveals that Pacific groups are positioned in New Zealand publicness in narrow ways – which they express concern about in this study through frustration with the journalistic depth of Pacific media and the neglect of Pacific perspectives in other media (excepting Māori media). This situation raises questions about how specialised communicative spaces or counter-public spheres work in practice for marginalised groups. Through examining the intersection of media practices with the ideals and expectations of journalism and public debate, this paper questions how far we should foreground the specifics of culture in interpreting people's media needs – or in funding and producing media content.

Background

New Zealand's Pacific news media are more diverse than is sometimes assumed by scholars or policy makers, and they face several challenges. Like other ethnic minority or identity media (Matsaganis et. al., 2011: p.159), Pacific news media are small-scale, often local 'mom and pop' businesses, their income is slight and their capacity to do investigative journalism or to respond to digital transformation can be limited. Unlike other ethnic minority media, such as Latino media in the USA or Turkish media in Western Europe, New Zealand's Pacific media¹ are also discrete; most do not have parent companies in the 'homeland' on which to call for financial or production support or content. That means that what they do for their New Zealand-based Pacific audience matters, especially as these audiences are poorly served by mainstream media and have limited choices with regard to media imported from the relatively less well-resourced Pacific region.

In addition to these structural challenges, Pacific news media are grappling with significant digital transformation of the media ecosystem as well as significant intergenerational and cultural transformation within their target Pacific population (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2006). People of Pacific² ethnicity form the fourth-largest ethnic group in New Zealand (behind Pākehā/European, Indigenous Māori and Asian ethnic groups); the group is marked by multiple ethnic identities, linguistic and cultural diversity, a significant inter-generational divide and is spread geographically throughout the country. Given these characteristics, Pacific news media, especially those that serve more than one ethnic group, are required to be many things for a population that is scattered and extremely diverse. What is more, by 2038 more than one in ten New Zealanders – and, significantly, nearly one in five New Zealanders under 14 – will be of Pacific ethnicity (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). New Zealand audiences will be 'browner',

¹ The focus here is on media produced within Aotearoa/New Zealand (not in the wider Pacific) for New Zealand-based Pacific communities.

² In the interest of finding an operational term, this paper uses the term 'Pacific' throughout – always with the understanding that the term is contested and does not refer to a homogeneous group, but that it is commonly used in Pacific peoples' self-description, including the descriptions of Pacific media producers and audiences.

and the Pacific media that speak for and to Pacific communities will likely have increasing importance. For these reasons, it is timely to look more closely at Pacific media in Aotearoa and the position they hold in New Zealand's multi-ethnic, multicultural society.

The scholarship on ethnic minority news media advances several roles for ethnic minority news outlets like Pacific media, including being a voice for under- or mis-represented communities (Shumow, 2010); providing political and cultural self-representation, including preserving culture and language (Browne, 2005; Husband, 1994; Riggins, 1992); and providing a counter-narrative to mainstream media, and a space for empowerment (Hourigan, 2003; Pietikäinen, 2008). Some of that is reflected in this research, but not in straightforward ways, particularly when it comes to cultural preservation. In audiences' talk, detailed below, there was a disconnect between what they said they wanted and the cultural performances Pacific media producers' imagined they wanted, demonstrating divergent understandings not just about what constitutes Pacific culture but also its place in the mediascape. Indeed, audience research elsewhere suggests we must take care with cultural explanations about the role of ethnic minority media, as minority audiences' media use cannot always be explained by their culture or ethnic 'difference' (see Aksoy and Robins, 2003; Arnold and Schneider, 2007; Georgiou, 2004; Lewis, 2008; Madianou, 2005; Ojo, 2006).

The scholarship on ethnic media in general is fragmentary and its various definitions of ethnic media as diasporic, Indigenous, community or language media are an uneasy fit for the socio-economic context and practices of Pacific news media in New Zealand. Utanga (2007), Kailahi (2009), Robie (2009), Papoutsaki and Strickland (2008) and Neilson (2015) have all made useful attempts to summarise Pacific media in the New Zealand context³ and have highlighted the role of these news media in combating negative stereotypes, as well as the challenges they face regarding a lack of resources and competition for small but highly diverse audiences. However, this small body of local literature has little to say about how Pacific media are responding to these challenges (indeed, as older accounts, most of these works have been rendered out of date by churn within the Pacific media sphere as well as significant technological and economic change within the wider media industry as a whole) or about actual audiences.

As such, this paper seeks to understand the Pacific mediascape by involving Pacific peoples in categorising and making sense of their media practices. As the discussion below reveals, Pacific peoples value the media in ways that often have more to do with ordinary concerns for quality journalism and publicness than with their ethnic difference. Indeed, when closer attention is paid to what Pacific audiences say in relation to media, explanations emerge that are more closely related to journalistic functions (which have tended to be under-explored or overshadowed in the literature). This paper sets out to explore these practices by drawing on analysis of audience focus group discussion that identified broad themes of Pacific peoples' alienation from mainstream media and frustration with Pacific media's journalistic role and activity in the public sphere.

³ These New Zealand-based Pacific media sit within a wider context of Pacific Islands-produced news media, about which there is a growing body of scholarship (for a useful overview see Singh, 2014: 27). Some of that work is considered here, but through a lens that views New Zealand's media as an uneasy fit with regional models and/or theories about diasporic media.

Method

This paper is part of a larger study into Pacific news media in Aotearoa/New Zealand comprising semi-structured interviews with twenty-three Pacific news media producers and journalists, a textual analysis of key Pacific news media, and audience research with Pacific focus groups. Taken together, these methods collectively address questions about producers and audiences' media practices and the role that Pacific media play in the everyday lives of Pacific audiences. Unlike much of the previous research on Pacific media (see Neilson, 2015), the material gathered for this larger study covered different media platforms and production contexts, and attempted to explore the contexts of consumption to make connections between media production and audiences.

This paper draws mostly on the study's audience research, which was based on Pacific audience focus groups and some Nielsen audience ratings data (2016). Focus group interviews were chosen as a method of investigation because they are a recommended way of consulting with Pacific groups (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2006), and because interview-based methods allow us, as researchers, to better understand the world from within Pacific realities and worldviews. The Nielsen data, which provided ratings for the NZ on Air-funded Pacific programmes *Fresh*, *Tagata Pasifika* and *Pacific Beat Street*, was drawn on to fill gaps in the available data on Pacific audiences, but can only be indicative of actual Pacific audiences' behaviour as the data was aggregated for Pacific and Māori audiences (because data for Pacific peoples did not meet Nielsen's minimum sample size). Thus, while this paper provides some insights into Pacific peoples' audience practices, these can be seen only as partial, and future research might seek finer-grained data that can tease out different Pacific audience practices.

For the focus groups, forty-six participants were interviewed at three major urban centres in New Zealand: Christchurch, Porirua and Auckland. Participants were found partly through a 'snowball' method and partly by tapping into existing Pacific groups, and the sample comprised twenty women, twenty-six men, a mix of first-, second- and third-generation New Zealanders and a mix of Pacific ethnicities, as well as a mix of ages, including fifteen participants aged below twenty-five years but no one aged over sixty. Almost three-quarters of participants stated they had a good understanding of or were fluent in a Pacific language, compared with almost a sixth who said they had limited to no understanding of a Pacific language.

In line with Pacific research guidelines elsewhere (Health Research Council, 2014), this study aimed to follow ethical procedures that were culturally sensitive, and that did not harm Pacific communities or individual participants. I consulted Pacific leaders and advisors, including those through whom focus groups were recruited, for ethno-specific and context-specific advice on culturally competent practice. I also established a Pacific Advisory Group, comprising community and media representatives, to oversee and provide advice on the research project as a whole and on my practice as a former journalist and a woman of Pacific as well as Pākehā heritage. My positioning as afakasi or half-caste – where I am both and neither insider nor outsider – means there can be no taken-for-granted subject position, and I took extra care to reflect on my interaction with participants, and to draw on advice from the Pacific Advisory Group.

Discussion

All forty-six focus group participants interviewed for this study said they had consumed Pacific media at some point – nineteen had used various Pacific media in the last week (notably, six said they had also watched Māori television news) – and they talked about using Pacific media to follow stories on topics as varied as climate change, suicide, education and sport, among others.

As reported in an earlier analysis (Ross, 2016), audience participants' talk reflected the literature on ethnic media in some respects, particularly in demonstrating their alienation from mainstream news media and their search for counter narratives to dominant media representations. Audiences, however, did not draw on ethnic or cultural identity explanations about their media use (Ross, 2016: 8), which appears to run counter to the ways in which funders and policy-makers view these media. The lack of cultural explanations offered by audience focus groups may reflect the extent to which New Zealand has become increasingly 'brown' and super diverse (Chen, 2015); against that background of apparent multiculturalism, discourses of separation may recede from people's everyday talk. However, the fact that participants did not talk in terms of culture-as-thing raises questions about what we mean when we say culture shapes how people use and make sense of media.

Instead, participants spoke most about journalistic quality and public debate, which are arguably better understood in terms of Pacific people's citizenship rather than their cultural difference. Participants' talk about journalism quality is discussed more fully in Ross (2016), where analysis showed that participants mostly used the idea of journalism in evaluating Pacific news media – and often found these media wanting because they were too often out-of-date or out of step with audience participants' web-based media habits and preferences. Indeed, the demand for more accessible Pacific journalism identified in Ross (2016) corresponds with a NZ on Air survey (2012a: 26) where Pacific peoples said they wanted content delivered using new forms of media and technology, with a strong presence on the Internet and social media, and mobile devices.

Notably, the same NZ on Air research (2012a) also found that Pacific peoples had a stronger preference for news and current affairs than language and culture per se, yet many of the structural features of Pacific media favour a cultural focus – where 'culture' is interpreted in ethnic categorising terms. Cultural elements such as targets for Pacific languages are embedded as priorities in the establishment deeds or funding contracts of several Pacific media, which can work against Pacific audiences' desire for more news and current affairs (Ross, 2016). For instance, the state-owned Pacific Media Network is required to report against language targets of at least 4100 hours of Pacific language annually across Niu FM and 531pi. However, given the majority of Pacific peoples in New Zealand cannot hold a conversation in their heritage Pacific language (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.), that requires significant portions of the network's programming to be in a language that cannot be accessed by large parts of the Pacific population.

Indeed, Pacific audiences' critique of Pacific news and journalism may reveal a heightened sense of critical citizenship (Banaji and Cammaerts, 2014: 15), in that those who are most

pathologised by news and who see themselves as negatively – or *under* represented – are the most likely to show disaffection and be negatively critical. Funding mechanisms that appear to give quality news and current affairs a lower priority than language and cultural performance further reinforce these tensions. NZ on Air's funding for *Tagata Pasifika*, which does most of the heavy lifting in terms of Pacific journalism in New Zealand, appears to lower than funding for other programming, which may be an effect of seeing the programme as community (rather than public service) media. From 2011 to 2016, *Tagata Pasifika* received between NZ\$1.49m and NZ\$1.69m annually to produce between fifty-two and fifty-four shows a year, amounting to NZ\$28,846 to NZ\$32,003 a show (NZ on Air, n.d. "Annual Reports"). That funding was often less per programme than NZ on Air's funding for *Fresh*, a youth-oriented magazine production "with a light-hearted take on Pacific culture and events" (NZ on Air, n.d. "Fresh"). *Fresh*, which is funded under NZ on Air's Special Interest and Children and Young People's (and, in 2016, its Māori) categories, features lighter news, such as profiles of 'Poly-Kiwis' "who through their performance in arts, music and sports have put ... Pacifica on the cultural map" (ibid.). Per half-hour programme in 2016, *Fresh* was paid NZ\$46,089, almost 1½ times the NZ\$32,003 granted to *Tagata Pasifika*, despite the fact that the latter show attempts more in-depth and investigative journalism, which generally costs more to produce than entertainment-oriented programmes (Hamilton, 2009; Matheson, 2010). What is more, the funding for Pacific news and current affairs programmes does not appear to be keeping pace with inflationary pressures. In the six years from 2011 to 2016, *Tagata Pasifika's* funding increased by only eleven per cent. This figure is less than the rate of growth in wages over the same period (Reserve Bank of New Zealand, n.d.) and, very likely, not enough for the programme to keep pace with rising production costs as well as the cost of developing expensive investigations and new online products.

All of this leaves New Zealand's Pacific communities in something of a news and information gap between mainstream media that rarely speak to Pacific communities or issues (Loto et. al., 2006) and Pacific media that face key constraints both reporting on and for their communities *and* providing a space for debate, deliberation and public connections. In terms of the democratic and public sphere functions of news media, that has important implications. Normative theories of a socially responsible media suggest that news media constitute the civic culture and public spheres that are vital for democracy (Dahlgren, 1991, 2002, 2005, 2006; Fraser, 1992: 125; Waller and McCallum, 2014), and there are strong arguments that marginalised communities have *more* need of this role. Waller and McCallum (2014: 20), for instance, note that because marginalised groups, compared with established interest groups, typically have limited access to formal channels of influence in government bureaucracies, the news media have extra importance in conveying their concerns to policymakers. That said, it appears from the analysis above that Pacific audiences' expectations are much higher than structural forces or policy instruments seem to allow, and they are positioned as second-class in relation to news products.

A further issue is the fact that audiences were potentially turned off Pacific media by some outlets' exposure to outside view. Where Pacific language media seemed able to raise and debate contentious issues relatively free from the scrutiny of those outside their community (though within a smaller circle of Pacific language speakers), English-language Pacific media, which have the biggest audiences and broadest (pan-Pacific) community

reach, were exposed to an outsiders' gaze that potentially dampened participation and deliberation. Several focus groups said that exposure to outside view limited their ability to debate issues that were "important to us who are there but they're not actually the things you show the rest of the world." This concern was not shared in all focus groups, but it is worth discussing here, as it raises key questions about the civic role of Pacific media within a marginalised context.

English-language Pacific media appear to act as something of a shop window for the Pacific community. Some audience participants expected that there were things that should not be shared in that open space with a non-Pacific 'them' that could be better shared in a more private space with an in-group Pacific 'us'. To an extent, this caution may be a result of the insecure socio-political position of Pacific communities and their marginalisation in mainstream news. Focus groups were hypersensitive about negative stories and several talked at length about the harm done by well-known stories such as TVNZ's 2009 'Gangs and Drugs in Samoa' expose (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2010) and mainstream media coverage of the "hip hop grant" scandal in 2004 (Whimp, 2008).

Participant 1: It still hurts. I mean even people who aren't family or you know, just being brown and living in Christchurch, it still hurts what happened with that, because I think the effects of it, to our perspective, to the general perspective, was so blatant. It really rankled that one.

Participant 2: Yeah, it did stigmatise Pacific people. 'Oh, don't give them funding.'

Participant 3: Oh, yeah. It stopped a whole heap. _Audience focus group

Stories like these had a significant impact and had clearly sensitised some audience participants to negative attacks within news media.

Audience participants' sensitivity about the appropriateness of sharing tricky content in wider public spaces sat alongside their suspicion that producers' representations were sometimes tailored for a dominant audience, rather than Pacific audiences. Many participants expressed frustration with what they described as the false positive representation of their communities through stories that were either too celebratory or too narrowly focused on high achievers and/or arts and cultural performance, and some felt these representations were aimed at addressing an outside view. For example, participants said that *Tagata Pasifika* played too much to what they described as the "tourist perspective".

Tourist perspective being, obviously the dominant culture viewing us as people who just dance, sing and chant and all of that scenario. So I sort of wonder if maybe *Tagata's* other angle of actually putting on those dances and whatever to also try and attract the dominant culture.... I don't know, but I just feel that we are so much more than that and maybe we need to actually incorporate a lot more of the realities of what we are encountered by on a regular basis. _Audience focus group participant

My Palagi friends who see TP love it because they otherwise never see any Pasifika stories, while some of my Pacific friends think it feeds the stereotypes of brown people only liking brown things and that it's somehow unusual to find Pasifika professionals or successful business people etc., or that not knowing a language makes you somehow second-class. _Audience focus group participant

Audience figures for *Tagata Pasifika* (Nielsen, 2016) reveal that the majority of the programme's viewers are not Pacific, leaving plenty of room for people to feel 'exposed' (indeed, the figures show that, in the fifteen years of broadcast from 2001 to 2015, the programme's combined Māori and Pacific audience has accounted for less than half, and usually less than a third, of the overall audience⁴). Elsewhere, a *New Zealand Pacific* producer said their newspaper had a sizeable Pākehā audience and Pākehā advertisers, for whom it tailored stories.

The discussion here does not attempt to reconcile these tensions. Rather, the aim is to demonstrate how Pacific audiences are positioned in a conflicted space by dominant forces in society, with Pacific media caught between Pacific audiences' demand for more in-depth and investigative journalism that addresses the tough issues in their communities *and* the same audiences' misgivings about the dominant group's scrutiny of such journalism-led debate.

Dahlgren (2005: 152) and Curran (2000: 140-141) argue that marginalised groups require separate spaces and specialist media where they can work out internal issues, debate issues of identity and express politics that are oppositional to the dominant mainstream. However, it would appear from audience participants' concerns above that the existence of a separate ethnic media is no guarantee of an empowering public sphere. By way of example, consider how often government ministers appear on *Tagata Pasifika* and Niu FM. When examined in terms of how much attention the powerful afford these media (and, by extension, their ability to speak 'truth to power'), Pacific news media are limited in their ability to fulfil the democratic potential that is argued for ethnic media in the literature. Among the many reasons audience research participants gave for following Māori media, for instance, was the fact that they could see ministers held to account in Māori media on issues that mattered to them.

I'm talking Hekia Parata⁵. Every time she's on *Te Karere* because she's always on there trying to defend her issues on education and one thing I love about it is that the reporters just give it back, you know, straight. There's no – I mean from a Maori perspective, so they're talking about their – asking the questions that I would want to know so – and that's why I like watching *Te Karere*. _Audience focus group participant

Pacific media do tackle controversial issues, but it is clear that is not easy for them. The Māori and Pacific web magazine *e-Tangata* ran an in-depth interview with New Zealand-born Samoan rugby player Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu, which challenged the 'White history' being taught in New Zealand's schools and became the site's most popular story. But e-

⁴ Nielsen figures combine Māori and Pacific audience, which obscures what are likely to be higher Pacific audience numbers.

⁵ New Zealand Minister of Education.

Tangata co-founder and editor, Tapu Misa (quoted in Neilson, 2015: 53), said the site struggled, because of lack of funding, to tackle the issues it would like to: “We’ve concentrated mainly on profiles and Q&A interviews, because it’s the most do-able, cost-effective way of getting our thinkers and movers and shakers on to the site”. Indeed, the structural positioning of Pacific media in ways that make it harder for them to sustain high-quality journalistic informational outputs poses significant questions about the limits of media power for Pacific communities. Shah (2008) suggests that news media can mediate the effects of background factors on the public-mindedness and civic participation that underpins a group’s advocacy for itself but the findings above suggest that Pacific audiences may have insufficient access to these levers.

Arguably, the constraints identified in this study have the potential to exacerbate already low rates of Pacific civic participation in New Zealand. Pacific youth, particularly boys, are less well prepared than their Pākehā and Asian counterparts for their roles as citizens, scoring particularly low in civic knowledge scores (Lang, 2010: 8); and, despite Pacific peoples’ reasonably healthy interest in politics, they remain significantly more likely to be non-voters compared to the general population (Iusitini, 2013). If the health of democracy depends upon the quality of news and information that people receive and the meaningful debate it engenders, then the constraints on Pacific news media identified here have important implications for the healthy functioning of New Zealand democracy – especially as ethnic minority groups such as Pacific peoples are growing as a proportion of the New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). It may be that this is where Māori media fulfil a role for Pacific audiences – by providing extra and alternative avenues for their sense of being informed and for participation. If so, that raises some big questions not just about media producers’ imagined audiences but also about the practices of funders who have largely categorised and funded Pacific and Māori broadcasting separately⁶ through NZ on Air’s special interest categories budget and Te Māngai Pāho’s⁷ budget. This sits in contrast to public service models such as that in the UK, where broadcasters have a remit to speak to all of society, or Australia, where the SBS has a remit to speak to a wide and diverse range of publics.

Conclusion

This study’s demonstration of Pacific audiences’ frustration with the amount and quality of journalism that is available to them and an apparent lack of media fora for well-informed debate on Pacific news and current affairs, suggests a further need for state funders and policy makers to rethink how they support Pacific media interests. Livingstone and Lunt (2011) argue that the focus of policy deliberation is too often on the regulation of provision – a top-down perspective that views audiences as mere receivers of content – and fails to consider audience participation, the mediation of social relations or provision claimed to be ‘in the public interest’. This research suggests that policy makers and funders need, at the very least, to reflect on the cultural lens through which

⁶ In a notable departure from that trend in 2016, NZ on Air funded *Fresh* through two funding channels (Māori and Youth), and counted its hours in both Māori and Pacific programming hours (NZ on Air, 2016: 74-75).

⁷ Te Māngai Pāho is a Crown Entity established to make funding available to the national network of Māori radio stations and for the production and broadcast of Māori language television programmes, radio programmes and music recordings (Te Māngai Pāho, 2016).

they define Pacific audiences and their needs. Despite a commitment to diverse content in its Pacific Content Strategy, NZ on Air (2012b) often talks about cultural rather than news content. Indeed, it funds *Tagata Pasifika* not through its news-funding category but through its special interest category⁸, where it talks about New Zealand's "diverse *cultural communities* and minority groups" and the "*high cultural value*" of the Pacific programmes it funds. In showcasing *TheCoconet.tv*, it says the site has helped to address major gaps in Pacific content by reconnecting "Pacific youth with their *culture*"; and in its Pacific content strategy, it talks about the need for collaboration with "*cultural agencies*" (my italics). However, a focus on cultural content may risk overlooking audiences' desire for stronger journalistic content and a robust public sphere.

As signalled elsewhere (Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013: 193), this focus can also have a damaging effect on the politics of representation, "where issues of discrimination, exclusion, and social justice are marginalised in favor of a raceless, commodified version of (multi)cultural difference". It also risks excluding youth and future audiences, as cultural categorisations can translate into narrow identity representations and closed discourses of authenticity that tend to exclude New Zealand-born Pacific youth (Ross, 2014). And it tends toward an essentialism that might prevent synergies with Māori media when there is an evident overlap between Pacific and Māori media interests, and potential for identifying Pacific audiences in less traditionally 'cultural' ways to appeal to younger Pacific (and Māori) audiences⁹. These problems suggest that Western societies need to think about their non-dominant media, which serve many communities, in ways that do not essentialise them but see them as part of society as a whole, without subsuming them.

Further exploration of these issues might also provide a starting point for analysing the interrelationship of New Zealand's communicative spaces (Pacific, Māori, mainstream and so on) and their interaction with wider public opinion. To what extent, for instance, does coverage of issues in *Tagata Pasifika* reach and inform coverage in mainstream media, let alone inform mainstream debate? What does it mean for Pacific audiences as citizens when their interests are overlooked in mainstream media but Pacific media may be too small for their voices to be heard within the political sphere? Waller, Dreher, and McCallum (2015) make a distinction between ethnic peoples' participation as involvement in the production and dissemination of media, and participation as political influence (that is, the attention and responses of decision-makers and democratic institutions). They argue that both are crucial for fully realising the potential of ethnic participatory media, especially in an increasingly mediatised policy-making context. That said, institutional support for Pacific media appears to favour participation in production, rather than political influence. Pacific news media's democratic potential, measured in terms of how much attention the powerful actually afford these media, raises fundamental questions about issues of power and citizenship. However, when Pacific communication opportunities are understood largely as cultural practice and content production – and not as the participation of audiences as citizens or as influencers in decision-making – these questions are overlooked. The concerns of Pacific audiences

⁸ Contrast this with TV3's Māori current affairs programme *The Hui*, which is funded under both NZ on Air's General and Māori News/Current Affairs categories.

⁹ NZ on Air's funding of *Fresh* through both Pacific and Māori funding categories in 2016 suggests some recognition of that overlap at the institutional level.

identified in this study demonstrate a need for policy-makers and funders to recognise these broader roles for the media they fund.

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