

# Inclusive Journalism

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As journalists, we enjoy an authority that has become so firmly established that news often has the status of "common sense". We have a responsibility to wield this authority carefully.

Accurate and responsible journalism reflects the society it serves, in all its diversity. To report on one group or view but not others is fundamentally flawed. For example, Europeans comprise 67 per cent of the population but it would appear account for more than 80 per cent of news voices (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005). That paints a skewed picture of New Zealand's society, its peoples and their interests.

Accurate journalism demands that reporters make an effort to become more familiar with and reflect the full range of communities and perspectives within Aotearoa/New Zealand. That is not about pandering to certain groups; it is about recognising the distorted nature of much news coverage, which overemphasises the interests and perspectives of certain groups, usually white, middle-class, heterosexual men.

It matters that journalists get this right. For one, the news media play a key role in how a society sees itself. Journalists claim to know what is 'really' happening in society, and audiences believe that journalists communicate that factually, truthfully, and objectively (Zelizer, 2004).

New Zealanders cannot possibly know all of their fellow citizens directly; instead we rely on what we are told in the media and the manner in which journalists

report different groups can have a real effect. Good diversity reporting can help communities to be seen, heard and accepted; poor reporting can fuel misunderstanding, racism, and division.

The health and survival of your news organisation also depends on your ability to capture the fullest range of voices. If people do not see or hear themselves in your stories, they will not view you as a credible source of information and they will look elsewhere for news that is relevant to their lives. That has implications for your newsroom's bottom line – and its ability to call on a digitally connected audience to help report the news. The commercial drive to reach the largest audience has meant news media often pitch to the dominant and not minority groups. But just as the business of news is changing, so is its audience. It will not be long before there is a majority of none, and who will be the dominant group then?

New Zealand population projections ([www.stats.govt.nz/](http://www.stats.govt.nz/)) hold that by 2026 two-thirds of New Zealand children will identify as Māori, Pacific and/or Asian. You owe it to your news organisations – and to those future readers, listeners and viewers – to include them in your reporting, and to include them in ways that are ordinary and routine. People are made different often because we treat them as different, as the exotic “other” or “them” segregated from “us”. Our aim as journalists should be to pull together as many voices in our storytelling that diversity becomes the unremarkable norm and chapters like this become redundant.

## Diversity in the newsroom

News coverage routinely reflects Pakeha interests. That's partly because mainstream newsrooms remain, by and large, white and middle class. Four in five respondents to the NZ Journalist Training Organisation workplace survey in 2006 were European/Pakeha; fewer than 1 in 10 recorded themselves as Māori. Despite the fact that Pacific peoples make up almost 7 per cent of the population, it is estimated that only 2 per cent of the country's journalists are Pacific – and few of them work in mainstream media (Kailahi, 2009). It should be no surprise then that news stories are often constructed in ways that reflect the experiences and assumptions of dominant groups.

Mainstream media are themselves part of the power establishment and there are plenty of examples of how they are biased in favour of powerful, often Pakeha, institutions and interests (Nairn et al, 2012; Walker, 2002). Partly, that is the result of a reliance on news values that tend to advance dominant views and news routines that make it easier to cover council meetings than Pacific fono (Abel, 2004). It is also the result of a reliance on Pakeha sources, even in stories about other ethnic groups.

A 2007 study (Rankine et al, 2008) of newspaper and television news about Māori issues and Te Tiriti o Waitangi found that even when Māori sources outnumbered Pakeha sources, stories were invariably framed within a Pakeha perspective. Māori were represented as a problem or source of conflict and their rights

For more on reporting Māori issues, see Chapter 6.

## People are people

Katy Gosset, Radio New Zealand journalist and former producer of *One in Five* ([www.radionz.co.nz](http://www.radionz.co.nz)), a programme about the issues and experience of disability, says it is easy for euphemisms and stereotypes to sneak into stories. When you write about the achievements of a person with a disability, for instance, do you cover their achievement on its own merits or as a cliché of the heroic individual? Is it, “It’s amazing that you’ve managed to get out of bed to do the washing!”?

Effusive admiration for a person’s “courage” and determination assumes that life with a disability is awful and unsatisfying. That is not only a gross assumption, but also a stereotype.

“That still has the potential to be isolating and single people out rather than looking at the person as just a person in the community,” Gosset warns. In other words, always take care with the messages you convey in your stories. “People have all sorts of issues and quirks and characteristics. They’re not a certain way because they happen to have a disability.”

were silenced. Clearly, the perspective of the journalist writing the story is crucial – and can distort how we report.

## Be aware of your own biases

As journalists we must recognise how our own histories and biases can affect our storytelling. Writer and blogger Sarah Milstein (<http://dogsandshoes.com/>) says if you are among the majority group – white, middle class, heterosexual – you have an obligation to scrutinise systems of inequality, not only because you are probably a beneficiary of them, but also because you are less likely to be aware of the role prejudice plays on a daily basis.

We all have some type of bias. To report fairly and accurately, we must be aware of it and work to overcome it. Start by being open to difference and the worldviews of other cultures. Avoid making incorrect assumptions about other communities by reading up on issues and people’s histories. Examine your stories closely for bias. Are you reporting on all aspects of communities, positive and negative? Are you looking for different perspectives?

Part of mitigating bias is about listening – really listening – to others. Expose yourself to communities and people who are different from you, ask them questions and listen. Try to understand where they are coming from. The more questions you ask, the more inclusive your stories are likely to be. This goes for reporters working in mainstream media and alternative media.

Robert Khan, founder and managing director of Indian station Radio Tarana ([www.tarana.co.nz/](http://www.tarana.co.nz/)), says you need to get in the community to understand it. He requires every new reporter to learn about different communities by visiting places of worship and spending time with leaders to build deeper knowledge and meaningful relationships. “Just as you have to be able to interview the prime minister

and report court, you've got to have some element of diversity reporting," he says. "You have to remember, we need the story. They don't have to tell us the story, so we need to be respectful."

It is not that hard, a Pacific journalist says. "It's the same as any other job. You just make your contacts, people need to trust and you've got to feel comfortable in that community. I'm not Samoan, but I feel totally comfortable in that community."

## Broaden your sources

At its most basic, inclusive reporting starts with your contacts and Twitter, Facebook and other social media lists. How diverse are they? Who do you follow? If you sorted your sources roughly by age, gender, ethnicity and so on, where would you fall short? Make the effort to cast your net widely and develop a range of sources that reflects the broader community. Ask your contacts for other sources – who do they seek out for community news?

Strive for a diverse range of voices from within each community. The Pacific population, for instance, comprises significant linguistic and cultural differences, and people may align themselves variously with their village, island, church or family identities. Avoid treating ethnic and other groups – including your own – as if they were homogenous. How closely do you share the views of your family or your classmates? Why would you assume that ethnic groups all share the same view or perspective? Try to get the names of everyday people and do not assume that leaders speak for everyone. Many Pacific leaders are island-born elders who may not be expert on the issues facing New Zealand-born youth who now make up the majority of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Carol Archie, in her guide to Māori news and current affairs, *Pou Kōrero* (2007), says you need to aim for a cross-section of sources. Look for Māori, as well as Pakeha sources, and look for credible Māori sources, not just the "Pakeha-sanctioned" dial-a-Māori who may not be held in high regard in the Māori community.

Follow community newspapers, radio stations and websites, and note who speaks in their stories. A diverse media is growing media from New Zealand's many ethnic communities. Paying attention to what, who and how they report will pay dividends. Join online communities and know where different communities meet. Many Pacific peoples are on Facebook and YouTube, but few are on Twitter.

Be aware, too, that many communities lack access to digital technology. It is vital that you also get out of the office and meet people face to face. You should:

- Attend cultural events and community meetings
- Visit different places of worship: temples, mosques, Pacific churches
- Talk to people with disabilities, not their service providers
- Talk to women and young people, not just male leaders
- Try to find activities that take you into a new community

*Tagata Pasifika* (<http://tvnz.co.nz/tagata-pasifika>) journalist John Utanga urges journalists to make the effort to meet people *before* they need to interview them. "I'll make contact first day, go back another day and then schedule a filming day

It is not easy to find good sources on demand. Put in the groundwork early so that you have a pool of reliable sources when a story breaks on deadline.

once we've got everybody on board. You don't bowl up with your cameras straight away (especially) where you need people to be more open about the issues that affect them.

"The ethnic communities are often involved in a lot of cutting-edge social issues, so any young journalist should have solid contacts across the board, particularly in Auckland."

When you make connections into a new community, stay in contact. After Chanwai-Earle's documentary series aired, she returned to the Wellington Masjid to follow up on more stories. "That to me was affirmation," she says. "If they had been offended they wouldn't have allowed me back." Good reporting requires good relationships, and those must be earned. Didien Malifa, manager of the Samoa Observer's New Zealand subsidiaries New Zealand Pacific (<http://newzealandpacific.co.nz/>) and Māori Voice, says his reporters work continually to build and maintain their relationships with different Pacific and Māori communities. "We thought it was going to be easy, but we've had to earn that respect," he says. "It doesn't come overnight." His advice: "If you really want to focus on the Pacific or Māori communities, learn about the culture. If you know a little bit more about them, then doors will slowly open."

Giving voice to a broader range of people in your reporting is also about more than just covering the occasional cultural festival. You need to cover minority affairs all year long, and bring minority voices to all your stories. Include minority voices in the everyday stories that affect us all. Find a Pacific businesswoman for your story on tax changes, look for a Māori scientist for your story on science funding, and interview Chinese parents for your story on childrearing.

Including people in this way not only helps you to avoid ghettoising minority voices and news, but also helps you to avoid assuming Pakeha mainstream values are the norm. Mark Revington, editor of Ngai Tahu magazine *Te Karaka* ([www.tekaraka.co.nz/Blog/](http://www.tekaraka.co.nz/Blog/)), points to environmental journalism as one area where different values emerge, with a tension between the conservation focus on locking away resources and protecting them from use, and the view of many iwi who place an emphasis on sustainable use within the framework of kaitiakitanga or stewardship. "That Māori viewpoint is hardly ever reported properly, if reported at all," Revington says. Always ask yourself: does your story angle reflect *your* culture or



Tagata Pasifika journalist John Pulu crosses live to TVNZ's Auckland studio from the state funeral of King George Tupou V of Tonga, 2012.

the culture you are writing about?

Be careful not to overlook the largest minority group, which, in New Zealand, accounts for about 17 per cent of the population: people with disabilities. The US-based Society of Professional Journalists ([www.spj.org](http://www.spj.org)) says whether you are writing about education, unemployment or the economics of aging, there is always a disability angle to uncover. When a new school is built, ask if the buildings comply with the law. Are they accessible to people with disabilities?

## Pay attention to cultural norms

Inclusive reporting requires more than seeking out a range of sources or ensuring a range of perspectives are in your stories. It also demands a degree of cultural competence, and that starts with an awareness of your own beliefs, values and cultural practices. You must understand your own identity to understand how it may differ from others, and how it may frame your storytelling. As Archie warns (2007, p. 79), your attitudes and approach to the job do not come from an innocent ‘nowhere’.

To interact effectively with people across different communities, you need a sound knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews. In Māori and Pacific communities, for instance, it is important to identify a person’s hapu/iwi or island/village affiliation. *Te Karaka* magazine requires all writers to report hapū and iwi affiliation. “They are incredibly important,” Revington says. “Hapū more than iwi, quite often.” If that information is missing, he makes the writer rework the article. In Muslim communities, it is important to be aware of gender protocols. Female reporters must cover their heads and wear a garment that covers most of their legs when visiting a mosque. Male reporters should take care approaching Muslim women, and do so through an intermediary. Both men and women should avoid shaking hands with the opposite sex.

Brush up on appropriate customs. Check protocols with a key contact or advocacy organisation if you are not sure. It is important to get first impressions right. If you cannot get in the door then you are not doing your job.

Look for stories on larger societal and structural issues. People with disabilities often struggle on low incomes. These bigger stories need telling too.

## Expect behavioural differences

A Pacific journalist says one of the biggest problems journalists face when reporting Pacific communities is people’s feeling of inferiority or shame, known in Māori as *whakamā*.

“There’s a word for it in every single language across the Pacific. They just don’t want to talk and there’s several reasons for that. One is, for example, in the Kiribati culture, to talk means that you are standing out. You’re a person who is trying to show off. “Look at the person, look at her, why is she saying that?”

“If it’s someone in authority, that’s okay, or someone who is perceived to be in authority then that’s fine, but just your average family member, it’s very hard to get people to talk.”



## Taking things slowly

Lynda Chanwai-Earle, producer and presenter of Radio New Zealand's *Voices* and former reporter for TVNZ's *Asia Down Under*, took a slow and measured approach to her four-part documentary on New Zealand's Muslim communities in the lead up to the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

For an episode on Muslim women, she first contacted the Office of Ethnic Affairs to get the right introductions, then the president of the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ) ([www.fianz.co.nz/](http://www.fianz.co.nz/)) to get the names of women in different communities.

Chanwai-Earle started with Reihana Ali, a spokeswoman for the Wellington Masjid in Kilbirnie. She visited Ali to ask about the appropriate protocols when visiting



Lynda Chanwai-Earle interviews Verpal Singh at the Auckland Sikh community's Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha. She wears a chunni (scarf) out of respect for Sikh customs.

Muslim families and mosques, and took time to introduce herself and her story ideas. She was sensitive to the fact that the community was wary about talking to media.

"Since 2001, the Muslim community have been dealt to by mainstream media and they've lost their trust," she says. "I was very conscious that this was going to be broadcast at the time of the 10th anniversary and I didn't want to create a programme that was sensationalist."

Ali, a respected figure in the community, took Chanwai-Earle to the mosque to introduce her to other Muslim women. Chanwai-Earle then returned for another meeting at the mosque, this time with her recording gear, and it was only then that she began her interviews.

"Even if you're not taking your recording device, to initially meet and say this is where I'm coming from – putting that face to a name – is so important. It breaks down so many barriers."

Chanwai-Earle took several key steps to ensure she included voices that may not have been reached before. She:

- learned who to approach first
- learned appropriate protocols and a little of what she was walking into
- sought out a key respected contact who could introduce her to the community
- took time to meet face-to-face before conducting interviews

Some suggestions:

- Know when to adopt a formal or informal form of address. Informality can be seen as ‘forward’ in some cultures.
- Know whether to make direct eye contact or shake hands. Both can be seen as disrespectful in some communities.
- Know whether to use first names or titles and surnames. Using first names can be seen as rude or disrespectful.
- Know how to greet people. In some cultures, physical touch is okay, in others it is not. You might be expected to shake hands, using one or both hands; to hongi; to kiss on the cheek or both cheeks; to Namaste, pressing your hands together in a prayer position and bowing slightly; or to perform a deep bow.

To report society in all its diversity you need to know something about your country and its peoples. At the very least, that means having a grasp of tikanga and te reo Māori, as well as a good understanding of New Zealand history and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Make sure you are familiar with the structure and tikanga of pōwhiri. Know how to perform a basic mihi, preferably in Māori.

Make yourself familiar with and observe marae etiquette. On many marae, for instance, it is not appropriate for women to speak on the paepae. Seek permission to use microphones and to film or take photographs. Ask someone to explain where camera crew and photographers can and cannot go. Observing these protocols is more likely to earn you goodwill and cooperation. It is about respect, Utanga says. “If you respect people, you’ll be fine.”

## Pay attention to language

Your words matter so be accurate. The terms you use can reinforce stereotypes or help to correct them. For people with disabilities, commonly used terms often do not represent their experience. Wheelchair-users, for instance, generally do not consider themselves “confined”. When considering what terminology to use, Gosset offers the following advice:

- Put people first, not their disability.
- Emphasise abilities, for example, people *use* a wheelchair; they are not “confined to a wheelchair”.
- Avoid generic labels, such as “the deaf”.
- Avoid emotive language, for example, a person *has* multiple sclerosis, they are not “afflicted with”, “crippled with”, or “a victim of” it.
- Keep your language simple, accurate and neutral.

If you use certain labels, make sure you are clear about your reasons for doing so. Beware of letting place names like Otara or Aranui stand in as code words for negative news. Be specific. Muslim, Arab and Middle Eastern identities are not the same. Arabs come from Arabic-speaking nations in the Middle East, but not everybody in that region is Arabic. Islam is the dominant religion in 49 countries, including Ethiopia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey and Kosovo, and there are as many Muslims living in Nigeria as in Iran. The Middle East-North Africa region



accounts for only a fifth of the world's Muslims; the majority, six-in-ten, are concentrated in the Asia-Pacific (The Pew Forum, 2011).

Always check terms with your sources, particularly when referring to someone's identity. For transgender subjects, for instance, you should use the name and personal pronouns that are consistent with how they live publicly. If possible, ask which pronoun or term they prefer. Check with Pacific peoples which identity they prefer. More often than not, they are lumped under the broad umbrella "Pacific", when they would rather be referred to as "Samoan" or "Tongan" or "Niuean". Never assume how someone will self-identify; many Pacific peoples have mixed ethnicity and their answer may surprise you.

Think about why you or your audience would want to know. Does that information add to the story? Would it seem out of place if you left it out? The Association of LGBT Journalists ([www.nlgja.org/](http://www.nlgja.org/)) provides a checklist of reasons for asking (and not asking) about a subject's sexual orientation (LGBT is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender).

Take care with names. When people tell you their names, repeat them back to them to make sure you can say them correctly. When Utanga is in the field, he asks people to say and spell their names to camera, so that he gets a pronunciation guide and a spelling guide on tape. In Japan, China and Korea, first name follows the family name, so a man called Zhang Wei is Mr Zhang. If you are not sure which is the first name and which is the last, ask. As with words, take care with images, including your own, he says. "In terms of your demeanour and your dress sense, try to not to clash. You want to be sensitive to what's in front of you, because the goal is to get in the door and get people to talk."

When photographing or filming people with disabilities, show them in everyday social situations or in their work environment. Avoid focusing on a medical set-up or a dependent relationship. In the same way, do not let assumptions about ethnicity determine your news selection. If you are reporting on poverty, ask yourself: do you illustrate your story with footage of a Māori family? Poverty is often equated with Māori and Pacific peoples, but the New Zealand Income Survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2012) indicates they make up only 21 per cent of the lowest-earning fifth of the population, those earning under \$410 a week. In that case, it would be more representative to film a Pakeha family.

As a rule of thumb, refer to someone's difference only if it is central to the story you are writing.

## Keeping an open mind

As a longstanding reporter in Pacific communities, John Utanga is knowledgeable about Pacific customs, but had to go back to basics when chasing a story on a Muslim community in central Auckland.

"All those things that I'd learned and have taken for granted in the last 20 years came back to me, and you just click into it. You're in a completely foreign environment, but when in Rome do as the Romans do," he says. "I had to go to a mosque prayer, take food afterwards, wash the feet and all that stuff. That was all new to me, but I just kept an open mind."

## Sexual orientation

### Reasons to ask about sexual orientation:

- It adds context to the story. Are you interviewing them because they are members of the LGBT community?
- It is central to the story. Are you interviewing them as someone directly affected by same-sex marriage laws, for instance?
- Are you trying to add diversity to your story or to highlight how different populations might be affected differently?

### Reasons to avoid asking – or reporting – sexual orientation:

- It would harm your subject.
- It is to sensationalise the story or pander to lurid curiosity.
- Would you include the information if the subject were heterosexual? If not, think about why you want to include it. It needs to be relevant.

Source: The Association of LGBT Journalists (2013). Reprinted by permission.

Use statistics to crosscheck your assumptions – and use them carefully. You need to know when the data is more or less representative. Look for selection bias in survey sampling, especially phone and email surveys. Have all population groups been adequately represented? One-parent families with dependent children are less likely to have access to phones or the Internet than two-parent families with dependent children, and Māori and Pacific peoples are less likely than Pakeha to have access to phones or the Internet. (<http://socialreport.msd.govt.nz>)

## Interviewing

Learn from ethnic news media and take your time. In the first instance, take time to find the right person to talk to. “If you went to a government department or a business they’d fob you off onto their spin doctors. If it’s the local rūnanga or marae, they don’t have a spin doctor,” Revington says. “You’ve got to make a whole lot of calls to find the right people.”

Take the time, too, to deal with sources in person. In a time-pressured newsroom that can be difficult, but *kanohi ki te kanohi*, or face-to-face, discussion is crucial in Māori and Pacific communities. You will earn trust and respect if you develop your relationships face to face, and once your sources know you it will be easier to phone them for comment when necessary. “Make sure you learn some reo. Make sure you pronounce people’s names properly and get the spelling right. And make sure you get out there and talk to people to develop the relationship,” Revington says. “One of the best things you can do is say, ‘I don’t know much about this, I want to know.’ As a journalist, that’s the best way to uncover any story.”

If you do use an interpreter, be careful about how you choose and use them, especially when reporting a controversial issue. Many ethnic minority communities are small, and your interpreter may have a stake in the story. If you are using a NZ Sign Language interpreter, allow for regular breaks – five to 10 minutes for every

If the community you are reporting on is primarily immigrant and speaks English as a second language, develop a relationship with an advocacy organisation that can help with translation.

30 to 45 minutes of interpreting.

Think about your subjects' needs and what will help them to feel comfortable. If your subject is in a wheelchair, sit. If your subject has a guide dog, avoid patting it. Like you, it is working. Always try to deal with your subject directly rather than through an intermediary. Gosset describes interviewing a subject who needed a support person to translate their words. She was mindful of needing to engage her subject as well as the interpreter who was providing the audio. So she used two microphones to capture both sources, and was careful to maintain eye contact with her interview subject throughout their meeting.

## Diversity as accuracy

Inclusive journalism is really about nothing more than covering our society in all its guises. It is about including in your stories those who have been frequently left out of the news. It is about reporting deeply – providing context and explaining why things happen, not just what happens. It is about paying attention to the point of view that frames a story. Is it white? Is it middle class?

It is also about finding stories that help your audience understand the people and the world around them. For ethnic media, that can mean taking extra steps to ensure they report the bad with the good. Self-censorship is a risk for small community news media. Journalists can be under huge pressure to protect their communities from negative stories, but those stories cannot be swept under the carpet. *Tagata Pasifika* journalist John Pulu says it is tricky when you have to report on your own community.

He should know. He reported on his own church, the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, when a new church it built in Sydney with big donations from the Tongan community folded, owing NZ\$27million. “I had to put on my reporter hat,” he says. “The thing with our people, most of the time we encourage the positive stories, but we have to do these stories to show that some things have to change.” Another Pacific journalist says reporters cannot ignore issues and events that need to be discussed just because they make their community uncomfortable. “Once you let yourself be swayed then you’re not a journalist, you’re a commentator...if you want to be a journalist you cannot cross that line.”

Regularly audit your portfolio: over time, what issues are you reporting and from which viewpoint? Whose voices are you regularly including or excluding, and whose interests are you amplifying? As a Pacific journalist says, if you stop questioning how you’re covering things, it’s danger time:

I always question: ‘what are the important issues facing the community?’ I also ask, ‘why is this interesting to my audience?’ And generally it is that people love stories. I get so many people coming up to me – quite middle-class, white New Zealand if you want to term them in such ways – but I get all sorts of people coming up to me saying, “I love your stories”. They find them interesting. I think that the news bosses across the spectrum need to wake up and realise that New Zealand is actually interested in other people’s stories.

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To ensure your reporting is inclusive and accurate, check each story for balance, point of view, voice, context and framing

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